

# Introduction

## 1. OBJECTIVES AND AUTHORS

(I) OBJECTIVES. The investigation undertaken in this book tries to provide an understanding of the main points in the development of the analytic programme in philosophy as practised in England during the twentieth century. G. H. von Wright, at one time the Professor of Philosophy in Cambridge, wrote in 1993:

The history of the [analytical] movement has not yet been written in full. With its increased diversification, it becomes pertinent to try to identify its most essential features and distinguish them from later additions which are alien to its origins. (von Wright 1993, p. 26)

In the same year Michael Dummett, then the Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford, noted: 'I hope that such a history will be written: it would be fascinating' (Dummett 1993a, pp. viii–ix).

The task of this book is to justify these hopes. Indeed, in recent years, there has been a growing endeavour to find out by historical means what analytic philosophy really is. Here we can mention the works of Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (1993); Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy* (1996); *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy*, edited by H.-J. Glock (1997); *The Story of Analytic Philosophy* (1998), edited by Biletzki and Matar; Avrum Stroll, *Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy* (2000). However, none of these books—in contrast to this one—were comprehensive, thoroughly organised, exhaustive studies of the history of analytical philosophy as developed in England in the twentieth century.

P. M. S. Hacker's book, for instance, concentrated above all on portraying the analytical movement in English philosophy from the perspective of Wittgenstein. As I shall show in this study, however, despite his having been a leading figure in it, it is misleading to put Wittgenstein at the centre of this movement.

(II) THE SELECTION OF AUTHORS. The aim of this book is to portray the analytic philosophy of the last century as practised in England by its seven most prominent representatives: Moore, Russell, Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin, Strawson, Dummett. I shall address this task in a series of seven essays.

The main criterion in selecting these seven philosophers was that each had been an actual leader of English philosophy for a certain period of time, as opposed to being prominent in present-day analytic discourse. I have followed this principle in an effort to reconstruct the authentic history of analytic philosophy in England, not its history as seen from the point of view of today's *status quo*.

Of course, many English philosophers would argue to the contrary; they will say that 'it is a complete falsification of history . . . to speak as if a band of pygmies had been dominated [English philosophy of the first half of the century] by the gigantic figures of G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell' (Paton 1956, pp. 343, 342), and later also Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin, Strawson, Dummett. To this one can retort: Naturally there were many other prominent non-analytical philosophers in twentieth-century England; for example, R. G. Collingwood or Samuel Alexander. It is not

they, however, who formed the basis of, to use Warnock's expression, the 'current orthodoxy' in philosophy there.<sup>1</sup>

The second criterion of selection is the authors' association with one of the two constellations: that of the Cambridge, or that of the Oxford 'School' of analytic philosophy. Indeed, it is these two 'Schools' which make contemporary British philosophy a world-wide authority. Here the reader should bear in mind, however, that I speak of 'Schools' for convenience's sake only. The point is that these philosophers themselves were adamant that they 'do not constitute a school or movement' (Urmson 1956, pp. 163–4). Admittedly, they never shared a common 'methodological programme'. Nevertheless, they have 'something which belonged to what might be called their collective institutional unconsciousness' (Rée 1993, p. 11a). In this book I shall try to articulate this common intuition as precisely as possible.

All this explains why there are outstanding analytic philosophers who nevertheless did not find place in this project. A. J. Ayer is a typical example here. He was indeed the standard bearer of the generation of young philosophers in England immediately before the Second World War. In the post-war period, however, when Oxford was seen as the new 'Aristotelian Athens', he was there for one year only (1945–6). The reason for this is that Ayer felt uneasy in the Oxford of the time. Later he described this situation as follows:

My own views, which had been thought so revolutionary before the war, were now regarded not merely as orthodox but even as old-fashioned. I had mysteriously passed from being a young Turk to being, at the age of thirty-five, almost an elder statesman, without ever having known the plenitude of office. (Ayer 1977, pp. 294–5)

Owing mainly to this philosophical disregard, in September 1946 Ayer migrated to the University of London. It was only shortly before J. L. Austin's death that Ayer returned to Oxford—in 1959—as White Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy (succeeding H. H. Price). By that time, however, the Oxford School of linguistic analysis no longer existed.

