

DOING PHILOSOPHY

An Inquiry into the Academic Lives of Philosophers
in the UK

Francisco Javier Salinas Lemus

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Knowledge

Supervisors: Professors Stephen Ball and Judith Suissa

UCL Institute of Education
Department of Education, Practice and Society

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*I, Francisco Javier Salinas Lemus confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.
Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been
indicated in the thesis.*

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ABSTRACT

This research deals with a question that has not been convincingly answered in sociological studies: what do philosophers do? Sociologists have traditionally been interested in philosophy mainly as a means of justifying their own disciplinary knowledge rather than as a proper object of sociological inquiry. On the one hand, early sociologists claim that their domain is different from that of philosophers as it is a scientific discipline; on the other hand, new approaches amongst sociologists consider philosophy as an intellectual ally or foundation for the discipline. Except for a few authors such as Collins, Fuller and Geisler, only a handful of scholars have studied philosophy as a professional culture and discipline deploying sociological theory and concepts. In this document, I propose to begin to fill this gap through an exploratory sociological study of the practice and effects of mainstream professional philosophy in the UK.

Therefore, my study addresses the formation, boundary-work, pedagogical effect, disciplinary tensions and neoliberal negotiations of professional contemporary philosophy in the UK. In this sense, this work tries to understand the complex social interactions amongst tradition, embodied subjectivities, organisations, knowledge pretensions, conflicts, policies and the heterogeneous materials that are mobilised by practitioners of philosophy to shape philosophy in its current institutionalised forms. Combining theoretical insights with an ethnographic approximation to this field, with in-depth interviews, historical research, reading of institutional documents and numerical data, I attempt to develop a realistic social description of philosophy as practised in the UK. As a result, I characterise the socio-educational situation of analytic philosophy as a culture, in consideration of the dreams and terrors of its practitioners and the enaction of social forces and socio-technical apparatuses.

IMPACT STATEMENT

One of my interviewees, a REF panel member, told me the following:

Interviewee: But, I mean, let me see if I could get a hypothetical example... I was trying to think what's the most amount of impact your PhD could get. What would be "impact" for your PhD?

Me: Well, I don't know, but I have to find out something. They are asking me for that at UCL...

Interviewee: If you could demonstrate... I mean... I can imagine, I don't really know, I'm guessing... But, let's say, it would be no impact because you are a PhD and it just goes in the file like everything else – mine had zero impact, right? But if your work was to somehow inform... say... would you be taken up or somehow disseminated to things like the British Philosophical Association, the American Philosophical Association... If you were to be able to, as it were, you know, reveal things about the workings of the philosophy profession in ways that might help people to improve its workings, I think that would count as impact. Now that would be a complicated point though because the impact is still within academia, so, it might be technically ruled out [he laughs]. I think that changes to practices would count. I think it would. Now, if basically, you could demonstrate the BPA, the APA or some institutions change their practices in a way that says as much impact as you can expect this to have, and I think you'd get full marks. It's going to meet all four or three and a half or something because maybe, maybe four if... you... but I think maybe there'd be people arguing four, but you cannot ask more impact than that, you know?

As my interviewee suggests, the impact of my research is probably zero and its potentiality is subject to the unlikely scenario where philosophy institutions use it as a resource to change the ways in which they do things and, even then, it could be ruled out by an eventual assessing panel for being an intra-academic matter. More than *making an impact* in my thesis, here I show an intellectual concern about *what does the impact agenda do* to disciplines such as philosophy and to their practitioners. Indeed, this is specifically addressed in Chapters 5 and 6 of this study.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A-Level or A Level	Advanced Level
A&H	Arts and Humanities
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
AP	Analytic Philosophy
APA	The American Philosophical Association
BA	Bachelor of Arts
B.C.E.	Before the common era
BBC4	British Broadcasting Corporation channel 4
BiS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BPA	British Philosophical Association
BSHP	British Society for the History of Philosophy
BSPS	British Society for the Philosophy of Science
CONICYT	Chilean Commission for Scientific and Technological Research
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
DfES	Department of Education and Skills
DH	Department of Health
Dti	Department of Trade and Industry
EAGs	Expert Advisory Groups
E.S.P	Extrasensory perception
FONDECYT	Chile's National Fund for Scientific and Technological Development
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GPS	Good Practice Scheme
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	The Higher Education Funding Council for England
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HM	Her Majesty's
HOD	Head of Departments
IBE	Inference to the best explanation
IBM	International Business Machines Corporation
KCL	King's College London
LSE	London School of Economics
MA	Master of Arts
MAP-UK	Minorities and Philosophy UK
Mphil	Master of Philosophy
MS	MA Student
NCP	National Committee for Philosophy
Oxbridge	Informal way of referring to Oxford or Cambridge (to protect identities, I consciously use it as a way to be unspecific)
Philos-L	Liverpool's philosophy email list
PhD	Philosophy Doctor
PP	Philosophy Professor
PPE	Philosophy, Politics and Economics
QR	Quality-related
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
RAND	Research and Development Corporation
REF	Research Excellence Framework
RP	Radical Philosophy
SAPERE	Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education

SSCI	Social Science Citation Index
SWAN	Scientific Women's Academic Network
SWIP-UK	The Society for Women in Philosophy UK
TV	Television
UGC	University Grants Committee
UCL	University College London
UCU	University and College Union
UN	United Nations
UOA	Unit of Assessment
UoL	University of London
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WW2	World War II

INTRODUCTION

Doing research on philosophers in the UK

<i>You ask me what I think</i>	<i>Me preguntas en qué pienso.</i>
<i>I do not think about anything:</i>	<i>No pienso en nada:</i>
<i>I only see a formwork bridge</i>	<i>Sólo veo un puente de cimbra</i>
<i>On the dry bed of a river</i>	<i>Sobre el lecho reseco de un río</i>
<i>That we have never crossed together.</i>	<i>Que nunca hemos atravesado juntos.</i>

Jorge Teillier (1992, p. 110)

Rationale

Sometimes, I still see in my mind's eye a 16-year-old version of myself sitting in a philosophy lecture for the first time. These memories take me back to Santiago, the Chilean city where I grew up. I remember Ana María Guajardo, my philosophy teacher, introducing the discipline through the following mind experiment: 'Imagine that an extra-terrestrial being landed now, here on earth, in this classroom... It would have lots of questions, about the nature of things, about our language, about how we look, about what we are doing...'. 'Philosophy', she continued, 'is about being as perplexed with the world around us as this extra-terrestrial would be'.

Seventeen years after, I am introducing a study on the doings of philosophers and philosophy in the UK feeling an extra-terrestrial myself. As the hypothetical visitor from another world would do, I also landed on a realm of questions concerning an epistemic and geographical territory that is not my own, in a language that is different to mine, concerning people that do not look like nor interact as I do. In the case of my study, especially intriguing

were the audit systems and disciplinary norms to which philosophers are subjected and with which I was largely unfamiliar until conducting this study.

At the risk of sounding naïve, I have always enjoyed philosophy as the experience of tackling difficult questions about existence, the self and the nature of concepts. Even though I did not pursue a 'proper' philosophy degree myself, I have had some biographical proximity with the subject in my own trajectory. During my years as a student and as an academic, I have attended many philosophy modules, did an MA in Contemporary Thought at a philosophy department, participated in philosophy conferences, taught 'epistemology' modules for social scientists, and even had the experience of publishing a philosophical paper in Spanish on the notion of the 'sublime' in Heidegger's philosophy of art (see Salinas, 2014). In spite of this, my education as a sociologist prevented me from totally falling for the game of philosophy; indeed, probably that is why now I would conceive myself more as a researcher attempting to do sociology of knowledge than any sort of specialist philosophy. Such concern with knowledge, of course, makes me susceptible to read philosophy or think in philosophical terms. Philosophy, however, is interesting for me not only *philosophically* but also as a matter of *sociological* concern. On the one hand, I want to understand and tackle some philosophical questions and arguments about social relations and forms; on the other hand, I am fascinated to know more about what philosophers actually do, how they justify careers orientated by concepts, historical figures, questions and texts, what their forms of organisation as a 'profession' are, what their dreams and terrors are, etc.

In fact, the latter are the coordinates informing this research: I want to understand, sociologically, i.e. without idealising and through reflection on actual practice, what philosophy is about and what is it like to be doing philosophy now. Also, in consideration both of broader social processes and those internal to the discipline of philosophy, I am interested in exploring the complexities associated to the question on whether *philosophy* is a name that refers to a set of practices that change through time, space and circumstance or is it something that maintains, across different contexts, a certain degree of cohesiveness and stability as a social institution.

Philosophy in the UK

In many senses, my starting point is an experience of what might be called a *cultural shock* – that is, once in the UK and attend attending philosophy seminars, reading insights by local

philosophers and conversing with them – it was evident that as a culture and a discipline, philosophy was different in the UK from the discipline of the same name practised in my home country. Admittedly, in both places they are organised in university departments; here and there they have interests in common - Plato, Aristotle, Kant and so on; in the UK and Chile philosophers deal with arguments, concepts and questions. Nevertheless, recent commentators have noted that distance in space and culture has an effect in the way philosophers do philosophy. For instance, an account by Retamal, which also resonates with my own experience in philosophy departments there, states that in Chile philosophy is normally conceived as ‘a way of being or inhabiting the world’, with professional philosophers seeing themselves as ‘existential seekers’ (Retamal, 2012, p. 166). This impression of philosophy in Chile contrasts with some comments by Baggini and Stangroom after interviewing more than fifty academic philosophers in the UK (and a few in the USA) as part of their project of *The Philosopher’s Magazine* (Baggini & Stangroom, 2002, 2003, 2007); for them, ‘professional philosophy, more often than not, deals in the minutiae of technical arguments’ (Baggini & Stangroom, 2002, p. 289). Considering this, a first concern I have is about the socio-historical, institutional and cultural conditions that create different and even incommensurable ways of doing and understanding life as a professional philosopher. Of course, this does not mean that philosophers in Chile do not have any interest in technical matters or that philosophers in the UK are totally indifferent to existential matters.¹ The question is about the socio-historical articulations channelling a certain accent in the ‘normal’

¹ In other book, with Peter Fosl, Baggini goes on to propose that ‘philosophy can be an extremely technical and complex affair, one whose terminology and procedures are often intimidating to the beginner and demanding even for the professional’ (Baggini & Fosl, 2003, p. viii). It is difficult to see clearly if these authors are doing a generalisation on contemporary philosophy or accounting for concerns that are more typical inside the community of philosophers in the anglophone world. It seems reasonable to expect that ‘existential seekers’ also have some engagement with some of these or other technical issues. Baggini and Fosl’s ‘toolkit’ of technical philosophical concepts and methods include: arguments, premises, conclusions, deduction, induction, validity and soundness, invalidity, consistency, fallacies, refutation, axioms, definitions, certainty and probability, tautologies, self-contradictions and the law of non-contradiction, abduction, hypothetico-deductive method, dialectic, analogies, anomalies and expectations that prove the rule, intuition pumps, logical constructions, reduction, thought experiments, transcendental arguments, useful fiction, alternative explanations, ambiguity, bivalence and the excluded middle, category mistakes, *ceteris paribus*, circularity, conceptual incoherence, counterexamples, criteria, error theory, false dichotomy, genetic fallacy, horned dilemmas, Hume’s Fork, is/ought gap, Leibniz’s law of identity, masked man fallacy, Ockham’s Razor, paradoxes, partners in guilt, principle of charity, question-begging, reductio, redundancy, regresses, saving the phenomena, self-defeating arguments, sufficient reason, testability, A priori/ A posteriori, Absolute/Relative, Analytic/Synthetic, Categorical/Modal, Conditional/Biconditional, Defeasible/Indefeasible, Entailment/Implication, Essence/Accident, Knowledge by acquaintance/description, Necessary/Contingent, Necessary/Sufficient. Objective/Subjective. Realist/Non-realist, Sense/Reference, Syntax/Semantics, Thick/Thin concepts, Type and tokens, Class critique, Deconstruction and the Critique of presence, amongst others.

ways of doing philosophy in philosophy departments, this is, a question about tendencies and emphases.

Generally speaking, the philosophy that is practised in philosophy departments in the UK, appears to be not that much concerned with dealing with the complexity involved in the 'big questions' compared with many non-Anglophone countries (see Baggini, 2018a; R. Collins, 1998a). Of course, this does not mean that philosophers in the UK do not have any interest at all in big, apparently unanswerable, questions concerning matters such as the meaning of life, mortality, God, values, knowledge, reality, society and even philosophy itself. A good example of is A.W. Moore (2000) working on the question *are absolute representations possible?* However, and despite some notable exceptions, I observe that in the professional anglophone philosophical milieu, of which philosophers in the UK are part, there is a tendency to break down big questions into sets of narrower problems that could be reasonably tackled with the use of concrete methodologies, such as thinking in terms of a selection of pre-fabricated answers. As put by an advocate of analytic philosophy: 'The big philosophical questions may seem as fascinating and frustrating as ever, but there is a range of responses available to entice and enrage further' (Beaney, 2013, p. 27).

Two examples can make this clearer. The first one is Finlayson's (2015) description of how anglophone political philosophers 'attempt to treat methodological questions as independent of political-philosophical ones' (p. 4). According to the author, this would be problematic in the sense of dismissing the question of the political landscape as being secondary and, therefore, favouring an acritical acceptance of 'a predominantly liberal political status quo' (ibid.).² A second example comes from the question *What do philosophers do?*, offered by Penelope Maddy (2017). The question is interesting and, indeed, it addresses the main issue I explore in this thesis. Nevertheless, Maddy does not engage with the big question she raises, and rather prefers to translate it into an assessment of the models of practice or *methods* used by practitioners of philosophy to do philosophy as a means of defending her own position: naturalism.

More than 'big questions dwellers', contemporary professional philosophers in the anglophone world are more likely to conceive themselves as 'puzzle-solvers'. In the UK, this idea of puzzle-solving was articulated by Bernard Russell and remains one of the pedagogical devices used in university departments to teach students how to do philosophy. Russell put it

² Further critical discussion about the effects of Rawls' liberal legacy amongst anglophone political philosophers can be found in Finlayson (2020).

this way: 'A logical theory may be tested by its capacity for dealing with puzzles, and it is a wholesome plan, in thinking about logic, to stock the mind with as many puzzles as possible since these serve much the same purpose as is served by experiments in physical science' (Russell, 1905, pp. 484–485). It seems that puzzle-solving has now gone far beyond 'logical theory' and has been exported to many other philosophical specialities practised in philosophy departments. There are professional philosophers in the UK preoccupied with and occupied in logical puzzles and trained in working rigorously in the technicalities involved in philosophy's specialised problems. This 'rigour' is something regarded as very valuable amongst philosophers. As put in the blog *The Philosopher's Cocoon*, 'rigor narrows the way we think about things. Rigor tells us: "If you can't justify each of your premises to an intelligent, skeptical reader, your argument is a non-starter"' (Arvan, 2012). Rigour seems to be the key to puzzle-solving and a practical ideal shared by many of those who play the game of professional philosophy in the anglophone world.

The value of rigorous work is put as philosophy's comparative advantage in terms of careers; it is therefore not unusual for philosophy to be presented by UK universities as producing clear-minded subjects that would be functional to society in different ways. For instance, UCL's webpage introduces its philosophy BA as follows:

This programme will assist you in constructing and assessing philosophical positions and arguments, thereby teaching you how to analyse and present complex ideas. Furthermore, it will provide you with an understanding of a wide range of traditional and contemporary philosophical theories. Such skills are transferable to non-philosophical contexts. [...] The discipline of philosophical training, and in particular its emphasis on rigorous argumentation, logic, and clarity of thought and expression, makes philosophy graduates highly suitable for a wide variety of careers.

(UCL Philosophy, 2020b)

In the case of UCL's BA in philosophy programme, this rationale seems to be well-aligned with their offer of modules mainly in logics, epistemology, metaphysics, applied philosophy, classics and the philosophy of mind (for details in their BA module offer, see UCL Philosophy, 2020a). However, this is a contested point and many philosophy departments try to present their programmes in a more nuanced way that does not expose philosophy as being something utterly technical –despite their curriculum being mostly technical. An example of this is KCL's philosophy department, that despite offering a curriculum that is more than 90% technically-oriented philosophy, uses a brochure to highlight in big letters some of the unusual areas of study offered by their department before stating what they mainly do:

Our Philosophy BA offers an extremely wide range of modules, including Indian Philosophy and Philosophy of Psychology, available at few other UK universities.

Located in the heart of London our Department of Philosophy has particular strengths in philosophy of mind, philosophy of science and ancient philosophy.

(KCL Philosophy, 2018, p. 1)

This raises basic questions for me about what philosophy as a practice is, and how a different social milieu may affect what philosophers do and, as a result, what their relation to philosophy may be and become. The definition of normal practice in philosophy is constantly being made and re-made in local sites of construction and responds to the reproduction of some broader cultural trends.

A clue about the relationship between practice, philosophy and national character can be found in Karl Marx when in his 1847's *Misery of Philosophy*, he states: 'If the Englishman transforms men into hats, the German transforms hats into ideas. The Englishman is Ricardo, rich banker and distinguished economist; the German is Hegel, simple professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin' (Marx, 1960, p. 115). This caricature makes the English look industrious, useful and business-driven, while German philosophical concerns look small and inessential in comparison. If so, however, one may ask: how does this translate into specific ways of doing philosophy? Does the enterprise form of the world constructed by Puritanism and the industrial revolution also have an effect on the way of dealing with philosophy as a practitioner? Moreover, is there something current about the following mid-twentieth century characterisation of philosophy in the UK?

The native characteristics of British philosophy are these: common sense, dislike of complication, a strong preference for the concrete over the abstract and a certain awkward honesty of method in which an occasional pearl of poetry is embedded [...] We might vainly enquire whether climate or language or some original hereditary strain or a combination of all three produces the distinguishing marks of national character, but their existence cannot be denied. The British philosophers, at least the most typical of them, stand with both feet on the ground. They are, compared with the great German system builders, Kant, Hegel, Leibniz and the others, earthbound and pedestrian figures. But then, they would say, a sound philosophy is a utility product, which must be capable of taking hard knocks.

(Matthews, 1943, p. 7)

This description raises many questions about the present of philosophy: is philosophy in the UK 'a utility product' and their philosophers 'pedestrian figures'? If so, how is such a product produced and what consequences does it have for both philosophy practitioners and the actual ways in which UK philosophy is portrayed? Are philosophers in the UK against abstractions and pro common sense? If so, how is this actually achieved? Also, would not this be, paradoxically, some sort of 'abstract rejection of abstraction' (G. Rose, 1995, p. 151)? It could be the case that this is an outdated picture of philosophy in this country and that its culture,

taste and practice have changed radically during the last decades or, indeed, have never been this way.

The problem of what philosophers actually do is the issue that in this document I explore theoretically, historically and empirically. However, before I describe my project in more detail, I would like to suggest another way to pose my research interest. My impression, from reading, talking and listening to philosophy being done in the UK, is that a particular philosophical sensitivity, loudly accentuated in Gilbert Ryle's mid-20th-century book *The Concept of Mind*, is still very relevant. There Ryle claims that 'Descartes left as one of his main philosophical legacies a *myth* which continues to distort the continental geography of the subject' (Ryle, 2009, p. lx, my italics). For Ryle, the very idea of the thinking ego at the basis of the modern continental European epistemology has methodological problems that render philosophy untenable and that desperately need correction. Indeed, many of his intellectual efforts are directed to the orthopaedic task of correcting these issues: 'the philosophical arguments which constitute this book are intended not to increase what we know about minds, but to rectify the logical geography of the knowledge which we already possess' (ibid. p. lix). Ryle works as a technician or a mechanical specialist rearranging the existing pieces of Descartes' system in an attempt to make them work better. His aspiration is mainly a functional one; no new heights for thought, just the reparation of a system, re-arranging logical propositions and getting rid of some 'disorders' (ibid. p. lxi).

My hypothesis is that philosophical attitudes such as Ryle's are not unusual amongst professional philosophers in the UK and that 'ordinary language' and other kinds of philosophical products of this territory are to be better characterised as philosophies operating in a post-Reform landscape that conceives the world as having disposed of all magic (M. Weber, 2012). This does not mean that I am claiming that *most* contemporary philosophers in the UK subscribe to Oxford's *ordinary language philosophy* – though, its specific influence is notorious in contemporary philosophers working in areas as different as feminist theory, the mind-body problem or Wittgensteinian philosophy of education (see Langton, 2015; Midgley, 2004; Smeyers & Marshall, 1995). More specifically, my point is that distinctions such as continental/analytic and research interests orientated to specialised efforts in rigorous puzzle-solving are very much alive in philosophy departments in the UK.

Contrary to views attuned with an *ordinary* conception of philosophy, elsewhere (in other disciplines in the UK, in philosophy departments in other parts of the world, in 'popular' conceptions of philosophy) there can be found different ways of understanding the philosophical project, for instance, as attempts to make sense of the *extraordinary* (see Sabrovsky, 2013). However, as I will indicate through this study, even though sensibilities as

the latter are also practised in the UK, this is neither what has been historically predominant in philosophy departments nor the typical image of what people understand as philosophy in the UK.³ Indeed, the tasks of professional philosophers in the UK many times look more like those manifested in Ryle's work. *Per se* this is not problematic at all; however, trouble arises in social relations when a particular way of doing things becomes 'normalised' as a dominant disciplinary model, and thus produces the ways of being and doing of others as 'abnormal':

Disciplinary normalization consists first of all in positing a model, an optimal model that is constructed in terms of a certain result, and the operation of disciplinary normalization consists in trying to get people, movements, and actions to conform to this model, the normal being precisely that which can conform to this norm, and the abnormal that which is incapable of conforming to the norm.

(Foucault, 2009, p. 57)

As I will attempt to show in this thesis, the 'normal' way of practising philosophy in the UK has in various ways been intolerant of the sensibilities of certain groups of people who conceive philosophy differently. As well, as explored in later chapters, new assessment technologies such as the REF have produced a more complex scenario that creates new challenges for understanding (and perhaps changing) what is 'normal' in philosophy. I aim to reconstruct how a professional identity grounded in the reproduction of certain ways of doing things creates a boundary resulting in a fracture in experience – this is expressed in a series of divisions, tensions and social problems in the realm of philosophy.

³ Even though my claim is that what today is commonly referred to as 'analytic philosophy' is, in different forms and through a variety of devices, dominant in philosophy departments in the UK, this does not mean that continental or other kinds of philosophy are totally absent in these departments. These philosophies usually have a second place there and have mostly flourished outside traditional philosophy departments (see Chapter 2 and Appendix). Also, there is a plethora of anglophone and non-anglophone practitioners tensioning the boundaries and creating bridges between both traditions, for instance, by introducing poststructuralist and existentialist authors in analytic discussions (see, for instance, Haslanger, 1995; and McDaniel, 2013) or essaying encounters and bridges between both traditions (see Biletzki, 2001; Braver, 2011). Inside the analytic school of thought, the ambiguity of Wittgenstein's work seems to be an interesting resource for contemporary philosophers to explore this liminal space; proof of that is a recent seminar in Bucharest entitled *Wittgenstein's Phenomenology: Bridging the Analytic-Continental Gap* (IRH-ICUB, 2019).

Methods and scope

As a note of caution, I would like to clarify that this thesis is not a survey of philosophy in the UK; it does not claim to represent the discipline in any simple empirical sense. Some empirical materials are used, and these illustrate and exemplify some of the major issues addressed in the thesis, but they are not by any means exhaustive of the range of views and positions currently apparent in the discipline. Rather, these materials offer a set of starting points and provocations for a conceptual analysis of tensions, divisions and exclusions in the field of philosophy and its practice. In this sense, the sampling of documentation, interviews, anecdotes and observations was *theoretical* (Coyne, 1997). This means that the selection of materials was driven by my interest in knowing more about a variety of frontiers, experiences and practices in philosophy in the UK rather than by an attempt to be empirically 'representative' of this field.⁴

In terms of design, the research behind this document mixes theoretical work with a qualitative approach to empirical materials and documentation. During the four years this research lasted, I collected as many materials as possible that could help me understand more thoroughly the history and present situation of philosophy and philosophers in the UK. Of course, I do not use or refer here to *all* of these materials (I accumulated thousands of documents), but they make up the archive informing many of my insights. I deploy some of these materials as devices providing analytic possibilities to address the question: *what do philosophers do?* These include:

- *Databases.* Even though the focus of my research is qualitative, I also accessed some numerical data publicly available at HEFCE, the BPA and elsewhere to complement some of the other materials here used.
- *Encyclopaedia entries.* I focused mainly on entries from the *Continuum Encyclopaedia of British Philosophy* but also to other sources such as the *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* and the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

⁴ I am driven by Adorno's claim that a purely methodologically driven sociology loses sight of its object (society) in the bureaucracy of procedures (see Adorno, 1966). Theory provides us of interesting tools to think through a variety of empirical materials.

- *Internet archives.* An important resource consisted of e-mail messages sent to the PHILOS-L e-mail list, but also public profiles from scholars, departmental webpages, learned societies webpages, philosopher's blogs, the REF webpage, among others.
- *Philosophy Journals.* I paid special attention to materials published in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, the *Radical Philosophy Journal*, *Metaphilosophy* and *Mind* - particularly to their historical archive.
- *Minutes from meetings.* Useful material for this research came from the minutes produced by the BPA and the REF philosophy sub-panel. Most of them were publicly available in their webpages, but some of the BPA's more recent ones were made available to me thanks to the goodwill of one of their executive committee members.
- *Papers, book chapters and books.* I especially attended to literature in the areas of social theory, metaphilosophy, the history of philosophy, the sociology of philosophy and critical policy studies. In terms of authors, the work of Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Bruno Latour, Max Weber and, to a lesser extent, Pierre Bourdieu, have a special place here in providing some theoretical resources, distinctions and conceptual tools that helped me think about the social life of philosophy when confronted to the specificities of my empirical and philosophical materials. Other resources I used were books containing interviews with philosophers, technical and critical papers on the REF and philosophy, philosophy introductory books and guides, among others. I revised material primarily in the two languages I am more fluent, English and Spanish.
- *Personal notes.* These refer to my notes in more than 5 notebooks gathering my experience as a participant and observer in over 30 philosophy conferences, lectures, workshops and modules all around the UK. As well, they record observations at the buildings where philosophers work and meet, together with my thoughts on informal talks with staff and students, especially in London.
- *Transcripts from interviews.* I interviewed 30 individuals for this research,⁵ 11 were women and 19 men (even though I approached more women than men, I received more declines from women). The interviews generated a total of 35 hours of transcript conversation. Most participants, particularly university staff, were identified through their institutional web profiles and later contacted by e-mail; others, such as students, were reached through a 'snowball sampling' in which 'informants refer the researcher

⁵ All the interviewees signed a consent form agreeing for the results of the interview to be published in the present document and forthcoming publications resulting from my research. Even though some of them also agreed to be referred to un-anonymously, I took the decision to anonymise everyone and protect their identities.

to other informants, who are contacted by the researcher and then refer her or him to yet other informants, and so on' (Noy, 2008, p. 330). It should be noted that more than 3/5ths of the 107 people approached declined or did not reply to the request to be interviewed but those who accepted tended to be supportive of the project. Most of the interviews were with professional philosophers (21 in total, 11 associated to philosophy departments and 10 to other departments), but I also interviewed administrative staff (2), philosophy students (3) and graduates from philosophy programs that do not work as professional philosophers (4). Of the interviews, 7 were done by Skype while 23 were face-to-face (mostly in coffee shops, but some of them at the office of the interviewee or their home). I approached philosophers from different schools, universities (many from England, but also some from Wales, Ireland and Scotland), philosophy institutions (learned societies, REF panel, representative bodies, etc.) and non-philosophy institutions (independent writers and people working outside philosophy). Sometimes quoted and sometimes not, the chance to talk with them helped me understand better the struggles, atmosphere and practical concerns of philosophers and philosophy in the UK. My interviews cannot then be considered representative of UK philosophy as a whole, whatever that might mean.

That said, the status of the claims I make based on materials of different kinds varies between chapters. For instance, chapters 1, 2 and 3 rely mostly on texts written by sociologists and philosophers, on encyclopaedia entries and images available in published books and specialised journals. Also, an occasional consideration by some of my interviewees or an ethnographic observation pops up here and there. First person narratives take prominence starting from Chapter 4. There, I mix narratives from published interviews and autobiographies, ethnographic observations, e-mail communications forwarded to me by philosophers and my own interviews. In Chapter 5, I used these materials further and explore them at a more metaphorical level inspired by the imaginary of monsters available in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. My use of metaphors draws from Arendt (1981, pp. 98–125) in the sense that they provide links between conceptual and embodied concerns and offer tools for the exploration of 'ineffable' matters, i.e., those which tend to escape simple linguistic formulations (in this case, atmospheres and affects). As well, in Chapter 5 I use images, a drawing and numerical data from QR funding to explore further some micro and macro aspects of philosophy. Chapter 6 returns to documents (especially from the REF, but also BPA minutes) and relates them with literature from policy ethnography and my interviews to trace the movement of the 'impact' policy and its effects in philosophy. Chapter 7 relies on only one interview and works it in detail – relating it to secondary literature and depictions of philosophy

in Chile. Both excursuses use secondary documents –BPA minutes in one case, Radical Philosophy texts, on the other– and put them together with the insights of a key interviewee and my observations. Both excursuses aimed to re-construct the current situation of those organisations.

This thesis does not offer a definitive or finished account of the doing of philosophy in the UK. Rather it is a set of first steps and openings and a tentative mapping of issues which, in most cases, need further work, more data and careful, focused elaboration. Arguments or characterisations that seems overgeneralised need to be pursued further. Nonetheless, I argue that my account does capture a set of significant tensions and demarcations that operate to ‘police’ the field of philosophy. In parts of the thesis, I explore those tensions and demarcations by focusing on some of the key characteristics of the dominant tradition of analytic philosophy. These characteristics are not identified as normative problems, even if in the text my comments may sometimes be read in that way. I am not asserting that there is anything inherently wrong with puzzle-solving, rigour or a genuine interest in particular authors or forms of writing. Rather these characteristics are presented and discussed as modes of exclusion and division which, in a sociological sense, privilege certain kinds of practice and exclude or create barriers for others to flourish.

My own sympathies may be apparent at times, but they are not substantively relevant to the analysis. I am not doing much more, I would argue, than providing a narrative for matters that are constantly voiced in conversation amongst philosophers. Of course, as sociologists continually reminds us, it is impossible to be totally impartial and not tend to take sides when doing research (Becker, 1967; Warren & Garthwaite, 2015). I would suggest that this study is read as the account of a curious traveller who detected a certain imbalance in the practices inside an academic community. Hopefully, it can provide some insights for the ongoing conversation about social problems in philosophy.

Plan of the study

This study raises many questions about philosophy, especially in relation to philosophy conceived as a profession. The overarching objective of this research is to have a better understanding of *what philosophers do* and to explore some of the effects of their practice. This presupposes the existence of a type of practice involved in doing philosophy (philosophers *do* something) and that part of it can be grasped through a study of philosophers’

experiences, interactions and history in a particular social milieu – in the case of this study, philosophy as practised at UK universities, learned societies and organisations. My question is about the ‘conditions of production’, affects and the making of people who comprehend themselves and their actions as being philosophical. In addition, this implies attending to the many exclusions and technologies mediating the construction of this practical identity.

To present these issues, the text is organised as seven interconnected chapters dealing with different aspects of the practice of philosophy. This starts with two sections concerned with theoretical and methodological questions about a plausible way of approaching philosophy. Chapter 1 presents the basis for an ethnographical account of philosophy within the sociology of philosophy. Reconstructing some of the main strategies with which sociologists have approached philosophy, I position myself from what I call *socio-ethnographic strategy* and attempt to do a *realistic* depiction of philosophy. In a way, this chapter argues that when sociology thinks about itself, it ends up encountering issues of a philosophical nature and that sociology offers some methodological resources for inquiring further into them. Furthermore, I introduce my way of approaching philosophy as something resulting from object-oriented, circulatory and relational practices. The argument of this chapter is complemented by Chapter 2, which is devoted to the relation between metaphilosophy and crisis. Metaphilosophy could be thought of as the production of texts and materials within philosophy that refer to philosophy being philosophy. My claim here is that, when liberated from tautological operations, metaphilosophy can also be explored through other means, such as autobiographies, sociological concerns and crisis experiences of philosophy practitioners. When properly considering their potential, my take is that metaphilosophical materials can show some faces of what is social about philosophy. Seen as a whole, these two chapters argue that sociological and philosophical reflection find each other when thinking about their own condition; to a certain extent, sociology and philosophy are in a dialectical relation.

After considering philosophy and philosophers as part of society and as having social problems of their own, Chapter 3 outlines the specific history of philosophy in the UK between the 19th century and the 1970s. The main object of inquiry in this chapter is the notion of ‘professional’ philosophy: how it came into being in the territory, what sorts of institutions have been created to establish and sustain it and what sort of challenges to these institutions have been attempted by certain self-denominated ‘radical’ philosophy practitioners. Taking into account these points, in this section, I also discuss some considerations about the concepts of boundary-work, gatekeeping and transgression between philosophers.

Chapter 4 explores what the discipline of philosophy, as practised in philosophy departments in the UK, produces in the subject interested in philosophy. From this chapter onwards, it becomes clear that mine is not a full ethnographic study, but a partly theoretical inquiry, with some empirical exploration. My claim in this chapter is that newcomers to philosophy tend to approach philosophy mediated by a sense of discovery and wonder that normally dissipates after experiencing philosophy as a discipline. Philosophy as a discipline produces a gap between the newcomer and professional philosophers, a gap that university curricula and pedagogical practices try to lessen by means of ‘disciplining the mind’ of the former to play the game of philosophy in increasingly similar terms to the ones practised by the latter.

Chapter 5 explores this last problem and faces the ‘monsters’ of professional philosophy and the ‘small terrors’ they produce on the everyday lives of philosophers currently working in the UK. These monsters act as forces creating disciplinary as well as managerial and quality assurance neoliberal pressures that in many ways shape the identity, meaning and actions of philosophers in the UK today. This is further explored in Chapter 6, which follows the ‘impact’ agenda put forward through the Research Excellence Framework. There, I emphasise how the ‘impact’ policy sets into motion through a series of contexts, philosophy included, and how it ends up shaping – or at least attempting to shape – important aspects of what is associated with being a philosopher.

Chapter 7 reiterates many of the issues discussed in the previous chapters and attempts to explore them in a more biographical fashion. I focus on the experience of one particular anglophone scholar who has worked as a philosopher in both the UK and Chile. I use her narrative, together with some of my own experiences, as a means to identify some notable cultural and professional differences between philosophies in these contexts. This raises many questions about uneven material conditions, incommensurable cultural identities and the effects that an anglophone-dominated philosophy can create over other alternative ways of conceiving this discipline.

After Chapters 3 and 5 I include two excursions to develop further some ideas that require specific attention but which I was unable to include within the narrative of these chapters without deviating from their core arguments. Excursus 1 pays attention to the *Radical Philosophy Journal* and the paradoxes of professionalisation it has had to face. I focus on how, ending in the 1970s, there was a conflict between the ‘activist’ and ‘academic’ sides of this project – with the second taking prominence at the expense of the first. The story of the journal also specifies some of the tensions amongst many scholars working in the continental tradition of philosophy in the UK. Excursus 2 is devoted to showing how the British Philosophical

Association works. It attempts to illustrate how the members of the Association cope with some of the problems associated with their organisational practice, neoliberal pressures and professional aims. Also, after the references, it is possible to find an Appendix offering a list of the years of foundation and closure of some of the main institutions enabling the practice of philosophy in the UK. This can be read as a complement to the contents presented in chapter 3.

This text does not have a conclusion as such. I preferred to end it with an afterword where I tackle some of the limits of this research, as well as the challenges and possibilities of following the sociology of philosophy as a programme of inquiry in the future. The characteristics of philosophy, neoliberalism and subjectivity studied here are not set in stone and are likely to keep on changing. Consequently, here I mean to give a definitive argument neither about philosophy in the UK nor about philosophy as a practice. Instead of announcing the end of a journey, I rather suggest an attitude of openness towards emergent, unnoticed or contingent issues relating to philosophy that could surely enrich what here is presented.

I end this introduction with a note of caution and a challenge to sociological enquiry when it comes to accounting for the current situation of the disciplines of the humanities. A decade ago, Mike Savage claimed that the post-WW2 rise of the social sciences in the UK ‘challenged the authority of the arts and humanities’, which ‘were increasingly demarcated away from the everyday’ (Savage, 2010, pp. vii, 112). However, disciplines of the humanities such as philosophy still exist, have their day-to-day activities and hold some kind of social legitimacy and have supporting people and institutions even in allegedly ‘antiphilosophical’ countries such as the UK. The success of the social sciences does not automatically imply the disappearance of the humanities. Indeed, if areas such as philosophy were ‘demarcated away’, where would they go? Why dismiss them as unattractive domains for social scrutiny *a priori*? Perhaps, claims as those of Savage’s can be the result of sociology instrumentally devoting major efforts to reflection about itself and the sciences rather than providing resources to understanding the complex social life of the humanities. Contrary to this trend, my project here is to advance into the sociology of an object that has been scarcely recognised as important by contemporary sociological inquiry. I think that an indifference towards the role of philosophy in society is something problematic: philosophy is part of social life and, as such, is a legitimate area of inquiry for sociologists.

