Between Nature and Culture:
After the Continental/Analytic Divide
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Introduction: Analytic Philosophy as a Post-structuralism?

Point of Departure

This Special Issue of *Konturen* explores above all two relationships, which may also be
nonrelationships: those between nature and culture (qua human artifice) and between
the continental and (Viennese-Anglo-American) analytic traditions in philosophy.

The broad problem of the wavering limit between what is *natural* and what
artificial, especially as concerns the definition and organization of the human, is one that
interests and troubles our times in manifold and manifest ways, in the domains of
political and cultural-identity ideology, technology, ecology, ethics, aesthetics, and on
and on. In the context of *Konturen*, the thematization of this limit functions, on the one
hand, as a displaced extension of the reflection on the border between religion and
politics (or Church and State) that comprised our opening volume.   For—either
surreptitiously or candidly—nature constitutes often enough (and always ideologically)
our stand-in for religion or God (as a kind of literal absolute, whether as endowed with
spirit or posited as objective foundation), while artifice frequently carries the sense of a
"mere" politics or human disposition of power (qua figural, derivative, relative). This
power is understood implicitly as inauthenticity, except when the constellation is
reversed, such that nature as reality signifies the play of power while artifice or culture
functions as a kind of religion (in a positive or negative sense).   In the contributions
below, on the other hand, we pursue the limits of the nature/culture opposition in its
relative independence from this religio-political problematic, which we leave here in the
background.   More particularly, the individual essays examine the nature/culture
opposition critically in the guises of nature versus arbitrary convention, lived experience
in tension with theory, essentialism in competition with constructivism, actuality in
relation to possibility, reality as complemented by fiction, humanity in view of its robotic

simulation, performative improvisation as supplement of fixed musical composition, and aesthetic demonstration qua displacement of aesthetic judgment.

The second main (and perhaps only apparent or conventionally established) binary opposition we explore here, the *continental/analytic* divide, is of pressing interest today because both philosophical (sub)traditions are at generational and theoretical turning points where their contours are becoming indistinct, their projects perhaps uncertain. On the continental side, the generation of French philosophy that produced the post-structuralist and post-modernist developments in continental philosophy, including Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze and others, is almost entirely gone, lost to time and death. The thinking produced by this generation, often summarized (when one effaces the significant internal conflicts and differences of position and project) as an anti-humanistic anti-philosophy, is under sustained attack from a number of perspectives ranging from the *nouveaux philosophes* to the Lacanian Marxism of Slavoj Zizek to the systematic philosophy of Alain Badiou, which in fact incorporates certain important motifs from analytic philosophy (these prominently including the importance of mathematized sciences). The Frankfurt School tradition of "critical theory," to take another prominent example, faces the aging of its second and even third generations, and its contours (especially in the case of Walter Benjamin, but also that of Theodor Adorno) have become unclear partly through its very success: the multiplication of readings and appropriations from different perspectives.[1] In short, the schools and movements that have comprised and carved up late twentieth century continental philosophy seem to have largely run their course.

The analytic tradition, for its part, is marked by internal discontinuities that have become increasingly pronounced. For example, on the one hand, the difference between the original anti-essentialist impulse of its "linguistic turn" and its more recent essentialist direction (since Kripke) appears potentially more significant than the difference between that original impulse and the kindred impulse in much of the twentieth century continental tradition (at least after Husserl)—see the contributions by Paul M. Livingston and Samuel C. Wheeler III below, which agree on this point. Further, the very difference between the analytic and continental traditions becomes quasi-

irrelevant in the face of certain political concerns like those of feminism, as Bonnie Mann argues here, which divide each tradition from itself.

Such a moment of uncertainty is a propitious one for the reconsideration of how the continental and analytic traditions relate to one another, where their mutual disregard comes from, what might justify or contest the legitimacy of this disregard, and so on. And indeed, such reconsideration is under way in rich, recent philosophical work along the continental/analytic divide.   Richard Rorty has traced the division to the Kantian distinction between intuitions and concepts, the related distinction between reflexive and determinant judgments, and the nineteenth century debates between Romantics and positivists that turned around these distinctions. Rorty proposes, as is well known, a return to the pragmatist approach in an attempt to avoid the dichotomies that lead to, and sustain, these debates, which he finds extended in the "literary" and "scientific" cultures of continental and analytic philosophy respectively.   Michael Friedman develops a similar genealogy of the continental/analytic divide, tracing it to the conflict between the natural scientific orientation of Marburg Neo-Kantianism and the focus on *Geisteswissenschaften* of the Southwestern School. Andrew Cutrofello has recently argued, against Rorty's proposed pragmatist resolution (which Cutrofello sees as effacing or repressing real incompatibilities), that the tensions between the continental and analytic approaches concern fundamental and irreconcilable differences about what it means to do philosophy at all.[2]