## 2. OXBRIDGE CIRCLES AND SCHOOLS

A selective analysis of the history of analytic philosophy is made in the body of this book; but it can of course also be analysed *in extenso*. Seen from this perspective, analytic philosophy in England developed in several, interconnected 'Schools', 'Circles' and factions in which many more philosophers were active than our seven authors. Since they are not discussed in this investigation, in this section they will be surveyed briefly.

(1) CAMBRIDGE. The most important split in twentieth-century Western philosophy was articulated as early as 1923–4, when C. D. Broad opposed 'critical' to 'speculative' philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Many coincidences combined to facilitate this development. Besides the tendency characteristic of the years after the First World War for philosophers to group in opposing 'Circles', there was also an additional factor that facilitated the emergence of the New Philosophy. Between 1923 and 1925 'English phi-

<sup>1</sup> The 'current orthodoxies' 'should be seen as consisting not so much in any agreed budget of doctrines, but rather in a kind of consensus, usually but not always tacit, precisely on the question who was and who was not a "negligible back-number" [in it]' (Warnock 1976, p. 48).

<sup>2</sup> For the first time in Broad 1923, pp. 18–25; then in Broad 1924.

losophy . . . suffered heavy losses through the death of its four greatest Idealist thinkers, Bernard Bosanquet, F. H. Bradley, James Ward and J. Ellis [M.] McTaggart' (Stebbing 1926, p. 90).

The result quickly became apparent. In 1925 Ramsey published his famous paper 'Universals', clearly marking the emergence of a new philosophical movement in England. In the same year Moore was elected Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge.<sup>3</sup>

(a) *The First Cambridge Circle and Wittgenstein's Dissent.* The history of Moore's rebellion against British Idealism, followed closely by Russell's, is well known. In Chapters 1 and 2 we shall see how the two philosophers worked in close collaboration (especially between 1898 and 1904) in this direction. When Wittgenstein came to Cambridge in 1911, he joined their Circle of two.

Before the Second World War the Cambridge New Philosophers were best known as the 'English realists'. Indeed, Moore and Russell assumed that metaphysics 'would enable us to know what precisely there is in the world' (Stebbing 1933b, p. 65). While the old metaphysics, for example, that of McTaggart, studied the ultimate nature of the world—and was thus of necessity systematic—the new metaphysics studied the phenomena of the world.

In the 1930s, a second generation of analytic philosophers (attached to what I shall call the 'Second Cambridge Circle') were anxious not to confuse Moore–Russell with the Vienna Circle. The main difference between these two was that whereas the first were strict realists, the second were not.

One of the first to take issue with the confusion of Vienna with Cambridge was L. S. Stebbing. This led her to write an unprecedentedly critical article against Wittgenstein in 1933.<sup>4</sup> First of all, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* accepts *hypothetical* facts which *can* verify propositions. In contrast, 'in Russell's view a fact is what *makes* a proposition true, or false' (Stebbing 1933a, p. 85).

The difference between Moore and the *Tractatus* was even more pronounced. It is true that in his book Wittgenstein followed Moore in many respects; for example, he accepted Moore's idea that 'the chief task of philosophy is to discover the correct analysis of expressions' (*ibid.*, p. 59). From this point on, however, their ways part. First and foremost, Wittgenstein had 'an erroneous conception of the way in which the philosopher is concerned with questions of symbolism, and hence . . . an unduly restricted view of the possible *kinds* of analysis' (*ibid.*, pp. 78–9). He was above all interested in linguistic analysis. Moore, in contrast, was interested in analysis of facts.

Susan Stebbing was the first author to see that the difference between Moore–Russell and the *Tractatus* was mainly due to Frege's strong influence on Wittgenstein. She found this to be the reason why the *Tractatus* is closer to Vienna than to Cambridge.