CHAPTER 1

AN ETHNOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT WITHIN THE SOCIOLOGY OF PHILOSOPHY

Russell sat at his desk, a look of deep abstraction upon his face. Then he abruptly rose, paced to the door, and sat down again.

Randall Collins (1978, p. 18)

Exploring what philosophers do

As I went up the stairs of the main hallway of the LSE's *Lakatos Building* – named after the philosopher of science and former LSE Professor of Logic, Imre Lakatos – I noticed the following: hanging on a wall there were eight book covers, symmetrically displayed in solid white frames, authored by philosophers who used to work at this university's philosophy department. On the upper row, from left to right, there was Lakatos' *Proof and Refutations* (1976), followed by Karl Popper's *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1934), John Watkins' *Science and Scepticism* (1984) and David Makinson's *Sets, Logic and Maths for Computing* (2008). As I write these words, only David Makinson is still alive and working at this department. It is easy to imagine him entering this building every morning and being proud to see that his work shares a place with some of the most respected philosophers of science of the twentieth century. It can be said that this wall testifies to a specific tradition and continuity in the kind of practices done by people working in this space.⁶ But what exactly are these practices? What sort of profession is being a philosopher?

⁶ As mentioned in a promotional video by a former head of the department, philosophy at the LSE has had some persistent elements throughout its history: 'In many ways we look the same. We are still

There is perhaps an even more pressing question that must be answered before going any further. What materials are at hand for the study of what philosophers do? I would say that there are plenty, but scattered in many places, traditions and scholarly debates. Academic and social life is full of walls, books, words, journals, preoccupations, narrations, certificates, notes, professionals, formalisations, stories, buildings, archives, models, names, people, experiences, policies, webpages, notebooks, interactions, questions, propositions, profiles, figures, concepts and situations, all of which can be associated with the word *philosophy*. Rephrasing Latour, I would say that neither of these specific elements on their own nor the domain of 'existence' of philosophy as a whole can be understood as made from a *substance* called philosophy. In fact, it seems to be the case that in specific contexts of practice, something becoming philosophical would circulate 'when everything is in place and working well' (Latour, 2013, p. 39), i.e., as a reality made of a non-stop process of manufacture undertaken by the people working with these heterogeneous materials and who are giving them a philosophical articulation. From this, it follows that, for an outsider, such a set of heterogeneous elements may not have a great sense of 'continuity', despite surely doing so 'for a person who is operating within this network' (ibid. p. 40).

Therefore, observing what philosophers do implies looking at how a plethora of heterogeneous elements is set into motion and given a 'philosophical' connotation by these practitioners. Here, I have to add a note of caution: the practice of philosophy is likely to be something more than just the way in which individual practitioners become *problem-solvers* when challenged by such heterogeneity. Things turn more complex when we start asking ourselves sociological questions about *when* it is the case that 'everything is in place' or 'working well' and for *whom*. Such considerations are especially important if we consider the fact that 'intellectual life is first of all conflict and disagreement' (R. Collins, 1998a, p. 1). In this sense, and following Latour again, it is important to attend to the practical expressions of how certain actors arrange this multiplicity of factors while constantly forging boundaries that separate and protect what they deem philosophical from the outside. Consequently, their organised practice also includes mapping and distinguishing themselves from alternative forms of assemblage mobilised by 'antigroups' (Latour, 2005, pp. 31–32). If our main focus is to depict philosophy as practised by university scholars in philosophy departments, we also need to examine how such practice is contested by other groups constantly trying to mobilise

interested in a kind of philosophy that is continuous with the practice of the sciences' (Luc Bovens, in LSE, 2014).

this heterogeneity of materials into other philosophical claims. Is there any sort of recognition between them? Is there something more than differences as a common ground?

It is clear that, the main protagonists of the field of professional philosophy in the UK have been white British men working in philosophy departments and engaging with the game of abstractions in its analytical form. However, I would argue that it is possible to have a broader sense of the practical struggles and the reality of this area of knowledge if we also look at the doings of other actors involved in philosophy. Here, 'other' kinds of practice are considered as equally important for understanding what philosophy is as a practice: that of women, of newcomers to the field, of the people who studied philosophy but follow careers outside philosophy, of foreigners, of those doing philosophical work outside philosophy departments, of those trying to make philosophy understandable for general audiences, and of staff administering processes that have consequences for philosophy. That is the reason why in this thesis I consider the order of discourse governing both, hegemonic and non-hegemonic actors (with an emphasis in the latter). In light of the above, I am interested in the sociological topology of philosophy as a product and producer of a particular way of conceiving philosophy. With this in mind, my research on philosophers could be seen as a case study for a new political economy that, as Bacevic argues, understands universities as 'assemblages' with a 'variegated ecology of knowledge and expertise' (Bacevic, 2018, p. 11). In such a scenario, the challenge is to see how philosophy practitioners confront epistemic and human variety, with a special interest in the making and displacement of boundaries.

To make sense of all the empirical materials elicited and collected for this research (see Introduction), it is necessary to demonstrate that constructing an ethnographic approximation to the pragmatic making of philosophy is a reasonable endeavour. I would claim that philosophy is something occurring inside the social world, and whose results, movements, foundations, problems and relevance need to be seen as performative elements participating in the constitution of social aspects transcending the gates of *pure* academic discussion. In this sense, showing philosophy as it is practised in particular contexts can help us overcome the 'metaphysical delusion' (Arendt, 1981, p. 110) that sees philosophical thinking as being isolated from the social world. Such a view can have its most delightfully unfair depiction in Aristophanes' portrayal of Socrates in *The Clouds*. There, the philosopher is presented in his 'thinking shop', 'suspended in the air in a basket' and claiming to be 'walking in the air, and speculating about the sun' (Aristophanes, 2005, pp. 11, 14). Of course, this raises the issue of describing philosophy and philosophers in reductionist and simplistic terms.

It was a pleasant surprise for me to find some literature that, in one way or another, accounts for 'the doings' of philosophy. However, some of this scholarship is narrow as it

focuses on specific aspects of the doings of philosophy, or consists in randomised commentaries; as I point out more fully later, a proportion of these texts can also feel very broad, exaggerated or ambitious. Despite this, here it is also possible to find interesting reflections, compelling documentation and clever suggestions written with different aims in mind and directed to distinct audiences. As a starting point, I look at the information that is available in various philosophical texts as well as in non-philosophy literature concerned with philosophy. Correspondingly, these writings are produced by the action and re-action to the practice of philosophy. They are both topic and resource.

In light of the above mentioned materials, the theoretical proposal I would like to use in this chapter has to be regarded as an extension of or complement to a sociology of philosophy. This happens in a twofold manner, namely, through an ethnographic turn nurtured by the empirical material elicited and produced for this study, and through the texts provided by two already existing forms of studying what philosophers do. These materials are the main focus of this chapter and the one that follows. Here the first group of scholarly works could be clustered under the label of *Sociology of Philosophy*, which contains all those literatures addressing how philosophy relates either to sociology or to society in a more general or specific way. Such a notion encompasses research about the extent to which sociology may also be philosophical, as well as theories concerning the place that philosophers and intellectuals have in the social world, depictions of the features of the 'philosophical' domain, Randall Collins' important account of the 'sociology of philosophies', and empirical studies 'on the making' of famous intellectuals. The second group is known as *Metaphilosophy*, i.e., a type of philosophical literature reflexing about philosophy, which in some cases observes philosophy in the attempt to overcome it. This perspective comprises the works about philosophy written by philosophers, including, amongst others, 'philosophical utterances' about the tasks of philosophy, philosophers' autobiographical writings and intra-sociological accounts of philosophy emerging from philosophy.

In this chapter, I present an overview of the existing sociological approaches to philosophy. Considering the sociological literature that has struggled to understand philosophy, I attempt to give an account of their main contributions to the sociological discussion regarding philosophy and its limits. In light of this, I make a case for an 'ethnographic turn' in the sociology of philosophy, one that looks at the trajectories and assemblages produced by the doings of the different actors involved in the social construction of philosophy. Following this, when we reach Chapter 2, in the interest of finding a way to describe today's philosophy that is as real as possible, I discuss why the reflexive component of metaphilosophy is also a crucial *sociological* component of the construction of philosophy.

The sociology of philosophy

At first glance, it seems that philosophy can be seen as a specific research area of sociology, that is, as one of the many phenomena that sociologists have studied, such as class struggle, education, capitalism, professions, crime, sports, social movements, *inter alia*. However, studying philosophy becomes immediately complicated when we take into account the tensions between two of the constituent aspects of sociology, namely, the scientific and the philosophical.

In the beginnings of sociology, philosophy was mostly seen as an obstacle for the development of the discipline.⁷ This can be observed in, for example, Comte's attempt to create a positive science that would overcome the 'metaphysical stage' of knowledge (Comte, 1858, pp. 25–26), in Marx's and Engels's critique of the ideological fetishisms of the German Young Hegelians' discussions (Marx & Engels, 1998, p. 34), and even in Durkheim's remarks on 'social philosophers' who made theoretical formulations without putting them into practice (Durkheim, 1982, p. 161).⁸ All these authors are critical of what they deem abstract philosophical idealism and propose sociology as an alternative to the necessary engagement between their concepts and empirical reality. In their view, only then is it possible to have a science of society.

This notwithstanding, such formulations have not solved the problem of how to make these concepts sociological or how to study the social world with their help. The never-ending dispute about the form of this engagement is what is known as sociological theory. More recently, it has been said that the 'increasing dependency on (continental) philosophy, literature, and humanities for inspiration' is partly responsible for the current 'crisis in sociology'

⁷ A notable exception is Tönnies, who in the first meeting of the German Society for sociology stated the following: 'Sociology is first a philosophical discipline. As such, it is much older than its name. The name did not create it, nor did the person who coined the name bring it into being. Speculation about the essence of human society, especially political alliances, has always been closely connected with the ideas of ethical and good conduct of life and forms of life' (Tönnies, 2005, p. 57).

⁸ Barberis has further studied Durkheim's case and his original disciplinary disputes with philosophers to legitimate his new science of sociology in France. For her, the aftermath of his interest in differentiating sociology from philosophy ended up having an undesired effect: 'sociology remained locked in a relationship with philosophy that limited its possibilities of institutional independence and circumscribed the realm of objects thought worthy of consideration to those previously sanctioned by philosophy' (Barberis, 2002, p. 357).

(Turner, 2008, pp. 5–6). For Turner, this is due to the epistemological effects that poststructuralist, postmodern and sceptical pragmatist philosophies have had upon positivist, empiricist and objectivist certainties that used to define the discipline.⁹ Leaving aside the discussion on whether these elements led sociology into a crisis or rather are post-foundational theories giving opportunities to continue exploring, this discussion seems to stress the point that contemporary sociology exhibits ‘strong philosophical inclinations’ (Baert, 2008, p. 61).

The point I am trying to make here is the following: despite its acceptance or neglect by sociology practitioners, philosophy eventually emerges for sociologists either as a problem, a challenge, or a mystery; it is a fact that it *does* emerge. The mediation that philosophy has had in sociological practice in some way speaks about the performative effects that the philosophical activity has over other professions – it says something about the repercussions that it has in a social world that goes far beyond philosophy. With this in mind, here I would like to discuss some of the theoretical, empirical and hybrid attempts made by sociologists who have taken up the challenge of trying to construe philosophy more fully.

Using the label *Sociology of Philosophy*, I would like to outline four sociological perspectives which in different ways explore social factors related to the social production of philosophy. The first approach, that of philosophical sociology, is closely aligned with the discussions addressed here and focuses on the ways in which sociology may be philosophical and on the implications of such crossover. The second perspective gathers all the attempts to understand the sociological characteristics of the domains of philosophy and intellectuals, i.e., giving an account of their particular set of sociological features and limits. The third view is Randall Collins’ *Sociology of Philosophies*, which can be regarded as a more refined and ambitious version of the second perspective. Finally, I consider some of the literature that has applied different forms of the sociology of philosophy to empirical case studies of ‘the making’ of highly respected intellectual figures.

⁹ Nevertheless, this other tradition survives today through contemporary accounts by sociologists attempting to do an *analytic sociology* concerned with ‘dynamics’, ‘mechanisms’, ‘models’ and finding ways to ‘dissect the social’ (Demeulenaere, 2011; Hedström, 2005; Hedström & Bearman, 2009). Their intellectual debt to analytic philosophy is unclear, but in their declarations they seem to have a shared obsession with writing clearly and in a rigorous way.

1. Philosophical sociology

As I mentioned above, regardless of being considered abstruse and/or exciting by individual sociologists, it seems undeniable that philosophy is something relevant for sociology. Perhaps this is so because they *share* something. Ultimately, this may have to do with the fact that ‘society’ itself is a concept (Luhmann, 1992), and when dealing with concepts sociology has to dive into a space that is more commonly associated with the job of the philosopher.¹⁰ In this sense, it is important to point out that there is a ‘false dilemma between philosophy and sociology’ (Cordero, 2017, p. 7) whenever someone considers that the former falls within the realm of the ‘theoretical’ and the latter within what is strictly ‘empirical’. Actually, their borders are blurry, and any conclusive definition of such boundary is to a certain extent pointless. The social tissue that brings them together seems to be very knotty.

Moreover, I take the view that philosophy is especially interesting for sociology because it pesters the discipline. Just to evoke its name triggers unease between sociologists pressured towards constantly re-thinking their subject matter, foundations, identity and limits. In other words, I would argue that speaking about philosophy in sociology is usually taken as a reflexive challenge: sociology would be more ‘philosophical’ when it explores the depths of its own constitution and of society as its subject matter. In fact, there is a line of inquiry where these issues have been thought of in accordance with their complexity; such a line is what in sociology is known as ‘philosophical sociology’.

The classical conception of this term was first elaborated by Georg Simmel when he argued that a philosophical sociology addresses ‘the study of the epistemological and metaphysical aspects of society’ and, more specifically, constitutes research towards ‘a complex of questions’ that ‘are sociological only in a broad sense of the term’ and that, ‘more properly, they are philosophical’ (Simmel, 1950, p. 23).¹¹ He gives the following list of questions that illustrate the speculative nature of this area of inquiry:

Is society the purpose of human existence, or is it a means for the individual? Does the ultimate value of social development lie in the unfolding of personality or of association? Do meaning and purpose inhere in social phenomena at all, or exclusively in individuals? Do the typical stages of the development of societies show

¹⁰ Accepting this, also involves understanding that ‘society’ cannot be reduced to a merely empirical reality; such observation makes place for a whole process of living socio-conceptual abstractions to emerge as a challenge for sociological research (see Cordero & Salinas, 2017b).

¹¹ For the history of ‘Philosophical Sociology and its later ‘normative turn’, see Alvear (2016).

an analogy with cosmic evolutions so that there might be a general formula or rhythm of development in general [...] which applies to social and material data alike? Are social movements guided by the principle of the conservation of energy? Are they directed by material or by ideological motives?

(Simmel, 1950, p. 25)

Partyga observes that ‘we might be tempted to dismiss these questions as obsolete’ (Partyga, 2016, p. 434). Nevertheless, and specifically thinking of the influence that Nietzsche later had in Simmel, she adds that there is always the potential of ‘rephrasing them in productive and novel ways’ (ibid.). I would argue that this creative reaffirmation of this line of questioning is exactly the kind of strategy followed by Daniel Chernilo in his recent recovery of the idea of philosophical sociology.

Chernilo’s starting point can be regarded as deeply Simmelian in form and spirit. For him, ‘the questions that matter to sociologists are always, in the last instance, also philosophical ones’ (Chernilo, 2014, p. 340). The reason for this would be ‘that a normative vocation for sociology emerges out of implicit presuppositions about the shared humanity of human beings to be found inside sociological theorizing’ (ibid.).¹² In this sense, Chernilo thinks that philosophy must be regarded as an important ally of sociology: it refers to the whole world of ‘presuppositions’ appearing when thinking the sociological questions of injustice or the constitution of society, and the like. Besides, as he stresses in an interview, such attention to philosophy is something that could also help sociologists to gain awareness on the origins of some of their discipline’s most basic distinctions:

Tönnies’ work on *Community and Society* is explicitly modelled on Hobbes’ distinction between the state of nature and civil society. When I was doing research for my previous book on *Social Theory and Natural Law*, one of the biggest surprises was that this theme did not figure at all in the sociological literature on Tönnies even though Tönnies himself was open about it and wrote two huge biographies of Hobbes and Marx. The clues to interpret the philosophical debt of Tönnies’ sociological contributions were being missed even if they were very much in front of our eyes. My explanation for this is, quite simply, that we sociologists just don’t know enough philosophy so these connections simply don’t become visible.

(Chernilo, in Chernilo & Beer, 2018, p. 282)

¹² The Kantian-like divisions between thinking and the world apparent in this approach have faced some resistance and critiques. For instance, Fuller (2018) criticises him for staying within a dualist paradigm. Many other divisive commentaries about the programme of sociological philosophy can be found in a recent contribution to the journal *Distinktion*, evaluating its consequences for a diversity of perspectives speaking from Nietzsche, political philosophy, post-humanism, temporality, other forms of sociological philosophy, amongst others (see Callegaro, 2020; Chernilo, 2020; Durkin, 2020; Elder-Vass, 2020; S. Fuller, 2020; Magnelli, 2020; Partyga, 2020; Raza & Silva, 2020).

Moreover, Chernilo's research programme aims to create unease inside sociology by means of philosophical concerns. For Chernilo, 'philosophical sociology is an invitation to try to understand more fully who are the human beings that populate the social world', and therefore, something reminding us that 'we still do not fully understand what human beings are' (Chernilo, 2014, p. 353). Such a concern is precisely what he pushes forward in his recent book *Debating Humanity. Towards a Sociological Philosophy* (2017). There, and after mentioning that sociology owes to philosophy its pre-scientific heritage, epistemological self-clarification and normative motifs, he states that:

a re-engagement between sociology and philosophy must take the form of a mutual learning process between the different knowledge-claims that underpin them both: the empirical vocation of sociology as it grapples with the complexities of contemporary society and the kind of unanswerable questions that we still associate with the best of the philosophical tradition. At stake is the fact that as long as sociology continues to raise the big questions about life in society – the relative influence of material and ideal factors in historical explanations, the relationships between individual actions and social trends, the interconnections between nature and culture or the dialectics between domination and emancipation – these are all questions that also transcend it: *good sociological questions are always, in the last instance, also philosophical ones.*

(Chernilo, 2017, p. 3)

I share Chernilo's idea that sociology and philosophy can learn from each other, and even merge to create new milieus from where to think about the important issues of social life. In spite of this, I would contest some of the aspects of his argument. First, for Chernilo, when sociology spots interesting and 'good' abstract questions, it becomes philosophical. This more or less resembles the fairy tale frog prince that turns into a human after being kissed by a princess. But, why do we have to consider philosophy as the depository of the normative conundrums of sociology? A closer look to the discipline of philosophy reveals that this would not be the intention of many of its practitioners and, perhaps, it could be a case of what Merton, following Weber, called 'the unanticipated consequences of purposive social action' (Merton, 1936). In this sense, philosophical sociology seems to require a *proviso* that considers what the conditions of production of 'good' philosophical questions are. This could probably take the form of an in-depth study addressing contingent micro-sociological aspects that make the philosophical practice be, at any given time, at its best. But even before this normative endeavour is possible, I think that it is important to work in identifying the internal conflicts of the field.

Second, and connected with the latter, Chernilo's assertion about 'good' sociological questions being philosophical makes me think about a series of questions related to how his framework confronts 'bad' questioning. How are questions deemed good or bad in philosophy? In light of this, what is the effect of bad philosophical enquiry? What is the reality of

practitioners dwelling between good and bad questions? What are the social conditions of such an assessment? What happens with all the questions that philosophy never poses? What can sociology do with the questions that philosophy excludes as a by-product of the biases of its own history? Is it always about questions? Is it not the case that sometimes the main issue is a topic, a cosmology, a way of reasoning rather than a question? Does an alliance with philosophy also make sociology complicit in possible ontological errors?¹³

I think that Chernilo's programme is extraordinary, and it surely revitalises the role of sociological questioning and theorising in the contemporary world. However, I would like to add a note of caution about this enthusiasm towards philosophy. While I would agree with the idea that philosophical sociology must learn from the best of the philosophical tradition, it also seems that it would do well to learn from its problems, mistakes and history. Cherry-picking what we personally consider to be the best philosophy creates a blind-spot regarding the actual practice of the philosophical enterprise. I think that this may be, in part, tackled by a detailed sociological study of philosophy as a practice. In this sense, my proposal is that a pragmatic study of philosophy should be able to complement the project of philosophical sociology by means of a broader inquiry that looks at philosophy despite it being good, bad or ugly.

2. Philosophy as a social domain

Philosophical sociology is important because it makes us aware and provides us with questions to think about the blurry limits between sociology and philosophy. However, in a more traditional sense, philosophy has also been an object of sociological enquiry on its own. Sociology has thought about philosophers, intellectuals, ideas and thinking for a long time. A specifically sociological approach to this realm probably started with Mannheim's relational sociology of knowledge. Such a view suggested that the main determiner of the way in which

¹³ Such a question opens the possibility of being sociologically aware about the aspects that make specific traditions in a philosophical culture have a voice to judge what is good or bad in the discipline. This can be seen, for instance, in the reflections that Aaron Preston, who I will come back to in Chapter 3, makes about Analytical Philosophy in the Anglo-Speaking world: 'From its position of dominance, AP has managed, over the course of the twentieth century, to establish a *de facto* orthodoxy in academic philosophy, complete with 'professional standards' for judging 'good' and 'bad' philosophy. By imposing these standards on the profession, AP has shaped the Anglo-American experience with academic philosophy for the better part of a century; and [...] that experience has not been a uniformly happy one' (Preston, 2010, p. 8).

an individual thinks – their particular *perspective* – is the ‘position’ they hold within a ‘social group’ (Mannheim, 1954, p. 239). However, knowledge as a result of a social position is not the only important aspect to consider. A few decades later, scholars such as Camic and Gross stated that there is a need for a ‘new sociology of ideas’ which ‘focuses on women and men who specialize in the production of cognitive, evaluative, and expressive ideas’ while examining ‘the social processes by which their ideas [...] emerge, develop, and change’ (Camic & Gross, 2004, p. 236). In sum, for a type of sociology interested in the social aspects of knowledge, elements such as ‘position’ and the ‘production of ideas’ have to be regarded as relevant conditions to be studied within specific socio-historical realities so long as they account for the historical relevance of knowledge claims.

Patrick Baert’s ‘positioning theory’ adds further aspects to this discussion. He suggests that ‘the reception, survival and diffusion of intellectual products’ depend not only ‘on the intrinsic quality of the arguments proposed or the strength of the evidence provided, but also on the range of rhetorical devices which the authors employ to locate themselves (and position others) within the intellectual and political field’ (Baert, 2012, p. 304). In all these elements, I think it is particularly relevant to take into account his consideration of (1) the *circulation of intellectual products* instead of only their production or conditions of production; and (2) that he looks at research programmes, theories, concepts and propositions as *entities that are not strong on their own*, but heavily dependent on elements transcending the game of knowledge production.

The circulation of intellectual ideas and culture has proven to be a fruitful area of inquiry for the social sciences. For instance, it has led researchers to explore the history of misunderstandings, and the uses and re-conceptualisations arising from the movement of theoretical ideas from one culture into another. This is the course of action followed by François Cusset in his work on the ‘reception’ of French Theory in the USA. His main point is that French Theory is ‘a creation ex nihilo of the American university’, an ‘entirely new composite creature’ occurring after the arrival of the works of French authors such as Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Guattari and Lyotard in the US (Cusset, 2008, p. 26). This is interesting as it shows that the invention of a ‘philosophical tradition’ is something historically situated, territorially mobilised, semantically transformed and practically crafted.¹⁴

¹⁴ Of course, this kind of phenomena is something sociologists are well aware of. The dominant view of the discipline for good part of the 20th century had to do with Parsons’ artificial foundation of the

Bourdieu is also worth mentioning here. His view of philosophy offers a description that sheds light on the experience of many philosophy practitioners who have not engaged in metaphilosophy or other types of sociologically reflective philosophies (see Chapter 2). Bourdieu's observation is that questioning philosophy tends to exclude 'the question of its own socially necessary conditions' (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 4). Besides, he argues that 'every attempt to bring philosophy into question which is not bound up with a questioning of the philosophical institution itself still plays the institution's game by merely playing with fire, by rubbing up against the limits of the sacred circle, while still carefully refraining from moving outside it' (ibid.). In other words, it is a game where people 'tacitly commit themselves to identifying the interest of philosophy with the interest that they have in philosophy' (ibid.).

However, in spite of such denial of the social conditions, for Bourdieu, the philosophical field is always a constitutive part of the socio-historical reality within which it obtains its relative autonomy. This is perhaps the most interesting part of his argument. He puts forward a case by reading Heidegger's *ontology of being* in relation to his participation in the Nazi party. With this in mind, Bourdieu observes that even under the *illusio* of 'pure philosophy', it is undeniable that philosophy takes a position in the social world. In this sense, Heidegger would put in practice a series of reciprocal connections that create his 'political stance' while giving them a 'pure philosophical expression' (Bourdieu, 1999, pp. 5–6). Such an argument is thought-provoking in the sense that it accounts for how deeply-rooted philosophy is in social life, even if it denies it. Heidegger's case shows how contradictory is the position of those who write and speak about 'being in the world', publicly denying their own participation in it but actually having a discourse with performative effects in the world they deny.

A more recent sociological view is offered by Steve Fuller in his book *The Sociology of Intellectual Life. The Career of the Mind in and Around the Academy* (2009). In this interesting work, he claims that his approach to social epistemology 'overcomes' the incommensurability between contemporary analytic and continental philosophers 'but also incorporate[s] the empirical findings of the history and sociology of science in aid of a more richly informed knowledge policy' (S. Fuller, 2009, p. 44). For him, such inquiry starts at the university, 'a specific institution [that] has best promoted a form of intellectual freedom that has managed to serve as a vehicle for the progressive transformation of society' (ibid. p. 1). However, he

sociological action in a monster such as Frankenstein's made-up by parts of Durkheim, Marshall, Pareto and Weber (Parsons, 1968b).

also argues that the university is nowadays affected by 'that unholy alliance of plagiarism and bullshit by which clever academics routinely overreach for the truth' (ibid. p. 2).

Notwithstanding his occasional hard-to-swallow rhetoric, Fuller poses some interesting points in relation to the political-epistemological disputes in philosophy, especially regarding Anglophone Philosophy (see ibid. 62-82). On a speculative note, he concludes that: 'The abdication of philosophy's prescriptive function has rarely been as complete and learned as it is today, but those with a long institutional memory can take comfort in the prospect that it too will eventually come to pass once the next cycle of radical thinkers find their voice' (ibid. p. 82). In his conception of philosophy, such social institution seems to be moved by *cycles* – and this consideration of change would give a normative horizon within which to think the possible range of movements for the actors involved in the discipline.

All of the above shows that there is the possibility, and the intellectual interest, of undertaking sociological inquiries into the production and dissemination of abstract knowledge such as that concerning philosophy.¹⁵ From this point of view, philosophy has to be understood as part of the social world. This implies accepting that *there isn't a ready-made world* (Putnam, 1982) and that factors such as social relations, rhetoric, processes, positions, receptions, illusions and institutions, are sociological components in the construction of philosophy. Of course, this can be a bitter drink for some logicians, positivists and systematic philosophers who prefer to consider the social as a *ceteris paribus* or messy component occurring somewhere outside their offices.

3. Randall Collins' sociology of philosophies

Any study concerned with the sociology of philosophy would be incomplete without mentioning Randall Collins' suggestive and ambitious work. His programme is twofold and can be seen as a synthesis of the two approaches previously discussed. On the one hand, it has traced the complicated intellectual interconnections between philosophy and sociology from a theoretical interest. On the other, it has been deeply concerned with advancing a general empirical programme for the study of philosophers and intellectuals throughout world history.

¹⁵ For other sociological studies about 'philosophical knowledge', see the interesting volume edited by Kusch (2000).

Collins' project can be said to have started with his paper 'For a Sociological Philosophy' (1988). In this work, he outlines a programmatic approach to philosophy from a sociological perspective – in his words, 'I am arguing for a sociological philosophy; at the same time a philosophy of sociology also seems promising. Sociology is terrain for considering the underlying conceptual structures, and the knowledge claims, of some of the deepest and most complex issues anywhere in the intellectual world' (ibid. p. 670). Sociological problems such as the 'micro-macro', 'the self' and 'the nature of social causes and explanations' are, for him, elements that contribute 'not only in epistemology and ethics [...] but in metaphysics as well' (ibid. p. 669). Along with this mixture of 'sociological philosophy' and 'philosophical sociology', he also proposes a straightforward 'sociology of philosophy', understood as yet 'another area of empirical sociology' and, more specifically, as 'a branch of the sociology of science, which happens to take philosophers and their productions as a topic to study, in the same way that sociologists have looked at bio-chemical laboratories or compared astronomers' research teams' (ibid. p. 670).

Seventeen years later, and from the viewpoint of sociology, Collins suggests that sociology and philosophy relate to each other in three ways: (1) *genealogically*, i.e., sociology 'branched off from the lineages of philosophers'; (2) *internally* to sociology, i.e., 'philosophical issues' such as epistemological, methodological and metaphysical debates, are often raised both in 'activist and analytical modes'; and (3) *as a target* of sociological inquiry, i.e., the sociology of philosophy would 'theorize on the social conditions under which intellectuals have created philosophical topics and which shape what they think about them'. Moreover, he contends that the sociology-philosophy nexus provides 'many layers of reflexive consciousness' and speaks about 'the hypermodern intellectual situation' (R. Collins, 2005, p. 61).

Collins has been a particularly prolific sociologist of philosophy. His work has provided telling insights into the many moments in the intellectual history of philosophy (see, R. Collins, 1981, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1998b). His wide-ranging approach was materialised in his massive *The Sociology of Philosophies. A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (1998a). In this book, he follows the ambitious task of analysing the intellectual networks and interactions of 2700 philosophers throughout world history including, amongst others, the philosophy schools of ancient Greece and the Hellenistic world, the legacy of Confucian disputes in China, the competition between sages in India, and the rise of the Zen movement in Japan. Additionally, he studies the intellectual networks of Modern Western philosophies such as German idealism, British analytical philosophy, German phenomenology and French existentialism.

The key to his analysis lies in his theory of *interactions rituals*. Linking the Durkheimian and Goffmanian traditions, Collins appeals to 'a global theory of the moral integration of an entire society' interpreted 'in the spirit of symbolic interaction, ethnomethodology, social constructionism, and sociology of emotions' (R. Collins, 2004, p. xi). A kind of interaction rituals are *intellectual rituals*, understood as Goffmanian *interactions* in which participants present themselves and struggle to define a situation. Basically, these rituals have a Durkheimian sense of *sacredness* and their content is the thoughts and arguments of the presenter. In addition, Collins understands philosophical ideas as 'intellectual sacred objects' that are sustained by the *emotional energies* provided by people gathering in lectures, conferences, discussions and debates.

According to Collins, a special characteristic of intellectuals is their capacity to focus their attention on a particular matter for a long period of time, achieving abstract levels of distinction with language (Collins, 1998a, p. 26). In more detail, it is possible to understand these *intellectual rituals* as having the following sequence: (1) Intellectuals come together for the sake of serious talk. Therefore, they do not meet up to socialise nor to be practical, but to attend to what they consider important; for example, to discuss the future of the university, to discuss new readings of the problem of 'modality' in Kant's work, or to attend the launch of a re-edition of Descartes' *Discourse on Method*. (2) When they gather, intellectuals focus their attention for many minutes on the speech of one of the participants of the situation. This sets the impossibility of having two or more people speaking concurrently without subverting the ritual; for example, a scholar presenting a paper at a conference or somebody raising a question at a seminar. (3) Within this discourse, the sacredness of old objects can be recharged with attention or removed from them. This means that the speaker's positive and negative remarks fall on pre-existing concepts, arguments and preoccupations that they are aware of; for example, a presenter demonstrating a new possible reading of Aristotle's notion of 'accident' in book six of his *Metaphysics*, or a speaker in a panel claiming that the argument of his interlocutor has the problem of the 'infinite regress'. (4) The speaker makes a proposal that is related to what pre-exists. In this sense, new sacred objects are offered for sanctification; for example, in the following argument: scholars have criticised author A in ways X and Y, nevertheless, A could be better understood if read from Z viewpoint (see *ibid.* pp. 25-28).

Intellectual rituals repeat throughout history with conflicts between intellectuals in opposing schools of thought, establishing a process of interaction that seems to be a necessary condition for the rise of *creative* ideas. According to Collins, such dynamic would lead to a series of structural tendencies inside the field of philosophy. (1) The development of

major philosophers has to be regarded as a construct of their intellectual descendants (ibid. pp. 68, 79). This means that the philosophers remembered in history are those who are able to transfer their knowledge and cultural capital through interaction rituals to later become totemic figures informing the work of their disciples. (2) There is the law of the small numbers, that is, the maximum number of active schools of thought in a generation (33 years) is between three and six (ibid. p. 81). This empirical trend is due to the restrictions of plausible interest space in the intellectual community at any point in time, which reduces the slots available for attention.¹⁶ (3) Some philosophers are condemned to be remembered only as secondary or minor, usually owing to a lack of originality and depth, unlike the 'great' philosophers. Their typical fate is never to become a major concern for the work of future generations (Collins, 1988, p. 62). (4) Engaging philosophically with the work and concepts of other philosophers inevitably leads to an ever-increasing level of abstraction of an active intellectual community. This goes together with an increase in reflexivity, understood as the self-consciousness of the intellectual operations facilitated by the intergenerational sequence of chains (Collins, 1998a, pp. 787-788).

For Collins, these interactionist observations rapidly become a structuralist impetus for ordering the grammar of connections and school legacies. Of course, much can be learned from the encyclopaedic knowledge present in his long analyses. However, the main problem in his work is that we lose track of the sentient people living the material experience of thinking and relating to others while making philosophy. In fact, Collins argues that emotional energies are an important causal psychological element of any intellectual enterprise; however, that argument lacks evidence in his work. Moreover, all those who are not 'major philosophers' are seen as unimportant. Such a decision, I would say, is symptomatic of the author's obsession with 'prestige' and 'grand' philosophy over the concrete experience of other practitioners sustaining the field. As a result, and despite the spectacular complexity of his analyses, Collins' account ends up presenting us with a series of lifeless surnames trapped in diagrams (see Figure 1, for philosophers in the UK).

¹⁶ In a way, perhaps this tells us that what Foucault described as 'a superficial, very Parisian phenomenon' is, actually, a widespread trend among intellectuals. In his words: 'The feeling of "no room," "him or me," "it's my turn now." We have to walk in line because of the extreme narrowness of the place where one can listen and make oneself heard' (Foucault, 1997, p. 324).

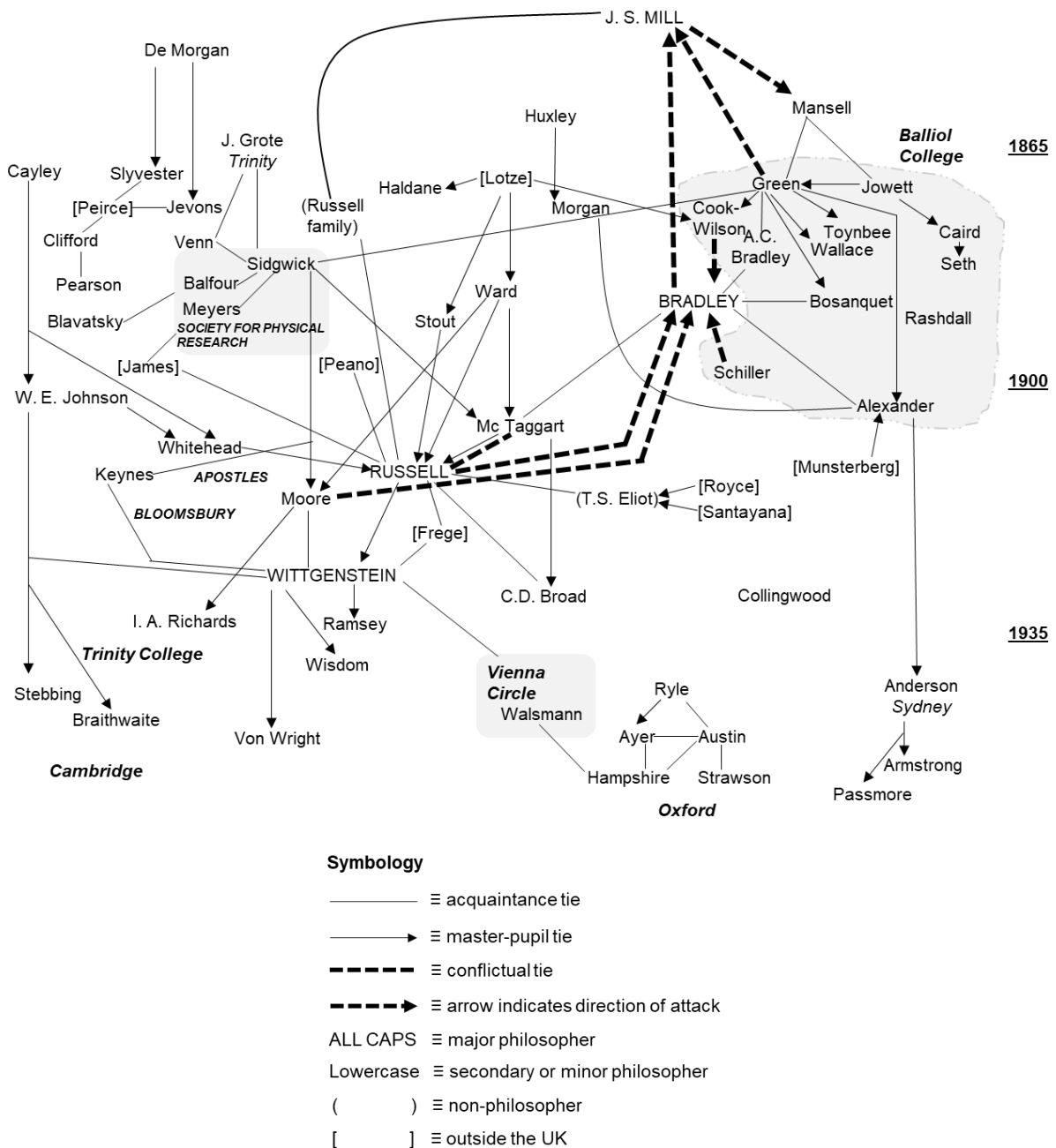


Figure 1. Broader network relations between Philosophers and Logicians in the UK during the 19th and 20th centuries. Source: Collins (1998a, p. 711).

