

History of Analytic Philosophy

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Paolo Tripodi

**Analytic Philosophy
and the Later
Wittgensteinian
Tradition**

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Series Editor's Foreword

During the first half of the twentieth century analytic philosophy gradually established itself as the dominant tradition in the English-speaking world, and over the last few decades it has taken firm root in many other parts of the world. There has been increasing debate over just what 'analytic philosophy' means, as the movement has ramified into the complex tradition that we know today, but the influence of the concerns, ideas and methods of early analytic philosophy on contemporary thought is indisputable. All this has led to greater self-consciousness among analytic philosophers about the nature and origins of their tradition, and scholarly interest in its historical development and philosophical foundations has blossomed in recent years, with the result that history of analytic philosophy is now recognized as a major field of philosophy in its own right.

The main aim of the series in which the present book appears, the first series of its kind, is to create a venue for work on the history of analytic philosophy, consolidating the area as a major field of philosophy and promoting further research and debate. The 'history of analytic philosophy' is understood broadly, as covering the period from the last three decades of the nineteenth century to the start of the

twenty-first century, beginning with the work of Frege, Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein, who are generally regarded as its main founders, and the influences upon them, and going right up to the most recent developments. In allowing the 'history' to extend to the present, the aim is to encourage engagement with contemporary debates in philosophy, for example, in showing how the concerns of early analytic philosophy relate to current concerns. In focusing on analytic philosophy, the aim is not to exclude comparisons with other—earlier or contemporary—traditions, or consideration of figures or themes that some might regard as marginal to the analytic tradition but which also throw light on analytic philosophy. Indeed, a further aim of the series is to deepen our understanding of the broader context in which analytic philosophy developed, by looking, for example, at the roots of analytic philosophy in neo-Kantianism or British idealism, or the connections between analytic philosophy and phenomenology, or discussing the work of philosophers who were important in the development of analytic philosophy but who are now often forgotten.

The role of the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) has always been central in the history of analytic philosophy. His *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which appeared in 1921, is one of the founding texts of analytic philosophy, and his later *Philosophical Investigations*, published posthumously in 1953, lay at the heart of developments after the Second World War. In the 1960s Wittgenstein's later philosophy was at the high-point of its influence, but from the 1970s that influence started to wane, for a variety of reasons. These reasons form the subject of the present book, in which Paolo Tripodi discusses the growth and decline of what he calls the later Wittgensteinian tradition, focusing on its history in Britain and the United States.

One of the characteristic features of Tripodi's account is the way he incorporates other approaches to the history of philosophy than the purely philosophical, especially the sociological approach. While providing helpful elucidations of key arguments, he also stresses how many of the driving forces in philosophical developments derive from institutional changes and wider cultural and political circumstances. He describes, for example, how various Wittgensteinian distinctions were criticized in the post-war period without the arguments being altogether

convincing or rooted in genuine understanding of what Wittgenstein actually said. In the early years, especially in America, Wittgenstein's views were readily confused with Carnap's: Tripodi talks in this regard of a hybrid figure called Carnapstein against whom many philosophers in the States reacted, without doing justice to either Carnap's or Wittgenstein's own positions. As Tripodi puts it in Chapter 5 in discussing Davidson's critique of the distinction between reasons and causes, 'misunderstandings can be more effective than philosophical arguments'. Arguments are often read through a lens of *expectations*, which may well distort the views of those who are being either explicitly or implicitly criticized.

A major reason for the decline of interest in Wittgenstein over the last four decades is undoubtedly the scientific spirit—and indeed scientism—in philosophy that the professionalization of the discipline has encouraged. The role of inference to the best explanation in analytic metaphysics offers just one illustration of this. In discussing this in Chapter 6, Tripodi remarks that '*philosophical style is like history: it is written by winners*'. What is valuable about the history that he offers in this book, though, is that it is written by someone who manages to attain a healthy critical distance from the 'winners' alluded to here. With over 30 volumes now published in this series on the history of analytic philosophy, I regard Tripodi's history not only as admirably exemplifying the more humanistic style of philosophy that is very much needed today, but also as helping to deepen the self-understanding among analytic philosophers that it is one of the main aims of this series to foster.

October 2019

Michael Beaney

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Paolo Tripodi

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