(b) *The Second Cambridge Circle. Ramsey.* Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* was close to Frege in many respects. Nevertheless, the presence of Moore–Russellian realism in it was stronger. From this penchant for realism, what I refer to as the 'Second Cambridge Circle' emerged. Its beginning was marked by the publication of the English translation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* in 1922. Another of its milestones was the

<sup>3</sup> On the struggle for intellectual supremacy in England of this period see Grattan-Guinness 1986.

<sup>4</sup> An analysis of this article is provided in Milkov 2002a. Another critical paper on Wittgenstein from this period—Braithwaite 1933—came direct from Cambridge and aroused Wittgenstein's anger, expressed in his 'Letter to the Editor' (see Wittgenstein 1933). After this incident, nobody dared to oppose Wittgenstein publicly.

publication of the second edition of *Principia Mathematica* in 1925. Its high point was, beyond doubt, the discussions between Ramsey and Wittgenstein in 1929. Roughly, it ceased to exist with Ramsey's death in January 1930.

The *Tractatus* was assimilated in Cambridge slowly. Despite Keynes's note dating from 20 March 1924 that the book 'dominates all fundamental discussions at Cambridge since it was written' (Wittgenstein 1974a, p. 116), it is very difficult to discover traces of its direct influence in the publications of the period. Frank Ramsey was perhaps the only one who tried to write in Tractarian terms.<sup>5</sup> Two examples:

( $\alpha$ ) Ramsey was the only one who seriously accepted Wittgenstein's thesis that philosophy is nothing but analysis. This implied that it has no specific subject. The conclusion: 'There is nothing to discuss [in philosophy]; . . . there is nothing to know except science' (Ramsey 1931, p. 287). In philosophical discussions we deal rather with psychological questions. We 'simply compare our several experiences. . . . Another thing we often do is to discuss what sort of people or behaviour we feel admiration for or ashamed of' (p. 289). In such discussions 'the critic can point out things to other people, to which, if they attend, they will obtain feelings which they value which they failed to obtain otherwise' (p. 290).<sup>6</sup>

( $\beta$ ) Ramsey also developed some critical elements of Wittgenstein's logic. So both considered the Axiom of Reducibility as the weak point of *Principia Mathematica*. Indeed, 'there is no reason why the arguments to a truth-function should not be infinite in number' (Ramsey 1978, p. 158). But Ramsey went further. His argument was that *all* propositions, including general ones, are truth-functions of elementary propositions. More precisely, 'general propositions containing "all" and "some" are found to be truth-functions, for which the arguments are not enumerated but given in another way' (p. 159).

Ramsey believed that this correction suggests an 'entirely objective method'. It makes it possible

to determine the symbols which can be substituted as arguments in ' $f(\hat{\phi}\hat{x})$ ' not by the manner of their construction, but by their meanings. . . . to disregard how we could construct them [propositions], and to determine them by a description of their senses or imports. (p. 188)

He was convinced that this theory only develops further Wittgenstein's idea 'that functions of propositions are always truth-functions, and that a function can only occur in a proposition through its values' (Russell 1925, p. xiv). More precisely, it develops this principle in predicate logic—a step not made in the *Tractatus*.

Another philosopher of mathematics who criticised Russell's Axiom of Reducibility from a Wittgensteinian point of view was Max Black.<sup>7</sup> Black too was a Cambridge man—he studied mathematics there between 1927 and 1930. At that time he had close contacts with both Ramsey and Russell, and later also with John Wisdom. In 1930–1 he studied in Göttingen under Weyl, Hilbert and Bernays.

(c) *The Third Cambridge Circle*. The cultural influence of America during and after the Second World War had its effects on Cambridge philosophy as well. Ironically, it appeared there in the form of an orthodox neo-Fregeanism. This neo-Fregeanism was launched in America by Carnap's pupil Alonzo Church (in 1929 he also studied at Göttingen under Hilbert and Bernays). Starting from 1940, he tried to revive Frege's theory of identity from 'On Sense and Reference' (see Church 1940a,

<sup>5</sup> One of the few exceptions was R. B. Braithwaite. See, for example, Braithwaite 1927.