Figure 1, which reconstructs the network of philosophers and logicians in the 19th and 20th centuries in the UK, is an example of the type of analyses presented in Collins' work. Here, based on the number of pages dedicated to them in books and encyclopaedias addressing the history of philosophy, it is no surprise how Collins concludes that Ludwig Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russell, Francis Herbert Bradley and John Stuart Mill hold key positions as major philosophers, and that philosophers such as Moore, McTaggart, Ramsey and others were secondary or minor thinkers. In addition, someone reading this complex diagram could, for

instance, raise issues about the empty spaces next to the relations between major and secondary philosophers.¹⁷ Who is not mentioned? What are the expectations of all those who do not even compete in this race for attention and recognition? What do the 'un-mentioned' do? Are they perhaps the flesh of this skeletal diagram? I think that it is important to consider these issues, and take care, when doing sociological analysis of philosophers, not to include only 'major' philosophers but also to take account some of some of the many other social actors that in their daily work make up the field of philosophy generally. Also, because Collins thinks that 'we have no way of knowing who if anyone will be remembered as a major or secondary figure' (ibid. p. 782), he also disregards doing any study of what philosophers do in the present. Is there any good reason for this? It does not seem so; instead, it seems that Collins has an obsession with the intellectual greatness of individuals of the past. This said, as Camic writes, this is a splendid piece of scholarship as it offers 'so much to reckon with', including aspects 'to extend, revise and, in some instances, reject' (Camic, 2000, p. 96).

4. Studies in the making of intellectuals

A growing number of scholars concerned with the sociology of philosophy have become increasingly interested in doing in-depth studies about philosophers and intellectuals, understood as individuals embedded within their socio-historical conditions. Such studies have to be regarded as applications or case studies of some of the sociological concerns reviewed in the previous subsections. These are mostly empirical studies about the making of historical intellectual figures in consideration of their broader or specific social context.

Gouldner's *Enter Plato: Classical Greece and the Origins of Social Theory* (1966) seems to be the earliest of these works. This title aims to 'examine Plato as a case of a social theorist' (ibid. 170) to shed light on what it is that social theorists do and why they do it. To do this, Gouldner looks at Plato as someone who works within the constraints and affordances of his time to arrive at abstract solutions, such as his 'theory of forms', in a response to the wars

¹⁷ Perhaps the two types of philosophers – major and secondary – are unified by what Deleuze calls an *Empty Square*. Such an element would be a 'paradoxical object' that participates in both series; simultaneously 'traversing them', 'moving with them' and 'without which nothing would move forward or function' (Deleuze, 2004, pp. 184, 186). Invisible readers, lost books, unknown students, the general public – all of them could be the silent participants, the content, of what is shown as an empty space.

and tensions of the Hellenistic society. After this work, a new avenue of sociological research was open to explore. As Camic and Gross write:

By means of this kind of analysis, *Enter Plato* brings an (sic) historicist sociology of ideas to life, opening up avenues of inquiry that have yet to be pursued. Successfully problematizing the historical bases of the intersubjective and social-psychological processes by which intellectual choices get made, the book invites sociologists of ideas to shed, once and for all, their ahistorical claims about intellectual life and to undertake studies of men and women of ideas in different times and places and of the historically variable social processes by which their ideas emerge, develop, and change

(Camic & Gross, 2002, p. 108)

Other than Randall Collins' *diagrammatic solo project*, this field of enquiry remained mostly silent for two decades. It was not until Michelè Lamont wrote a paper on how Derrida became a dominant French philosopher that this silence was interrupted (Lamont, 1987). In the same way as Gouldner, Lamont also aimed at speaking about a bigger social phenomenon by looking at a specific author. She particularly looks at 'the cultural, institutional, and social conditions of interpretative theories by analysing the legitimation of Jacques Derrida's work in France and the United States' (ibid. p. 585). The case is interesting because in following the ways in which Derrida's work got legitimised, she is able to examine how two distinct national intellectual fields with different rules in their games have a positive appraisal of the same author. She observes elements such as how 'his writing style' – sophisticated and obscure – 'meet[s] the cultural requirements of the French intellectual milieu' and how his 'application of deconstruction to classics [...] give[s] it prestige and contribute[s] to the theory's potential for intellectual diffusion' (ibid. p. 591). Interestingly, she also notices that coming from the French phenomenological discussions, 'the intellectual operations and style typical of deconstruction are in decided opposition to the ethos of analytic philosophy, which emphasizes precision, clarity of language, and detailed argumentation' (ibid. p. 613). Hence, his reception was limited in philosophy departments in the USA, and the dissemination of his work in that country is better explained by how elite places such as Yale's literature department appreciated Derrida's 'high culture' as well as the tools he offered to make a 'criticism of science' (ibid. p. 614).

Following this trend, other scholars including some outside sociology, have produced detailed works about the making of important philosophers. For instance, the Jewish intellectual historian Eugene Sheppard examines 'the making of Leo Strauss as a Jewish thinker and political philosopher' having special consideration of his experience as a refugee: 'between the Jewish and the philosophical, the ancient and the modern, Berlin and New York, Strauss developed an intellectual project and distinctive hermeneutic remarkable for its complexity and intrigue' (Sheppard, 2006, p. 1). Another interesting case can be found in a

study by the feminist theorist Toril Moi about the making of Simone de Beauvoir as an intellectual woman. Moi examines Beauvoir's conviction that 'there is no divorce between philosophy and life', and studies 'her fiction, memoirs, personal writing (letters and diaries) and philosophy' (Moi, 2008, p. 2) to reconstruct the French intellectual landscape by means of narrating the perils and lessons of one of its most recognised women.

More recently, two studies have broadened the spectrum of sociological works about specific philosophers. On the one hand, Neil Gross documents Rorty's 'journey from being an intellectually precocious adolescent in the schoolyards of rural New Jersey [to becoming] "the most influential contemporary American philosopher," as he was dubbed in a feature-length profile in the New York Times Magazine in 1990' (Gross, 2008, p. 5). In his book, and by means of the figure of Rorty, Gross attempts to understand 'some of the social processes that intellectuals encounter and navigate as they develop their ideas' (ibid.). On the other hand, we can find Baert's study on Sartre and the 'existential moment'. He 'focus[es] on the period, in France, when Sartre rose from relative obscurity to public prominence', i.e., 'a short time span, one in which not just Sartre, but also his philosophy caught the public imagination' (Baert, 2015, p. 1). Baert is particularly interested in how in the mid-1940s, after the Nazi occupation of France and the intellectual confrontation between collaborationists and the resistance, 'Sartre rearticulated his philosophical position to the situation at hand', removing technical language from his existentialist position whilst reframing 'the experience of the war in ways that helped to express and alleviate the trauma' of the French society (ibid. p. 77).

Finally, I would like to point out that there is also some sociological literature on the making of leading theorists and intellectuals in sociology, such as Talcott Parsons (Camic, 1992) and Charles Wright Mills (Aronowitz, 2012). Huebner's study on George Herbert Mead is a notable example. Huebner addresses the problem as follows: Mead did not write *Mind, Self and Society* (whose publication is based on notes of the students attending his lectures) and he was not a sociologist (he was mostly a philosopher and scientist); although he became posthumously famous in that field. Thus, 'Mead is known in a discipline in which he did not teach for a book he did not write' (Huebner, 2014, p. 3). This takes us back to issues related to the boundaries between sociology and philosophy: Where are they? How were they historically constructed? These are the questions that have to be answered whenever such demarcation arises.

To sum up, seen as a whole, the abovementioned studies provide rich empirical materials and theoretical discussions that have to be considered in future research in the field. As well, the way they deal with biographical and anecdotal events with sociological trends has been inspiring for this thesis. However, as works that have the intention of generalising the

intellectual life of philosophers from in-depth observations of only one philosopher at the time, these authors tend to fail on what William James calls a *salto mortale* (James, 1987, p. 900), i.e., jumping to reach a distant object, usually on the other side of an abyss. In addition, there seems to be a perpetuation of the sociological bias of focusing only on people who are already famous, thus dismissing, making invisible, and neglecting the relevance of a wider range of actors in the field. My own attempt is to attend to a broader range of practitioners, and to include the voices of both famous and mostly unknown (and many times unnoticed) practitioners.

Proposal: A Socio-ethnographic approach to philosophy

Here is the place to say that all the efforts coming from the sociology of philosophy must be recognised as genuine and valuable attempts to understand either what philosophers do or what the particularities are that make the domain of philosophy what it is. The proliferation of sociological studies of this type has to be seen as an important achievement of human intellectual labour producing and making sense of all sorts of theories and materials which provide insights into the social tissue growing in and around the work of philosophers. In my view, these four approaches have to be seen as empirical-theoretical layers that can be drawn upon as critical resources when doing analyses of ethnographic observations, documents and interviews concerning philosophy and philosophers.

Adding an ethnographic layer to the sociology of philosophy, as I attempt to do in this thesis, will necessarily include documenting archives and texts produced by practitioners of the discipline while concurrently looking at the communications between philosophers, their interactions, the materials at their disposal (including texts), their narratives, life choices, working conditions and dissemination of their work. In this regard, here I advance my previous concern with Bruno Latour's *pragmatic realism* and my attempt to understand human forms of knowledge that are, simultaneously, 'object-oriented', 'practical' and 'circulatory' (see Salinas, 2013, 2016b). Realism here does not mean either a comprehensive review or an extensive empirical enquiry; it means to follow events, materials, assemblages, and people, thinking about what the enacted situations reveal about a particular realm of practice, in this case philosophy. Again, here I do this considering the limits (and advantages) of my condition as a curious traveller. I am not a native philosophy practitioner, therefore, there are many things that escape my eye but others that I may be more likely to see than those practitioners embedded in playing the game of philosophy. For many years I have been struck by Latour's

notion of 'circulating reference'. This concept tells us that 'reference is not simply the act of pointing or a way of keeping, on the outside, some material guarantee for the truth of a statement; rather it is our way of keeping something constant through a series of transformations' (Latour, 1999, p. 58). Of course, it is important to remind ourselves that Latour made such observations in the context of scientific practice. This said, I strongly believe that following the human labour involved in maintaining constant forms throughout changing materialities is something applicable to other regimes, such as the philosophical one. Therefore, I propose to follow practices related to philosophy together with the materials produced by such practice. I want to see how the practice of philosophy constitutes a realm where authors, researchers, teachers and students make their trajectories¹⁸ which further involves thinking about the pragmatic processes encompassed in the encounters between philosophy and what is regarded as *not philosophy*. For instance, policy texts, desks, decorations or institutional brochures.

A 'realist' ethnographically-informed sociological account of philosophy must adopt a position in relation to how the existing sociology of philosophy has studied the social conditions of philosophy. I do not want to 'reinvent the wheel'; my intention here is to complement the current and past efforts of my colleagues by giving an ethnographical orientation to my analyses. Keeping that in mind, I would like to present three challenging considerations to my approach:

1. An ethnographic sociology of philosophy should be able to question the realm of existing questions.

A lesson from *philosophical sociology* lies in the importance that questions have for both philosophy and sociology. A challenge to overcome in this regard is the temptation of attending only to what is recognised as 'good' philosophy. A more realistic conception of philosophy can only be achieved if we also take the time to look at philosophy that is not valued as 'good', and explore the set of practices that lead to some texts, authors, thoughts and statements being considered as valuable while others are not. In this sense, a pressing issue is to find ways of observing 'big' and 'small' questions in their context of production and query what has not been asked when raising such questions. The purpose of doing so is to position the practice

¹⁸ In similar fashion to how others have observed the transformations of medical students throughout their formal studies (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1977).

of philosophy in its broader cultural context and in relation to different practices of boundary-making.

2. Ethnographic sociology of philosophy is committed to situating philosophy as part of society and its mundane institutions.

As sociology of knowledge has shown since Mannheim, ideas and knowledge can be studied as aspects of the construction of society. Thus, the scholarship interested in showing that philosophy is indeed a social domain (where there is a place for social processes, the invention of traditions, institutional constraints, among others) ends up finishing Marx's proposal of philosophy as being something that 'must be inverted' after putting it 'on its head' (Marx & Engels, 1976, p. 103).¹⁹ However, Marx's suggestion has been taken up through armchair classificatory distinctions by sociologists who still need to walk to the philosophy department to observe the social life that mediates its inputs and outputs. In this regard, I would argue that this literature has received only scant attention, and has not stimulated a more ethnographic approach that can trace unexpected dynamics that can help create a livelier picture of intellectual practice. For instance, a look at the REF impact agenda in philosophy reveals important ways in which research and organisational practices within the discipline of philosophy can be re-shaped by the intervention of external technologies (see Chapter 6).

3. The greatest challenge for the sociology of philosophy is its scale

Randall Collins' obsession with 'macro' sociological trends is a tempting alternative, which I attempt to resist. The same goes for its opposite, that is, the in-depth 'micro' studies of *the* intellectual *making* of individuals. The ethnographic approach to the practice of philosophy that I am pursuing here has to consider the macro and the micro, but from the viewpoint of the concrete sites of practice and interaction that happens 'in-between', i.e., the space where philosophers interact with each other and through the mediation of computers, curricula, texts, tradition, and so on.

¹⁹ While I speak of philosophy, Marx was more precisely referring to *dialectics*. The head he refers to was Hegel's.

Closing remarks: the socio-ethnographic strategy

Overall, a socio-ethnographic strategy for the study of philosophy allows us to navigate throughout the blind spots of the sociological approaches outlined above while at the same time recognising their achievements as well as using their resources. However, this research is not only a form of archival practice, but it also has an interest in seeing the concrete movement of the networks of materially-grounded practices containing the forms taken by philosophy at present.

As regards philosophy, I would like to highlight two pieces of work that provide ethnographic accounts with similar characteristics to what I intend to do. The first one is a book chapter by Gross and Fleming (2011), who describe the processes undertaken by a political philosopher of the USA during the preparation of a paper for an international academic conference in France. Particularly interesting are the different types of materials that the authors elicited from the philosopher they followed, who 'agreed to be interviewed by [them] multiple times, share copies of all communications relating to the paper he was writing, and provide [them] with drafts showing its progression' (ibid. p. 158). Additionally, the nature of the elements they highlight through their research is notable. First, they considered the biographical background that shows how the professor got involved in philosophy. Second, they followed the paper preparation process since he applied to the conference until the aftermath of such an experience. Third, they regarded his application as a strategy he followed to pressure himself into writing and ordering his ideas with a fixed deadline in mind. Fourth, and possibly more interestingly, they speculated on whether the social class background of the presenter had anything to do or not with how the public at the conference received his paper. In addition to this, the ethos of this small-scale research is close to what I propose to do here. As they say, 'if the history of science and technology studies serves as any guide, attention to social practices should position sociologists of ideas and others to formulate more robust and realistic accounts of the origins of social knowledge and of its circulation and effects' (ibid. p. 175).

Cheryl Gelsler's excellent *Academic Literacy and the Nature of Expertise. Reading, Writing, and Knowing in Academic Philosophy* (1994) is another study in this line of inquiry. She argues that 'the cultural movement of professionalization has used the technology of literacy to sustain claims to professional privilege, creating a *great divide* between expert and layperson' (ibid. p. xiii). Interestingly, she compares reading and writing practices of

newcomers and professional philosophers, pointing out the difference created by the set of rhetorical apparatuses managed by the latter (ibid. p. 185ff). She even shows through a historical comparison of the structure and contents of the writing strategies pursued by the USA's philosophers William James (1842-1910) and Richard Bernstein (1932-), that the professionalisation of philosophy during the 20th century radically changed the relationship between the writer and the general public. Old-style James 'could not pass on this task to others for he believed in the need to listen to the general public, to hear their judgement and to understand their concerns'. Bernstein, however, does not show such concern as the contemporary relationship between the academic and the general public is 'one of production and consumption' and, in such circumstances, there is no need for 'a direct interaction between the academic community and the general public' (ibid. p. 167). For Gelsler, these cases depict that the gap separating philosophy experts and laypersons have extended over time. These insights offer interesting possibilities for thinking about the doings of academic philosophy. They also show the relevance of doing ethnography while simultaneously taking into account texts produced by philosophers, and highlight relevant aspects of the history of the discipline.

Finally, my view is that the use of ethnographic tools in the sociology of philosophy is a necessary move before conjecture and speculation. When sociology is used to understand only how some philosophers become famous and prestigious, it repeats the story of the 'special' outlier. This constantly obscures or erases the ordinary lives of the many people that form the philosophical field, with their motivations, ambitions, disappointments, objects, transitions, knowledge forms and ways of living their lives. Like Latour (1993), I aim to bring back the associations of 'hybrids' to a reality denied by constant practices of purification. The combination of sociology and ethnography can become a strong heuristic to do so.

Overview of the chapter

In this chapter I have proposed a socio-ethnographical approach to study philosophy. I started by presenting the different sociological works concerned with the doings of philosophers and the composition of the field of philosophy. I looked at how sociological research has tackled the question of the doings of philosophy, highlighting four approaches: philosophical sociology, sociological accounts of the philosophical domain, Randall Collins' sociology of philosophies, and in-depth studies concerned with the making of intellectuals. With this literature as a backdrop, the proposed ethnographic approach looks at the in-site interactions

between philosophers. It is also a call to attend to their narratives, life choices, working conditions and the dissemination of the work of not only renowned, prestigious scholars, but also of the many others constituting the field of philosophy. All in all, in this chapter I argue that an ethnographical account of philosophy is a necessary move to know more about and make sense of the *reality* of philosophy.

CHAPTER 2

METAPHILOSOPHY AND CRISIS

Revealing what is social in philosophy

It has always been difficult for philosophy to define itself, to articulate its nature and purpose, and to state its distinctive relation to other cultural practices.

Michael McCarthy (1990, p. xi)

The relevance of metaphilosophical texts

At the end of the previous chapter I alluded to the relevance of looking at the different types of materials produced by philosophers. Amongst them, I would argue that *texts* are an important and obvious practical material in the academic life of a philosopher because many of the non-speaking tasks involved in their daily routines have to do with reading and writing in different ways. These texts are the result of their daily practice and form a large body of literature available to the public; the sole intent of reading it all would be a nonsensical task in terms of magnitude and complexity. Of course, not all these texts are crucial to achieving the aims of this research. The use of an ethnographically informed sociology – one that attempts to make sense of what philosophers do by observing their practice – can be justified if we examine in-depth only those texts that have been written by philosophy practitioners to understand themselves and their activity. In this regard, I will focus on some of the papers, books and communications expressing the boundaries (or margins) that philosophers have drawn around their discipline and on texts documenting their expectations about what philosophy should or could be and in some cases what it should not.

In this respect, I explore what contemporary philosophers call *metaphilosophical texts*. As I show in this chapter, these texts account for a *philosophy of philosophy*,²⁰ that is, a more reflexive type of philosophy that attempts to explain itself in the language of philosophy (although it sometimes relies on a broader set of resources).²¹ This literature has to be regarded for what it is: the product of concrete actions done by some of the practitioners of philosophy; therefore, a material manifestation of their research and writing practices. I would argue that, as such, these texts have intrinsic ethnographic value.²²

I see texts as ethnographical materials in my research because the studied practitioners are concerned with writing as the production of textual materials that they recognise as 'philosophical' as well as with the circulation of said texts and those produced by others. Moreover, I see the texts produced by philosophy practitioners as *documents*, because they 'provide a ready-made ground for experimentation with how to apprehend modernity ethnographically' (Riles, 2006, p. 2). In this regard, I believe that documenting these texts is as valuable as gathering oral narratives and conducting direct observation of actions.

Many documents about a more reflexive type of philosophy of philosophy can be found in all sort of physical and digital formats. For instance, and considering British resources only,

²⁰ However, authors such as Timothy Williamson will stress the difference between a 'philosophy of philosophy' and 'metaphilosophy', preferring the former term over the latter: 'I also rejected the word "metaphilosophy." The philosophy of philosophy is automatically part of philosophy, just as the philosophy of anything else is, whereas metaphilosophy sounds as though it might try to look down on philosophy from above, or beyond' (Williamson, 2007, p. ix). Unlike Williamson, I embrace the ambiguity of the term *metaphilosophy*. As I show in this chapter, the tensions of the prefix *meta*, somewhere between being *about* and *beyond* philosophy, is what allows the development of the sociological aspects of philosophy. Such richness cannot be found; it is somehow covered by a perfectly tautological philosophical project such as Williamson's.

²¹ Sociologically speaking, their perspective resembles the systemic problem of 'self-referential systems' and their creation of 'self-descriptions' (see Luhmann & Fuchs, 1988). Of course, a clear difference between them is that metaphilosophers usually have an explicitly normative programme, while straight-forward luhmannians would neglect being normative.

²² With this in mind, my attempt to move away from this has to be seen as an attempt to avoid the limitations of looking at these texts through the light of *ethnographies as text* (Marcus & Cushman, 1982). Such a view is too concerned with the reflection on how an ethnographer produces his/her *own* ethnographic text in the context of a spectrum of other texts manufactured with ethnographic aims in mind. The problem of the latter is that ethnographers end up being more interested in the manufacture of their own text than in the reading of the texts offered by the culture under study. This is the reason why Bourdieu criticises the traditional *observatory participation* as being contradictory: the ethnologist tends to 'play the game as a game' only because he or she wants to get out of it to 'tell it' [*pour le raconter*] to other social scientists (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 57). Because of the significance that texts have for philosophy practitioners, here I cannot *a priori* disregard the texts offered by the culture I am studying.

there are about 2,400 highly informative entries about authors, institutions, departments, problems and figures included in the four volumes of *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British Philosophy* (2006)²³ in addition to other sources such as the handy *Keywords* by Raymond Williams (1976). In addition, there are several introductory books to philosophy that, with their pedagogical-disciplinary aims, contain the re-statement of the conventions and conflicts of philosophy practitioners who seek to invite newcomers to what, allegedly, are the problems of philosophy (to mention a few, Baggini & Fosl, 2003; Double, 1999; Garvey & Stangroom, 2012; Grayling, 1998; Nagel, 1987; Philosophy Panel, 2000).

As I show below, there are many types of metaphilosophical writing, that is, texts with different aims in mind and which offer distinct forms of metaphilosophical value. Here, I believe three manifestations of metaphilosophy (philosophical utterances, autobiographies and intra-sociological accounts) can lead us to understand better what is social in philosophy. Seen as a whole, they may be conceived as powerful tools to address the problem of philosophical self-delusion, i.e., the inherited belief, overcome by many philosophers but still persistent in the field, about philosophical problems being more important than those suggested by other knowledges. But more concretely, for philosophy, they can provide us of the means to evade the illusions that are prevalent in any social game (football, chess, philosophy, science, religion, politics, engineering, etc.). In this I am following Bourdieu (1990, p. 66), who conceives '*illusio* in the sense of investment in the game and the outcome, interest in the game, commitment to the presuppositions [...] of the game'. In other words, I am claiming that certain metaphilosophical manifestations coming from within philosophy enable us to think further about the structuration of the field of philosophy in ways that many times go unnoticed or are deliberately ignored by the actors invested in playing the game of philosophy.

Philosophical utterances, autobiographies and intra-sociological accounts are all interesting metaphilosophical manifestations in the sense of *adding* new layers of complexity to philosophy. Respectively, they can show the variety of tasks conceivable for philosophy, explain a philosopher through the lens of a life within philosophy, or criticise some of the persisting sociological states of affairs affecting the discipline. By studying these dimensions, it is possible to identify some problems of philosophy that are not only philosophical.

Before going any further, I would like to discuss one pressing issue. It is crucial to understand more clearly what the metaphilosophical problem is. Thus, it is necessary to

²³ A crucial material informing many aspects of Chapter 3.

explore the origins of the term, as well as the disagreements and tensions that it has created between philosophy practitioners. Following this, I focus on the core aspect of this chapter: a characterisation of certain types of metaphilosophical texts. Interestingly, the study of these documents reveals the various sociological aspects emerging from observing philosophy as practised by philosophers. In addition, an important challenge here is to make sense of the reach and plausibility of a 'metaphilosophical crisis' that, according to some authors, is currently affecting contemporary philosophy. After this, I conclude with a discussion of how metaphilosophy can help us reveal some of the sociological aspects lying at the heart of philosophy.

What is metaphilosophy?

In a one-page long contribution at the end of the first edition of the journal *Metaphilosophy*, Morris Lazerowitz claims to have coined the term 'Metaphilosophy' in 1940. In his note, he presents this notion as the 'investigation of the nature of philosophy, with the central aim of arriving at a satisfactory explanation of the absence of uncontested philosophical claims and arguments' (Lazerowitz, 1970, p. 91). In other words, for Lazerowitz, metaphilosophy is an area in which it is possible to inquire about the disagreements of philosophers in relation to what philosophy is. In Lazerowitz's formulation, this takes the form of a normative challenge for philosophers: 'the need to improve our understanding of philosophy, what it is and how it works, can no longer be in question for philosophers who are serious about their subject' (ibid.). For Lazerowitz, the seriousness of philosophy was at stake; he challenged philosophers to improve their understanding of what they did. A few years later, he continued such metaphilosophical work when he wrote the following:

Metaphilosophy is the investigation of *philosophical utterances*, with the special aim of reaching a satisfactory understanding of what in their nature permits the intractable disagreements which invariably attach to them. To an onlooker the disagreements might well appear to have built-in undecidability, and the assurance of philosophers who espouse rival positions to be nothing more than a delusive state of mind.

(Lazerowitz, 1977, p. 1, the emphasis is mine)

Thus, for Lazerowitz, a metaphilosophical inquiry is the study of the statements made about what philosophy is (its *utterances*). He is particularly concerned with what makes these utterances prevent philosophers from agreeing with regards to their most basic concerns. Interestingly, this version of Lazerowitz's account of metaphilosophy includes some preoccupation about how an outsider is likely to see the matter: for him or her, philosophers

would disagree on basic propositions and value distinct positions because they are 'in a delusive state of mind'. But are they? Also, who is this imaginary observer? Is such a diagnosis widely shared throughout society?

The challenge posed by Lazerowitz seems to be quite straightforward and I would argue that it may be presented in the form of three questions: (1) What is philosophy? (2) Why do philosophers disagree about what philosophy is? And, (3) what are the consequences of such disagreement? This programmatic version of metaphilosophy is not, however, an uncontested conceptualisation of metaphilosophy. To a certain extent, the disagreement about what metaphilosophy is gives rise to interesting *meta*-metaphilosophical remarks. As stressed by Reese (1990, p. 28), the prefix *meta* in the word 'metaphilosophy' makes this area of inquiry be understood either as a project 'about' or 'beyond' philosophy. In this sense, some authors suggest that the metaphilosophical discourse can be used to explain what philosophy is able to 'accomplish' (as Double, 1996, p. 19ff); others, inspired by Wittgenstein's attempt to *dissolve* philosophical problems, see it as a way to 'overcome' philosophy (as would be the case of Lazerowitz program, according to R. S. Cohen & Wartofsky, 1977, p. vii). This lack of basic agreement seems to give more richness to metaphilosophy: if we cannot agree on the *meta* of *philosophy*, this is then a place where it is possible to raise philosophical concerns about how to question philosophy.

At present, this still seems to be the case. Forty-three years after Lazerowitz's note in the journal *Metaphilosophy*, a group of authors highlighted the lack of expansion of the field of metaphilosophy when presenting the by-then only introductory book of this subject. For them, this lay in the 'neglect' of thinking, by philosophers, about 'what they are doing when they are doing it' (Overgaard, Gilbert, & Burwood, 2013, pp. 4–5). Moreover, such 'neglect' seems to be closely related to a sense of 'embarrassment' on behalf of practitioners of the discipline in relation to the question 'What is philosophy?' as this implies that they '*do not know*' what the answer to this is (ibid. p. 3). Furthermore, this question is likely to arise when a philosopher attempts to communicate what they do to people who have no familiarity with their discipline. This is what is humorously described in the following imaginary scene:

the professional philosopher meets a stranger at a party and in response to the question "so what do you do?", she replies, and the stranger, momentarily emboldened and otherwise at a loss for anything to say, asks, "so what's the meaning of life then?". At this point a little nervous giggling is followed by the philosopher's anxious attempt to either change the subject as quickly as possible or to explain with an embarrassed smile that the academic study of philosophy is not really about such things.

(Critchley, 2001, p. 3)

The situation above illustrates that philosophy appears to be a grey area to both the philosopher and others, which also highlights the importance of reiterating the metaphilosophical question: what is philosophy? Such a question is in itself a philosophical one and, owing to the fact that 'philosophers often disagree in what it is that makes them so' (Overgaard, Gilbert, & Burwood, 2013, p. 4), there seems to be no way of justifying any kind of definitive and uncontested answer to it. However, from the viewpoint of a curious traveller, it is possible to explore some cases in the plethora of answers to what philosophy is and navigate the places to which they lead us. Hopefully, and different to what Lazerowitz thinks about non-philosophers, I will encounter much more than just a collection of practitioners in a 'delusive state of mind'.

A characterisation of metaphilosophical materials

Metaphilosophy can be conceptualised as a discourse 'about' or 'beyond' philosophy. In both circumstances – as a reference to philosophy or as attempting rupture – it needs to materialise its metaphilosophical condition. Metaphilosophical research uses pre-existing texts that say something about what philosophers do and think about, while, at the same time, they themselves are producers of new materials that document the observations of people doing metaphilosophy. Here I need to clarify that what I call *metaphilosophical materials* refers to any kind of materials produced with an aspect of the philosophical field in mind and that *indicates* something about the doings of philosophers. As I noted earlier, the usual form of metaphilosophical materials is the *text*; however, other kinds of devices holding metaphilosophical value, such as formulas, codes, statues, memorials, images and so on, also fall within this rubric.

Let me suggest a logical beginning from which we might inquire into metaphilosophical materials while exploring their sociological potential. Emulating certain aspects of the logic followed by Hegel in his *Philosophy of Right* (2001),²⁴ I would like to start from an *abstract* and *undetermined* aspect of metaphilosophy, one which is usually referred to by philosophers as

²⁴ Despite the fact that I am aware that, as shown by Derrida, the whole of the project of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* can be read with a more critical eye with the help of specific metaphilosophical texts (a letter and a report), revealing some of his more personal and conservative interests in relation to the State, Pedagogy and the University Curriculum (see Derrida, 2002).

metaphilosophy, i.e., utterances about what philosophy is and does. As it was for Hegel, my aim is not to stay at that level of abstraction, but to exceed it by moving down through a gradient of abstraction in order to address the elements accounting for the concrete realisations of philosophy in social life. In so doing, I find autobiographies and intra-philosophy sociological accounts as holding metaphilosophical value. As I show in this section, the three kinds of metaphilosophical texts I would like to account for here, i.e., utterances, autobiographies and intra-sociological accounts, say something interesting about what philosophers do in relation to philosophy.

However, before going into the specific kinds of metaphilosophical texts, I would just like to mention that these do not encompass all the existing metaphilosophical materials at our disposal. The necessarily incomplete list below shows us the existence of many other metaphilosophical materials:

- Book collections
- Book covers
- Booklets
- Brochures from philosophy departments
- Documents from philosophy assessment panels
- E-mails related to philosophy written by philosophers
- Correspondence between philosophers
- Minutes from meetings between philosophers
- Personal libraries
- Philosophy blogs
- Philosophy conference programmes
- Philosophy encyclopaedias
- Philosophy guides
- Philosophy introductory textbooks
- Philosophy section of a university library
- Statistics produced about philosophers
- Study spaces
- Syllabus from philosophy modules
- Webpages from philosophy organizations

Whilst I will go back to only some of the materials in this list later in the chapters to follow, they all have explanatory potential for future research. Next, I go through a very specific collection of metaphilosophical texts: philosophical utterances, autobiographies and intra-philosophy sociological accounts.

1. Philosophical utterances

Philosophical Utterances are texts written by philosophy practitioners about the boundaries, categories, concepts and aims that delimitate what philosophy is and how it should be practised. In this sense, philosophers regularly refer to ‘metaphilosophical programs’, ‘his [or her] metaphilosophy’, ‘metaphilosophical theories’ or ‘metaphilosophical strategies’ (see these uses, for instance, in McCarthy, 1990, pp. 32, 104, 105, 141). Definitions such as these usually have strong normative content as they provide orientations as regards how philosophy could be practised better in the future; these texts say something about how philosophy should be carried out or what it could be of it if done ‘correctly’. Below I present different attempts by thinkers who may personally regard themselves as professional philosophers (or not) and who offer indications about philosophy in the sense described above.²⁵

The German philosopher Michael Hampe distinguishes two types of philosophy, the ‘doctrinal’ and the ‘nondoctrinal’. For him, the former is ‘close to the explanatory sciences and, in the ideal case, establishes new programs of explanation’; the latter, on the other hand, ‘frequently transitions into belles lettres’ and ‘ideally thinks about and criticizes circumstances that exist in the world behind successful explanatory projects’ (Hampe, 2018, p. xi). Bernard Williams, an analytic philosopher with humanist sensibilities, highlights another aspect. For him, the aim of philosophy is ‘offering arguments and expressing oneself clearly’ (B. Williams, 2006, p. 180). William Charlton, in his books on the *ambitions* of analytic philosophy, claims that ‘philosophy is the systematic applying [sic] of the resources of a civilization to the deepest problems that engage the human intellect’ (Charlton, 1991, p. 1) while Simon Critchley, a continentally-driven philosopher, sees in philosophy the ‘attempts to unify or at least move closer together questions of knowledge and wisdom, of philosophical truth and existential meaning’ (Critchley, 2001, p. 9). This brief overview shows five different versions of what the task of philosophy is: ‘explaining’, ‘critique of what is hidden’, ‘offering arguments and clarity’, ‘systematic application of resources’ and ‘attempts at unifying different kinds of questions.’ I would like to continue developing this list as we proceed.

For the logician Graham Priest, and expanding on what Hampe sees as a non-doctrinal view, ‘philosophy is precisely that subject where anything can be challenged and criticized’ (Priest, 2006, p. 203). Such is also the case in Theodor Adorno’s critical theory. Differentiating

²⁵ More utterances and even philosophers laughing or remaining silent when confronted by the question ‘What is philosophy?’ can be found in Edmonds & Warburton (2010, pp. xiii–xxiv).

himself from the depiction of philosophy by 'positivist' Anglo-Speaking analytic philosophers and the 'ontological' German phenomenologists, Adorno argues that 'philosophy must dissolve the semblance of the obvious as well as the semblance of the obscure' (Adorno, 2005, p. 12). He further posits that amidst a 'delusional system of reality', the only kind of philosophy that is still necessary is the one that understands itself 'as critique, as resistance to the expanding heteronomy, even if only as thought's powerless attempt to remain its own master' (ibid. p. 10).

In *What is Philosophy?* (1994), French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari present a view of philosophy that is neither contemplation, reflection nor communication. *Not contemplation*, since if that were the case 'things themselves' would be the creators 'of their own concepts'; *not reflection* suggests that 'nobody needs philosophy to reflect on anything';²⁶ and *not communications*, suggests that philosophy aims to create concepts rather than 'consensus' (ibid. p. 6). Confronting such views, they conceive philosophy as the discipline whose objective is to 'create concepts that are always new' (ibid. p. 5). Such concepts, which are not 'discursive formations' nor 'propositions' (ibid. p. 22), relate to the task of extracting 'an event from things and being', and 'to always give them a new event' (ibid. p. 33).

In an interview, the historian of systems of thought Michel Foucault says that philosophy should be about 'the displacement and transformation of the frameworks of thinking', 'a way of reflecting on our relationship to truth' and 'a way of interrogating ourselves' (Foucault, 1997, p. 327). In brief, Foucault sees philosophy as an examination of the historically specific conditions and possibilities creating the knowledge distinctions between what is true and false as well as a way of questioning our own relationship with such contingency. Additionally, in *The Uses of Pleasure* he declares that for him the essay 'is the living substance of philosophy'. However, this would only be the case 'if we assume that philosophy is what it was in times past, i.e., an "asceticism," *askēsis*, an exercise of oneself in the activity of thought' (Foucault, 1990, p. 8).