Why, against this background, have we attempted to organize a Special Issue around the connection between the nature/culture question and the analytic/continental one? We have two principal reasons for bringing together these two binary oppositions. Our double suspicion or hypothesis is that the second binary here is often organized by the first either in an internal or in an external sense. By internally, I mean to refer to what might be a real and significant difference, and to suggest that— especially with regard to the theory of language—the analytic tradition tends to *naturalize* while the continental tradition *culturalizes*. The analytic tradition would thus situate language by and large *within nature* and in continuity with it (in a way that is linked with certain historically Enlightenment tendencies, as transformed by nineteenth century

positivism and evolutionary theory). Analytic philosophy has, after all, remained closer to the natural sciences than continental philosophy, and indeed it began with positivist programs. The continental tradition, in contrast, would tend to situate language *within culture*, or to understand language as the eruption of a radical break with nature (taking seriously the insights of European aestheticism of the late nineteenth century, such as Oscar Wilde's provocative claim that nature imitates art), as for example in the Saussurean structuralist notion of the arbitrariness of the signifier. The Lacanian notion of language as a traumatic disruption and loss of the Real of *jouissance* would be one example of such an approach, but it would be possible to cite many others, as well.[3]

      In a more *external*, implicit sense and on a more ideological plane, it seems that the nature/artifice disjunction organizes stereotypical perspectives adopted by each of these traditions toward the other, but in ways that are frequently inverted. For example, to those immersed in and committed to the continental tradition, analytic philosophy often appears no doubt as somewhat "artificial"—in its interest in formalized languages, for example, and in the privilege it seems to grant to logic—while continental thought appears (implicitly) as more "natural," or "real," and so on. Inversely, analytic philosophy can appear as bound to "nature," maintaining a literalist concern with reliable reference and communicative accuracy, as well as to the uncritically accepted values of natural science, while continental philosophy would claim to be appropriately comfortable with figurality, culture, the transcendental, and so on. Symmetrically, a sympathy for analytic philosophy can induce one to view continental philosophy as lost in the artifices of culture, metaphorical language, mere indirect language, and so on, or on the other hand as incapable of escaping the natural limitations of irrationality and confusion.

      If either the *internal* or *external* determinations of the continental/analytic divide in terms of the nature/culture opposition (or both) have some degree of historical reality or reliability, that is if they actually take place, according to our hypothesis, then perhaps the contributions below can serve a broad positive function. Perhaps the non-conversation or non-relation, the mutually disavowing silence, that still largely reigns between the two traditions or trajectories within twentieth century philosophy can be

mitigated, the silence induced to speak and the disavowal lifted, by posing the question of this relation between nature and culture, especially concerning language, in both traditions at once and in relation to one another.

This is not to say that one unified tradition would necessarily be better than two separate ones, of course, as if unity were always to be preferred to disunity. For example, it may well turn out that the inscriptions of nature and culture each into the other are both equally necessary, while the philosophical consequences of each inscription remain mutually incompatible. Nor is it to assume that we will necessarily consolidate the separate identities of each tradition by reflection on their interrelationships. Indeed, if we have supposed that such separate identities exist on a significant level, we may see this supposition crumble, the relative internal coherence of each tradition dissolve or become relativized, by means of a persistent examination of their interrelationships in terms of the nature/culture polarity. The point is simply that it could be useful to come to an increased clarity about what we mean when we talk about the two traditions of continental and analytic philosophy.

On the Limits of Structuralism: Nature and Convention

We begin with the essay by Paul M. Livingston, "The Breath of Sense: Language, Structure, and the Paradox of Origin." This essay condenses and elaborates upon the perspective Livingston has developed at length in an impressively wide-ranging and clarifying recent book, *Philosophy and the Vision of Language* (New York: Routledge, 2008), a study of language in the analytic tradition and in the work of Martin Heidegger. This essay and book function below as the point of departure for an exchange (twice around) between Livingston and Samuel C. Wheeler III, one of the most important participants in the broader discussion of the analytic-continental relationship to date (see his book *Deconstruction as Analytic Philosophy* [Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000]).

