

**Is there (still) a Continental - Analytic divide in philosophy? Is it necessary to bridge the Analytic - Continental divide?** [Draft of February 2017, for the Gavagai philosophy journal  
<http://gavagaiphilosophy.weebly.com/> ]

*In the texts*, there is no analytic-continental divide, if we understand the divide as important for the explanation, understanding and, most significantly, continued interpretation and application of those texts. So anyone approaching interesting problems in philosophy is ill-advised to think of them as analytic or continental. It is much more constructive to follow lines of research to pieces that challenge and improve current responses to a given problem. To close off or judge part of the library because of its tag is harmful and rather sad.

For example, I'm currently working on the counter-intuitive idea of an egalitarian sublime. Can the experience of the sublime lead to an egalitarian politics, or must it always be divisive in some way? Analytic commentators on Kant, continental critics and researchers on empirical theories of the sublime have important points to make about the definition of the concept and about the role it might play in political and ethical arguments. The nomenclature 'analytic' and 'continental' is dispensable – mere chitchat – when compared to the detail of what Guyer, Strawson or Adorno have to say.

If that's true for the texts, is it also true *for the academy*? It is still the case that some jobs, philosophers, societies, journals and departments are labelled analytic or continental. It is also true some think that it is significant that they are. I've already explained why I do not consider it important from a research point of view. However, I am certain that from the standpoint of particular careers, publications and departments it still matters a lot; for instance, for employment or for the survival of a department. Given my views on research, you can see that I don't think that it should matter, but it does.

We need constructive and far-sighted philosophy, not continental or analytic philosophy. Where labels get in the way of good appointments, it is important to fight for those who suffer wrongs on the basis of prejudice. This means that political and social organisation around politically meaningful tokens is worthwhile. However, at present, positive action for better gender and racial representation, greater diversity of subjects and methods, and resistance to political interference, are more important than traditions.

To get down to the microcritique that underpins research, when reflecting on the philosophers I have done most work on, and on the philosophy of signs, it is clear to me that it is unhelpful to think of Deleuze, or Whitehead, or the philosophy of language as analytic or continental. We certainly do not need to think in that way. For example, there is currently interesting work on how to renew pragmatism and semiology. The research draws resources from philosophers and texts taken from both sides of the so-called divide. The inquiry does not mention the divide as important at all, because fine-grained analysis and interpretation requires resources that bridge the divide.

James Williams, Deakin University