A similar issue is raised by the phenomenologist Peter Sloterdijk when he discusses the notion of *askēsis* to argue against what he calls the 'romantic loser', i.e., those who follow

²⁶ Or as put by Arendt, in a lucid way: 'All the metaphysical questions that philosophy took as its special topics arise out of ordinary common-sense experiences; "reason's need" – the quest for meaning that prompts men to ask them – is in no way different from men's need to tell the story of some happening they witnessed, or to write poems about it. In all such reflecting activities men move outside the world of appearances and use a language filled with abstract words which, of course, had long been part and parcel of everyday speech before they became the special currency of philosophy' (Arendt, 1981, p. 78).

the Socratic conviction that ‘philosophical life is to die philosophically’ (Sloterdijk, 2012, p. 42). Evoking ‘how Greek athletes defined their training’, he presents philosophy as ‘the life of practice’, by which he means the mixed domain that ‘seems contemplative without relinquishing characteristics of activity and active without losing the contemplative perspective’, in addition to being a theoretical-practical hybrid that can be related to practices such as ‘exercise’, getting ‘into shape’, ‘fitness’, among others (ibid. p. 6).

Only by introducing some additional authors and the views that they embrace or criticise, our list of tasks for philosophy has grown considerably: ‘asceticism’, ‘attempts at unifying different kinds of questions’, ‘communication’, ‘contemplation’, ‘creation of concepts’, ‘critique and resistance to heteronomy’, ‘critique of what is hidden’, ‘displacement and transformation’, ‘essay’, ‘exercise of oneself’, ‘explaining’, ‘reflection’, ‘systematic application of resources’, ‘offering arguments and clarity’, ‘potentially challenge and criticize everything’, ‘the life of practice’, ‘the obscure’, ‘the obvious’ and ‘to die philosophically’. Such a list of commitments and possibilities for philosophy will certainly continue expanding if we add more authors’ views.²⁷ However, the list I have provided thus far is enough to make my case: philosophy has several conflicting practical, normative and functional accounts of itself. Of course, which of these accounts prevails and is most widely accepted at any given moment will be contingent upon the dispositions towards them in distinct cultural settings and in personal taste.²⁸ On their own, most of these utterances are incomplete for the purposes of my thesis. They treat the aims of philosophy in narrow and somewhat *idealised* ways.²⁹ This can certainly be regarded as a relevant *factum* about how philosophers account for themselves and their practice. However, the fact that these depictions – wittingly or unwittingly – neglect the social medium of philosophy, reduces them to being only one of the many elements to consider when studying what philosophers do when they do philosophy.

²⁷ But we must learn when to stop! On the impossibility of making a definitive listing of any social phenomena, see my review of Susen’s *The ‘Postmodern Turn’ in the Social Sciences* (2015), in Salinas (2016a).

²⁸ Hence why, for instance, I gave more space to think through Deleuze, Guattari, Foucault and Sloterdijk’s proposals than to others in this section. It is difficult to escape the deep biases and stylistic appreciations derived from our own educational experiences. Also, I do not want to hide them.

²⁹ Even the idea that philosophers are idealists is probably nothing more than a generalised idealisation repeated through generations. For instance, in this claim: ‘So the philosopher is, at heart, an idealist. Where there is wisdom, there is foolishness. But without apparent foolishness, there can be no wisdom’ (Lyons, 2018, p. 22).

In this sense, I would suggest that a metaphilosophical enquiry is incomplete if it relies only on abstract accounts to answer questions such as ‘what is philosophy?’.³⁰ There are many other experiential and social levels that need to be explored in order to depict a more realistic picture of philosophy. Returning to an aspect I mentioned in the introduction, what is crucial for me is to avoid the kind of problems that can be seen in works such as Maddy’s recent *What do Philosophers do? Skepticism and the Practice of Philosophy* (2017). This book, whose title can be said to be misleading, offers an abstract account of philosophical methods rather than a depiction of the actual doings of philosophers.³¹ My criticism of Maddy’s work highlights the need to consider the issue of writing in abstract terms and out of context. A challenge for my own research is precisely to avoid this temptation, which can undermine the development of a more realistic depiction of philosophers’ practice in the social world. On the contrary, it is important to identify the social themes and tensions as they are reflected in the daily lives of some people inhabiting and reflecting, from within, on the psychosocial world of philosophy.

2. Philosopher’s autobiographical texts

The second group of metaphilosophical texts I would like to explore are *philosopher’s autobiographical texts*. In broader terms, these are texts written in the first person by practitioners of the discipline. The style of these texts is usually less conceptual than the literature looking to define the tasks of philosophy as they dig deeper into much more personal areas of their lives as philosophers. The temporality of philosopher’s autobiographies is the past: through these writings, it is possible to find assemblages of memories in which the authors seem interested in connecting their thoughts when writing with what they have read, the way they see themselves, their experiences with philosophy (academic or not), and narratives about their origin. Anecdotes, interactions, subjective impressions about people,

³⁰ As put by Norrie (2018, p. 647): ‘there is no prospect of philosophical practitioners reaching a consensual answer to the metaphilosophical question, as eminent philosophers put forward incompatible definitions and show few signs of moving towards a consensus’.

³¹ Instead of an exciting description of the actual *practice* – or doings – of philosophers, the book addresses ‘an investigation of the arguments for radical scepticism about our knowledge of the external world’ and ‘an examination of the merits and interrelations of various ways of doing philosophy’ (Maddy, 2017, p. ix). In sum, the title is misleading for the sociologist of philosophy because it is an account of the epistemology of the mind that also happens to have some interest in the assessment of the *methods* allegedly used by practitioners of philosophy, but not an interest in the practice itself.

things and conceptions circulate through the pages of this kind of literature. As such, the philosophical autobiography depicts the world in the first person. In this sense, each autobiography can be thought of as a 'historical and cultural record of the "I"' (Saito, 2009, p. 265).

This becomes salient when reading the way some philosophy practitioners criticise how mainstream philosophy tends to dismiss autobiographical accounts. For instance: 'For a long time now a wedge has been driven between autobiography and philosophy. Autobiographical remarks are dismissed as merely personal remarks in philosophical discussion. By implication, a philosophical remark offers a sharp contrast; it is thought to be universal, objective, grounded' (Szabados, 1995, p. 63). However, and especially considering the fact that 'contemporary philosophical writing is largely impersonal and technical in style' (Mathien & Wright, 2006, p. 1), I subscribe to the idea that autobiographical accounts by philosophers reveal a series of elements about philosophy that cannot be found in formalised texts. As put by Mathien & Wright:

Even autobiographical passages that are more concerned with the broad social and cultural milieu of the writer can aid interpreters of the author's work. These will reveal patterns of friendship and hostility among writers, show which historical events are salient to the thinker and reveal facts that make allusive passages in the writer's other works clear. What is more, the concerns and obsessions that come through in such works reflect on the character of the writer. Collingwood sets forth his respectful rejection of the old Oxonian milieu and his hostility to fascism. De Beauvoir reveals that she found Simone Weil intimidating. Facts such as these are data for the serious scholar, and not only data about the autobiographer.

(ibid. p. 5)

However, I would argue that this type of resource is not only important for the scholar interested in interpreting or reconstructing an author's work, it is also useful for all those who are curious about understanding better what the business of philosophy is. In this sense, this literary genre offers broader depictions of the social praxis of philosophy than those relying solely on a view centred on tasks or functions. These texts thus offer a wider notion of the practitioner of philosophy: 'the author-subject of autobiographical texts is a self-conscious, social, gendered individual, not an isolated soul or a will trapped within a mechanistic body' (Wright, 2006, p. 14).

Without a doubt, philosophers' autobiographies can be considered metaphilosophical materials. This is so because they narrate, from the viewpoint of the philosopher, a story of what a life in which philosophy has an important role is about. Of course, these biographies have the potential of shedding light on what philosophy is as a practice, in contrast with more 'human' biographies, that reduce the view of philosophers to one of 'geniuses' typically found

in non-autobiographical texts written by third parties (for instance, Adorno the “last” genius, in Claussen, 2008; Rousseau the “restless” genius, in Damrosch, 2005; Wittgenstein the genius with a “duty”, in Monk, 1991).

However, when looking at philosophical autobiographies we also need to be cautious about some of the limits of this specific genre. For instance, Shlomit Schuster sees ‘philosophical autobiographies as documents typically providing two kinds of information: how philosophical thought processes influence the praxis of the philosopher, and how life situations influence philosophical thought processes’ (Schuster, 2003, p. 5). If this is correct, which I do believe to be the case in many autobiographies, we would have to accept that there exists a distinction between the nature of thinking and the praxis of living and, moreover, that their only relations are of causality. But this is problematic. If the autobiographies of philosophers trace such a distinction, it is then likely that this just reproduces an inherited self-image that sees the philosophical mind at odds with the world, as if there were a clear-cut distinction between the *context of discovery* and *context of justification*.³² Of course, the resistance to these categories may be informative itself. However, if one assumes that philosophy is overall a type of praxis, then thinking, living and doing are so attached to and intertwined with one another that it is better to get rid of any categorical distinction between them.

In spite of the above, and obviously considering that some autobiographies can be published as neat, exaggerated, or carefully selected texts about the self, I believe that autobiographies are nonetheless relevant materials to observe how philosophers account for what they do and what surrounds them. My interest in philosophical autobiographies comes from my times as a university lecturer back in Chile, where I was responsible for a module on the ‘Epistemology of the Social Sciences’ offered to BA students doing sociology. It was a 12-week module where I tried to introduce to my students the knowledge debates of both philosophy and sociology. I can still remember a particular student who used to miss many of my lessons but had interesting questions and participated actively in our debates when he did attend. A couple of times he told me that he was experiencing a difficult moment in his life and that, in spite of this, he really enjoyed the module. Unfortunately, he did not attend the final exam and failed as a result. To my surprise, some weeks later he knocked at my office. In spite of failing the module, he seemed happy when he gave me an old copy of Rousseau’s

³² Nevertheless, the contrary can be said just by pointing out how usual are the references to day-to-day practices such as writing and reading in these accounts. Sometimes they even show philosophers amid publishers, time constraints, university conditions, family life, among others.

The Confessions (1995) as a present. When I asked him why he was giving me that book, he said he had really enjoyed the module regardless of his results to then add: 'when I found this book about this philosopher talking about his life I kept on thinking that you, who are always talking about philosophy, would appreciate reading it'. I valued his gesture; he was right.

Through Rousseau's writing in the first person, I discovered the existence of a fascinating literature relating many aspects of the psychosocial world and culture supporting intellectual life. This interest grew stronger as I began the PhD of which this thesis is the result. I read many autobiographies written by British philosophers together with some autobiographical notes written by educational philosophers (Just to mention a few, Ayer, 1977; Barnett, 2015; Magee, 1997; McGinn, 2002; G. Rose, 2011; Russell, 1967; Suissa, 2006). In all of these, philosophy is shown as interwoven with a heterogeneous array of elements such as rock bands, university life, religion, cancer, high class, middle class and working-class families, sports, childhood experiences, and so on. Many of these accounts also provide telling insights into the idiosyncrasies of the intellectual elites of Oxbridge, specially from the 1960s onwards. Of course, the elite environment from where many of them speak and the fact that all these philosophers were people who succeeded in their field, says much about the limits of what I have found. Such accounts, some of which I will return to later – especially in chapter 4 – must be complemented with empirical narrations encompassing other universities and the situation of people who do not speak from privileged positions in the field. This notwithstanding, these are interesting sources to take into consideration.

3. Philosophy's intra-sociological accounts

Some literature and initiatives led by philosophers would differ from the primary aims of metaphilosophy. Rather than being interested in conceptual tasks for philosophy or in the philosophers' own descriptions of philosophy, these texts look at the *sociological* conditions of philosophy as experienced by its practitioners. In other words, these works contribute to either producing a cartography or to fostering collective projects that address the situation of philosophy in the real social world, taking into account human relationships, social inequalities, professional challenges, disputes, and critiques of some of the practices naturalised by the discipline. In temporal terms, these metaphilosophical materials do not signal the past nor the future. With Arendt, it is possible to situate them in a timeline that is 'broken in the middle', 'in the gap between past and future', i.e., a 'standpoint [that] is not the present as we usually understand it but rather a gap in time' (Arendt, 1961, p. 11). In other words, it could be said that the temporality of these intra-sociological accounts of philosophy is the shattering

experience that occurs when the promise of the future and the stability of the past are broken, i.e., when they become ‘a tangible reality and perplexity for all’, and therefore, ‘a fact of political relevance’ (ibid. p. 14).

In philosophy, this relates to experiences of exclusion or to the impossibility of being taken seriously when addressing certain philosophical perspectives in institutional settings. Indeed, there are many practitioners of philosophy who have negative feelings towards narrow-minded views of the discipline. One of them is Elizabeth Brake who, reflecting on the obstacles to ‘philosophical progress’, highlights the restrictions, communication, and gatekeeping problems currently existing in the dominant views of Anglophone philosophy:

the view of philosophy reflected in the dominant understanding of progress is unnecessarily restrictive and obscures the progress — and the contributions — philosophy does make. Questions beyond the “core” matter equally — and recognizing this might not only help with the marketing problem, but help the discipline claim the progress that has been made and, furthermore, improve the quality of philosophical research. Reducing gate-keeping will, I will suggest, improve philosophical reasoning — which is surely conducive to progress. Philosophical progress is tied to how we understand philosophy itself and to philosophy as a profession.

(Brake, 2017, p. 26)

In Brake’s view, there is a need for the discipline of philosophy to use ‘new philosophical devices’ and to have ‘greater openness [...] to methodological diversity and diversity in topics’ (ibid. p. 45). For her, it looks as if philosophy, as it is currently practised, is not very open to elements outside the commonly legitimised practice. The problem is that it excludes many practitioners, especially from minority groups coming from experiences that may be distant from that of the white, male, Anglo-Saxon philosopher. For instance, and again in the English-speaking context, Verena Erlenbusch develops an interesting taxonomy of the *foreigner* in philosophy that brings to the fore a series of injustices and exclusions affecting many practitioners: (1) those who work in a language other than their mother tongue (‘linguistic’ foreigners); (2) those who live and work in a country that is not their own (‘material’ foreigners); (3) those who occupy marginal places in the profession, for instance, for having studied at a less prestigious university (‘cultural’ foreigners); and (4) those whose work is not in line with the norms of justification of professional philosophy (‘epistemic’ foreigners) (Erlenbusch, 2018). In line with this, Kristie Dotson recognises the existence of a *culture of justification* as something limiting the diversity of professional philosophy:

In what follows, I gesture to a dynamic that is, in part, responsible for the relatively few numbers of diverse peoples in professional philosophy. I highlight that the environment of professional philosophy manifests symptoms of a culture of justification, i.e. a culture that privileges legitimation according to presumed commonly-held, univocally relevant justifying norms, which serves to amplify already existing practices of exceptionalism and

senses of incongruence within the profession. *Ultimately, I claim that the environment of professional philosophy, particularly in the U.S., bears symptoms of a culture of justification, which creates a difficult working environment for many diverse practitioners.*

(Dotson, 2013, p. 6)

All of these arguments highlight the importance of philosophers being aware of their surroundings: 'it is impossible, now more than ever', said Derrida in *his* present, 'to dissociate the work we do, within one discipline or several, from a reflection on the political and institutional conditions of our work' (Derrida, 1983, p. 3). For instance, the programme of *Field Philosophy* in the USA constantly complains about the philosophical community ignoring 'the institutional setting that philosophy has occupied since the creation of the modern research university' (Frodeman & Briggie, 2016, p. 1) and proposes studying its problems and trying new ways of relating philosophy to what lies outside the academy. Indeed, the institutional side of things is also something very interesting when studied as a practice. As with political issues, when philosophy becomes interested in these matters, it can become very sociological. Another example of this can be seen in a Master of Arts dissertation submitted to the Department of Philosophy at Queen's University in Canada where the candidate proposed, as I do here, a sociological understanding of philosophical knowledge and practice. His case study of a *departmental colloquium*, which he sees less as an educational event and more as a site of intellectual conflict, was taken by practitioners as an opportunity that came prior to the publication of a text to increase their intellectual status and capital (Doucet, 2003).

I would argue that approaches such as the ones addressed here take the form of sociological reflexivity coming from practical accounts to metaphilosophy. This is more directly articulated by Bob Plant, who considers 'that social-institutional factors play an important, albeit often neglected, role in the formation, development, and sustenance of individual philosophers and the sub-communities to which they belong' (Plant, 2017, p. 15). For him, this takes the form of a challenge for philosophers who want to better understand what philosophy is: 'broadly sociological considerations ought to figure more prominently in metaphilosophical inquiry' (ibid.). In his discussion, not only should sociological elements be considered by metaphilosophical work, but also 'biographical, psychological, and historical determinants [...] 'because we cannot assume that the question "What is philosophy?" must be answered in the abstract before it can be answered in the concrete' (ibid. p. 16). While I agree with his view, I

would also argue that these psychosocial and historical variables can be much more abstract than what they might seem at first sight.³³

Philosophy and crisis

If we consider that metaphilosophical texts can take forms other than philosophical utterances, a Pandora's Box is opened. A number of psychological uncertainties and sociological conflicts come out of it to depict a more complex picture of the realm of philosophy. As I suggested in the previous chapter, philosophy is not only philosophy but a whole assembly of heterogeneous materials that are *given* philosophical content by the historically and spatially situated practices of its practitioners. When seen from this broader perspective, philosophers have much less control over how philosophy is defined than when working in their *abstract laboratory* of words.³⁴

Metaphilosophy is the art of worrying about philosophy, i.e., the craft of being open to the ways of expressing something about or beyond philosophy. Therefore, for an ethnographically-oriented sociology of philosophy, metaphilosophy's materiality has to be conceived as a *datum* over preoccupations that are not only philosophical, but also part of the broader aspects of philosophers' lives. It can thus be said that they work as a record of the

³³ Searching for the semantic traces of the early meanings of the word abstraction in dictionaries, it is possible to find that the English noun "abstraction" has its roots in the Latin verb *abstrahere*, which means to "draw away" something ("Abstraction," 2006, p. 7). In this sense, abstraction is associated with removing something from one location and re-locating it in another. However, as Heidegger well observed, there are various cases where the pre-philosophical and pre-logical components of the spoken expressiveness of Ancient Greek gets lost when just relying on the Latin logics of a word (Heidegger, 2010, p. §165). The Greek root of this expression is even more powerful as *κλοπή* [klope], related to *κλέπτω* [klepto]; it literally means 'theft' (Woodhouse, 2010, p. 4). The latter meaning adds violence to the action of drawing away something, as the act of displacing is executed by something that forces the distance between an original location and the new placement of the object of concern. This displacement is a common experience in contemporary social life and not a special characteristic of a philosophical or intellectual realm. My point is that abstractions cannot be considered either purely eidetic or totally concrete. Their nature is like that of electrons as it is impossible to fix them in only one position. I understand abstractions as a pragmatic flow separating entities, both material and conceptual alike. The process of abstraction can be seen as making a channel connecting what was present and what seems absent.

³⁴ As put by Hampe: 'It is true, to be sure, that one also has experiences with philosophical texts and concepts. But philosophy does not produce its philosophically relevant experiences by itself in the form of constructed *laboratory experiences*' (Hampe, 2018, p. 32).

forces that, now and then, overwhelm practitioners of the discipline. To illustrate these uncertainties more thoroughly, in this section I refer to accounts that in the last few decades have referred to an alleged *crisis of philosophy*.

I understand a crisis as a wound in the social tissue, one 'challenging the consistency of institutional arrangements and intelligibility of things' as well as a moment 'revealing some kind of truth about the world that we are not completely aware of yet' (Cordero, 2017, p. 15). In philosophy, crises are moments where identity is at stake and, therefore, questions regarding *what philosophy is* and *what the "I" that practices philosophy is supposed to do* become important. Furthermore, crises discourses are sites in which to explore beyond the biases of day-to-day philosophical discourse and unravel the existence of sociological concepts working at the heart of philosophy.

From an ethnographic viewpoint, crises seem to be an opportunity wherein it is possible to see the traces left by metaphilosophical texts voicing something about the truth of philosophy. In what follows, I would like to take the discourse of 'crisis' as an example of metaphilosophical instances that expose how philosophy cannot escape society even if it tries; these crises are moments revealing aspects of what is social in philosophy. Searching for evidence of this, I explore different accounts by philosophers about this matter. As I will attempt to show, all of the four points of view that follow – no matter how different are – are indicative of sociological concepts in operation within philosophy.

1. Philosophical crisis as a product of a deep disagreement

In the Anglo-speaking world, the persistent disagreement concerning ultimate answers to the question of what philosophy is and what it should do has led to a very specific kind of diagnosis of the state of affairs of the discipline. Such a view suggests that there is a *crisis* in philosophy produced by trench warfare between two intellectual groups which see each other's projects as nonsensical. For instance, in 1989, the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the editors of an edited volume on *The Institution of Philosophy* argued that the discipline was being affected by 'profound disagreement at all levels', so big that there was not even agreement as to whether the discipline was going through a crisis or not.³⁵ Under such circumstances, they

³⁵ Hence why the subtitle of the volume is the question *A Discipline in Crisis?* instead of the affirmation *A Discipline in Crisis*. At that moment, the field was divided between practitioners seeing the situation

added: 'it seems that philosophy cannot be anything but self-reflective and self-searching; its self-questioning cannot be other than truly metaphilosophical' (Avner Cohen & Dascal, 1989, p. xiii). Following this view, a philosophical crisis would be an opportunity for metaphilosophical reflection. This would be so because it foregrounds the question of what philosophy is. In this sense, philosophical crises are circumstances where the sense of uneasiness allegedly felt by professional philosophers when having to account for what do they do is bracketed.

However, for such a possibility to arise, an intellectual challenge has to emerge (see R. Collins, 1998a). In the particular case of the crisis depicted in *The Institution of Philosophy*, the reflective discussions held between professional (analytical) philosophers were fostered by the 'rise of postmodernism' and a 'pluralistic revolt' against 'clubby practices by which leadership roles were distributed among professors in leading departments of philosophy' (McCumber, 2012, p. 1). This makes sense when taking into account that the volume was published exactly a decade after the publication of books such as Lyotard's *La Condition Postmoderne* (1979) and, perhaps more crucial for the Anglo-speaking debate, Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979). The impact and reception of the radical content of these books were still a major concern for philosophers ten years later. Furthermore, as Jay Mandt argued in the same collection, monistic analytical philosophers 'have failed to produce authoritative standards for judging philosophical work' because 'philosophical practice is inherently pluralistic' and, therefore, 'a single authoritative evaluation of philosophical merit' is not enough to account for such plurality (Mandt, 1989, p. 100).

More than three decades have elapsed since this so-called crisis, and philosophy continues. However, distinctions such as postmodern/modern, analytical/continental, monistic/pluralistic, *inter alia*, constantly remind us that there is a fracture at the heart of contemporary philosophy. In spite of this, these major divisions have not significantly undermined the field nor made the people on either side of the distinction abandon their philosophical projects. Each side has 'allies' in the publishing industries, their specific audiences and, overall, a medium that fosters their productivity. Notwithstanding, my point is that this *disagreement* in philosophy is something that can be understood sociologically: is about the social relations amongst individuals having unlike philosophical sensibilities and a common desire to differentiate from each other (see Rancière, 1999). The sense of crisis is

as 'merely one more metamorphosis *within* the tradition' and those considering it as 'a massive *breaking away* from that tradition' (Avner Cohen & Dascal, 1989, p. xiii).

felt in the ontological uncertainties that these divisions produce in practitioners working in a discipline fissured from the inside.

2. Philosophical crisis as a product of separation

A second sense of the notion of crisis inside philosophy responds to a broader sociological phenomenon that follows from disagreement amongst philosophers. Moreover, as I elaborate below, there is a perspective that claims that an important problem seems to be the *separation* experienced by practitioners of philosophy. This notion of crisis reflects neither the tensions between ways of conceiving the form, content and style of philosophy nor those between the intellectual challenges and antagonistic ways of conceiving the discipline. It rather reflects a broader social problem supposedly affecting many areas of philosophy. Recovering the Greek notion of *crisis* as ‘separation’,³⁶ John McCumber argues that philosophy is in crisis because of several simultaneous divisions:

- (1) *Separation from culture*: many philosophers are more concerned with being ‘interesting to themselves and each other’ and, therefore, keener to disconnect from other cultural concerns in society;
- (2) *Separation between philosophers*: the divide between analytical and continental philosophers and especially between ‘specialities’, as also happening with many other disciplines, narrows the philosophers’ mindsets, and leads them to ‘disregard the work of anyone outside their own microspecialty’;
- (3) *Separation from philosophy itself*: ‘contemporary philosophers do not care about good work that is being done even in their own fields, unless the work is done by people in their own (Anglophone) milieu — which means that they do not really care about those fields at all’ (McCumber, 2012, pp. 4–6).

According to McCumber, these three separations account for a major crisis in philosophy as they are problems present on various fronts concurrently. Overall, they depict a version of philosophy where many things seem to be disarticulated, without common elements bringing philosophers together. This resembles Marx’s notion of *alienation*, where workers are separated ‘from their productive activity’, from ‘the product of their labour’, ‘from their fellow workers’ and ‘from their own human potential’ (Ritzer, 2011, pp. 54–56). McCumber would

³⁶ According to McCumber, there is an older sense of the term *crisis* that is ‘connected with the root meaning of the associated Greek verb *krinō*—which means to separate or divide’ (2012, p. 4).

probably agree that at least some of the Marxian senses of the worker's alienation would be affecting philosophers.

Other authors tend to dramatise this view suggesting longer lists of aspects creating a sense of crisis in philosophy, further arguing that 'philosophy is in ruins' (Bunge, 2001, p. 224).³⁷ However, such extreme views can be easily contested in light of a large body of books and journals as well as departments, scholars and acts of resistance that today advocate for philosophy. Returning to McCumber's notion of separation, I suggest that it offers a hypothesis that invites us to reflect on contemporary social problems, that also affect philosophy – in later chapters I will show that this resonates with what happens in certain philosophical contexts of practice. But my point is the following: something social is revealed through this notion of separation each time philosophers are disconnected from considerations about their own profession and/or human relations.

3. 'Metaphilosophical crisis' as a by-product of a 'neoliberal university crisis'

Assuming philosophy is currently going through a *metaphilosophical crisis*, it can be said that the 'meta' not only refers to 'about' philosophy internally, but also to 'beyond' philosophy, that is, as something disturbing the institutional setting where philosophy is practised. Trakakis (2015) takes the latter view. For him, a *metaphilosophical crisis* has emerged at universities as the result of their transformation into corporations by an audit neoliberal culture that reduces value to 'calculations of wealth and productivity' (p. 293). The problem for Trakakis is that this would be something 'overlooked by the profession' of philosophy, raising an important number of questions:

What type of philosophy will it be possible to pursue in a university setting? What connection will academic philosophers have with the rich legacy bequeathed to them by the luminaries of the past? Philosophy, like anything else, is shaped to a large degree by the social and historical forces in which it is situated; but given the nature of these forces in our times, what was described earlier as "neoliberalism," and the

³⁷ Mixing sound and picky arguments, Bunge claims that philosophy is 'in ruins' and is in a desperate need of 'rational reconstruction' after suffering from a catastrophic crisis involving ten ailments: (1) excessive professionalization, (2) confusion between philosophising and chronicling, (3) mistaking obscurity with profundity, (4) obsession with language, (5) idealism, (6) exaggerated attention to miniproblems and fashionable academic games, (7) insubstantial formalism and formless insubstantiality, (8) fragmentarism and aphorism, (9) detachment from the intellectual engines of modern civilization and (10) living in the Ivory Tower (Bunge, 2001, pp. 215–220, 224).

university sector's capitulation to them, can philosophers working within this sector continue to produce work of a genuine philosophical nature?

(ibid. p. 296)

Here I do not attempt to discuss whether there is a 'genuine philosophical nature' somewhere beyond academia.³⁸ However, as happening in all of HE, much of what philosophers do inside universities can be seen as responding to productivity expectations set by others (REF, TEF, etc.), that is, as *fabrications* aiming to adapt to policy pressures (Ball, 2003, p. 224).³⁹ In this sense, the crisis could be understood as an effect of participating of a system increasingly colonising many aspects of professional autonomy. In addition, the current system of productivity creates competition between peers as well as separation between those 'who support and promote it, and even more who silently acquiesce, not wishing to place their careers and finances at risk' and those looking for ways to confront or resist it (Trakakis, 2005, p. 295; see Chapters 4 and 5 for fuller discussions). If there is a metaphilosophical crisis going on, it is surely the case that the profound changes lived by universities in the last few decades also affect some aspects of the doings of philosophy practitioners. A more radical version of this view even suggests that inside universities the 'traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry and debate has been replaced with an institutional stress on performativity' (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 313). To consider this 'replacement' as total is probably an exaggeration. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that, similar to other academics, professional philosophers experience, as a product of neoliberal reforms inside the system of HE, crisis and change in their working environments.

4. There is no crisis in philosophy, only the sacred/profane distinction

Stephen Norrie offers a totally different view on this matter. Confronting the diagnosis of a 'metaphilosophical crisis', he claims that 'in practice we speak of philosophy in a fairly unproblematic and stable way, in order to refer to a particular, administratively organised "subject," to be learned in school or university, and the activities associated with it' (Norrie, 2018, p. 649). The day-to-day reliance on the word 'philosophy' and the expectation of institutional bodies organising it could be considered arguments in favour of such a view.

³⁸ A thoughtful reflection on 'philosophy as a work on oneself' can be found in Fermeadois (2018).

³⁹ More specifically, fabrications are a response to the imposition of disciplinary performativity: 'a cynical compliance inherent in making up responses to performativity' (Ball, 2003, p. 224).

Furthermore, the routine activities constituting the discipline of philosophy are uncontested even though they work under certain presuppositions regarding what is philosophical and what is not:

Not only do the activities that constitute this discipline (holding a seminar, giving a lecture, organising a library section, and the like) seem to presuppose an ability to make judgements of relevance, to distinguish the philosophical from the non-philosophical, but they are generally conducted in a routine fashion, without pronounced confusion or disagreement – indeed, philosophers are notably disinclined to question them.

(ibid.)

In spite of the existence of a crisis in philosophy, Norrie argues, philosophers routinely work within an ‘unarticulated’, ‘underlying and implicitly agreed criterion for identification’, i.e., a *rule of recognition* (ibid. p. 650). Such a rule relies on a particular ‘mode of problematisation’, one constantly obstructing the metaphilosophical answer to the question of what philosophy is. For Norrie, the reliance is on an implicit yet ‘*general claim to apriority*’ consisting in (1) *interrupting* a given concern or activity, and (2) ‘posing a *more abstract* problem, which is claimed to be of prior significance’. This is what the author refers to as ‘metacritical questions’. The emergence of these claims is a common philosophical practice consisting of always pointing to something more fundamental that should be addressed prior to whatever it is the case (ibid. pp. 654-655).

The political problem resulting from this ‘general claim to apriority’ is that philosophers use it as the ‘demarcatory power to define the boundary between philosophical practice and its cultural environment’ (ibid. p. 655). In this regard, philosophy can be ‘defined by the establishment of a division’, one ‘comparable to that between the sacred and profane, between an apriori inquiry and all other intelligent activities, which are postponed until its completion’ (ibid.). From this it follows that the self-sacralization of philosophy through constant prioritisation of itself would result in a shared bias amongst philosophers: for them, philosophy is a more relevant business than any other human activity because *it comes first*. Furthermore, this could be construed as an element hindering the link between philosophy and society in the sense that philosophy struggles for the priority of *abstract conceptual knowledge* and sees an address to society and its problems as a secondary task. In sum, even if Norrie were right when asserting that there is no crisis in philosophy, the absence of crisis itself reveals a sociological aspect working inside philosophy. At least part of day-to-day philosophical practice supposes the distinction between the sacred and the profane which Durkheim (1995) recognised as the basic way of knowledge production in society and that, according to

contemporary sociologists of knowledge, still has an important role in framing the knowledge hierarchies of intellectual communities (Bloor, 1991; R. Collins, 1998a).

Closing remarks: ethnography and metaphilosophical materials

I will return to the aspects of the questions raised by the alleged crisis of philosophy in the following chapters. Here, rather than making any rushed judgement on these different diagnoses of crises in contemporary philosophy, I would like to highlight that at least four sociological concepts were attained through these metaphilosophical discussions regarding the idea of crisis. The category of crisis led us to problems which are deeply rooted in social interactions: *disagreement*, *separation* (alienation), *the neoliberal university* and the distinction *sacred/profane*. What all these concepts have in common is that they reveal themselves after examining the concept of crisis found in metaphilosophical materials and, in a sense, they are an expression of profound metaphilosophical concerns to which the discipline of philosophy is subjected.

We have now seen in more detail why metaphilosophical materials are valuable tools to understand different aspects of the practice of philosophy. If in the previous chapter I showed that there is plenty of philosophy going on in sociology, here I hope to have demonstrated that concurrently there is much sociology going on inside philosophy. These are the two sides of the same coin – a coin that has to be carefully examined to make sure that it is not a double-sided coin, like those used by magicians to trick us.

As someone not totally immersed in the discussion and game of philosophy, there are some advantages in reading metaphilosophical materials for me. For instance, the advice offered in introductory books can be seen in new ways from the viewpoint of a pseudo-foreigner with a critical eye. Usually, this kind of literature gives the reader, or to be more precise, the *ideal* reader – who is normally a first-year philosophy student or an aspiring philosopher – some guidance about how to engage in the study of philosophy. This is the case of the following invitation, written in one of these books after a heading *For the Student: Doing Philosophy*:

Your attempt to develop your own thoughts – to “do” philosophy as well as to read what others have done – is central to any study of philosophy. Philosophy, more than any other field, is not so much a subject as it is a way of thinking, one that can be appreciated fully only by joining in.

(Solomon, 2001, p. xi)

This statement suggests that philosophy is a particular ‘way of thinking’ that can only be ‘appreciated fully’ – as a totality or coherent whole – if one participates in the game of philosophy.⁴⁰ This is surely good advice for someone interested in ‘doing’ philosophy for themselves: it is clear that they should *try* to develop their own thoughts as well as learn from others. However, when reading Solomon’s advice, it is possible to see an explicit association between membership (‘joining in’) and valuing the field (a ‘full appreciation’). Here I would like to caution that, *there is more than meets the eye*. Thus, I follow Luhmann’s consideration of ‘the observer’s blind spot’, i.e., ‘the distinction that is operatively used in observation but not observed’ (Luhmann, 2002, p. 190). To be more precise, philosophy is affected by the same blind spots as any other human activity: philosophers cannot see the totality of the philosophical activity just by doing philosophy; their particular blind spot is what they do not see when looking at their activity and their peers’. Therefore, the relevance of observing what they observe when ignoring the blind spot of their observations.

Considering the above, the reading of metaphilosophical materials by a *sociologist of knowledge with ethnographic sensitivities and situated on the borderline of philosophy*, i.e., someone who is not a professional philosopher (not fully inside nor outside, but aware of my own blind spots⁴¹), can offer novel interpretations about the practice of philosophy. I consider that this adds realism to the description of philosophical activities in the sense that it creates a site for identifying some issues, tensions and practices that are not immediately transparent to many philosophers or that they do see but deem unworthy of in-depth examination. Such work is metaphilosophical in both directions as shown in Reese’s account: it is about philosophy (a sociology of philosophy) and, also, a way of trying to go beyond it (because it keeps being a sociology).

This research is metaphilosophical because it refers to philosophy while speaking from sociology – therefore, somewhere outside the rules of the standard game of philosophy, but deeply interested in understanding and making sense of what is going on there. In the next chapters, I approach this subject matter from a sociological ethnographic stance. I will combine

⁴⁰ Here the philosopher echoes Bourdieu (mentioned at the start of this chapter), for whom ‘there is no action [...] *without investment in a game* [un jeu] *and in what it is at stake* [enjeu], *illusio, commitment*’ (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 85, note 30). I explore this issue further in Chapter 4, when looking at trajectories of people who decided to enter the knowledge territory of philosophy in the UK.

⁴¹ I refer to knowing that I do not know something. For instance, I am aware that my peripheral position as non-philosopher and non-native English speaker excludes from having any chance of participating or knowing about many key meetings in the field in contrast, for instance, to central UK philosophy institutional figures such as Robert Stern or Barry Smith.

a range of metaphilosophical materials with some traditional methodologies coming from the social sciences (observation, document analysis, interviews, statistics, etc.) to identify themes and tensions as they are reflected in the daily lives of some of the people inhabiting and reflecting on the practice of philosophy. The effort to do so, which again should not be taken to be a comprehensive review of the practice of philosophy or a representative empirical survey, is what I think should be at the basis of a realistic description of the practice of contemporary philosophers in the UK. In my view, a first necessary step in this direction is to provide a temporal-genealogical overview from which to address the problem of the 'professionalisation of philosophy'. I do so in the next chapter.

