

Why Am I An Analytic Philosopher?

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First things first

Congratulations to the Department of Philosophy, Ural Institute of Humanities, at the Ural Federal University on its 55th anniversary, and best wishes for the future, especially for analytic philosophy at UFU and its contribution to international philosophy!

What is analytic philosophy?

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Not even analysis!

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They would recognize me as an analytic philosopher.

Why be an analytic philosopher?

The genealogy is obvious:

Undergraduate at Oxford in Mathematics and Philosophy (1973-76)

DPhil student at Oxford in Philosophy (1976-80)

Supervised by W.H. Newton-Smith and Michael Dummett, attended lectures and classes by A.J. Ayer, P.F. Strawson, Derek Parfit, Gareth Evans, John McDowell, Saul Kripke, Hilary Putnam, Dana Scott,

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Under-tolerance of an openly experimental, conjectural approach.

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But I disliked some trends in analytic philosophy as I experienced it.

I knew they were not universal, e.g. I had no such complaints about Kripke's work, which I had been familiar with since my first term as an undergraduate (1973), when he gave the John Locke lectures at Oxford. But the prevailing atmosphere was different.

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His college room was decorated with cutlery bent in the manner of Uri Geller by one of his children, perhaps in the hope of unsettling analytic philosophers' naïve assumptions about rationality.

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It didn't.

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As I asked more questions, I realized that, although the Radical Philosophers had far more extensive knowledge of those texts than I had, their philosophical understanding of them went no deeper than mine. They were just more comfortable carrying on in the same way.

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My first teaching job was as a lecturer at Trinity College Dublin (1980-88). Soon after starting, I came to realize that what I disliked in the analytic philosophy I had experienced was not that it was *too analytic* but that it was *not analytic enough*.

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I realized that there was plenty of scope to do analytic philosophy in the style I liked, but I also lived in a philosophical environment where the analytic style by no means predominated.

Moral

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Analytic philosophy has its faults, but the alternatives are even worse!
We must keep incrementally raising standards in analytic philosophy.