Livingston begins by confirming that the tendency toward *naturalism* is indeed pervasive in contemporary analytic philosophy. He goes on to argue, however, that this *naturalism* is most often based on a misreading of W.V.O. Quine, and of the analogous

insights in Wittgenstein concerning the rule-following paradox, both of which amount for Livingston to a critique of the *structuralist* view of language.

In order to develop this view of Quine, Livingston shows that the object of Quine's critical reflections on Carnap from the 1934 lectures up through "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in 1950 and beyond is the structuralist picture of language in the specifically conventionalist form that it assumed in the work of Rudolf Carnap, Quine's forerunner, master, and opponent.   For a structuralist view, such as Livingston finds in both Carnap and in the French structuralism descending from Saussure, "language as a whole consists in a system or structure of rules governing the intercombination and regular use of signs." While Quine criticizes the conventionalist version of such a structuralist account of language, his critique equally renders naturalism impossible, Livingston argues, despite Quine's own partial self-misunderstanding concerning the ultimate implications of his own fundamental insight.[4] To try to replace Carnap's conventionalism with (a still structuralist) naturalism in the name of Quine is therefore to miss the point of Quine's fundamental insights into language.   According to Quine's thesis on the "indeterminacy of translation," it is not possible to construct the system of rules underlying the "meanings" of words in a language without making any number of arbitrary decisions. What Quine had (re)discovered and mobilized against Carnap's conventionalist theory, writes Livingston, was the irreducible "gap between any systematic description of the 'structure of language' in terms of rules or norms and the actuality of its practice," or again "a necessary and ineliminable gap between the lived actuality of any language—what we intuitively grasp from within as the meaning of its terms—and anything that we might describe as its constitutive underlying structure." This gap between description of structure and the facts of its use remains, even if we conceive the facts to be natural rather than conventional.

Analytic philosophy, then, is divided internally between conventionalist and naturalist forms of structuralism, but its deepest insights push it in the direction of (what I am calling here) a "post-structuralism" (not necessarily entirely coextensive with what we know under that name) or an "anti-structuralism." In his discussion of Martin Heidegger, Livingston tries to show that Heidegger's attempt to explore language from a

situation that is neither inside nor simply outside, i.e. to speak "of" or "from" language rather than simply "about" it, is a promising point of departure for the kind of thinking about language that Quine's critique of Carnap, as well as Wittgenstein's unfolding of the rule-following paradox, show to be necessary as an alternative to the "structuralist" conception of language.

In his responses to Livingston's piece, Samuel Wheeler III proposes a defense of naturalist structuralism in the form of Donald Davidson's theory of language. He emphasizes that the naturalism and empiricism of both Quine and Davidson were mobilized in order to negate and avoid essentialism rather than structuralism per se. Whereas Wheeler sees the thesis on indeterminacy in Quine and Davidson (and Derrida) as being motivated by this opposition to essentialism, Livingston responds in turn by reasserting that the insight into the rift between the universal and the particular dimensions of language itself motivates a critique of both empiricist and essentialist, both naturalist and conventionalist approaches to the development of a semantic theory in terms of a structuralist conception of language.

We move next to an examination of the nature/culture opposition within a feminist philosophy, for which the opposition between analytic and continental philosophy becomes, strikingly, irrelevant. Bonnie Mann's article, "What Should Feminists Do About Nature?" pursues the question of naturalism and conventionalism not with respect to meaning in general, but to the specific meanings (and practices) associated with gender. Mann explores the conflicts between naturalist essentialism and historicist constructivism principally here by way of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Through her reconsideration of Simone de Beauvoir, Mann tries to remind us that "nature" functions not just as a historical-political problem for feminism in the determination of gender-categories through enduring and violently constraining conventions of thought and behavior (hypostasized by essentialism as "natural"), but also as an ontological problem that women and men share. Namely, we are all inscribed, diversely, in an indifferent nature with respect to which we need to exercise our freedom, i.e., to work, in order to, among other things and for the time being, survive on this earth. Mann argues further that consideration of the latter, ontological

dimension of "nature," which feminism often (understandably) loses sight of, is the only way of gaining an adequate understanding of the former, political one.