Overview of the chapter

This chapter highlighted the relevance of metaphilosophical materials for an ethnographically informed sociology of philosophy. I have attempted to show that metaphilosophy is a reflective type of philosophy, one which generates materials *about* philosophy as well as *beyond* philosophy. Metaphilosophical materials can be said to be texts (or other types of materials) which indicate something about the philosophical field. Although they can take multiple forms, here I focus on three of them showing that philosophy can express itself in different registers within a gradient of abstraction: as utterance, as autobiography and as intra-sociological accounts. The last two are metaphilosophical materials that reveal many social problems that an enquiry relying only on philosophical utterances is likely to neglect. To test the idea that metaphilosophy can help us highlight social aspects of philosophy, I explore some contemporary conceptions about philosophy being in crisis. A brief revision of heterogeneous metaphilosophical positions expressing diagnoses of crises reveals problems which are deeply rooted in social interactions: *disagreement*, *separation* (alienation), *the neoliberal university* and the distinction *sacred/profane*. Considering that there is a point where metaphilosophy meets with sociology, I propose an ethnographically informed sociology of philosophy with arguments, questions and concerns to fuel, from a borderline position, the possibilities of research into what philosophers do.

CHAPTER 3

PROFESSIONALISATION AND SUSPICION

A socio-historical outline of philosophy in the UK (19th Century – 1970s)

In my own view, professional philosophy has not done too well. It is in urgent need of an apologia pro vita sua – of a defence of its existence. I even feel that the fact that I am a professional philosopher myself establishes a serious case against me: I feel it as an accusation. I must plead guilty, and offer, like Socrates, my apology.

Karl Popper (1986, p. 199)

Suspicion towards the professional philosopher

The development of an academic discipline seems to have striking similarities with the enclosure of the Commons that took place in England between the 17th and 18th centuries before the Industrial Revolution, and with the aim of increasing productivity in the land. As Polanyi writes, this followed a formula of ‘improvement at the price of dislocation’ (Polanyi, 2001, p. 36). Similarly, the rationalisation of the knowledge territory of an ‘academic tribe’ – to use the metaphor by Becher and Trowler (2001, p. xiv) – seems to involve the creation of boundaries that displace epistemologies, practices and people considered to be neither useful nor attuned to the logic of that specific process of rationalisation. Additionally, personal rivalries, the search for advantages, scholarly disputes, and the like, create other displacements that tend to be associated with this ‘boundary-work’ in many ways. As I suggest in this chapter, philosophy in the UK experienced a series of events with such effects during the end of the 19th Century and the first three quarters of the 20th, resulting in the development of its self-identity as a specific *profession*.

However, thinking of philosophy as a profession is something odd. For instance, as philosopher Simon Blackburn argues, the big themes of philosophy (knowledge, reason, truth and so) ‘are not the hidden preserve of specialists’; ‘they are things that men and women wonder about naturally’ (Blackburn, 1999, p. 1). If this is so, it is difficult to understand what the specificity of philosophy is, as it is practised by people who hold recognised credentials and work inside philosophy university departments. At the same, rhetorical claims such as Blackburn’s statements about the *universal relevance* of philosophy, can be mobilised to justify a professional dedication to problems that may not be of any interest to other people. Therefore, this also raises questions about how the boundaries of such a ‘philosophical profession’ have been historically constructed.

The extension of the problem seems to be wider than that of a specific culture – as a phantom following philosophy whenever it takes strong institutional forms. Professional academic philosophy appears to be a source of suspicion. In places as distant from each other as Germany and Chile,⁴² it is possible to find situations in which critical scholars who work with philosophy criticise the gatekeepers of the discipline of philosophy, using the word ‘profession’ as a derogatory term to describe them. To illustrate this, below I show how Hannah Arendt and Patricio Marchant struggled with this issue.

As stated above, I see in Hannah Arendt the first example of this suspicion. In 1964, at the beginning of an interview for the TV programme *Zur Person*, after being introduced by Günter Gaus as a philosopher, Arendt claimed: ‘I don’t belong to the circle of philosophers. My profession, if one can speak of it at all, is political theory. I neither feel like a philosopher nor do I believe I’ve been accepted in the circle of philosophers’ (Arendt, in Arendt & Gaus, 1964). Arendt’s reluctance to being considered a philosopher and her admission that she does not participate in their specialised circles makes sense given that at the time very few women were “accepted” in the circle of philosophers; but also this reflects something in her own work in as much as she seems much more interested in how actors come together in social life than in what she characterises as the *stillness* of philosophical life. This becomes obvious in the ironic depiction that she makes of philosophers in *The Life of the Mind* (1981), or as she calls them – following Kant – ‘professional thinkers’.⁴³

⁴² But, of course, not only there. Different kinds of complicated processes and declarations have been documented regarding the *professionals* of philosophy in diverse local realities such as the Argentinean (Domínguez, 2018), the Italian (Tripodu, 2016) and the Nigerian (Agada & Marshall, 2018).

⁴³ Arendt refers to a passage in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which Kant blames ‘professional thinkers’ for not being capable of distinguishing between ‘two elements of our cognition, one which is in

She describes philosophers from the pre-Socratics to Heideggerian phenomenology as people ‘specializing in what was supposedly the highest activity human beings could attain to’ (Arendt, 1981, p. 13). Unfortunately, one of the ‘great temptations’ of specialising would be the ‘bracketing of reality’ that produces a ‘difficult tribe to deal with’ as they have ‘no urge to appear in the world of appearances’ (ibid. pp. 157, 167). Arendt criticises professional thinkers for being ‘inclined to claim the right of regulating all other activities’ because of their ‘total devotedness to the thinking activity’ (Taminiaux, 1997, p. 21). According to Arendt, this would create the *intramural warfare* separating the philosopher’s ‘thinking ego’ from ‘common sense’ (Arendt, 1981, p. 81) – which she and others such as Dewey (Hildebrand, 2018) – attempt to overcome.

Patricio Marchant, a Chilean deconstructivist philosopher who wrote his major work during Pinochet’s brutal dictatorship in the 1980s, was also suspicious of professional philosophers. His suspicion takes the form of a critical obsession with one successful local philosopher, Roberto Torretti. Marchant’s attitude towards his fellow countryman philosopher is clearly seen in his book *Sobre Árboles y Madres [About Trees and Mothers]*, where he criticises Torretti’s work on Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*.⁴⁴ In Marchant’s words, ‘for our disgrace [Torretti wrote] a piece of work that, for its strictness, for its conceptual device, for its expository clearness, for the breath of its bibliographic reference, constitutes the most important philosophical product of Chilean universities in this century’ (Marchant, 2009, p. 113; my translation). Marchant’s critique of Torretti lies in how Torretti’s ‘decision to study Kant’s philosophy as a specialist constitutes his idea of university work’ (ibid. p. 120; my translation). In this sense, for Marchant, it was a tragedy that a specialised philosophy of this kind was

our power completely *a priori*’ and one that ‘can be derived only from experience *a posteriori*’ (Kant, 1998, B871). His criticism of these thinkers is even clearer a few paragraphs later, where he is concerned with the wide range of metaphysical utterances that arise as a consequence of keeping these forms of knowledge indistinct: ‘Thus it has been the case until now that since philosophers themselves erred in the development of the idea of their science, its elaboration could have no determinate end and no secure guideline, and philosophers, with such arbitrarily designed projects, ignorant of the path they had to take, and always disputing among themselves about the discoveries that each would like to have made on his own, have brought their science into contempt first among others and finally even among themselves’ (ibid. B 872). Perhaps, today, the problem seems to be quite the contrary: after believing in this Kantian credo for so long, many philosophers who think that there are possibilities for progress in philosophy are afraid of losing their *a priori* distinction and return to an age of categorical indistinction for the task of philosophy.

⁴⁴ The book is *Manuel Kant. Estudio sobre los fundamentos de la filosofía crítica* (1967). A mix between praise and critique of Marchant’s reading of this book can be found in Garrido (2000).

what was being valued as relevant academic work by Chilean philosophers of the time (Marchant's book was originally published in 1984).

Marchant continued attacking Torretti's writing: 'if his book constitutes, without a doubt, a masterpiece of university writing [it, therefore] constitutes itself in being a philosophically sterile work' (ibid. p. 121; my translation). Marchant believes that Torretti's book represents a form of philosophy that is confined to academic work only and does not seek to see or engage with anything outside itself. Marchant concludes with the following formulation: 'Torretti's book, a university text from the acknowledgements until its last line, is a book requested by the University and dedicated to the University, a book about the University, love of the University. Decision: The University, the sole reality' (ibid. p. 121; my translation, underlined in the original). Consequently, it can be said that such an enterprise is sterile because it becomes a project that disregards Chile's immediate cultural and political reality and what Marchant considers to be its most important production: its poetry (see Sabrovsky, 2019, p. 146ff for details on Marchant's project of "poetic translation").

Both Arendt and Marchant put forward, in different registers and levels, a critique of professional philosophers informed by narrow, protective and idealised views of the practice of philosophy, in other words, an understanding of philosophy as a special or superior realm. Resembling Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, Arendt and Marchant behave as *masters of suspicion* because they 'contest [a] representation of the sacred' and recognise its 'truth as lying' (Ricoeur, 1970, pp. 32–33). In Arendt's claims, the *intramural warfare* separating 'professional philosophers' from the rest emerges as the tragedy of such activity. For Marchant, what makes this worse is when it expresses the commitments of an enclosed culture, that is complicit with conservative values and is willing to celebrate itself with little consideration of the environment – as happening to Chilean philosophy during the second half of the 20th century (see Jaksic, 1989). In Arendt and Marchant's views, the 'specialist' in philosophy is a creature that must be treated with suspicion.

We could continue looking for differences and similarities between Arendt's and Marchant's views of academic philosophy; however, as the former makes a *general* critique of philosophy and the latter a very *specific* one, I will not pursue this. Moreover, as I outlined in the two previous chapters, I intend to develop a *more realistic* depiction of philosophy, which considers the tensions and boundary-making that philosophers inform and perform. More than relying on the account of one author or another, I consider that this can be more properly approached by looking at many philosophical activities as they are articulated in a particular cultural form and as present in metaphilosophical materials, speech and other observable resources. In my view, a historical exploration into the developments and struggles in the

name of 'professionalisation' can give us some insight into the structuration of the field of academic philosophy in the specific context of the UK.

Relying on *genealogy*, I attempt to tell a story of philosophy that asks questions about 'discontinuity' and rejects 'indefinite teleologies' (see Foucault, 1998, p. 370; Shiner, 1982, p. 387). Using a variety of historical and encyclopaedic resources I examine some of the institutions, concepts and technologies put forward by a diverse group of UK residents interested in abstract philosophical knowledge during the last decades of the 19th Century and the first three-quarters of the 20th Century. Through this, I explore how philosophy became a profession during this period. Keeping in mind the discussion about suspicion articulated before, I then look at the critiques of 'professional philosophy' by the *Radical Philosophy Group*, a group of philosophers that came to the scene during the 1970s. Hopefully, this focus in institutional development and its tensions can be seen as a complement to more traditional history of philosophical idea, schools and authors (for instance, Copleston, 1994). As well, the historical data considered here enables some theoretical reflections on how practices of expansion, monopolisation and protection of autonomy inform what can be conceived as *boundary-work*. Considering genealogical and critical aspects I will then be in a better position to make a detailed account of the contemporary situation of philosophy in the UK from Chapter 4 onwards.

Becoming a profession

Nowadays philosophy is a career option. For a prospective student, it may sound like something difficult to achieve, very competitive and requiring an overwhelming amount of work. But it is a fact of social life that there are people who hold contracts in universities to do philosophy and that a young person, regardless of how plausible or implausible it is to attain such a post, may be willing to follow a path leading to a *position* in which they research and teach philosophy. Today it is given as an *a priori* of socialisation that such a 'position' could be filled by different types of scholars, for instance, by an individual with a *vocation*, i.e., someone passionate about specialised minutiae (Simmel, 1910, pp. 390–391; M. Weber, 2012, p. 339), or by a *cynic* holding an 'enlightened false consciousness' (Sloterdijk, 1987, p. 5). Whatever the case, the point I want to stress here is that such positions exist but cannot be considered something natural. There is a whole set of interwoven stories and remnants of past practices that tells us something about the social construction of vacancies that, in places such as the UK, would have been unimaginable until even quite recently.

In fact, the recognition of philosophy as a profession is a somewhat recent phenomenon. In an early sociological study of professions in the UK during the 1930s, there is no mention of philosophy as being one of them (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933).⁴⁵ In spite of that, there is an interesting narrative articulated by philosophers telling that from the last two or three decades of the 19th Century until the 1960s-1970s, there has been a process of 'professionalisation of philosophy' or a constituting of 'professionalism' in philosophy (Brown, 2014; Hamlyn, 1992; Ryle, 1976). In addition, in texts written during the 1980s, it is already taken for granted that philosophy is a professional activity. For example, in the preface to the edited volume *Philosophy in Britain Today*, philosophy is depicted as an exciting, growing professional field in the country:

At the last count there were over 1,300 professional philosophers working in the nation's higher institutions, with widespread interest in the subject developing accordingly. Moreover, there are a wealth of prestigious journals, publishing houses, and societies devoted to philosophy, and a plethora of conferences graced by leading philosophers from throughout the world.

Shanker (1986)

Next, I would like to outline the making of these institutions, techniques, people, bodies of knowledge and, overall, the practices that populate such a landscape (a detailed list with the rise and fall of philosophy institutions in the UK is available in the Appendix to this thesis). This notwithstanding, and following the advice of Andrew Abbott in *The System of Professions*, I will avoid conceptualising the 'professionalisation' of this discipline: (i) as a unidirectional process evolving towards an *a priori* given form; (ii) as a development that proceeds in isolation from that of other disciplines; (iii) as if the 'social structure and cultural claims' of the profession were more relevant than what their practitioners do; (iv) as if its inner contingent differences were not important and the units of the profession were 'homogeneous' mirrors of a broader 'professional project'; and (v) as if the profession just responded to a unique, major teleological movement as it were 'lacking a history of its own' (Abbott, 1988, pp. 17–19).⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) study lawyers, doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, veterinary surgeons, pharmacists, opticians, masseurs, biophysical assistants, merchants, mine managers, engineers, chemists, physicists, architects, surveyors, agents, auctioneers, accountants, actuaries, secretaries, public administrators, teachers, journalists, authors, artists and brokers. Philosophers are not even mentioned in their overview of professions but perhaps are conceivable as part of teachers and authors.

⁴⁶ The 'general concept of professionalisation' that is often used by grand narratives about a particular discipline has, according to Abbott, the following sequence: 'Expert, white-collar occupations evolve towards a particular structural and cultural form of occupational control. The structural form is called profession and consists of a series of organizations for association, for control, and for work. (In its

I adopt no model for the professionalisation of philosophy. Instead, my claim here is that the recognition of philosophy as a profession has to do with a constant process of negotiation, imposition and re-consideration of its boundaries. These boundaries emerge from the practice of people – past and present – who have been interested in a type of knowledge that they call philosophical and who, mediated by certain technologies and practical achievements, have practised philosophy as a specific cultural form with its own divisions between who and what is included and excluded. In other words, philosophy has gone through a process of *rationalisation*, a rationalisation that, unlike that addressed by Weber (2001) is context-specific and is not fully commanded by a metanarrative. Thus, if we had to consider a structure, Archer's notion of structure as 'the activities of the long dead' (Archer, 1995, p. 143), would be an appropriate one. Archer's concept of structure alludes to the past practices that the living who are concerned with an area receive as social institutions coercing and making space for their possibilities.

According to Calder, the professionalisation of philosophy encompasses, amongst other things, the 'establishment of formal institutions sustaining philosophical communities' (R. R. Calder, 2006, p. 2606). These institutions are formed of sets of materials (funding, awards, stages, libraries, contracts, working spaces, other philosophers) that make the reproduction of philosophy more likely. Brown adds that in the UK, the end of the 19th Century was crucial because a series of practical situations created a 'gap' that served to separate professional philosophy from an amateur philosophy, i.e., the philosophers that do it for a living and those who do not (Brown, 2014, pp. 619, 638). However, with Blackburn in mind, if the problems of philosophy 'are not the hidden preserve of specialists', then how could such a distinction be made? How did philosophy become a realm specially designed for philosophers?

1. Philosophy before the 19th Century

In a strictly economic sense of the concept of 'profession', i.e., making a *living from* a particular activity, it can be said that during the Middle Ages philosophy was already a professional activity all around Europe. Scribes and scholars working in monasteries and universities (e.g. the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinian, and the like) had access to ancient philosophical

strong form, the professionalization concept argues that these organizations develop in a certain order.) Culturally, professions legitimate their control by attaching their expertise to values with general cultural legitimacy, increasingly the values of rationality, efficiency, and science' (Abbott, 1988, p. 16).

manuscripts and had theological production of their own and rivalries with other Catholics in Paris, Oxford, Rome, Avignon, Cologne, etc. (R. Collins, 1998a, p. 470ff). This was a period where paper was scarce; therefore, oral transmission of knowledge and good memory were crucial for this business. In terms of writing, most of the texts produced in these times were theological, but there was also a wide production of commentaries on ancient philosophical texts and writings on logic (Hamlyn, 1992, p. 34). It is possible to trace the origins of philosophy in the UK back to medieval authors such as John Scotus Erigena, John of Salisbury, John Duns Scotus or William of Ockham, all of whom wrote in Latin since the 8th Century (Sorley, 1965, p. 1) and participated in these medieval discussions.

However, regardless of how professionalised the intellectual scene was at that time, since the 16th Century, the Anglican Reform triggered a separation from the Catholic intellectual tradition. Perhaps, this is why there seems to be a consensus between the history of ideas and philosophy scholars about Francis Bacon being the first 'proper' philosopher in the UK (Matthews, 1943, p. 15; Simons, 2006, p. 990; Simpson, 2011; Sorley, 1965, p. 14). The main aspect that these authors highlight is that Bacon did not write in Latin but in the English language. They particularly praise his work published in 1605, *The Advancement of Learning*. One of the most interesting aspects of this book is that it makes a clear attempt to demarcate theology and philosophy as distinct knowledge territories. In addition, the doctrines of the book are clearly connected with the rise of systematic science in England,⁴⁷ famously orientating the exercise of the mind towards the 'power over the nature of things' (Bacon, 1901, p. 11 and ch. III).

Institutionally, philosophy started to take its first steps in the UK during the 17th Century tensions between new and traditional forms of knowledge as a result of the emergence of systematic science. Following Bacon's Philosophy, a group of 'virtuosi' from London and Oxford founded the Royal Society at Gresham College in 1660 (Rogers, 2006, p. 2777).⁴⁸ Although it advocated for the development of *Natural Philosophy* (the name for Physics and

⁴⁷ Whose history of institutionalisation is seen with sociological detail and Weberian lenses in Merton (1970). Foucault, who sees in Bacon more a man of action than a philosopher, would situate his work on the borderline of what he calls the *classical age*: 'On the threshold of the classical age, Bacon, lawyer and statesman, tried to develop a methodology of investigation for the empirical sciences' (Foucault, 1991, p. 226).

⁴⁸ In his *History of the Royal Society*, Sprat gives the name of *True Philosophers* or *New Philosophers* to all those who 'disagree from the Ancients' and are committed to 'experimenting' (Sprat, 1667, p. 35). He sees the main source of this in Bacon's experimental philosophy and states that 'there should have been no other Preface to the *History of the Royal Society*, but some of his Writings' (ibid. pp. 35-36).

Science at the time), the Royal Society also became a place whereby philosophers reflected about metaphysics and how it could legitimise the experimental sciences (see Stephenson, 2010). The Royal Society was the first of many 'learned' societies in England and Scotland, and to a lesser extent in Ireland, creating a landscape for institutional knowledge production in the UK, with its conditions, funding criteria, condemnations, and the like. At their onset, they seemed to act more as clubs ruled by the temperaments of their members than as societies with more formalised criteria of inclusion and exclusion. In fact, there are still discussions about why someone such as Thomas Hobbes, who had a wide intellectual recognition at the time even from members of the Royal Society, was never allowed into that Society (see Malcolm, 2002).⁴⁹

Notwithstanding stories such as the above, the importance of the Royal Society, and The Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow, amongst others, cannot be underestimated. Philosophers such as George Berkeley, David Hume and John Locke, lived and wrote in the 17th and 18th Centuries, a period in which these institutions mobilised a new intellectual circle for 'learned' people to know (from) each other. Until recently, many of these institutions remained stable and well-resourced organisations offering status and funding for researchers in many areas of knowledge, including philosophy. In this new pro-scientific environment, the medieval dictum *philosophia ancilla theologiae* [philosophy is the handmaiden of theology] (Vries, 2009, p. 41.1) started to be challenged.⁵⁰

According to the literature, during the 18th Century, in terms of philosophy, Oxford and Cambridge seem to have gone through a period of 'apathy and neglect' while in Scottish universities such as Edinburgh and St. Andrews philosophical life started to flourish (R. Collins, 1998a, p. 639; Hamlyn, 1992, p. 57). In spite of their different intellectual circumstances, some institutionalisation processes were ongoing in all of these universities, creating some of the political-economical conditions for the development of research. This is clearly reflected in the establishment of the first chairs of philosophy (in most cases, in 'morals', but also in 'logics')

⁴⁹ As shown by Shapin and Shaffer (2011), Hobbes was involved in central philosophical-scientific discussions of those times. For instance, he had a scholarly debate with Robert Boyle – who was a member of the Royal Society – about nature and the place of experimentation.

⁵⁰ However, during the 18th Century the influence of the church was still immense at universities in the UK. For instance, David Hume could not fulfil 'his ambition to hold a Chair in a Scottish university' due to being an atheist (Hamlyn, 1992, p. 67). Also, 'patronage' endured as the material base of intellectual life during the period, either because the writer himself was wealthy (like Bacon) or because they worked for wealthy individuals (like Hobbes or Locke) (R. Collins, 1998a, p. 638).

which involved and still involve, besides the honours and strict conditions to be maintained, economic allowance to support the recipient until retirement or death.

2. Philosophy during the 19th Century

Even though during most of the 19th Century there were no major formal institutions in which to do philosophy professionally in the UK, it is nonetheless possible to find some relevant works with lasting effects for utilitarian, materialist and idealist philosophies. For instance, in London, Jeremy Bentham wrote an extensive philosophical-juridical oeuvre that is still under editorial work. Amongst other things that he wrote, his penitentiary model approached from utilitarianism, the *panopticon*, famously amazed Foucault for being the architectural manifestation of disciplinary power becoming more efficient by means of the invisibility of control (Foucault, 1991, p. 200ff). Another icon of that time is Karl Marx who, in adverse circumstances (as a political refugee with a shortage of money, a liver disease and ill from cholera) worked in the British Museum a few blocks away from the newly formed UCL on *Das Kapital* during the 1850s and 1860s (Marx & Engels, 1981, p. 68ff). These developments in London were contemporary with a wave of *British Idealism* that was being developed in universities around England and Scotland by students who saw in German philosophy a respite 'from the stultifying atmosphere of an all-pervading empiricism, naturalism and individualism' (Boucher & Vincent, 2012, p. 35).

Alongside these works, the 19th Century stands out for the important institutional developments that would later encourage philosophers in the UK to present themselves as 'professionals' in their field. Especially towards the end of the century, the most important innovations had to do with actions taking place inside universities as well as in the foundation of certain learned societies that were dedicated to the dissemination of philosophy in the country. As we will see, the main element indicating the development of philosophy as a profession was the professionalisation of other disciplines with which philosophy was normally associated in the past and with the creation and endurance of certain institutions (chairs, learned societies and journals).

2.1. The situation of philosophy in the 19th Century universities

During the 19th Century, people interested in the study of philosophy were beginning to find tangible spaces inside traditional universities. In Oxford, from 1807, the *Literae Humaniores* (Classics) degree separated from mathematics and physics, and later, in 1850, there was even a failed attempt at 'setting up of an independent school of Mental Philosophy and Philology' (Walsh, 2000, p. 312). Despite this, at the end of the century, the syllabus had widened beyond classical philosophy and Oxford was starting to recognise modern philosophy authors such as Berkeley, Descartes, Kant, Mill and Spinoza (Stephens, 2006b, p. 2406). At Cambridge, the main event involving philosophy was the foundation of the Moral Sciences Tripos in 1848, which since 1867 established a 'part II', acting as a specialisation focusing solely on philosophy (Brown, 2014, p. 625; Stephens, 2006a, p. 533).

During the 19th Century, many new universities were created. University College London and King's College London opened their doors in 1826 and 1829 respectively and were the basis of what has been known as the University of London since 1836. The former was founded as a 'liberal' centre for education offering two chairs of philosophy: 'Philosophy of the Human Mind' and 'Moral and Political Philosophy'.⁵¹ King's College London, on the other hand, aimed to combine all the 'useful' branches of knowledge with the 'doctrines and duties of Christianity'; the first philosophy chair it offered was 'Logic and Moral Philosophy' in 1877 (Department of Philosophy, 2017; G. D. Hicks, 1928). The ecclesiastic restrictions at King's started to relax by the end of the century, probably influenced by a series of changes that were going on in many other places.

Alongside these newly-formed London colleges, reflecting a mix of 'national need [of] leaders of an emerging industrial economy' and 'local pride', new universities started to be founded in almost every major city across the country during the second half of the 19th Century: Manchester, Newcastle, Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol, Nottingham, Liverpool, Sheffield, Aberystwyth, Bangor and Cardiff, all of which helped create a landscape with 'more chairs and other teaching posts for academic specialists' (Brown, 2014, p. 624). Philosophy

⁵¹ These years are often associated with Jeremy Bentham, the utilitarian philosopher whose corpse is today on display as an 'auto-icon' at UCL's Student Centre. However, he did not play a major role in the foundation of UCL even though he is still considered by many to be the 'spiritual father' of the institution. Seemingly, he played a role in the creation of philosophy chairs and even tried, unsuccessfully, to have influence in the appointments for them (see Marmoy, 1958; UCL, n.d.-b, n.d.-a).

was 'usually represented in these new institutions, though the chair was often held by someone whose primary interest was in another subject, either because it was a combined chair or because the other subject was then included under philosophy, as psychology was' (ibid. p. 628). The relevance of these newly created institutions was marked by the end of 'the restriction of English universities to the two ancient foundations of Oxford and Cambridge, where religious tests for the holding of posts were abolished in 1871' (Hamlyn, 1992, p. 77).

The above reflects the development of a new environment for philosophy with more posts available all across the country. What is more, it became possible to do philosophical work with fewer religious constraints. What was happening in the UK reflected the university reform by Fichte, Humboldt and others in Germany at the beginning of the century (R. Collins, 1998a, p. 648). Their reform followed the ideal of 'the university as an autonomous body of self-governing professionals, accountable to and monitored by itself' (Baert & Shipman, 2005, p. 159). This was key for philosophy as 'the development of philosophy in a technical sense depended on the survival of the university', and the success of this reform meant that 'the philosophical faculty received full equality in status and pay with the other faculties' (R. Collins, 1998a, pp. 643, 648). Unsurprisingly, as Brown pinpoints (2014, p. 621), at that time, the German universities were 'the destination of the brightest and best of students from other countries, Britain included' and those returning from there 'joined the avant-garde of university reform'. The fact that 'politicians and industrialists saw Germany increasingly as a major competitor to be emulated' (ibid.) created very good conditions for the practice of philosophy inside universities in the region.⁵² The only obstacle was the lack of differentiation of philosophy chairs in relation to other subjects during most of this period. However, opportunities improved for philosophers by the end of the century when more chairs assigned specifically to philosophy were made available.⁵³

⁵² Brown illustrates this in a similar way to how Geisler (1994) did when comparing the change of philosophical style between the generations of James and Bernstein in the USA. In his case, Brown analyses the career options available in the UK to A.C. Fraser who worked in the mid-19th Century and Robert Latta who did so at the end of the century. Fraser was a 'man of letters' with 'no qualification', dependent on 'the good opinion and influence of others', who wrote for lay readership, who had been elected to the Metaphysical Society but never presented a paper and was lucky to get the only chair available in his surroundings. In contrast, Latta studied in Germany, acquired a professional doctorate, published in *Mind*, presented in the Aristotelian Society and was able to follow a career with ladders, more similar to that of a 20th Century academic (Brown, 2014, pp. 635–636).

⁵³ Brown writes it in the following way: 'the separation of strictly philosophical chairs from those that included other subjects was a precondition of the professionalization of the subjects involved. A long as subjects were combined or confused, the process of appointments to chairs would appear unsatisfactory looked at by professionals of either subject' (Brown, 2014, p. 633).

2.2. The rise of philosophy learned societies

Together with the changes going on in universities, the 19th Century saw the rise of the first specialised learned societies devoted to the study and dissemination of philosophical knowledge. As Lubenow writes, learned societies from the time had three functions:

to serve as enclaves for creative scholarship by corralling knowledge that was difficult to tame, such as religion and knowledge of the exotic world in the empire; to rend intellectual boundaries and to create intellectual legitimacy and authority; and to assist in the creation of a public sphere by establishing mental territory for the exploration of these difficult subjects.

(Lubenow, 2015, p. 272)

As creative circles that were devoted to the development and maintenance of intellectual work in a bourgeois civic space, the foundation of philosophical institutions of this kind was an important achievement for people devoted to abstract and conceptual concerns. Before these specific learned societies even existed, philosophers had to share spaces at clubs and societies with people who were interested in the commerce and collection of antiques as well as other broader intellectual and non-intellectual interests of elite and nobility groups in England, Ireland and Scotland. A major turn was prompted by the founding of the 'Metaphysical Society' (1869-1880), an elitist group formed of Theists and Agnostics who used to gather at Willis' Rooms in London 'to receive and discuss with absolute freedom such topics as ... the logic of the sciences ... the immortality and personal identity of the soul ... the existence and personality of God ... the nature of conscience ... [and] the material hypothesis' (James Knowles, as quoted in Brown, 2006b, p. 2158).⁵⁴ One interesting technological development inside the Metaphysical Society was the creation of the *Symposium* as a method consisting in the following steps: print a paper written on a given subject, circulate it between the members, make them write short papers commenting on the original paper, make these papers roll up in a 'snowball fashion' and meet to consider the 'whole set' (Brown, 2014, p. 629, note 53). This method would then become a trademark of philosophy practised in the country until today.

⁵⁴ However, it would be incorrect to say that this society was the *first* of its kind. There was a short-lived philosophical society in Dublin during the 17th Century; and the humanists were holding meetings of the 'Ethical Society' at London's Conway Hall from the end of the 18th Century. During the same century Glasgow founded its own 'Royal Philosophical Society' (R. H. Calder, 2006; Conway Hall, 2019; Duddy, 2006).

The end of the 19th Century also bore witness to the creation of two of the most influential professional societies in the history of British philosophy: the Aristotelian Society (1880-) and the Mind Association (1900-).⁵⁵ The Aristotelian Society for the Systematic Study of Philosophy was founded in London's Bloomsbury Square in 1880 'by Shadworth Hodgson with the deliberate aim of involving philosophically interested amateurs' (Hamlyn, 1992, p. 80). In fact, the original ideal of this aggrupation was 'the study of philosophy not as an academical subject but as the story of human thinking' (H. W. Carr, 1929, p. 359).⁵⁶ In spite their original *ethos* of being 'open to the general public', during the 20th Century it acquired the status of a 'fully professionalized, academic society', as a result of its prestige and institutional development (Preston, 2006a, p. 135). Even though 'amateurs were never excluded from membership' and the fact that at its onset it was 'run by amateur philosophers' (particularly, scientists), by the end of the 19th Century 'it was transformed eventually and almost accidentally into one of the main societies in Britain for professional philosophers, where the papers presented would become increasingly hard for amateurs to follow or find interesting' (Brown, 2014, p. 630).

The first president of the Aristotelian Society had the normative project of establishing philosophy as a social fact: 'the end of philosophical discussion and study [is] the establishment of Philosophy as one, more and greater than individual philosophers, just as Science is one, more and greater than individual scientists' (Hodgson, 1883).⁵⁷ The Aristotelian Society has met in the Bloomsbury area of London for more than a century and has almost sacredly held a session every second Monday of each month of the academic

⁵⁵ At the time, the Aristotelian Society and Mind Association co-existed with other learned societies. For instance, the 'Synthetic Society' (1896-1908) was a short-lived learned society with a philosophy of religion agenda (Brown, 2006b, p. 2158). The origins of the Synthetic Society do not seem so different to those of KCL in light of the formation of UCL, i.e., a conservative reaction to the creation of liberal-secular institutions.

⁵⁶ Being open to non-philosophers and avoiding unnecessary technicalities was a regular practice between philosophers in the UK by the time the Aristotelian society was founded. This can be seen in a manual written by a philosopher who used to work at the University of London: 'To investigate the phenomena of mind and matter, to study their connexion with each other, to seek to comprehend the universe around us intellectually, and determine the creative power from which it springs, all this flows from a natural impulse of the human intellect apart from technical details; and there is no need that such researches should be clothed in language essentially different from the phraseology of everyday life' (Morell, 1884, p. 3).

⁵⁷ I refer to 'social fact' in the Durkheimian sense. The words of Hodgson are strikingly similar to those of Durkheim when he says that 'a social fact is identifiable through the power of external coercion which it exerts or is capable of exerting upon individuals' (Durkheim, 1982, p. 56). Here, the 'establishment of philosophy as one' would be the external social coercion exerting over 'individual philosophers'.

calendar to the present day. In 1888 the society began to publish *The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, a journal documenting all the papers presented at its meetings (Preston, 2006a, pp. 135–136). According to Brown, with the implementation of this journal and because it was widely read, ‘an invitation to give a paper to the Aristotelian Society became a form of recognition valued by professionals’ (Brown, 2014, p. 631).

The Proceedings is not, however, the oldest journal of philosophy in the UK. *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, has been published since 1876.⁵⁸ *Mind* was founded and funded by Alexander Bain for the study of the psychology and the philosophy of mind as an academic subject. In 1900 Henry Sidgwick founded from this journal the *Mind Association* as a means to secure ‘the management and financial support of the journal’ (Preston, 2006b, pp. 2203–2204). The first editor of the journal, George Croom Robertson, stresses in the ‘prefatory words’ of the first issue that *Mind* looks forwards to confronting the ‘unprofessional character’ of the discipline in the country:

Except in Scotland (and even there Hume was not a professor) few British thinkers have been public teachers with philosophy for the business of their lives. Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Hartley, the Mills did their philosophical work at the beginning or at the end or in the pauses of lives otherwise active, and addressed for the most part the common intelligence of their time.

(Robertson, 1876, p. 1)

At its outset, *Mind* was the object of ‘some resentment and suspicion’ by philosophers from Oxbridge because of the close ties that the journal had with the newly formed UCL, which by then was commonly referred to as ‘the Godless institution of Gower Street’ (Preston, 2006b, p. 2204). Despite these initial moral prejudices, and with the increasing inclusion of key papers by famous philosophers from Oxbridge, the journal quickly overcame this prejudice and became widely accepted, respected and spread amongst philosophers. However, this was not the case for experimental psychologists – who were also expected to participate in the journal; they ‘increasingly wanted to be independent of philosophy and founded their own professional organs such as the *British Journal of Psychology*’ (Brown, 2014, p. 632). The growing technical complexity of the debates between academic philosophers (now more in number, as a result of the creation of new universities) and the process of differentiation of other disciplines from philosophy such as psychology or physics, alongside the actions of Robertson and others,

⁵⁸ The *Contemporary Review* came earlier (1866); however, such a journal was not directed to an academic audience and, to be more precise, its main purpose was ‘to appeal to the cultivated upper classes’ (C. Keene, 2006, p. 704).

created the conditions for the emergence of a more ‘professionalised’ philosophy during the 20th Century. To a certain extent, the ‘professionalisation’ of philosophy that began at the end of the 19th century did not respond to a project for its own disciplinary autonomy but was largely a by-product of the autonomy projects of other blossoming disciplines (I come back to this point in Chapter 5).

2.3. Philosophy during the first three-quarters of the 20th Century

Specialisation in philosophy was boosted with the creation of departments dedicated to philosophy during the early 20th century. The first philosophy departments in the UK were founded at the constituent colleges of the University of London: Bedford (1906), King’s College (1912), University College London (1927), Birkbeck (1930) and London School of Economics (1946). Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind, and Moral Philosophy were the main concerns of the first four, while Philosophy of Science was the novelty brought later by Karl Popper and his colleagues to the LSE.⁵⁹ Together with the creation of philosophy departments, another process bringing together the institutions of philosophy in the UK was the ties between the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association that since 1918 have co-organised their *joint session* – the ‘largest annual philosophy conference in Britain’ (Preston, 2006b, p. 2204). This yearly meeting, according to an interviewee, is ‘kind of a big social event’ because ‘a large part of it is that philosophers from all over the country come and you go to meet people that you may not have seen for a bit’ (Male, British – Former President of the Aristotelian Society).

A significant trend seen after WW2 was the proliferation of learned societies in addition to the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society. This new kind of learned societies was narrower in scope, i.e., more focused on specialised professional philosophical problems. The first of them was started in 1948 by a group including Alistair Crombie and Karl Popper, amongst others, who inside the *British Society for the History of Science* created a space for the study of ‘the logic and method of science as well as of the various special sciences, including the social sciences’ (BSPS, n.d.-b; “The Foundation of the Philosophy of Science

⁵⁹ In the case of Oxford, they paddled into a different direction than the new specialization processes going on in London when they founded their degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics in 1924. The PPE degree has the formidable characteristic of bringing together philosophy and power – even forming many of the leaders that have ‘ruled Britain’, including Prime Ministers (Becket, 2017). Oxford did not have a proper Faculty of Philosophy unifying how philosophy was practised in its constituent colleges until 2001 (Mander, n.d.-b).