<sup>6</sup> A procedure developed independently in Wisdom 1965. See also Wisdom 1991.

<sup>7</sup> See Black 1933, pp. 115–17. In this work, Black also eliminates Russell's Theory of Types and the Axiom of Infinity.

1940b). In *Introduction to Mathematical Logic* he adopted a theory of names 'due in its essentials to Gottlob Frege' (Church 1944, p. 4). Three years later, Carnap advanced a Fregean theory of names (see Carnap 1947, pp. 118–44).

Surprisingly, *prima facie* at any rate, the ex-Cambridge man Max Black contributed to the rise of neo-Fregeanism in America in the following way. In 1944–6 he was involved in a philosophical discussion with Morton White and Church in the course of which he eventually defected to the opposite side. Quite likely, Black's German (Göttingen) experience made him susceptible to Frege's influence. Be this as it may, in 1948 Black's translation of 'On Sense and Reference' and of *Grundgesetze* §§ 86–137 was published in *The Philosophical Review*.

This translation also revived interest in Frege in Oxbridge. In 1950 Austin's translation of *Grundlagen* followed, and in 1952 the Geach–Black *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege* was published. Here, other works of Frege's were added, in Peter Geach's translation, to the two pieces already translated by Black.

But Geach's activity as a translator and editor of Frege was only the tip of the iceberg of a newly emerged interest in Frege in England. In about 1950, for example, Geach gave the first series of lectures on Frege in England in the Moral Science Club.<sup>8</sup> In fact, there was a whole constellation of young philosophers—Anscombe, Geach and von Wright—one that had formed around Wittgenstein shortly before he retired—who were Frege's admirers. It is obvious too that the new group of neo-Fregeans in Cambridge influenced Wittgenstein in his later years in such a way that he saw himself as much more Fregean than he really was.<sup>9</sup>

(d) *The 'Cambridge School'*. I use this term to designate the group in Cambridge which after the Second World War contrasted with the 'Oxford School' of linguistic philosophy. Indeed, at least until the end of the 1950s, it was widely assumed that there were two schools of post-war English philosophy: the Cambridge School of therapeutic analysis, and the Oxford School of ordinary language. The influence of the Cambridge School was greater before and during the war, and that of the Oxford School after the war (see Charlesworth 1959, p. 152)—indeed, before the war it hadn't existed. In fact, the Oxford School was only spoken of in a later analogy with the Cambridge School.

Besides John Wisdom, the Cambridge School's main representatives were B. A. Farrell, G. A. Paul, Morris Lazerowitz and Norman Malcolm, and in certain respects also the later Wittgenstein.<sup>10</sup> The 'School' was shaped in the middle of the 1930s—as a reaction to the Vienna Circle<sup>11</sup>—and had as its inspiration what was *thought* to be the philosophy of Wittgenstein proper.

Already in 1933, the difference between the Cambridge and Vienna types of analysis was apparent. First of all, in contrast to Vienna, the Cambridge School was rather Moorean, not truly Wittgensteinian, in the sense that it was interested in reality, not in language. Vienna (and later Oxford) was always more Fregean than Cambridge (indeed, Carnap was Frege's pupil).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> In a letter to G. H. von Wright of 12 February 1950 Wittgenstein noted: 'I was very glad indeed to hear that Geache's [*sic*] lectures are good. Frege was just the right food for him' (Wittgenstein 1983, p. 61).

<sup>9</sup> See on this ch. 3, § 7.

<sup>10</sup> Besides Farrell 1946, and the therapeutic philosophy of John Wisdom (discussed in Milkov 1997a, i, pp. 435–521), the best exemplars of the 'Cambridge School' are Malcolm 1940a, 1940b and Paul 1936.

<sup>11</sup> The conflict between Vienna and Cambridge was discussed in (a).

<sup>12</sup> See Milkov 2002a.