De Beauvoir thus reveals not just historically given oppressive conventions about "nature"—and she is most often understood as a constructivist of this sort—but "the fundamental paradox of the human condition, with being nature and yet being the kinds of creatures who experience ourselves at a certain distance from nature." More specifically, on Mann's attentive reading, de Beauvoir enables us to see how the reductive choice between essentialism and constructivism is conditioned precisely by an unwillingness or incapacity to deal with, to suffer, this paradox. To be sure, the historically constituted distribution of this paradoxical naturalness/artificiality across the sexual difference— i.e. the association of women with nature and of men with the transcendence of nature that is determined as the proper of the human—requires relentless demystifying critique. Yet the reification of the alternative between essentialism and constructivism amounts for Mann to another, albeit significantly different, form of the evasion of this paradoxical naturalness/artificiality of all humanity. In a way that is perhaps analogous to Livingston's call for a "critical" reflection on language that would avoid the choice between naturalism and constructivism, Mann broaches a path that combines the acknowledgement of being-in-nature with historical-political understanding by placing in question the exclusive reign of the concept of causality in determining the relationships between historical and natural existence.

Unnatural Nature and the Living Dead

Our next two contributions examine sites of the passage between the natural and the unnatural (as between organic and mechanical, actual and possible, literal and figural) in moments of the interpenetration of life and death.

Catrin Misselhorn's essay, "Empathy and Dyspathy with Androids," explores the limits where empathy with humanlike objects (automata, robots, etc.) shades into a feeling of uncanniness, an eerie distaste when androids become human, all too human. Drawing on philosophical, literary, cinematic, and neuropsychological sources, she proposes an explanatory model of these phenomena in terms of "imaginative

perception." The crossing between natural, organic humanity and artificial, mechanical humanity, or the passage between humanity as animated subjectivity and its simulation by an inanimate object here takes on affective and aesthetic dimensions whose negative side emerges where death begins to impinge upon life: where their similarity threatens to become an identity.

While Misselhorn develops a philosophical psychology of our responses to artificial humans that frequently figure as living death in fiction and cinema, Martin Klebes examines the inscription of contemporary analytic philosophy in contemporary literary forms that thematically (and autobiographically) engage with problems of death and mourning. More specifically, Klebes interprets the reappearance of David K. Lewis's theory of possible worlds within the fictional space of Jacques Roubaud's lyrical production. Roubaud's poems, Klebes argues, "mark the vertiginous ability of literary fiction . . . to re-inscribe—or, as we might put it: to re-fictionalize—the very theory that would assign fiction a particular spot in its own philosophical architectonic."

What spot is concerned here? On the one hand, Lewis's "modal realism" includes in his ontology not only the actual, but all of possibility. The "worlds" of mere possibility that might more conventionally be characterized as fictional or figural now take on a virtually unheard-of literalness. On the other hand, Lewis takes fictional discourse not to constitute possible worlds, but only to refer to them (and this because possible worlds must be devoid of contradiction whereas fiction can well include contradiction).   Lewis thus in a sense excludes fictionality from possibility, giving the former a purely figural and derivative rather than constitutive status. Lewis controls and limits the range of metaphoricity and unreality in this way by rendering them secondary, along with the contradictoriness they include (for example simply by virtue of being neither quite real nor simply possible)—a contradictoriness that was also characteristic of the androids in Misselhorn's essay, as non-human humans.   Because fiction can include contradiction, it has the power to make the impossible appear possible; to protect possible worlds from impossibility, fiction must not be endowed with world-constituting force.

In the elegiac poetic fictions of Roubaud, however, the poet entertains the possibility of his (in actuality) deceased wife's survival in another, possible world.   To figure the possible as the (survival of the) dead is to figure the possibility of an impossibility, including one's own (a motif of which Heidegger makes much in his analysis of being-unto-death, as one will recall). What such a figuration reveals, according to Klebes, is "the dark heart of [Lewis's ontological] paradise": "the promise of possibility goes hand in hand with radically isolating each world and precluding access to it from any other realm." The contradictory fictional address of a deceased beloved across the abyss between worlds (actual and possible) reveals an *actual* dimension of 'our world' that is at once a *figural haunting*, a being haunted by figures and a being figurally haunted by those we have lost, a dimension Lewis's modal realism both excludes (in excluding contradiction from worlds and in placing fiction in a merely referential secondariness with respect to possible worlds) and brings into relief.   Roubaud's fictionally performed impingement of impossibility on possibility unsettles Lewis's 'modal realism' precisely while illustrating its formidable resources.