Group,” 1949) and which was later called the *British Society for the Philosophy of Science*. Other specialist societies have been founded since then, in different subareas: aesthetics, philosophy of education, Hegel, applied philosophy, history of philosophy, Kant, and, more recently, Marx & philosophy, philosophy of sport, Wittgenstein, etc. They are usually characterised by the running of a journal, organising annual or bi-annual conferences in their topic of expertise, and sometimes also offering grants to students and researchers.

While philosophers in London were creating the institutional arena for the practice of philosophy in the UK, Cambridge fostered the development of philosophical contents through the creation of the *analytic school of philosophy*. This school created a trademark British philosophical tradition whose use would consolidate philosophy as a profession in the country. Its origins can probably be traced to Bertrand Russell’s interest in Gottlob Frege’s work. Russell was actively reading Frege’s work and even had correspondence with the German logician since 1902 (Frege, 1980, p. 130ff). Frege influenced Russell’s famous theory of descriptions published in *Mind* as ‘On Denoting’ (1905); as well as the *Principia Mathematica* (1910) published in tandem with Alfred North Whitehead. This publication is still considered to be a ‘landmark work in formal logic’ (Irvine, 2015). Frege was a major influence of the logicist approach. Since the 1920s, when Ludwig Wittgenstein published his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, there was an increasing sharing of interests between logical positivists in Europe and philosophers of language in the UK. Since the first half of the 20th century, the Cambridge School was fed by Fregean thoughts and problems, which pushed the development of a type of philosophy mainly focused on language and its relationships with questions of meaning, articulation, sense and reference. Wittgenstein’s later works were also an important influence on the ‘Ordinary Language Philosophy’ developed by Gilbert Ryle, John Austin, Peter Strawson and others at Oxford from the 1940s until the beginning of the 1970s (Parker-Ryan, 2011).

Not unjustifiably, it is claimed that the period 1900-1975 was one ‘of great brilliance as regards philosophy in the UK’ as the Analytic School in Cambridge, Popper’s Philosophy of Science in London, and Ordinary Language Philosophy in Oxford were developed during those decades (Gillies, 2007, p. 39). The Oxford scholars, as I show in more detail later in this chapter, were those at the forefront of the attacks from the Radical Philosophy Group, who saw in them the epitome of a professionalised philosophy that was far too comfortable. In relation to this, there are two other aspects of these decades that should be observed more closely: the creation of an anglophone philosophical culture connecting scholars from the UK and the USA as well as the establishment of a form of ‘analytic philosophy’ that would be common to them both.

2.4. The link between philosophers from the UK and the USA

It is possible to trace some of the first attempts to bring closer philosophy scholars from the UK and the USA at the beginning of the 20th Century. Before then, they had only shared a common language and some philosophical sources and interests; however, there had been a lack of strong institutional ties between philosophers on both sides of the Atlantic. Some key events reversing this situation include, (i) the University of Edinburgh promoting Harvard philosophers representing pragmatism such as Josiah Royce and William James, giving the Gifford Lectures between 1899 and 1902; (ii) Bertrand Russell travelling to Harvard in 1914 following an invitation to join their faculty which he eventually declined;⁶⁰ and (iii) Alfred North Whitehead moving to the USA late in his life, and becoming a factor in the fabrication of 'what became known as 'Anglo-American' philosophy' (Kuklick, 2006, pp. 3236–3237). It is important to highlight that during this time, the philosophy practised in the USA was more 'professionalised' than that practised in the UK. One manifestation of this is that the American Philosophical Association was founded in 1901 (Geisler, 1994, p. 69), in contrast to the UK where political organisations attempting to represent the guild were only seen from the 1980s (with the founding of the National Committee for Philosophy). This notwithstanding, the professionalisation process also involved changes in the ways of doing philosophy with which the older generation of philosophers, more eclectic and less specialised, were not very pleased:

In 1905 William James spoke of 'the gray-plaster temperament of our bald-headed young Ph.D.'s boring each other in seminaries, and writing those direful reports of the literature in the "Philosophical Review' ". James had one word for this 'dessicating and pedantifying process': 'Faugh!' 'The over technicality and consequent dreariness' of the young were appalling. The realists came of age in the new university order and exhibited the standard characteristics of individuals in that order: their philosophizing began with a set of problems that their mentors and graduate training had bequeathed. As James put it, they regurgitated 'what dusty-minded professors have written about what other previous professors have thought'.

(Kuklick, 2001, p. 201)

⁶⁰ Actually, it looks as if Russell's first contacts with the elites of the 'New World' were shocking for the English philosopher. When he travelled to Harvard in 1914, he got the impression that such a place was 'hell'. He observed that the academics and the authorities of this university were stimulated only by 'business', 'quick results' and 'hard slave-driven efficiency'. At Harvard, he experienced 'a soul-destructive atmosphere', the opposite to what he believed a university should be. In his words, these people had lost 'the patient solitary meditation... the lonely hours away from mankind that go to producing anything of value' (Russell, in Willis, 1989, p. 17). If Russell were still alive and observing the universities of our times, he would see hell almost everywhere.

Part of the professionalisation of a discipline seems to imply a reduction of what is conceivable, publishable and, overall, possible to do in the discipline. For the case of philosophy in the USA, it is understandable that James' older generation – used to work in a less defined and open intellectual field – was overwhelmed by these changes. As the 20th century advanced, philosophy in the UK was approaching an academic culture taking a similar form. Of course, this led to major changes in the practice and identity of philosophy in the UK. Ordinary Language Philosophy, which was developed at Oxford as a methodology 'committed to the close and careful study of the uses of the expressions of language, especially the philosophically problematic ones' (Parker-Ryan, 2011), played an important role in consolidating these ties with academics and universities in the USA. After WW2, when 'the younger generation of philosophers at Oxford became prominent in directing Britain's philosophical affairs', the links between philosophers of both nations became ever closer (Kuklick, 2006, p. 3238). According to Kuklick, a professionalised 'bi-national philosophy', between the technicalities of post-pragmatist US-Americans and some of the British metaphysical tendencies was born:

Much of what joined the philosophers of the two nations together was an apolitical, secular temperament that saw philosophy as a professional field of study connected only tangentially to questions of life and death. Anglo-American philosophy narrowly defined the boundaries of the discipline, delimiting the few questions that were taken to be constitutive of university thinking, and marginalizing many others.

(ibid.)

Many common cultural aspects and concerns brought these two nations together in philosophy; not without some asymmetries, however. More than the emergence of 'Anglo-American' philosophy, it would perhaps be more accurate to say that the result of this alliance was an *Americanisation* of British Philosophy. As stated by Magee in the 1970s, 'British philosophy is no longer autonomous in the way it once was – indeed, it seems on the way to becoming a chief province of a territory whose capital is elsewhere' (Magee, 1971, p. ix). This becomes obvious when we see what was happening with the publications of UK philosophers at the time: '[British] philosophers are choosing to publish their most important papers in American journals. *Mind* may still be the leading philosophical journal in England but it is no longer the leading philosophical journal in English' (ibid.). Times were changing for philosophy in the UK. Now, it was part of a growing international Anglo-speaking arena (later including Canada, and Australia) in which 'traditional' UK institutions were losing some of their relative influence on the framing of new cultural and practical distinctions.

2.5. The institutionalisation of 'Analytic Philosophy'

Together with this alliance, a major practical shift was taking place between philosophers from the UK and USA. In contrast with the 'Analytic School' which flourished at Cambridge, during the first half of the 20th century, first in Oxford and then in other universities in the USA and the UK, a new way of doing philosophy was developed since the 1960s: the so-called 'Analytic Philosophy'. In terms of *style*, it became recognisable for its 'emphasis (in theory!) on clarity and care', for 'a certain lack of overt rhetorical devices' and 'a more-or-less common stock of by-now-familiar ideas, terms, and symbols from the enormous advances achieved in modern logic and semantics' (Skorupski, 2013, p. 300).

Sociologically, the emergence of this new Lernaean Hydra reflects some common criteria of recognition amongst those who participate in it. However, amongst philosophers, it has also produced antagonistic reactions. For instance, a defender of analytic philosophy highlights it as 'a tradition that is healthier and stronger today, albeit more diverse, than it has ever been in the past' (Beaney, 2013, p. 6), while a pessimist view argues that contemporary anglophone philosophy is 'empty' in the sense that 'there is not much more to recent and current mainstream philosophy than there was to be found in the philosophy of fifty or sixty years ago' (Unger, 2014, p. 4). Both views are nevertheless limited: the first does not consider the many exclusions (some of which I develop later in this thesis) that denote and maintain this tradition; the second, romanticises the past and perhaps relies too much on the idea that philosophy should make notable 'advances' over time.

Aron Preston offers a more interesting proposal. He proposes that 'Analytic Philosophy' became dominant in Anglophone universities because it is usually equated and confused with the 'Analytic School' – despite the fact that many analytic philosophers work with epistemic tools that have little to do with those of that school. This situation would create 'the illusion that AP was defined by a specific approach to philosophy endorsed by many of the greatest philosophical minds of the era' [Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, etc.] (Preston, 2010, p. xi). However, Analytic Philosophy lacks a 'defining doctrine' (it operates more at the level of shared familiarity with certain ideas, in the sense put by Skorupski (2013)) and its advocates are not necessarily followers of the *linguistic thesis* of the first part of the century. According to Preston this leads to the 'sociological peculiarity' that 'AP has maintained its dominant position even though the original reason for its dominance has long since been undermined' (ibid. p. 3). The problem of this dominance would be the contingency of the hierarchy of philosophers and opportunities that it creates:

The designation 'analytic' would then be little more than a label of arbitrary approval to be worn and bestowed by those with academic power and prestige. In that case, the professional entrenchment of AP would have to be seen as a case of hegemony in the worst sense, generating and sustaining an unjust professional situation in which people are hired or not, tenured or not, promoted or not, on the basis of prejudice rather than principle. And this possibility is something about which everyone involved in the profession should be concerned.

(ibid. p. 19)

We should add that Analytic Philosophy, 'the variety of philosophy favoured by the majority of philosophers working in English-speaking countries', is often considered in opposition to philosophy as practised in the European 'continent' (Charlton, 1991, p. 3). In the UK, the historical dominance of Analytic Philosophy in philosophy departments has not been uncontested. In what follows, I would like to highlight some critical claims raised by advocates of a more continental sensibility.

The critique of professional philosophers in the UK

In the first part of this chapter, I outlined how philosophy turned into a 'profession', or better said, developed the characteristics associated with what we call a profession. This was the outcome of the interaction of many processes, initiatives by individuals, technologies, journals, and institutions, amongst others. By the 1970s, a professional form, with posts, specialised learned societies, international links, and a characteristic 'analytic philosophy', was encrypted in the DNA of philosophy in the UK. However, this newly achieved analytical-professional form was the subject of a collective attack against its behaviour and practice. The attacks came mostly from a mix between Marxist, existentialist and phenomenologist philosophers who were concerned with what they conceived as bourgeois ways of doing philosophy in the UK, and who were willing to release the *radical* potential of philosophy. In addition, such attacks also gave a clearer look (anchored in specific scholars and institutions) to what analytic Anglophone philosophers call, with a certain pejorative tone, 'continental' philosophy in the UK.⁶¹

⁶¹ This is because 'the label "continental" is applied not only to European philosophers, but to the significant minority of Anglo-American [and UK] philosophers who see themselves as continuing the continental "tradition" [that] take up the inheritance of Hegel, Nietzsche, Bergson, Husserl, Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida' (Cutrofello, 2005, p. 1).

To put it in dramatic terms, in the 1970s there was an assault on established philosophy which responded to what Anthony Grayling refers to as the *tragedy* of a philosophy commanded by ‘waged bureaucrats of the mind’:

In one significant sense, the greatest tragedy to befall philosophy has been its professionalization in the last century or so, producing a caste of waged bureaucrats of the mind who do an analogue of what Kuhn described as ‘normal science’ – worrying the minutiae of a narrow set of concerns as dogs worry bones, endlessly quoting the same few admired contemporaries or fashionable recent authorities, pursuing one another in ever-tightening and never-ending circles round the same small points of contention.

(Grayling, 2006, p. xi)

Interestingly, Grayling’s critical impression of the contemporary condition of professional philosophy in the UK resembles that of William James in the USA a century earlier. Also, Grayling’s analogy between what ‘professional philosophers’ do and Kuhn’s notion of ‘normal science’ adds further questions to the mix.⁶² In Kuhn’s model of scientific research, scientists rarely solve normal science puzzles before acquiring ‘firm answers’ to the nature of ‘the fundamental entities’ that are part of the universe (ontology), the interrelation between these and the senses (epistemology), a definition of the spectrum of ‘legitimate questions’ (normativity) and the ‘techniques’ that may be employed (methods) (Kuhn, 1996, pp. 4–5). For Kuhn, specialised puzzle-solving is only possible if some exemplar work has dealt with all such issues and provided practical ways of dealing with new phenomena. However, it seems very problematic for philosophy to sustain a paradigm: it either implies that philosophers have already resolved what the world, knowledge, normativity and techniques are or that, at least, they act as if they have done so.

It looks as if the apparent focus of professional analytic philosophy on the resolution of puzzles for specialists was associated with the dismissal of many other forms of philosophy and with a sought or accidental unawareness about the social conditions that make philosophy possible in the first place. Such philosophical and sociological deficit can result from a lack of self-observation. That was the way in which the ‘continental’ philosophers associated with the

⁶² Kuhn understands *normal science as puzzle-solving*. In his view, the usual practice of science (when not interrupted by the strike of revolutions) consists in trying to corroborate what was anticipated by paradigmatic work through putting together the different pieces of a puzzle: ‘Bringing a normal research problem to a conclusion is achieving the anticipated in a new way, and it requires the solution of all sorts of complex instrumental, conceptual, and mathematical puzzles. The man who succeeds proves himself an expert puzzle-solver, and the challenge of the puzzle is an important part of what usually drives him on’ (Kuhn, 1996, p. 36).

Radical Philosophy movement saw matters back in the 1970s. Below I address their concerns about professional philosophy.

1. Radical Philosophy's critique of professional philosophers

Three years after the protests of May '68 in France, it was possible to see its echoes of revolt amongst left-wing philosophers working in the UK.⁶³ In June 1971, a group of philosophers later known as the *Radical Philosophy Group* held 'a small and informal discussion weekend' at the University of Kent (Radical Philosophy Group, 1972d, p. 30). In the evening of the first day of their meeting, Tony Skillen presented a paper which would set the tone of the critique articulated by the group for the years to come. In his paper, Skillen 'examined the non-theoretical determinants of modern English (and especially Oxford) philosophy' and concluded, forty years before Preston, that 'there was no powerful or rigorous theoretical tradition at all in England' and that, therefore, the 'philosophical activity was dominated by its institutional and social setting' (ibid). To explain this, Skillen signalled a paper by Oxford Philosophy Professor R. M. Hare in which he found the expression *professional philosophy* as a domain where well-positioned philosophy professors participate. There, Hare illustrated how college life for a professional philosopher was during the decades following WW2 at Oxford University: 'our jobs are secure and cannot be taken from us until we reach the age of sixty-seven' and, therefore, an academic in such conditions 'is free to philosophize' without pressure beyond 'ambition' (Hare, 1960). For Skillen, this expressed a view which is 'conformist' and in 'isolation from reality and living thought' (Radical Philosophy Group, 1972d, p. 30).

Unsurprisingly, when one year later the Radical Philosophy Group published the first edition of their journal *Radical Philosophy*, a further development of the attack on 'Professional Philosophers' was the main concern. For instance, Jonathan Rée observed that philosophy professors sometimes looked like 'guardians of meaningless rituals, who force[d] the eager young flatterers who surround[ed] them to prove their devotion by undergoing ordeals –

⁶³ As written by Kristin Ross: 'May '68 was the largest mass movement in French history, the biggest strike in the history of the French workers' movement, and the only "general" insurrection the overdeveloped world has known since World War II. It was the first general strike that extended beyond the traditional centers of industrial production to include workers in the service industries, the communication and culture industries—the whole sphere of social reproduction' (Ross, 2002, pp. 3–4). In terms of a sociology or history of ideas, this moment is particularly important because for philosophers such as Badiou, Rancière, Blanchot and Bensaïd it 'constituted a pivotal if not a founding moment in their intellectual and political trajectories' (ibid. p. 7).

degrees, fellowship exams, and so on' (Rée, 1972, p. 2). He also added that a successful candidate 'naturally acquire[d] a personal interest in maintaining the prestige and exclusiveness of the clique' (ibid.). Philosophy depicted thus becomes a form of practising the constant reproduction of an academic elite.

Interested in understanding what was fashionable between these groups, Rée also looked at what the 'main phenomenon of modern British philosophy' was at the time, i.e., the Oxford definition of philosophy. According to this, philosophers do not study things but rather 'the concepts by means of which people conceptualise things.' Such scope, Rée continues, 'seems to offer a reason for the existence of philosophy departments'; it is an expression of the professional philosopher's desire to allow the subject to become 'cumulative, piecemeal, detailed, objectively assessable research' that is also 'clearly defined, so as not to overlap with studies pursued in other university departments' (ibid). For the critique of professional philosophy, this leads to a major problem: 'In higher education in Britain today [1972] these forces are stronger than ever. Philosophy is an academic profession rather than an intellectual tradition. The isolated opponents of academic philosophy, though numerous, are dwarfed by the institutions they face' (ibid. p. 4). Confronted by this, Rée makes a call for collective action: 'Unless we organise ourselves, philosophy will remain a mere formality' (ibid.).

This collective agenda was echoed by other contributions to RP's first issue. For instance, Benjamin Gibbs argues that 'there is something new and exciting about the Radical Philosophy movement. For the first time, the critics of orthodox philosophy are not isolated individuals but an organized group' (Gibbs, 1972, p. 5). The *spirit* of such critiques of philosophical orthodoxy is perhaps best presented in the 'founding statement' on the back cover of the first issue of this journal (see Figure 2). There, the Radical Philosophy Group criticise what they identify as the problems of specialisation, dissatisfaction, and isolation created by 'Professional Philosophers'. They further propose to investigate the ideological role that this has had in the broader British culture, as well as to look forward to alternatives to this impasse in the by-then neglected 'continental' philosophy (Phenomenology, Existentialism, Marxism, Hegelianism and so on) and to letting new philosophical alternatives 'blossom'.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Of course, the assertiveness of this claim does not make it universal. Antony Flew, for instance, claims to be an exception to what was criticised by RP: 'I realised that, long before any of these new Philosophical Radicals had even begun their studies, I had myself published work on every one of these allegedly neglected topics' (Flew, 1986, p. 80).

Radical Philosophy Group

Contemporary British philosophy is at a dead end. Its academic practitioners have all but abandoned the attempt to understand the world, let alone to change it. They have made philosophy into a narrow and specialised academic subject of little relevance or interest to anyone outside the small circle of Professional Philosophers.

Many students and teachers are now dissatisfied with this state of affairs, but so far they have been isolated. The result has been that serious philosophical work outside the conventional sphere has been minimal.

The Radical Philosophy Group has been set up to challenge this situation, by people within philosophy departments and in other fields of work. We aim to question the institutional divisions which have so impoverished philosophy: for example, the divisions between academic departments which have cut philosophers off from the important philosophical work already being done by psychologists, sociologists and others; the division between students and teachers which has divorced academic philosophy from the radical activity and ideas of students; and, above all, the divisions which have isolated the universities and other educational institutions from the wider society, thereby narrowing the horizons of philosophical concern.

As well as exposing the poverty of so much that now passes for philosophy, we shall aim to understand its causes. We need to ask whether its barrenness is the inevitable consequence of its linguistic and analytic methods as opposed to, for example, their application to trivial 'problems'. We shall examine the historical and institutional roots of recent British philosophy and investigate its ideological role within the wider culture.

But we do not want to become exclusively preoccupied with the inadequacies of this type of philosophy. Our aim is to encourage and to develop positive alternatives. For this there are other traditions which may inform our work (e.g. phenomenology and existentialism, Hegelian thought and Marxism). However, the Group will not attempt to lay down a philosophical line. Our main aim is to free ourselves from the restricting institutions and orthodoxies of the academic world, and thereby to encourage important philosophical work to develop: Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom!

ACTIVITIES

The initial activities of the Group will be:

- (1) Publication of a journal: *RADICAL PHILOSOPHY*
- (2) Regular meetings to be arranged in as many different places as possible. Local groups are being formed in London, Glasgow, Oxford and elsewhere.
- (3) We also hope to organize Conferences and other activities at a national level.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, PLEASE CONTACT:

Sean Sayers, Keynes College, The University, Canterbury, Kent.

LOCAL GROUPS

London: Jerry Cohen, 26 Twisden Road, London N.W.5. (01-485 1322)
Oxford: Jonathan Ree, Balliol College, Oxford.
Glasgow: Scott Meikle, Department of Moral Philosophy, University of Glasgow, Glasgow W.2. Scotland.

Figure 2. The founding statement of the *Radical Philosophy Group*. Source: *Radical Philosophy Group* (1972a).

In the second issue of RP, it is possible to see a typical-ideal depiction of the *features* of the professional philosopher. According to Cohen, this type of professional can be recognised by the following:

- lack of concern about the origin of ideas 'in a person's life or thought'. The professional of philosophy would rather relate to academic sources;
- 'ideology (and fantasy) of neutrality' in politics. The problem of this is that not 'taking a stand' is already a way of 'taking a stand'.
- 'verbal athleticism and glibness, apparently designed to stun students and others into a baffled silence'
- overall tendency to respond to 'human and political problems' with 'withdrawal, escapism, indifference, sarcasm, and disengagement' (J. M. Cohen, 1972, p. 8).

Overall, in RP, professional philosophers are depicted as participating in the circles of Oxford's orthodox language philosophy, looking forward to securing their places at the university and not allowing space for broader intellectual debates outside their areas of specialised comfort. In addition, they are presented as scholars mobilising language in an authoritarian way, while being unaware of or indifferent to their socio-political and bio-political situation in the world. The various aspects of these criticisms are perhaps best communicated in the images that were deployed in the journal's early days.

2. The critique of professional philosophers through images

The earliest contributions of RP seem to focus on the critiques of the UK's philosophical establishment. Their project was to improve the situation of philosophy by creating the conditions to nurture marginalised philosophical views and cultural reforms at the institutions where philosophy was studied and practised. In a way, they started a 'modality of truth' resembling what Foucault, following the Ancient Greeks, called *parrhēsia* [παρρησία]. For Foucault, such modality relates to 'the courage of the truth in the person who speaks and who, regardless of everything, takes the risk of telling the whole truth that he thinks' (Foucault, 2011, p. 13).

What RP did in the 1970s looks like *parrhēsia* as it 'speaks polemically about individuals and situations' (ibid. p. 27), aiming 'to tell individuals the truth of themselves hidden from their own eyes, to reveal to them their present situation, their character, failings, the value of their conduct, and the possible consequences of their decisions' (ibid. p. 19). Additionally, as the *parrhesiast* did, these philosophers took certain risks when undertaking their critique of

professional philosophy practitioners (banning from certain circles, marginalisation inside institutions, dismissals, etc.). However, the truth held by these radical philosophers had two main differences from Foucault's parrhēsia. First, it was a *collective act of expression* and, therefore, their courage to speak did not emerge from the exceptionality of an individual truth-teller; it was instead grounded in the support of a network in which they encouraged each other to write and speak loudly in unison. Second, and as I develop further down, their critique also relied on *rhetorical devices*, such as cartoons, humour and images, aiming to convince people of their truth by showing the kind of critical imagination that was mobilising the collective critique against professional philosophy. In this sense, their situation is not exactly that of the parrhesiast but of another modality of truth that combines parrhesia with togetherness and satire. Below I elaborate on the expressions of the satire.

Take, for instance, Figure 3. In the form of a comic strip, we can see a depiction of a moment of R. M. Hare's speech when he became the president of London's Aristotelian Society in 1972. The juxtaposition of his words, dividing the roles of the 'workmen' and the 'guardians' of the republic, with the images, showing the heroic self-image of the scholar, creates a satirical image of how detached his ideas about philosophical practice in relation to actual social life were. Overall, it suggests the idea that only those with a 'thinking cap' have the time and technical abilities to create principles to 'optimise' the lives of others, which the cartoonist is likely to consider authoritarian, insensitive and ridiculous.

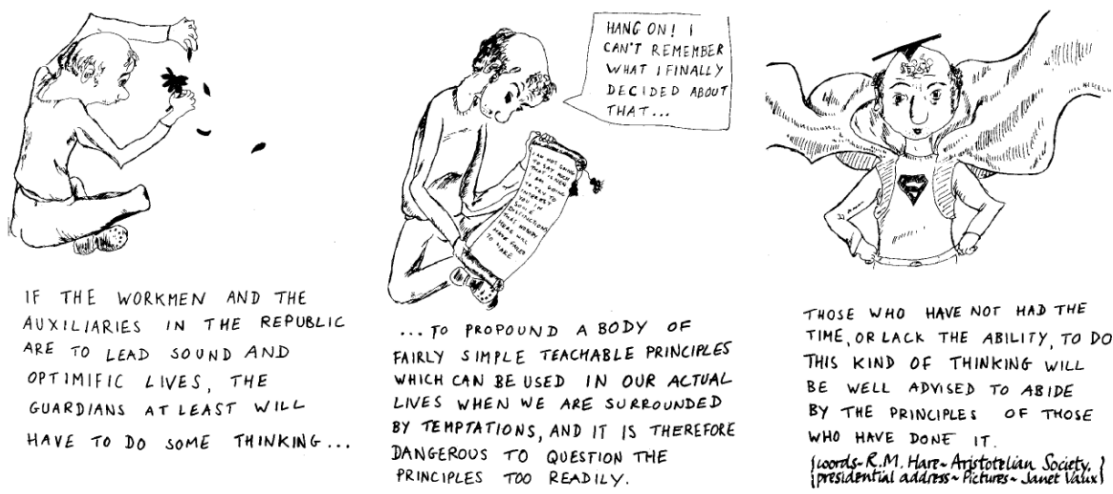


Figure 3. Satirical cartoon accompanied by extracts of the acceptance speech R.M. Hare gave when he became president of the Aristotelian Society. Source: Radical Philosophy Group (1973c, p. 34).

Something similar goes on in Figure 4 below, which shows a satirical depiction of what the preparation of the Mind Association and Aristotelian Society's *Joint Session* would look like. Shadowy men secretly discussing philosophy (mostly logical-linguistic) matters to be dealt with at a conference are shown. At the same time, the cartoonist makes fun of the irrelevance

of the topics addressed by introducing hilarious pressures coming from the government through 'the minister of thoughts'; and sarcastically depicts them as concerned with the 'civic importance' of the topics that should be addressed at the conference as well as how professional philosophers would try to tackle such demands.



Figure 4. Satirical cartoon making fun of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association. Source: Radical Philosophy Group (1972b, p. 32).

Figures 5 and 6 criticise the people participating in philosophy institutions in the UK. In Figure 5, philosophers of mind are shown as attempting to read the minds of monsters. Remarkably, such a depiction of philosophers is not completely unrealistic. There is an actual area in the philosophy of mind that is interested in the phenomenon known as E.S.P or *Extra Sensory Perception*, i.e., 'the perception of things by other means than the known senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling)' (Maartensz, 2011). Even further, there is a thought experiment by Donald Davidson involving the creation by lighting of a 'Swampman' that becomes a replica of Davidson in everything except in that it cannot recognise a thing 'since it never cognized anything in the first place' (Davidson, 1987, p. 444).



Figure 5. Depiction of philosopher trying to read the mind of a monster. Source: Radical Philosophy Group (1972c, p. 45).

Reflecting the above, Figure 6 shows UCL's Chair of Philosophy of Mind as someone in a doomed position. We can see him sketched as some sort of possessed supervillain, a 'terrifying' individual trapped in the madness of an abstract vortex. If the creation of philosophy chairs across UK universities was key to the project of professionalisation of philosophy, it makes sense that the deconstruction of these symbolic positions became central to those criticising the outcome of such a process.



Figure 6. Parody of the Philosophy of Mind Chair at UCL. Source: Radical Philosophy Group (1974, p. 15).

If the previous images explored satirical ways to illustrate philosophy authorities giving a speech, organising events, working from their chairs, etc., Figures 7 and 8 offer a contrast between how radical philosophers conceive analytical philosophers vis-à-vis themselves. In Figure 7 (left), 'E.S.P freaks' are depicted as a gang of filthy drunken logicians and philosophers of the mind playing extreme games with rockets imported from the USA and looking forward to having their minds blown away. Philosophers of mind are so concerned with the mind that they would make their heads explode for the sake of it. By contrast, in Figure 8 (right) it is possible to see phenomenology as a heroic masculine figure punching the air (or his shadow?) and putting 'the essence back into existence'. This is an idealised depiction that summarises very well the 'antidote' that, for some radical philosophers, was needed to improve the practice of philosophy in the UK: philosophy's establishment had to be combated for philosophy to become worthy of existence.



Figures 7 and 8. Cartoons and images found in the *Radical Philosophy Journal*. Source: Radical Philosophy Group (1973b, p. 25 (left), 1975a, p. 2 (right)).

The philosopher working as a professional in a philosophy department in the UK, at least as it is portrayed by RP, would be one who is psychologically and institutionally stuck in the problems of the mind. Such depiction of the professional philosopher describes an institutionalised creature, attempting to understand the human mind in the iron cage of language analysis. For me, this raises the question as to whether such a description of the philosopher has aged well and resonates with what philosophers look like in the present.

In fact, I recall an ethnographical field situation that happened to me after an interview with a graduate of a BA in philosophy in London during the early 2000s who now works as a lawyer for a rocket-science firm. When talking to him about my project of doing sociology of philosophy in the UK, I told him that I was particularly interested in Baggini and Stangroom's book on *New British Philosophy: The Interviews*. I was carrying my own copy of the book which I showed to him. He got very excited to see it and told me that he had read that book himself and that he had loved it. Then, he started flicking the pages of the book looking for something. He stopped when he reached a page with a photo of a famous philosopher who had been interviewed for the book. Staring at the picture (Figure 9), he told me that this philosopher looked exactly like one of the very serious and 'severe' philosophy professors he had as a student, who earlier in the interview, he referred to as people who 'were completely detached, not very interested in anything [...] other than their very narrow fields of research'.

Connecting the serious look of this person with his eyewear, whiteness, formal attire and short hair, he told me that he saw in such an image the 'stereotypical look' of a philosopher in the UK.⁶⁵



Figure 9. Philosopher Timothy Williamson. Source: Baggini & Stangroom (2002, p. 146).

Are we looking at the same set of problems identified by the radical philosophy group five decades ago when we stare at the image of this contemporary professional philosopher? Do these representations say something about the present? Are they sound? After my attempt to characterise some of the events leading to professional philosophy in the UK, readers of this text may have reached their own conclusions. The sociological and historical fact is, nevertheless, that an organised critique depicting and denouncing the problems of orthodox philosophy was put forward by the efforts of Radical Philosophy in the 1970s.

⁶⁵ Interestingly, if that were the case, such an icon would be very different from the symbol of wisdom carried by the 'philosophical beard' of someone such as Gaston Bachelard in France (see Chimisso, 2000). It looks like 'implicit bias' and 'stereotypes' still have a place in philosophy. Nevertheless, as pointed out in the blog *Looks Philosophical*: 'Philosophers come in a range of genders, colors, sizes, classes, ages, and levels of tweediness. Our discipline isn't the rarefied domain of the sophisticated hyper-intellectual. It's simply the domain of people who like to think about philosophy. And people who like to think about philosophy can look like...well, pretty much anything' (Looks Philosophical, n.d.).

Closing remarks: boundary-work, gatekeeping and transgression

In this chapter I have discussed over one hundred years of the history of philosophy in the UK, starting from before the founding of its first institutions during the last few decades of the 19th Century and ending in the 1970s when this ‘professional’ tradition was challenged by a group of radical philosophers. Conceptually, the story I have told so far is one that resembles what has been sociologically studied as *boundary-work*. According to Gieryn, ‘boundary-work is a likely stylistic resource for ideologists of a profession’ used to look for the ‘*expansion of authority*’ into the domain of other professions, the ‘*monopolization of professional authority and resources*’ (excluding rivals), and the ‘*protection of autonomy over professional activities*’ by blaming the outside for problems in the field, exempting its members from their responsibilities in them (Gieryn, 1983, pp. 791–792). Expansion of authority, monopolisation and the protection of autonomy are all aspects found in the making of professional philosophy. However, unlike Gieryn, I would argue that boundary-work cannot be observed as an ‘ideological style’ *only*, but it must be also considered as a *practical* assemblage bringing together material, strategic and ideological boundary-practices.

Indeed, as shown in Figure 10, it is possible to merge Gieryn’s classification of boundary-work with those practices leading to the professionalisation of philosophy described in this chapter. I have shown, on the one hand, a set of *practices of expansion* of philosophy and its authority within the knowledge and institutional landscape; on the other, I have shown *practices of monopolisation* of philosophical authority and of the resources available for doing philosophy as a profession. The former says something about the involvement that philosophers have had in other territories, as 19th Century explorers looking for a niche for philosophy. The latter is a 20th Century story centred in practices of control and management of the knowledge and institutional territories of a dominant way of conceiving philosophy in the UK. Both expansion and monopolisation are themselves the condition of possibility to construe philosophy as an autonomous profession ideologically and practically. Attempts to protect the boundaries of such ‘autonomous’ knowledge territory follow this.

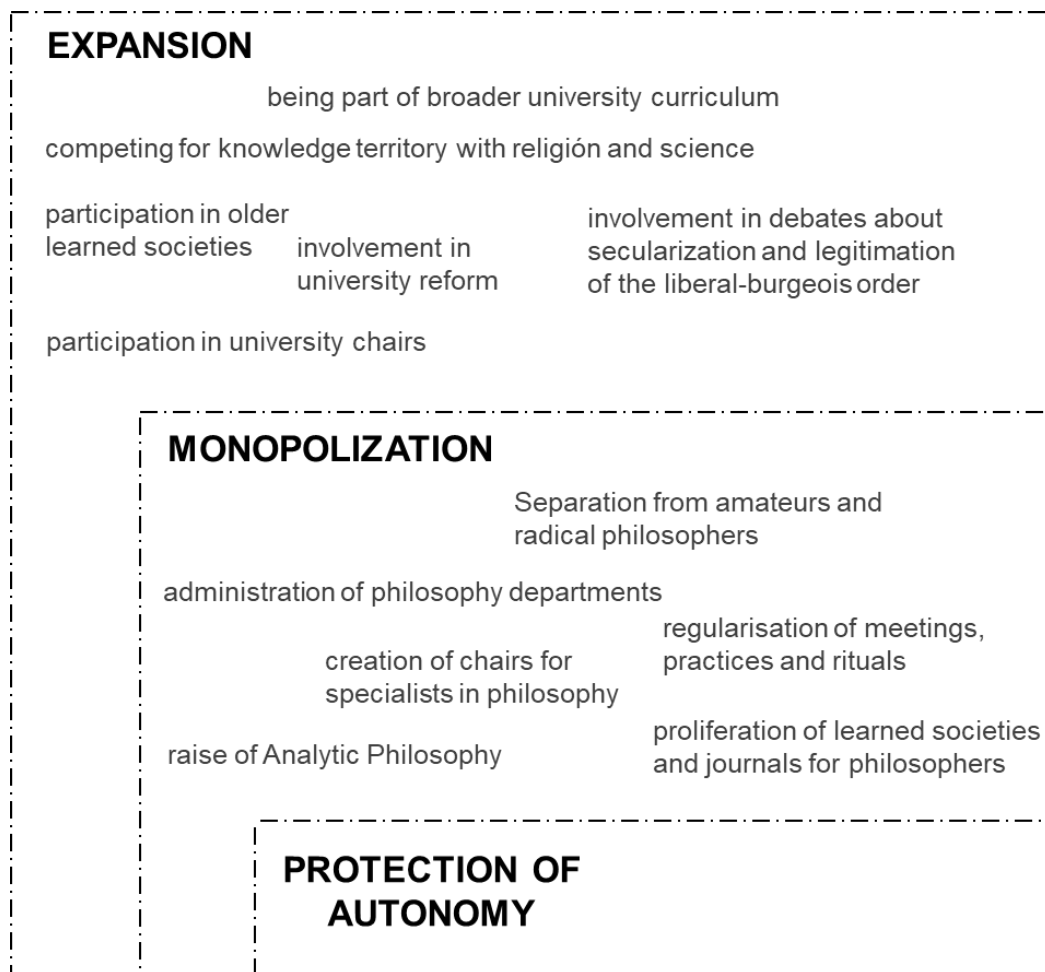


Figure 10. Practices of boundary-work amongst professional philosophers in the UK. Source: Own elaboration, based in distinctions by Gyerin (1983).

The function of protection of a profession is ascribed to the figure of the *gatekeeper*, construed as ‘the person that determines who is allowed into a particular community and who remains excluded’, and whose role is seen by practitioners as ‘a significant one in terms of the development of knowledge fields’ (Becher & Trowler, 2001, p. 85). In philosophy, gatekeeping practices such as the review of papers, coursework, applications, hiring, promotion and tenure are performed by practitioners on the ‘inside’ to ‘protect’ their practices from counter-practices that might disrupt their common codes and mutually-accepted ways of working. The staunch defender always updates a border in consideration of newer processes of expansion and monopolisation while each attempt at transgression, for instance by the *collectivist parrhesiast*, ‘affirms the limitlessness into which it leaps’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 35). In the UK, it is as if analytic philosophers had the institutional history of professionalisation on their side, meaning that movements in the professionalisation process such as those I described in this chapter maintain and reproduce their dominant position. In the territory of philosophy, this takes the form of a real social force equipped with institutional devices that have sometimes

been used in regrettable ways to dismiss other practitioners, especially those speaking truths that they do not want to hear.

A model case of this is the effect of Ernest Gellner's *Words and Things*, his first book which was published nearly a decade after he finished his studies at Balliol College, Oxford. There, Gellner criticised Oxford's Linguistic Philosophy for being 'conservative in the values that [it] in fact insinuates' and for having an elitist pursuit 'which can only make sense in an extremely limited environment' (Gellner, 1959, pp. 224, 235). Gilbert Ryle, who was the Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy at Oxford and the editor of *Mind* at the time, wrote to the publishers of the book: 'I shall not have a review of the book in *Mind*. Abusiveness may make a book saleable, but it disqualifies it from being treated as a contribution to an academic subject'. In spite of this, the book was popular outside philosophy and got the support of Russell as well as of other philosophers who did not work at Oxford (for this, including Ryle's letter, see Uschanov, 2002, p. 24ff). However, a few years later an affected Gellner refers to the book as the one that *ruined* his career as a professional philosopher:

As far as professional philosophy is concerned, 'Words and Things' ruined my future rather than secured it. I attacked the philosophical Establishment, and as long as the present philosophers remain in power, I will never have a position at an Oxford college. Whether I will be accepted again in philosophical circles remains to be seen.

(Gellner, in Mehta, 1963, p. 38)

In this act of rejection, Ryle seems to be personifying an establishment protecting itself against metaphilosophical critiques. Indeed, he acted as a gatekeeper of a territory that was defensive against potential transgressions exposing the institutional problems of the field. The question now is to what extent do these issues persist in contemporary times and, above all, what sorts of experience do philosophers have when entering the field of philosophy in the light of the problem of gatekeeping. In sum, the problem I would like to address has to do with the boundaries of the discipline of philosophy.

Overview of the chapter

This chapter attempted to understand two things: (i) the events, institutional conditions, uses of knowledge and actions that established philosophy as a profession in the UK during the 19th and 20th Century; and (ii) the critiques and suspicions directed at the notion of 'professional philosopher'. I then offered a brief overview of philosophy in the UK before the 19th Century, discussing its position as a practice between religion and science. Then I focused

on the relevance that the last few decades of the 19th Century had in the institutionalisation of philosophy at the university level and in the creation of the first learned societies dedicated to philosophy. Moving into the 20th Century, I showed how philosophy established longstanding links with scholars from the USA that, in connection with other developments, resulted in formalising a kind of philosophy that we may call 'analytic'. In light of this, I presented a critique of professional philosophers by Radical Philosophy in the 1970s as a collective manifestation of suspicion mixing critique, collective parrhesia, and satire. I finished the chapter with a conceptual note bringing together the events described in this chapter in terms of boundary-work, gatekeeping and transgression.

EXCURSUS 1

THE TRIUMPH OF THE FIRST LINE

On the taming of the radicals

Radical Philosophy still exists today as an academic journal. It is difficult, however, to think of it as the lively and ambitious intellectual project aiming for social change that it was during the 1970s and 1980s. So, what happened to RP's critique of professional philosophy? Something changed among the radical philosophers and their project. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to interview one of its former editors, who helped me dig deeper into the history of the journal. Interestingly, one aspect of their journal is that it works as a useful metaphilosophical device as the reflexive editorials capture the story of the achievements and failures of its participants. These editorials not only account for what happened to the scholars involved in this specific group, but also shed some light on the trajectories of *continental philosophy* in the UK.

Here I would like to suggest that the radical philosophy group was the victim of its own success. In its glory days, RP had 'some claim to having the biggest circulation of any philosophical journal ever, up to four thousand copies per issue' (Edgley, 1985, p. vii).⁶⁶ The journal was very popular in the UK and due to the high demand for it, the editors had to reprint the first issue. Additionally, as a collective, RP encouraged the creation of many dissident groups of philosophers active in (and around) philosophy departments all over the country and offered their journal as a site where they could showcase their activities. The reports and news at the end of each issue, especially those of their first decade, used to show a network of left-wing scholars mostly from philosophy and sociology departments who acted as suppliers of physical copies of the issues, as well as the activities of sympathisers running alternative study

⁶⁶ If so, it must be acknowledged that this phenomenon occurred in a pre-digital era where access to journals was established through face-to-face relations rather than on research engines and online databases.

groups, conferences and meetings in places such as London, Oxford, Sussex, Cambridge, Dundee, Kent, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Enfield, Leeds, Cardiff and so on. For instance, in 1975 there was a report in RP about students at the University of Swansea who organised demonstrations and occupied the philosophy department of their university as a way to demand a 'reform of the assessment system and for staff/student democracy' (Radical Philosophy Group, 1975b, p. 1).

However, the group soon began to evince internal tensions. This was made explicit by Jonathan Rée when he quit his position as editor of RP – action starting a tradition of 'radical declarations' also followed by later editors of the journal when they resigned. Rée wrote in his last editorial: 'Radical Philosophy is constantly faced with a dilemma between two lines - two conceptions of its field of action, two models of what it means to produce a dissident magazine', further writing, 'my worry (sometimes despair) about Radical Philosophy is that the first line has increasingly overshadowed the second' (Ree, 1978, p. 1). The 'two lines' he has in mind are contrasted in Figure 11, as an opposition between the academic and the activist souls of RP.⁶⁷

	First-line (Academic)	Second-line (Activist)
<i>Success criteria</i>	Theoretical excellence, originality, modernity	Effectiveness in creating a vital counter-culture
<i>Actions valued</i>	Production of alternatives to empiricisms, ignorances and evasions of theory in the UK	Campaigns aimed at shoving UK's culture out of its circle of discreet and repetitious complacencies
<i>Anxieties</i>	To avoid vagueness and theoretical deviation	To avoid ghettoization and abstruseness
<i>Critique</i>	Eclecticism of activists	Elitism of academics

Figure 11. Two lines of action of Radical Philosophy. Source: Own elaboration, based on distinctions made by Rée (1978, p. 1).

Rée's argument was clear about how RP was a two-headed creature: one of its heads criticised, in academic terms, the theoretical problems of the philosophy commonly practised by philosophers in the UK; the other head was a broad radical educational project inspired by left-wing political practice aspiring to make major changes inside philosophy and 'British culture'. However, Rée was disappointed by the first head taking over the body of RP. In fact, this was reflected in a feeling of guilt found in the group since its early days: 'But although

⁶⁷ The editor that succeeded Rée criticised this distinction as 'a series of complicated manoeuvres, deploying a set of floating sliding signifiers defined only by a criss-cross of differences, oppositions – and contradictions' whose effect was to 'establish an embattled void' (Gordon, 1979, p. 38).

most of us work in academic institutions, we have not yet succeeded in analysing what we are doing in them, let alone in changing them significantly' (Radical Philosophy Group, 1973a, p. 1). This is expressed in the fact that sometimes the second head of the group, unsuccessfully, tried to remind the first one about the continued existence of this problem:

Socialist academics, having found a niche for themselves, may then become just another academic elite, producing a self-contained body of theory which is remote from experience, impenetrable to all but the initiated few, and which can safely be ignored or accepted by the guardians of bourgeois culture. [...] Radical Philosophy began with the intention of opposing academicism. In re-affirming this policy now, we have to recognise that it means resisting the academicism of the left as well as of the right.

(Radical Philosophy Group, 1979, p. 1)

The point at which the history of this group is one that might be considered a success is intimately related to the agency that their practitioners and other sympathetic scholars had in bringing phenomenology, Marxism and other European philosophies – what in the Anglophone cultures is usually called “continental” philosophy – into the curriculum of many courses (mostly outside philosophy departments) and to the quality of the work done by some of the scholars involved. This is clear in the view of one of the former editors of the journal. Reflecting on what happened after various decades of RP as well as in other left-wing intellectual circles, he told me:

I think, not just Radical Philosophy but movements of the new left like Radical Philosophy were incredibly successful in changing the curriculum... and largely because they did incredibly important, brilliant academic research that couldn't be denied to be philosophy. Emm... so, you know, even that - as I say - not just Benjamin, but even as an example, the wider reception of Benjamin's work in the 90s got brought in very rigorous philosophical thinking that was difficult and complex, and rooted in certain philosophical tradition, even if it was an unusual one, kind of a romanticism and Marxism... They made impossible to deny that this was proper philosophy. Because it was difficult to understand the stuff... So, you know... partly than being very good researchers and writers, in a very traditional way, they were very successful in bringing thinkers like Marx, and Hegel and Benjamin into British academia.

(Male, British – Former Editor of *Radical Philosophy*)

The main members of the group were successful academics themselves, that is, the ones that could influence changes in the curriculum. For instance, the scope of the change that was brought about has a material expression in the fact that the *Philosophy Study Guide* of the University of London nowadays incorporates Phenomenology and Marxism as possible papers to be written by students when following degrees in philosophy in any of its colleges (see Philosophy Panel, 2000, pp. 171–174; 189–193). Also, as mentioned by my interviewee, the fact that many continental sources were received with ‘very rigorous philosophical thinking

that was difficult and complex' made it possible for them to gain certain recognition amongst 'professional' philosophers. For instance, the former representative of one of the most traditional philosophy institutions in the UK recognises the value of the work and contributors to Radical Philosophy: 'Marxist, phenomenologists, and so on... Good philosophers involved, like Jonathan Rée...' (Male, British – Former president of the Aristotelian Society). However, the success of the academic side of RP also relates to the decline of their broader political/educational project:

What got abandoned was the formal part of *Radical Philosophy* as a kind of educational project [...] interested about having certain things as accepted in the curriculum but thinking on the very notion of what education itself is. And because of the success of the curriculum side was achieved by being very good traditional academics, you know, good research, good publications... In a sense, I think, that came along at the expense of what I think it was the more radical project, which was the question about the form of education in issues of disciplinarity and hierarchies. And notions of pedagogy were left untouched by the success of the curriculum itself - the content side.

(Male, British – Former Editor of *Radical Philosophy*)

In light of the above, it is clear that the academic success and the recognition of the work of certain individuals in this group were problematic for the collective political ambitions of the radical philosophy movement. In fact, philosophers such as Sean Sayers, actively involved in the journal, had successful careers in areas such as Marxism and Hegelian studies, contributing to books of major publishers and attaining Professorship in Philosophy (for Sayers, see University of Kent, 2019). It seems like a voice from a long-forgotten past when, in the second issue of RP, Peter Binns claimed that the purpose of RP should not be 'replacing one syllabus by another' but rather looking forward 'to the *destruction of philosophy* as the property of professional philosophers, before we begin to practice it' (Binns, 1972, p. 26; the emphasis is mine). Indeed, the non-realisation of such a project clearly 'lends an uncomfortable edge to the gibe that what has been philosophical in it [RP] has not been radical, and what has been radical has had little to do with philosophy' (McCarney, 1982, p. 52). Their success as professional philosophers is the sign of a decline in the 'second line' of their original mission and of turning into a routinised academic culture:

you read an article in Radical Philosophy and it would largely be incomprehensible unless you've certainly done a BA and probably an MA... and even there a PhD maybe... They were incredibly academic things, you know, and that's the issue, so... the new.... that tradition became itself professionalised and the codes, and language and discourse that were still... that could be very alienating unless you understood it.

(Male, British – Former Editor of *Radical Philosophy*)

Alongside this increasingly specialised expert knowledge that began to take over the journal, some explicit editorial movements settled the triumph of RP's academic philosophical project over their political one. For instance, in an issue of RP in 1987 there was a message about ongoing editorial efforts to include the journal in the 'standard' reference sources. Indexing a journal is not a problem *per se*, and indeed in modern conditions, it may be justified as a necessary move for a journal's continuity. However, from the viewpoint of the radical philosophers, it looked like something accommodating and problematic. Indeed, the journal, academic in soul, form and format, had primacy over the plan of a 'magazine' that was less constrained and more receptive to the expression of different forms of radicalism. The new project was to increase its readership, submissions, and expand the inclusion of RP in reference sources:

In an effort to gain a wider audience for Radical Philosophy and to encourage authors to send us their work, we are taking steps to be indexed and abstracted in some of the standard reference sources. Radical Philosophy is now included in the British Humanities Index and in The Philosophers' Index, which will also include abstracts of main articles. We hope to be able to announce our inclusion in further reference sources in due course.

(Sayers, 1987, p. 1)

Such inclusion in other 'standard' databases became effective after some years. Currently, RP is even included in Clarivate Analytics' SSCI and Elsevier's Scopus (Clarivate Analytics, 2019; SJR, 2019). Thus, what is left of the circle around RP works in a similar way as a traditional British Learned Society: it organises research activities from its centre in Kingston and has RP as a standard journal whose specialised content matter is continental philosophy and Marxism. Perhaps, the only notable difference to most journals is that it still works as a collective where graduate students still have an important role instead of having a traditional editorial division of labour.

Stories such as this give us some sense of the uneasy paths followed by a philosophy of the 'continental' kind in the UK. In spite of the gap continental philosophy practitioners experience in relation to analytic circles and departments monopolising the word 'philosophy' as a noun referring to their own specific activities, work in the continental tradition is extensively done at universities all across the region and in particular sub-fields. As said by an interviewee: 'crudely the sociological situation in England is that Continental philosophy is done quite a lot... but is not generally done in philosophy departments. It's done in French departments, in German departments, film studies departments and so on' (Male, British – Professor, working at Constituent College of the UoL). Consequently, continental philosophy has had a strong influence in many knowledge territories developing outside philosophy

departments: 'literary theory, art history and theory, social and political theory, cultural studies, historiography, religious studies, and anthropology' (Critchley, 2001, p. 41), amongst others. Only a few departments with the name 'philosophy' specialise in continental philosophy, namely, Dundee, Essex, Sussex and Warwick.

So, the type of philosophy interested in phenomenology, existentialism, (post)structuralism, Marxism, and the like, is practised in the UK. However, their practitioners are scattered across many disciplines and knowledge territories. The remaining question here is what made these non-philosophical disciplines be receptive to ideas, scholars and arguments coming from this continental tradition? In the intent to answer this question, I will explore briefly three of these areas. In the case of *literature*, it is clear that the influence of cultural Marxism developed by scholars such as Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart at Birmingham opened a new way and dialogue with French authors such as Althusser and Barthes (see Cusset, 2008, p. 133). In addition, as in the USA (Lamont, 1987), Derrida has remained very popular amongst literary scholars in the anglophone world because of his contributions to the semiotics of textuality. In fact, in spite of the criticisms by a group of philosophers from Cambridge, the English Faculty from the same university proposed Jacques Derrida to be bestowed with an honorary doctoral degree by the Duke of Edinburgh (Rée, 1992, p. 61).⁶⁸ In *sociology*, continental philosophy came as a handy resource when the discipline was looking for alternatives to the dominance of Parsonian functionalism during the last half of the 20th century amidst a disciplinary crisis (A. W. Gouldner, 1971). Sociologists in the UK were reading not only Marxism but also authors such as Alfred Schutz, who brought them closer to Husserlian phenomenology, while they were looking for alternative tools in 'existentialism, structuralism, European Marxism and critical theory' (Rex, 1983, p. 1005). In the case of *film studies*, Deleuze's interest in philosophical issues of cinema and its assemblages sparked debates and gave scholars of the discipline materials to think about and re-consider notions of time and creativity (Martin-Jones & Brown, 2012). Additionally, Frankfurt scholars such as Benjamin have remained relevant in this area of knowledge in light of the critique of mechanical reproduction (Benjamin, 2008).

⁶⁸ What followed was a letter by a group of analytical and positivist philosophers claiming that 'Academic status based on what seems to us to be little more than semi-intelligible attacks upon the values of reason, truth, and scholarship is not, we submit, sufficient grounds for the awarding of an honorary degree in a distinguished university' (letter signed by 19 philosophers, in B. Smith & Sims, 1999, pp. 166–167). In spite of this complaint, which made the tensions particularly obvious, Derrida finally received the award on June 13 of 1992.

Scholars working in these areas, many of them trained (and who rebelled against the kind of knowledge produced) in traditional analytic philosophy departments, tend to mobilise their work in ways that have proven to be useful to legitimise non-philosophical disciplines concerned with different aspects of culture. Over the past few decades, these 'UK continental scholars' have provided – especially – non-philosophy academic tribes with theoretical resources that have been useful to explore their own specific concerns further. As a result, continental philosophy itself has become professionalised academically, finding its place for practice in the rhizome of dispersed spots across higher education institutions. Furthermore, the enactment of academic spaces where philosophers with these sensibilities can develop their work, valued by both publishers and prospective students alike, can be read as a way of taming radical agendas. Discussions on radical politics, the event, extreme thoughts, the construction of the self, transgression and collective organisation have been pigeonholed as academic topics that can be discussed and explored when reading and thinking but are put aside as concepts informing the praxis of an alternative educational project. In other words, the project of continental philosophers is currently *about* radicalism, not itself a radical project.

CHAPTER 4

A PASSAGE FROM WONDER TO DISCIPLINE

On the Experience of the Newcomers to Philosophy

There are students who desperately hope for something from their philosophy course which they will not and cannot get; and there are teachers of philosophy who fail to make any contact with at least a proportion of their students – all because they are not really concerned with the same subject at all.

Mary Warnock (1972, p. 28)

Being a newcomer to philosophy

Here I would like to tackle the question about the process of socialisation into philosophy, i.e. the *transition* from discovering problems understood as ‘philosophical’ to confronting the realities of ‘formal’ philosophical territory. At face value, the narrative I follow in this chapter is not different from that of the broader philosophical tradition: the origin of philosophy has to do with ‘wonder’. Indeed, below I show that such a perplexing feeling is often intimately connected to the discovery of the value of philosophical thinking. However, here I offer a turn: instead of simply suggesting that wonder is the experience leading to a ‘contemplative life’, I present the dramatic interaction between an individual’s original philosophical motivations and the reality of the disciplinary logics governing formal philosophical studies in Higher Education. The problem is that wonder and other initial motivations to do philosophy are many times at odds with what the philosophy department is able to offer. I seek to make sense of this as a *gap* in the philosophical experience which is not indifferent to many people who enrol in philosophy departments. In other words, I offer an exploratory account of how the disciplinary machinery of HE tames the original motivations of a newcomer, creating a set of mixed feelings and attitudes that shape philosophers in specific ways.

To achieve this, I focus on the stories of individuals who have studied philosophy in the UK system of HE and contrast their initial discovery of philosophical problems with their impressions of the formal education they received during their course. Considering this, perhaps it could be helpful to come back to the metaphor of the ‘academic tribe’ (Becher & Trowler, 2001),⁶⁹ and think philosophy through this lens. This entails considering it as a tribe that enculturates new recruits: newcomers go through a ‘rite of passage’ (Holm & Bowker, 1994), where their value for the tribe is tested. Furthermore, tribes have *myths*. These myths provide the tribe members with ‘the exemplary models’ for all the ‘responsible activities’ in which they engage (Eliade, 1959, p. viii). However, in modern differentiated societies, it would not be appropriate to look at this phenomenon only in this way. As Levi-Strauss argues, modern individuals bring their own myths, i.e., an excess of the signifier that becomes evident when they talk (as in the psychotherapeutic interaction) (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 182ff). Therefore, the challenge is to attend to both, the myths carried by individuals and those worshipped by the tribe. In this sense, I have to avoid judging – as a scholar in the field of philosophy would do – newcomers as bearers of ‘misconceptions’, ‘errors’, ‘confusions’ and ‘difficulties in understanding philosophical reasoning’ (an example of this in Double, 1999, p. xi). I would argue that newcomers interact with philosophy in a different way than that expected by those subsumed by their academic surroundings.

In a more general way, the problem addressed here is similar to that announced *en passant* by Pierre Bourdieu when thinking about philosophy in France. In the foreword to *Distinction*, he pointed out that the philosophical field is a ‘historical product of the labour of the successive philosophers who have defined certain topics as philosophical by forcing them on commentary, discussion, critique and polemic’ (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 498). He then added that such a historically-constructed array is imposed on would-be philosophers ‘as a sort of autonomous world’ (ibid.), i.e., a ready-made reality. For Bourdieu, newcomers to the field of philosophy still need to learn the rules of an area that is nothing more (and nothing less) than the result of socio-intellectual work, that is, the interactions and asymmetries between the actors constituting the field. Such rules, it should be noted, are understood and taken for granted by those who end up achieving stable positions within the field. When looking at philosophy in UK universities, this issue becomes especially interesting, as it is possible to observe a field attracting people from different nationalities and ages learning how to deal with an idiosyncratic Anglo-Saxon version of analytic philosophy managed, directed and defended

⁶⁹ A metaphor still heavily used in discussions about disciplines, interdisciplinarity and knowledge production (see Colavizza, Franssen, & Van Leeuwen, 2019; Mocanu & Bibiri, 2019).

by its professional guardians. Furthermore, as Baggini and Stangroom (2002) found out in their own interviews with representatives of what they call the *New British Philosophy*, the difficulty of studying the reality of newcomers to philosophy is that the reasons why people follow studies in philosophy may seem very different. Here, I attempt to show that, at least, there seem to be some discernible types of trajectories.

Starting from an e-mail interaction between a philosophy scholar and one of his students, I would like to show the gap between wonder, traditionally thought of as the original *leitmotif* for doing philosophy, and discipline, the way in which philosophy is understood in its university form. In a sense, such a gap and the transition between these states has to do with the manufacture of individuals struggling between 'enchantment' and 'rationality'. The description of such a dynamic underpins biographical and autobiographical stories of people who have crossed paths with philosophy in their lives. In following the original stories of people deciding to pursue HE studies in philosophy in the UK, I ended up finding personal stories about the quest for enchantment interrupted by, as it were, machinery at the service of the *disenchantment of the world*. Next, I take the position of the observer of a boundary, someone looking at what happens when individuals cross the line between reading philosophy as outsiders and becoming the trainees of university 'professionals'.

An email exchange between a scholar and his student

The starting point will be an email exchange between a Chinese MA student and a British philosophy professor working at a philosophy department in a constituent college of the University of London. It should be noted that this exchange happened during the first term of formal philosophy studies that the student ever had (he did a BA in administration before). The context was a formative essay (i.e., with no mark) written for a 'Philosophy of Science' module and the student's reflections on the feedback given. After reviewing the comments to his work, the student still had questions which he planned to discuss with the module leader. To clarify his questions, he decided to email his professor. One of his concerns had to do with the professor being seemingly troubled with the following assertion by the Master's student in the essay:

MS: It (IBE) *should* at least provide some practical and instructive guidance to our inductive practice.

The student is referring to the notion of 'Inference to the Best Explanation', proposed by Harman (1965), who asserts that the truth of inferences is grounded in 'the premise that a

given hypothesis would provide a “better” explanation for the evidence than would any other hypothesis’ (89).⁷⁰ In his statement, the student seems to imply that this theoretical tool, regularly used for ‘securing’ hypotheses, should not only consider a map of possible hypotheses, but it should also have normative implications in the sense of using philosophy as a means for improving scientific practices. The following is what the professor seemed to understand in light of his comments to the essay:

PP: Some will deny that this is the case. Should philosophy of science help scientists make better inferences? That’s not obvious. Some will agree and others will disagree.

Here, the Academic moves a step forward from the specificities of IBE and understands that the student’s claim has to do with the question of what could be the proper role for the philosophy of science in relation to science. In addition, by presenting this matter as a topic of academic discussion, he seems to imply that the student cannot simply give such a statement without providing arguments, in addition to acknowledging the different perspectives around the issue. In his email, the student describes such a point as ‘thought-provoking’. Furthermore, it looks as if such a comment made him reflect about his own position as someone new in this sub-discipline and, therefore, legitimately able to question what the aim of ‘philosophy of science’ is:

MS: This is my first year of studying philosophy as well as philosophy of science, so I am really a starter in this area. Before, I supposed that [the] philosophy of science should be like a metaphysics of science, but [those] who do metaphysics should also provide some help for those who do not do metaphysics. I know this reasoning is not obvious and might make philosophy of science affiliated to science or at least [a] service science. But what is [the] main job of philosophy of science if it does not help scientists at all?

In a rather standard definition of *metaphysics* from the University of London *Study Guide* we can find the following: ‘these days, metaphysics is normally taken to cover very general questions about what there is and how the world works: questions about substance, identity, universals, time and causation, for instance’ (Philosophy Panel, 2000, p. 12). Here, however, the student’s concern seems to be somewhat exceptional and slightly differing from this academically accepted and standard definition of the field. If for him metaphysics has to ‘provide some help’ to ‘those who do not do metaphysics’, then the specific questioning of

⁷⁰ This notion, sometimes also referred to as ‘abduction’, is considered by introductory philosophy books as an ‘argumentative’ or ‘methodological’ *tool* (Baggini & Fosl, 2003, p. 38ff; Double, 1999, p. 26ff).

'what there is' in science (a *metaphysics of science*) should somehow be useful to science.

The academic's response below raises many interesting points:

PP: The main job of [the] philosophy of science is to understand science. When we study science, that raises questions, some of which are philosophical in nature. It is conceivable that answering those questions will help scientists, and sometimes philosophy of science does that. But it doesn't follow automatically that understanding something will help you do it better. Understanding the physics of what happens when a cyclist turns a corner and leans to the side won't make you a better cyclist. But it might be worth understanding that physics for its own sake. Likewise with philosophical questions. We note that scientists use explanations. So we wonder what makes something an explanation, and how it differs from a prediction. But we should not expect that this will help scientists make better explanations.

What is the philosophy Professor doing here? In my view, he is at least putting forward four operations:

- (i) *He defines his job:* States that the main aim of a philosopher of his speciality is to 'understand science'. Therefore, efforts in other directions (for instance, normative) would be considered secondary or misleading.
- (ii) *He defends the inner value of theoretical concerns.* In a similar way to theoretical physics, philosophical questions and distinctions (such as those between 'explanation' and 'prediction') hold value by themselves.
- (iii) *He creates a boundary between philosophy and practice.* Philosophy can understand practice (in this case science), 'but it doesn't follow automatically that understanding something will help you do it better'. Additionally, he believes in (ii), and therefore, defends the distinction between knowing about the physics of cycling and effectively riding a bike. The latter implies that philosophy and practice have different kinds of nature or tasks and, therefore, they are not necessarily connected.
- (iv) *He shows disagreement with the student.* Re-phrasing Rancière: 'Disagreement is not the conflict between one who says [philosophy of science] and another who says [religion]. It is the conflict between one who says [philosophy of science] and other that also says [philosophy of science] but does not understand the same thing by it [...]' (Rancière, 1999, p. x).

In his last message, the academic puts forward an educational device that lets him defend his practice while simultaneously neglecting it as a practice. Overall, he substantiates a 'great divide' between the expert [PP] and the novice [MS], presenting himself as the 'gatekeeper to the process of professionalization' (Geisler, 1994, p. 207). In other words, he traces the lines that demarcate the particularities of his field and of his own business while correcting the

thinking of his student and trying to make this fit inside the limits of what would be possible and realistic for a philosopher. In the context of curricular constrictions, the PP is probably justified to do so. My aim here is not decide whether he is 'right' or 'wrong' in putting forward this operation but to show that his display of power-knowledge has effects for the student. Indeed, this demonstration of their different views about a philosophical concern in an asymmetrical context is perhaps why, in an informal conversation, the MS later told me that he felt annoyed, overwhelmed and, moreover, complicated by this whole situation (despite finding it 'thought provoking' at first). However, and leaving the 'career' perspective aside, is the academic being somehow unfair to the student? Could it be possible to think beyond the self-imposed limits of the sub-discipline of philosophy of science and wonder how 'knowing about science' could help improve science? Are the student's concerns something that need interruption and correction? If so, is philosophical education about maintaining and repeating the conventions of the field or more about creating tools to think differently?

It could be said that what happens to the student is that his philosophy – in contrast to his teacher's – is 'young', not in terms of age, but in terms of a type of 'thinking that is not shaped but open and, above all, in desire of being shaken' (Raskin & Quintana, 2014, p. 9; my translation).⁷¹ As written in a letter from the 73-year old Jean-Luc Nancy directed to the next generation of philosophers: 'Philosophy cannot live but in the youth, as youth. [It] is missing *philein* – and youth is that: love, desire, to move towards... – it matters little whom or what is *sophia*. The latter is what each desire has to configure' (Nancy, in Raskin & Quintana, 2014, p. 15; my translation).⁷² This could be the key: the student *desires* to improve science through philosophy while the academic is comfortable with just *knowing* about it. Time and repetition probably shaped the latter way of thinking, but maybe it was not always like that, and even a person that now has strong convictions about how to tackle these problems must have learnt such ways somewhere. How can such a trajectory be understood? Moreover, how can we understand the process of transformation of 'young' philosophy into something

⁷¹ A similar gap in the expectations between newcomers and academics seems to be the case for the discipline of sociology. As put by Gouldner in relation to sociology in the USA during the 1970s: 'There is a problem here: How can one account for the very radicalism of those sociologists who accuse sociology of being conservative? [...] It is undoubtedly correct that sociology often attracts young men and women of reformist inclination and prior radical outlook, and that some of their subsequent criticism of sociology may indeed derive from their frustrated expectations' (A. W. Gouldner, 1971, p. 11).

⁷² Nancy refers here to *Philosophy* as the love or desire for wisdom, emphasizing *desire* (the active element) over wisdom (just a result of the former).

different? Before attempting to answer these questions, below I revisit a classic argument by means of a small *detour* into the tough question of where philosophy comes from.

Wonder and the Origins of Philosophy

Navigating the speculative debate about the origins of philosophy, we can ask the following: when does philosophy start? Perhaps we could begin by considering when such social form was just a new-born and, therefore, pure potential. The problem of the origins of philosophy is an issue that has troubled philosophers and scholars for ages. Historically speaking, it has been a matter of tensions and debate on whether there was a 'gradual evolution of religious mythology' into philosophy, or if the appearance of 'logical or metaphysical speculation' created a clear-cut distinction between both areas (Rosen, 1962, p. 49). For instance, Durkheim suggests the former view – a functional substitution keeping a common form – when he says that science and philosophy are in debt to religion because the latter provided the 'form in which [...] knowledge is elaborated' (Durkheim, 1995, p. 8), i.e., the making of distinctions. Taking a slightly different approach, Collins argues that 'the earliest [Ancient-Greek] philosophy gradually crystallizes out of a plethora of political "wise men" and questioners of the traditional religious beliefs in the generations around 600 B.C.E.' (R. Collins, 1998a, p. 82). From this viewpoint, philosophy, understood as a critical endeavour, is born from the thoughtful examination of previously unexamined beliefs.

It would not be too difficult to think of an approach that settles the origins of philosophy somewhere between both accounts. Philosophy seems to be an activity in *continuity* with the way in which religion creates its own categories; however, the critical attitude of (proto) philosophical groups generates a certain sense of *discontinuity* with religious discourse. In any case, the result is a way of thinking, which can be referred to as 'philosophical', whose contents look different from those of religion. The best description I have found of this borderline origin is by the archaeologist Robert Hahn: 'Anaximander was present at the temple building sites and witnessed the technologies there that he applied imaginatively to his cosmic speculations' (Hahn, 2010, p. 1). The portrait is delightful: in front of the incomplete temple, Anaximander, or whoever was the 'first' philosopher, stares at the contingency of religion and while observing its means of construction, tries alternative ways of thinking about the processes that lead to the creation of everything that we know. Such depiction goes along lines such as Hegel's when he observes that 'diremption is the source of the need of philosophy' (Hegel, 1977, p.

89),⁷³ that is, philosophy becomes a necessity only after something is no longer certain in the world (e.g. cosmology, common sense, political consensus) and, therefore, things have to be thought all over again.

In light of the above, a more generalised and abstract version of this story can be drawn: 'that philosophy can begin only with something which is hypothetically and problematically true' (Hegel, 2010, p. 48), i.e., as something whose foundations are not to be taken for granted. Going further into the psychology behind this reasoning, we can find the typical claim that philosophy starts with a disorientating state of consciousness known as 'wonder' (Chrysakopoulou, 2012, p. 89; D. V. Smith, 2017, p. 30). Such an idea comes from the writings of Plato in ancient Athens. Particularly, the notion of wonder can be found in a dialogue between Theaetetus and Socrates where Plato followed Theaetetus' state of astonishment in relation to the abstract matters of their conversation:

THEAETETUS: Yes indeed, by the gods, Socrates, I wonder exceedingly as to why (what) in the world these things are, and sometimes in looking at them I truly get dizzy.

SOCRATES: The reason is, my dear, that, apparently, Theodorus' guess about your nature is not a bad one, for this experience is very much a philosopher's, that of wondering. For nothing else is the beginning (principle) of philosophy than this, and, seemingly, whoever's genealogy it was, that Iris was the offspring of Thaumás (wonder), it's not a bad one.

(Plato, 1986, p. 155c-d)

In the dialogue, 'wonder' [θαῦμα] is described as the 'experience' of being 'dizzy' and as the 'beginning of philosophy'. However, it also relates to hope and communication, as *Thaumás*, a Greek aquatic deity depicting wonder, is said to be the father of *Iris*, the rainbow that comes after the storm and who is normally associated with human attributes such as 'temperance' and 'self-control'. This state of astonishment resembles 'surprise', but not only, as it may also be related to a fascination with that which does not easily fit (puzzled by puzzles). It seems as if wonder stems from situations such as wanting to have something unattainable, trying to grasp what is unknowable, looking to feel what is not possible to feel or being challenged by something that does not have an obvious solution. As a story about origins, it seems that philosophy, as an aim to re-examine what is visible and invisible in the world, was born from

⁷³ I changed the word 'dichotomy' in the English translation for 'diremption' inasmuch as the German term used by Hegel is *Entzweiung*, whose meaning has more to do with 'diremption', 'disruption' or 'rupture', i.e., an active moment of division rather than an analytic indication status as divided of what was already divided.

the sense of perplexed wonder produced by our human confrontation with uncertainty and the complexity of concepts.

This resonates with Gouldner's thesis that 'Plato's philosophy was rooted in the political dilemmas and the social tensions of Hellenic society' (A. Gouldner, 1966, p. 173). The dramas of society could surely be thought of as one of the sources of the problems that some individuals later developed more philosophically or abstractly. The modern rationalistic-scientific reinvention of philosophy during the 17th century also followed a similar pattern. The work of intellectuals such as Descartes, Newton, and Hobbes has been thought of as 'a desperate search for certainty' in reason when confronted with the 'uncertainty of the wars and the religious schism that characterize this period in European history' (Chernilo & Mascareño, 2005, p. 34, my translation). Paul Hazard understands this as an intellectually fertile period that was shaped by a 'swift' and 'sudden' crisis that apparently 'took men completely by surprise' (Hazard, 1953, p. 445). Faith in thinking through models, methods and inquiries into the nature of knowledge (Iris, the rainbow) could be seen as the answer to the intellectual perplexity generated by the political and cultural divisions initiated in Europe after the Reformation (Thaumas, wonder).

Notions such as 'wonder' and 'uncertainty' seem to be linked to a sense of crisis and to the origins of philosophy. However, this does not seem to be a satisfactory answer to the question of why some people decide to become philosophers themselves at the present. Confronted with the crisis, many other attitudes are conceivable; for instance, acting as a problem-solver or being an opportunist. Having an interest in philosophy is only one of the many options available, and not necessarily the most obvious one. Furthermore, and as Stähler argues in reference to wonder and crisis, 'an impulse from the outside may be helpful, but it never provides a guarantee that we shall enter into philosophy. Only after the fact, in looking back, does it really become obvious that a transition to philosophy has taken place' (Stähler, 2008, p. 23).

A shock in our reality such as a 'crisis' cannot be measured or seen directly as the factor leading to philosophy, although it does seem to be one of its conditions. However, we have to recognise that Stähler's 'entry into philosophy' necessarily supports the notion of deciding to study a formal degree in philosophy. She refers to engaging with the game of philosophy and enjoying going deep into its problems and inner logic. Her point is that such disposition could be encouraged by a crisis. With this distinction in mind, I would argue that the discovery that leads people to *enter philosophy* is not the same as the motivations that may lead people to *study philosophy*. For this, I will focus on the former, as a desire to participate in the game of philosophy that may lead to actual formal studies in philosophy or

not. In light of the above, what sort of events in life can lead people to want to philosophise or engage with philosophy?