Music Between Norm and Act

With our last two contributions, we turn to the sphere of music. Lawrence Kramer's essay, "Running the Gamut: Music, the Aesthetic, and Wittgenstein's Ladder," explores the relationship between the aesthetic theory of the "continental" philosopher Kant and the "analytic" philosopher Wittgenstein. Kramer shows how Wittgenstein's thought about aesthetics in terms of "demonstratives"—verbal and other acts in which showing exceeds telling—displaces the Kantian problematic of aesthetic judgement. Kramer's judicious account indicates, however, not only the shifts of emphasis but also the striking degree of continuity (to some degree against Wittgenstein's claims).   The apparent artificiality or unreality of Kantian aesthetic judgment from a Wittgensteinian point of view is not quite so easy to separate from what functions as the naturalness or ordinary reality of the demonstratives with which Wittgenstein would replace them. On the other hand, both Wittgenstein's and Kant's views on the aesthetic appear on Kramer's account as, in a sense, artificially or unrealistically limiting the realm of

aesthetic appreciation to the universal and nonconceptual.   Kramer argues that aesthetic appreciation cannot be strictly limited to demonstrative acts as displaced forms of aesthetic judgment in the Kantian sense.   Demonstratives elaborate themselves into other gestural and discursive modalities in the course of the unfolding of the aesthetic: "the demonstrative does more than show; it enjoins. In principle the demonstrative may become the descriptive may become the interpretive. The effects of aesthetic judgment run the gamut." This gamut includes the repeated passage through singularity, as Kramer puts it in a striking definition of the aesthetic in (almost) Wittgensteinian terms : "The aesthetic is *that which* becomes singular and cognitive by means, and only by means, of originary demonstratives that are neither singular nor cognitive."

Finally, this Special Issue closes with a multimedial, musical-philosophical essay by Marcel Cobussen, Henrik Frisk, and Bart Weijland on improvisation. The authors conceptualize improvisation in terms of two principal models.   On the one hand, they draw on nonlinear dynamical systems theory, along the lines of the "butterfly effect" developed by Edward Lorenz, the mathematician, meteorologist, and chaos-theoretician. On the other hand, the authors invoke "continental" philosophy to conceptualize improvisation as the active-passive deconstruction (Derrida) and/or deterritorialization/ reterritorialization (Deleuze) of the binary oppositions between composer and performer, innovation and repetition, order and chaos, and individual and community, among others. In terms of the essay by Livingston with which this Special Issue opens, improvisation is a composition-performance—not simply musical—that finds its place somewhere between the rules or norms dictated by a given composition and the concrete realization in a performance that would not be understood as co-constituting its compositional basis. In short, improvisation intervenes between art and nature.

[1] Oddly, reconsiderations of the continental-analytic divide seem to have had little space in German Studies, despite the fact that German Studies seems like one "logical" or "natural" place for them to occur, since after all analytic philosophy is as Viennese in origins as it is Anglo-American, a point Michael Dummett has emphasized.

[2] Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays: 1972-1980)* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1982); Michael Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (Chicago: Open Court, 2000); Andrew Cutrofello, *Continental Philosophy: a Contemporary Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), discusses these predecessors 1-30; 396-416. See also the works of Stanley Cavell beginning with *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Scribner, 1969). For important examinations of the relationship between Donald Davidson's thought and contemporary literary theory, see Reed Way Dasenbrock, *Truth and Consequences: Intentions, Conventions, and the New Thematics* (University Park: Pennsylvania State U P, 2001) and Samuel C. Wheeler, III, *Deconstruction as Analytic Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000).

[3] Such a view would perhaps be compatible with the schemas noted above that divide analytic from continental philosophy along the divergence between Kantian determinant and reflexive judgement. If culture is to nature in twentieth century philosophy as concept to image in Kant, then the subsumption of an image under a concept, which unifies concept with image and thereby asserts the compatibility of concept with image, is tantamount to the inscription of culture (including language) in nature. In contrast, the (unending) search for a concept that would accord with a given image, which is the operation of Kantian reflexive judgment, is tantamount to the acknowledgement of the radical separation of culture (including language) from nature. Reflexion, which is already the passage through potentially adequate conceptual models for an enduringly incomprehensible image, would be culture itself in exile from a nature that can only appear in cultural forms, and then only by showing up missing. As reflexive and determinant judgment are both complementary and at odds with one another, so too, perhaps, are the two traditions that descend from them.

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[4] Bill Martin comes to similar conclusions about Quine's self-misunderstanding in "Analytic Philosophy's Narrative Turn: Quine, Rorty, Davidson," in Reed Way Dasenbrock, ed., *Literary Theory After Davidson* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1993), 124-43.