Many complexities arise from this question. The main one comes from the nature of biographical accounts – the main material explored in this chapter. Again, I will follow Stähler's assertion that a 'transition to philosophy' is something that can really make sense when 'looking back'. Using the distance in time to my favour, I attempt to trace some of the 'meaningful patterns' in narratives that 'otherwise [could be seen as] random and disconnected' (Salmon & Kohler Riessman, 2008, p. 78). To do this, not only will I rely only on the interviews that I made, but also on UK-based philosophers' autobiographies, in addition to the interviews conducted by Baggini and Stangroom (2002) with 'the heirs of the subject's aristocracy' (p. 3). In this sense, the material examined here is rich, diverse and comprises the testimonies of almost fifty people speaking or writing – in the first person – about their experiences with philosophy. Elsewhere, from a social theory viewpoint, Cordero and I suggest that concepts constitute a *biographical knot* that 'speaks of the person behind the theory, of their passions, battles and of the shifts in their thought' (Cordero & Salinas, 2017a, p. 5; my translation). Here, I would like to expand those insights into the biographical elements that are prior to any type of settled commitment to a concept, methodology or author and explore the motives that encourage people to engage with philosophy.

However, these elements should not be seen only psychologically; in fact, there emerges the issue of to what extent biographies are subject to a certain degree of 'standardisation' (Beck, 1992, p. 131). The same applies to 'social relationships', which are said to *occupy* the 'biographical space, over which culture is picked up, transformed, and passed on, through a series of life-stages' (Gell, 1998, p. 11). In this sense, it may be useful to distinguish between elements of discovery that have more to do with an individual's agency and those elements that are clearly concomitant with the social medium that surrounds them.

To sum up, beyond any meta-historical consideration, it seems that many times philosophy has its origin in some kind of event indicating a biographical split in an individual's trajectory. Therefore, consideration of these experiences can help us understand other academic situations, such as the biographical *gap* evidenced in the different understandings of philosophy for the case of the e-mail interaction between MS and PP. Next, I explore some of the factors that lead people to 'do' philosophy. Is it a sense of wonder?

The Discovery of Philosophy

What spurs some people to philosophy? To explore this, I present the experiences of different people, of different generations, and with dissimilar understandings of what philosophy is about. The reason to do this is to show a plurality of experiences while trying to develop a sense of the social forms or conditions for which these people speak. Few people are able to give cohesive accounts linking how their original encounter with philosophy led them to its formal study. However, I would like to start with two exceptions to the rule that can help us get a sense of the broader picture of such a process. These individuals present fairly cohesive narratives with a clear connection between the two moments of *entering* philosophy and *studying* it. The first one is a philosophy graduate, currently working at the House of Lords. In our conversation, he told me that there were a couple of philosophy books at home when he was a teenager. Remembering one of them, he told me about his first encounter with philosophy and his further immersion into it:

I know there was a collected one on... I think it must be Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas. It was the three combined in one... because I've seen the book cover on a shelf and thought that it rang a bell. There's no way I would have read it cover-to-cover. I would've just looked through it and seen stuff about Platonic forms and metaphysics and I think it just struck me as really clever and it was intelligent stuff, and I wanted to do something like that. So, I ended up hanging around in the philosophy section of Waterstones, would pick up the occasional book and be sometimes lucky enough to pick up a classic. That actually gets recommended to students nowadays. Because the internet had only just started out then there was nowhere to go to get advice or anything like that. But I read a few of the classics at that point, you know, Bertrand Russell's *Problems of Philosophy*, A. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*... Bought a few other books, but I wasn't really a systematic reader. But, just... I quickly realised this would be a fun thing to study, and it was obvious that was what I wanted to do at university.

(Male, British – BA and PhD in Philosophy)

Another cohesive and coherent narrative of an individual's trajectory leading to the study of philosophy was provided by a scholar who now works at an Education Department. He told me how some philosophical questions in his childhood took him into a specific course of action:

I became interested in philosophy when I was about thirteen. I discovered that was the name for what I was interested in. When I was very young I was interested in... you know... sceptical questions. Did the furniture exist? And that kind of thing... And, then, when I studied chemistry I was about 11-12. I was very interested in models in chemistry. I became interested in models in chemistry, you know, like trying to understand the relationship between models like pictures of molecules and the actual

world. And my chemistry teacher encouraged me to think about that. So, so... that's why I decided to do philosophy.

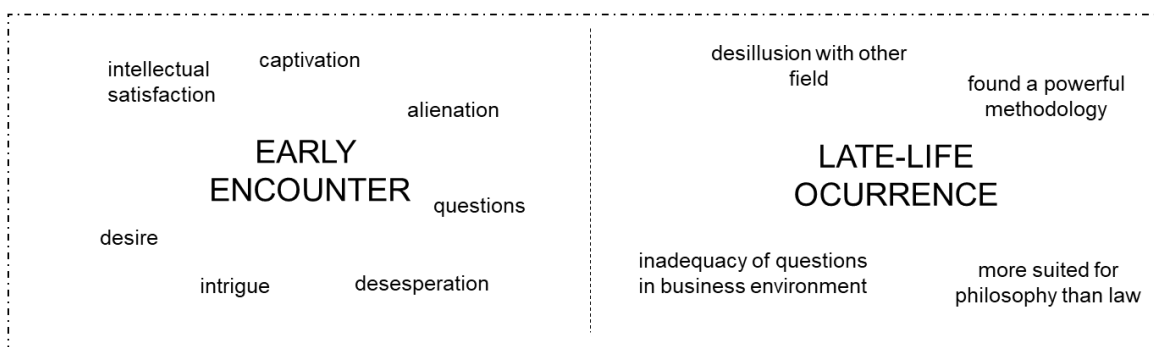
(Male, British – Professor, working at Constituent College of the UoL)

The first of these narratives starts with an 'event' that puts everything into motion: a random encounter with classic philosophy books, whose intellectual content is reciprocated with the teenager's reaction of being 'struck' by them, his motivation to look for further readings, and his realisation that studying philosophy could be something enjoyable and clever. In the second story, the 'sceptical' curiosity of the teenager seems to be conducted and stimulated by a schoolteacher who encouraged him to develop such interest, which the participant sees as directly connected to his subsequent decision to study philosophy. Overall, these narratives show many of the recurring themes emerging from the following accounts.

However, in spite of the clarity of such accounts, most of the narratives traced here display a more fragmented mode of exposition. With this in mind, following a more analytic approach, I would like to differentiate those related to *the discovery of philosophy* as something 'appearing' in someone's life, that is, in the form of a relevant encounter, from those events and actions that are more closely related to the decision of *studying philosophy* as a degree. As stated before, below I focus on the first group of experiences.

When referring to the discovery of philosophy, I allude to the phenomenological irruption of philosophy in someone's life. As we can observe in Figure 12, it is possible to distinguish between 'personal' and 'social' aspects of the discovery of philosophy. Of course, such a division is not clear-cut because there are many grey areas between this type of experiences. My emphasis has to do more with the amount of socio-institutional mediation between the individual and philosophy. On the one hand, 'personal' experiences of philosophy relate to existential, awkward or shocking circumstances directly faced by an individual. On the other hand, more 'social' experiences of philosophy have to do with approximations to this kind of knowledge occurring in forms whose communication is shared with others. This notwithstanding, such experiences can be considered 'special' by some of the individuals, being thus as relevant as more direct or personalised ones.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES



SOCIAL EXPERIENCES

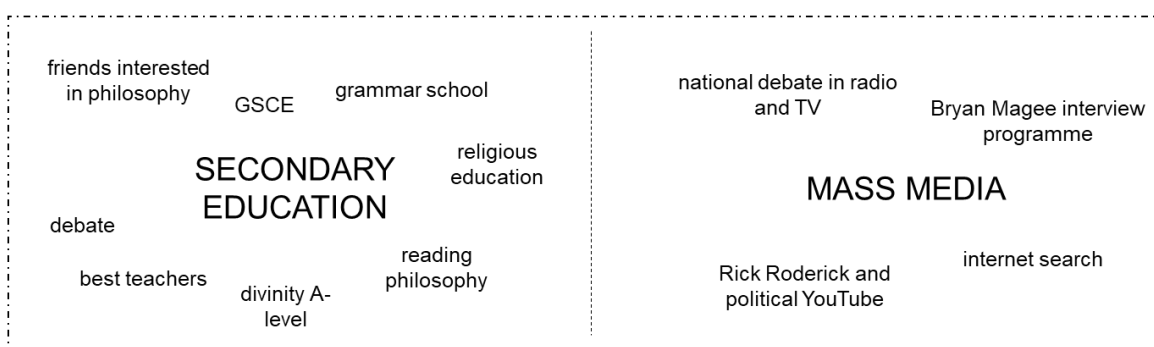


Figure 12. Some ways of discovering philosophy. Source: own elaboration based on research narratives and testimonies in secondary sources

In the narratives presented here, it is possible to identify at least four types of experience through which individuals get to know philosophy or relate to it as something of relevance for them. These are: (1) events that marked an ‘early encounter’ with philosophy; (2) philosophy as a ‘late-life’ occurrence; (3) philosophy as a ‘secondary education experience’; and (4) philosophy as a ‘mass-media spectacle’. The first two components have a stronger tie with personal or individualised experiences than the other two. As we will see, this occurs because the last two categories tend to emphasise experiences that have taken place in territories more fiercely determined by social institutions or situations shared with others. Of course, these are the most ‘typical’ experiences I reported, but in more exceptional cases, other circumstances can be crucial. For instance, a family heritage:

My father always had an interest in philosophy, but as a completely self-educated man. He left school at 14 or something, you know... So yeah... so I just sort of like I thought that's what I wanted to do at University and like many people discovered when I started that a lot of it wasn't what I expected it to be. But enough of it was interesting, so I just kept going.

(Male, Italian – PhD in Philosophy)

1. Early encounters with the philosophical 'event'

This way of discovering philosophy is the closest to the sense of 'wonder' previously addressed in this chapter. This is possibly because this type of experiences are closer to the 'origins' of philosophy in its historical sense, i.e., as wonder and speculation arising from some sort of tension with religion. A good example of this can be found in Bertrand Russell's *Autobiography*, where he mentions that he was raised in a very religious family and that as a child he used to write a secret philosophical journal in which he developed his atheist thoughts:

I used at this time to write down my reflections in English written in Greek letters in a book headed "Greek Exercises". I did this for fear lest someone should find out what I was thinking. In this book I recorded my conviction that the human body is a machine. I should have found intellectual satisfaction in becoming a materialist [...]

(Russell, 1967, p. 41)

It is not strange to think that such experience marked his further project: 'What I most desired was to find some reason for supposing mathematics true' (Russell, 1967, p. 67). In addition, such effort resulted in written works that can also be understood as important philosophical experiences for others: 'I bought Russell's *Sceptical Essays* when it first came out in 1928 [he was 18], and was immediately captivated by the opening sentences' (Ayer, 1977, p. 53). Ayer was enchanted by Russell's *subversive approach* that deems it 'undesirable to believe a proposition when there is no ground whatever for supposing it true' (Russell, in *ibid.* p. 54). Likewise, reading philosophy books can also relate to religion in the opposite direction. Such is the experience of a female philosopher whose encounter with philosophy happened when she was searching for some rationality to reinforce the beliefs with which she was raised:

I grew up in India, the daughter of missionary parents, and as a teenager I wanted desperately for there to be a clear-cut proof of God's existence. That's how I started reading what I realised later was philosophy.

(Female, Australian – Cambridge Professor of Philosophy, in Baggini & Stangroom, 2002, p. 97)

Furthermore, this feeling of 'desperation' can also be secular and take the form of powerful feelings, such as alienation from society by someone with highly 'metaphysical' concerns. In this case, the sense of crisis is devastating and does not lead necessarily to wanting to pursue formal studies in philosophy:

I had this overwhelming sense of being completely alienated from society. At the time I didn't suspect that a philosophy department could provide a home for someone like me. I've always had what one might loosely describe as a metaphysical bent, but back

then I was too impatient to bother with the academic study of philosophy. I wanted to change the world, not interpret it!

(Male, British – Oxford Professor of Philosophy, in *ibid.* p. 255)

Philosophy as an event may also take the form of a phenomenological appearance of *questions*. For instance, below a professor remembers how troubled he was and how he almost gave up the study of philosophy after his traumatic introduction to the subject through Locke's readings, and how he *converted* to philosophy when he saw his own concerns reflected in the questions posed by Mill in *On Liberty*: 'that converted me to philosophy because he was writing about questions I had tried to think about myself, questions like: What's wrong with censorship? Why is it important that people should be allowed to wear silly clothes?' (Male, British – Oxford Professor of Philosophy, in *ibid.* p. 30). Something similar happened to another scholar who remembered being struck by questions about his own individuality as a kid: 'I do remember being intrigued at the age of nine or ten by the question: Why was it that of all the people in the world just one of them happens to be me? And what did it mean for one person to be me?' (Male, British – Leeds Professor of Metaphysics, in *ibid.* p. 167).

These different testimonies not only speak about a sudden break or desire to understand the rationality of the convictions in which one was first socialised, but also about desperation with one's own situation in the world and, overall, about a space where questions start to take protagonism. In sum, they speak of an experience where philosophy becomes associated with 'wonder' in the sense of encountering questions or issues whose complexity they think of as interesting to approach from philosophy.

2. Philosophy as a late-life occurrence

For some people, philosophy appears very late in their lives and involves a radical shift in their professional and personal trajectories. For them, philosophy is some sort of revelation that shows the limits of their long academic/professional careers. As I suggested earlier, following Jean-Luc Nancy, the willingness to do philosophical reflection may be associated with being young in spirit, which has nothing to do with the actual age of an individual. In this sense, as recalled by an early-career academic who studied and used to work as an economist, many questions could be addressed to economists in relation to the foundations of their discipline and the superficiality of some of their analyses. However, people working as economists do not have a proper place to do that:

But basically, for all of the questions I wanted to ask, the Economists said: “Yeah... We do not really do that. It is interesting, but we do not do that”. So... why do we call this “rationality”? “Utility maximization”? Or the questions about Econometrics... Like, the way “causality” is understood... is just a few control groups... and then you observe a treatment effect, then that is “causation” - that is what it is. It does not go deeper. But this just seems to be evidence for “causation”, that is not “causation” itself. Yeah... “But for our purpose, that is what causation is”. And so, I had all of these questions. And I thought... although I like Economics I still wanted to go in the philosophical direction.

(Female, Swiss – Lecturer in Constituent College of the UoL)

Such experience resembles that of a famous political philosophy scholar who was preparing to become a lawyer. However, he was seduced by questions of a philosophical nature when preparing his law exams and was encouraged to change his path:

I started taking some of the legal examinations and there were certain things which we briefly covered and I thought were very interesting. It was the philosophical underpinnings of law; for example, questions of rights and duties – do political rights always correlate with duties? Do duties come first and rights come second, or is it the other way round? I talked with the teacher who was pretty sure that I was more suited to the philosophy of law than law. I wasn't very interested in learning Case Law, for example. So he just recommended that I applied to take a philosophy degree.

(Male, British – Head of UCL's Department of Philosophy, in *ibid.* pp. 45-46)

The career shift can also be connected to the feeling of amazement emerging from the discovery of some of the possibilities offered by philosophical methods. A researcher previously working in sociology, told me about how he got attracted to the argumentative instrumental offered by analytic philosophy:

It's called analytic philosophy, right? Making these linear arguments, using logic, you know, to construct the arguments... you know, one of the premises of the argument, how is the conclusion followed and how do we back various premises, how do we give good counter-examples, and so on. And... all that methodology I thought was very powerful, and that's why I went into philosophy.

(Male, Belgian – Professor, working at Constituent College of the UoL)

Another experience traced here is that of *disillusion* with a former course at the HE level. In this case, the student changed to philosophy attracted by the ‘smartness’ of the staff in the philosophy department:

When I got to the university I became very disillusioned by the teaching of literature and literary theory. At the same time, I was doing a philosophy course, and I came to the conclusion that the people teaching philosophy were simply a lot smarter than the people who were teaching me literature, politics, French or sociology. I became intrigued, and over the course of that year I switched to philosophy.

(Male, British – Essex Professor of Philosophy, in *ibid.* pp. 185-186)

In the same way that sociological vocation promises to connect an individual's biographical troubles to the general issues of society (Gane & Back, 2012, pp. 404–405; Wright Mills, 1959, Chapter 1), here philosophy also seems to promise something to these persons. The promise held by philosophy is to change the monotony of functional work for a place in which to think big, raise questions, enjoy powerful methodologies or engage in smart conversations. For these academics, the conversion into philosophy is led by the promise of accessing or developing more thoroughly these coordinates of practice.

3. Philosophy as a High School Experience

Although until recently 'philosophy' courses at the GCSE or A-Level were scarce in the UK, many students these days learn about the existence of philosophy during their secondary education. Traditionally, courses on religion have been a doorway into philosophy in the UK. Somewhere between theological problems and comparative religion, teachers of these subject areas tend to mention key philosophers, suggest books, or directly adapt the curriculum and orient it towards philosophy. From the 1960s to the present, school experiences like this seem to have stimulated the curiosity of some students to explore philosophy.

I had fallen under the influence of a teacher, Mr. Marsh, who taught me Divinity A-level. [...] He would occasionally mention philosophers as he was discussing some contentious point – as it might be, the plausibility of the virgin birth – and from him I first heard the name of Descartes [...] As a result of these philosophical intrusions I started to dip into some elementary philosophy books (if there can really be said to be such things).

(McGinn, 2002, pp. 6–7)

I don't remember how I got interested in Kant... Maybe, also, I got interested in philosophy at school... So, everybody had to do religious education GCSE and that was taught much more like philosophy. It was kind of debating things, a lot of ethics and stuff, not very much religion... And then I did it... because I enjoyed that [...] I remember getting into arguments for and against the existence of God, and Kant was one of the people we looked at... So... that's probably the first time I had come against Kant. [...] But then, I remember, in the Sixth form trying to read the *Critique of Pure Reason*... and I have no idea why that got to me, that that would be a good idea... [She laughs]. So, I think, I was, like... as I was getting interested in philosophy, I was getting interested in Kant, but I can't remember where that came from...

(Female, British – Early Career Lecturer, working at Constituent College of the UoL)

Despite the fact that the excerpts above occurred in different decades, it can be said that both individuals had the chance of reading a philosophical author because of their school education. Today, situations like this are more common since philosophy is no longer a lateral

component of religious education, but a school subject on its own (AQA, n.d.). In spite of this, an early experience of philosophy in a disciplinary way can have as a side-effect being discouraging for students that otherwise could be seduced by philosophy: 'At GCSE and A Level, just as the emphasis of content has moved away from "Ultimate Questions", the emphasis of assessment has moved away from students presenting a personal point of view' (Vardy, 2017, p. 12). The more specialised and transparent philosophy becomes for the student, the greater the risk of transforming it into an obligation that challenges its current status as a mysterious object of desire.⁷⁴ Of course, this also has the positive effect of lowering expectations of students who otherwise might be tempted to follow their studies in traditional UK philosophy departments and not find what they are looking for.

The possibility of experiencing philosophy as an educational privilege, such as studying at a *Grammar or Public school*, has also been highlighted by philosophers at different points in time. Again, comparing a scholar who went to school in the 1960s and one who studied in the 2000s, both seem to appreciate how their schools introduced them to philosophy:

My passion for philosophy began when I was seventeen. I read Plato's Republic and Pascal's Pensées. This is the only thing I have for which I am grateful to the local grammar school, which was otherwise the seat of academic narrowness and obsessive social propriety [...] I never found philosophy abstract or abstruse.

(G. Rose, 2011, p. 128)

I did classics, classical civilisation at school. I got lucky enough to get to Grammar School until I've got to study Classics, and Classics has a bit of philosophy on it. So I've got introduced to Plato and, so, I've got very interested in philosophy by the chance of doing that.

(Male, British – Early Career lecturer in ex Polytechnic Institution)

Beyond further considerations about the formal status of philosophy at the school level, what seems important here is that the whole social experience with philosophy may arise from its existence at this point in life. As mentioned by a philosophy BA student during an interview, if somebody is lucky enough to have teachers and classmates who are interested in philosophical discussions, they may develop a sense of *enjoyment* from reading or discussing

⁷⁴ Further critical discussion regarding 'philosophy for children', its history, and the question of the possibility of philosophising beyond philosophy can be found in Charles (2011). Also, I offer some discussion on the reform to A-levels in Excursus 2 of this document.

philosophical issues. In his case, this feeling leads him to dismiss study options which he finds more practical, and in which he believes himself to be better at:

I knew I really wanted to go to university, but philosophy was the only subject that I enjoyed at school... so... I was... I was much better at economics but I didn't really want to go and do that at university because I thought I'd just be bored, whereas everything we'd been reading in philosophy I found quite interesting. [...] Also the teachers we had at school for philosophy were, by far, the best teachers in the school. So, really it made it... it was quite an easy decision... I wasn't thinking really about doing anything else. Also, a lot of people in my friendship group also were very interested in philosophy so, yeah... Pretty much everything in my last years at school pointed towards me doing philosophy at uni. [...] I remember a big one that a lot of us were very interested in back then was the whole... the *determinism* debate, which we studied... Which that would always have a lot of us talking to each other... sort of disagreeing about what was right there... That was the main one, actually, that we spoke about back then. That was what probably really picked my interest in philosophy, actually.

(Male, British – BA Student at Red Brick University)

The point I am trying to make here is that if at school someone has the possibility of reading philosophers or discussing philosophy in an enjoyable way (i.e. not as a burden), that may also be a factor influencing that person's decision to enter philosophy. In this sense, wanting to do philosophy is many times encouraged by exposure to others doing philosophy and showing what this may look like.

4. Philosophy in the media and as a spectacle

It is not unusual to find philosophy in the mass media. For instance, BBC4 broadcasts Melvyn Bragg's radio programme in which philosophy authors and philosophical problems are discussed with expert guests. I would argue that phenomena like this invert Arendt's distinction between philosophy and performing, broadly seen as the separation between 'understanding' and 'doing'. Using the metaphor of the spectacle she claims that 'as a spectator you may understand the "truth" of what the spectacle is about; but the price you have to pay is withdrawal from participating in it' (Arendt, 1981, p. 93). When considering the particularities of being a non-philosopher observing philosophers in action, this seems to be the opposite, or at least something more complicated. Then, what happens when philosophers are the object of contemplation/observation as opposed to observers?

I would argue that, for some people, watching philosophy, philosophical problems or philosophising on a screen can promote their interest in the subject. Such is the case of a BA

student below, who recalled seeing 1990's philosophy videos on YouTube during her teenage years:

A lot of it was bad philosophy at the time, like looking back... a lot of it was like political YouTube. So, like...you know, the atheism movement on YouTube and look... so... watching a YouTube atheist that was kind of studying philosophy... and those lectures by this guy called Rick Roderick.

(Female, British – former BA Philosophy student at Oxbridge)

In this sense, the influence of popular communicators of philosophy such as Bryan Magee seems crucial. It has been said that 'in his two acclaimed television series, *Men of Ideas* (1978) and *The Great Philosophers* (1987) he proved that in the hands of a great communicator, two people sitting around chatting about philosophy could be utterly gripping' (Baggini, 2016). One interviewee remembers watching one of these programmes, finding in it inspiration to pursue an intellectual career:

Then, at that time Bryan Magee started to interview world figures in philosophy, in the most extraordinary way. Might even be on the television, actually... in which he just sat down individually, for an hour, with an individual philosopher, of world stature, people that you wouldn't even know some of them. But certainly Marcuse, but also Ernest Gellner... but others, world figures in philosophy. He just talked with them for an hour in the most accessible way... get them to reveal their thoughts about philosophy. And I was absolutely hooked by all of that. And that helped me inspire me.

(Male, British – Emeritus Professor, Constituent College of the UoL)

The notion of spectacle, however useful it may be, cannot account for all the experiences of mass media intervention in the discovery of philosophy. New technologies offer more interactive forms that cannot be reduced to the audio-visual elements of a screen only. The active development of curiosity can also happen through the use of search engines online. Such is the experience of the student who found Rick Roderick's videos by *searching* on YouTube, and the case of a Chinese student who remembered having looked for 分析哲学 [analytic philosophy] in Sougou, a Chinese search engine. He recalls finding the information needed to fulfil his abstract interests in the following way:

Well, and I just started a question like "if I want to learn analytical philosophy is there a recommendation?" And there was a professor at a Chinese University, but I don't know his name and maybe he is not a very famous professor – he is just a lecturer. So, he mentioned *From a Logical Point of View* [a book authored by Quine] and I started to read that and I found it quite interesting.

(Male, Chinese – MA student at Constituent College of the UoL)

Here, a lecturer shared some of his interests online, which matched with those of a young man curious about philosophy. In this case, the technologically mediated encounter between shared interests encouraged years of philosophical work and concerns from a person who

was about to become a philosophy student. In sum, I would like to re-state the idea that the discovery of philosophy has to do, in different ways, with a sense wonder or, at least, with a rational fascination with the possibilities associated with the word and world of 'philosophy'. However, and as I point out next, such experiences of 'wonder' tend to be very fragile. Confronted with the 'reality' of philosophy as a university discipline in the UK, newcomers to the field can be extremely overwhelmed. In other words, for many, the formal study of philosophy can be a profound shock, which is diametrically different from the original experiences that led them to enter philosophy in the first place.

Philosophy as a Discipline: A Form of Disenchantment

In his lecture on *Science as a Profession and Vocation*, Max Weber used the German word *Entzauberung* – meaning 'loss of magic' or 'disenchantment' – to explain the rationalisation process that 'has been going on continually in Western culture for thousands of years' (M. Weber, 2012, p. 342).⁷⁵ Habermas associates this process with the problems of 'loss of meaning' and 'loss of freedom' (Habermas, 1984, pp. 243–244), i.e., with issues regarding an individual's capacity for sense-making and autonomy. Here, I would argue that such a process is not only mobilised by science but it is also something observable at a microphysical level in many academic philosophy practices. Considering the context of HE institutions in the UK, the discipline seems to promote such disenchantment, which is especially salient when examining the experiences of those previously 'enchanted' by their discovery of philosophy. Academic Philosophy in the UK is no Wonderland.

I would like to illustrate this through the practical controversies caused by the figure of Wittgenstein in a pedagogical situation in a philosophy department. As mentioned in his intellectual biography, 'the figure of Ludwig Wittgenstein exerts a very special fascination that is not wholly explained by the enormous influence he has had on the development of philosophy [during the last] century' (Monk, 1991, p. xvii). A particular set of insights and practices introduced by a professor in charge of a module on the central 20th-Century authors of Analytic Philosophy at a London university reflects his concerns about Wittgenstein's influence. During our interview, the professor told me that he does not consider Ludwig

⁷⁵ See the editor's glossary in Weber (2012, p. 481) for a discussion on the English translation of Weber's term.

Wittgenstein to be a good 'role model for philosophy', compared to Frege, who writes clearly and gives arguments 'so you can follow this stuff and engage with it'. Considering the *Tractatus*, the professor took the view that Wittgenstein just wrote 'something for his friends, or for people who think like him' and that it is not possible that 'people can learn what it is to do philosophy from it'. However, he also voiced that his final-year undergraduate students, as well as MA students 'quite often, are drawn into [philosophy] because of Wittgenstein', as for them he 'has this kind of aura of... I don't know what... being a great thinker, being a great, mysterious thinker'.

Although he said that his students 'are always a bit disappointed that Wittgenstein is underrepresented in the course', he then told me that he did not want people to 'write' or 'think' in the way that Wittgenstein does because the Cambridge philosopher 'thinks that all philosophy is a kind of therapy' that entails 'getting rid of confused ideas' that usually operate in the realm of language. In this sense, the scholar finds himself responsible for protecting the newcomers to philosophy from the likely harm emerging from what he considers an erroneous vision. In fact, one of his students who got really keen on philosophy after reading the *Tractatus*, told me that he saw Wittgenstein and his theory of meaning as some 'kind of medicine for people who have some weird hope in philosophy'. His comment reflects exactly the type of conviction that his lecturer tries to fight.

I followed the module and attended some of the lectures on Wittgenstein delivered by this professor. I would describe them in a similar way as Löwith described Weber's lecture on *Science as a Vocation*: 'he tore down all the veils from desirable objects' (Löwith, 1994, p. 17). After two months of lectures on Frege and Russell, this lecturer presented Wittgenstein as an author (a) whose propositions were not very original and that many of his apparently new points were to be found already in the works of Frege and Russell; and (b) whose solutions to philosophical problems such as those of 'sense', 'language' and 'truth' seemed less reasonable than those of Frege and Russell. Most of his lecture consisted in a demonstration, following the logical implications of Wittgenstein's arguments, contrasting them with those of other authors, and indicating why Wittgenstein's philosophy was problematic.

During a seminar, he even made us choose between Wittgenstein, Frege or Russell in relation to a set of problems, but no one picked Wittgenstein (who was allegedly the student's favourite). One of the students, who had previously written a dissertation on Wittgenstein for his BA, and who probably considered himself a 'Wittgensteinian', seemed to be taking on board the arguments presented by the lecturer. He had never seen Wittgenstein from such perspective, and his convictions seemed modified by the new arguments with which he was confronted. The professor's arguments seemed very definitive, thus Wittgenstein had

to be seen in new ways. In this context, it looks as if Wittgenstein's charisma, style, originality or epistemological radicalism were not good enough in light of dry philosophical scrutiny.

This is the time to ask what the above is really about. Whilst not directly addressing experiences of 'discovery' of philosophy, it alludes to the adaptation of the way in which professional philosophy practitioners see things. As recalled by a newcomer to the field participating in this module: 'After three months of learning I found that some thoughts I used to have are totally wrong or totally irrelevant to what a philosopher thinks'. This process of learning the academic business of philosophy seems to reflect a process of *turning the experiences of discovery into something irrelevant*. It seems as if being 'good' at philosophy means having the ability to meet the 'necessary conditions' – through the mastery of logic, argumentation, counter-argumentation, abstract concepts, the articulation of propositions and such – to create texts and discourses that can be considered as 'valuable' or at least 'valid' for other philosophers. These experiences, which are by no means exclusive to philosophy but that have many expressions inside philosophy, can be extremely difficult for many people studying philosophy. The five stories of people remembering their study of philosophy below reflect their struggle:

1. Story 1 [from the 1960s]

This story is about a senior researcher who studied at a public university in North East England. He believes that, back in his days as a BA student, the philosophy department where he studied was somewhat 'stultifying' and 'suffocating'. He remembers his lecturers as people with a narrow interest in their sub-areas and who made no effort to show why philosophy was important for a young student struggling to understand philosophy and its relevance: In his words: 'Not making much of an effort to make philosophy interesting, to make it come alive. To make it clear to a young person... why philosophy was worthwhile, why it was important... and why the people they were talking about and the ideas they were talking were important. There was no standing back on helping one to see philosophy synoptically and understand it... where it come from and the different schools of thought, and the conflicts, and so forth' (Male, British – Emeritus Professor, Constituent College of the UoL). In this narrative, the experience of enthusiastic *discovery* is interrupted when confronted by scholars who seem to have limited pedagogical sensibilities and too much concern with their area of specialisation to even communicate effectively what the field is about. This indicates that the gap between discovery and discipline is also mediated by the gap between teaching and research (see

Brew & Boud, 1995; Leisyte, Enders, & de Boer, 2009); in some situations, which are not by any means exclusive to philosophy, this adds further challenges to the possibility of interesting new people in the game of philosophy. In the case of my interviewee, after this initial experience of studying philosophy, he continued his career with an interest in philosophical problems but discouraged by the way he was made unwelcome to the field, he never again set foot in a philosophy department.

2. Story 2 [from the 1960s]

This story is about Gillian Rose, who did philosophy at Oxford. In her memoir, she wrote that her philosophy education at school did not prepare her for the 'deeper stupidity of philosophy at university'. She argued that the 'oppressive opulence' of her university was married to an alienating vision of philosophy. More concretely, she remembers the words with which she was received: 'remember, girls, all the philosophers you will read are much more intelligent than you'. For Rose, this could not hide the fact that, actually, she and her classmates were 'hand-picked' and 'super-intelligent' and, therefore, likely to 'find the rules of the game fatuous'. Rose remembers being discouraged from any kind of innovation when, for example, she wrote an essay coupling Hume and Diderot, that she was asked to re-write only including the required reading – Hume (G. Rose, 2011, pp. 129–131). The academic culture she was confronted with was full of rules and forms of symbolic violence aimed at limiting and narrowing the possibilities of their work as philosophers.

3. Story 3 [recent]

This story is about a student who had recently finished his Philosophy BA at a redbrick university and the frustration he suffered while writing his dissertation. He was originally interested in writing about 'free will and determinism', a topic he had been interested in since secondary school. When he had to choose a question for his assignment, he felt that 'all had sort of been said before'. His second choice was to do something on Sartre, but the only academic working in that area was on a sabbatical. Eventually, he wrote a dissertation about artificial intelligence, although, he was pushed by his advisor to do it from the viewpoint of ethics. He recalls: 'I didn't enjoy the work that much' because 'she'd essentially almost tell me what to write and say: "this is the part you should take" and obviously because she's the one marking it or she knows who is marking it, I decided it would be best to just follow her advice

instead of follow what I was interested in...'. Here, the student had to compromise his own research interests for the institutional and argumentative possibilities he was offered in the setting where he studied.

4. Story 4 [recent]

This story is about a student who recently decided to transfer from her former BA in philosophy to another Oxbridge course in the social sciences. She was interested in the question of 'meaning' but was not offered the tools to address that topic in her philosophy course. For her, philosophers are interested in the 'spiniest points' of argumentation, which are not necessarily the most interesting ones, and have a 'picky' approach to big questions. Now, away from her formal studies in philosophy, she claims that philosophy can be really fun but 'while you are in the game, only'.

5. Story 5 [recent]

As part of my observations of philosophical events and talking to philosophy MA and PhD students who attended, I repeatedly observed the following story: students who claimed to have no clarity in their own mind about how they are actually handling their philosophy degree and who seemed a overwhelmed and daunted by the topics they were trying to address in their theses and which were discussed in these events. Furthermore, I also observed this issue in a couple of e-mail exchanges with philosophy students who had refused to be interviewed because of their lack of clarity about what they are doing while doing philosophy. Considering this, it is interesting to ask how such state of confusion came about, and in what ways, if any, the experience of studying for a degree in philosophy has something to do with it.

Closing Remarks: Disciplining the Mind

The problem for the newcomers to philosophy lies in the gap between their expectations about philosophy and what academic philosophy as a practice in universities actually entails. The

problem here has to do with the mediation of a very specific type of *discipline* between 'Philosophy' and 'Academic Philosophy'. When speaking of discipline, Foucault looked at the *docility* of the body 'that is manipulated, shaped, trained' and 'which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces' (Foucault, 1991, p. 136). Neither of these actions have to be understood in a moral sense but in a practical level. As happens in other disciplines, becoming well-versed in the game of philosophy involves being inducted into, trained into, expressing oneself, speaking and asking questions, using language, in a very particular way. Entering philosophy, and studying it in an academic setting, has a similar effect over the newcomer whose target of power is not the body but the *mind*. Moreover, as Bourdieu argues when writing about the *disciplining of minds*, this type of discipline operates through the imposition of 'categories of perception of subjects and careers as well as of their own skills' (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 19). In other words, what a discipline such as academic philosophy attempts to do to new recruits is to produce a subject that behaves, sees, and examines like an academic philosopher and, therefore, can be held accountable to the epistemic sensibilities of the community of professional philosophers. Of course, this presupposes a certain degree of discipline of the body that sits, reads, highlights, take notes, listens and writes. The aim of Academic Philosophy is to channel the mind in a disciplined way.

To remain in the business of philosophy, as understood in the UK academic system, newcomers need to engage with *how* ideas, construed as currency, are 'traded'. This is something faced by both, those disciplined in 'analytic' and 'continental' styles of philosophy. Academic philosophers are likely to teach 'that any conclusions reached are based upon a combination of good evidence, good reasoning and self-evident basic principles of logic' (Baggini & Stangroom, 2003, pp. 1–2), even if this means turning away from the sense of discovery that got them interested in philosophy in the first place. This is especially encouraged in places where analytic philosophy is dominant. Unless the newcomer had a predisposition towards understanding and learning these techniques of discipline the first experience of academic philosophy can be difficult and disappointing:

Unlike a lot of students who did the degree with me, many of whom I think have got these ideas about, it's going to be, you know, "the meaning of life", something a bit more like the religious-mysticism section of a bookshop. And then they get there and, if you hang around with philosophers now, you know it's about the necessary and sufficient conditions for S knows that P and J, and it becomes quite dry and technical. I knew that it was going to involve that kind of work. I wasn't necessarily familiar with the content a lot, but I knew it was going to be technical, is going to be dry, it was going to be narrow... So, I was never shocked by what philosophers studied and it was what I wanted it to be.

(Male, British – BA and PhD in Philosophy)

Looking through university brochures and webpages one can easily find the name ‘discipline’ or, sometimes more specifically, ‘academic discipline’, as a way of speaking about philosophy. This not only reflects the fact that philosophy is a discipline shaping individuals in particular ways, but it also reflects how philosophy is an ‘area of knowledge’ or as Foucault says, something whose ‘discursive practice’ is characterised by a historical ‘group of rules that are immanent in a practice, and define it in its specificity’ (Foucault, 2002, p. 51). In the case of philosophy in the UK, these discursive practices operate to tame the individuals’ sense of wonder, and further involve them in learning through the game of conceptual reasoning.⁷⁶ Ultimately, the particular historical constellation and the problem addressed here may have to do with the sort of ‘analytic’ understanding of philosophy or analytic *culture* that, as I showed in Chapter 3, has become established as hegemonic in most philosophy departments of the country. Perhaps the problem is that such a culture is counter-intuitive for those with philosophical inclinations but no professional training or desire of being disciplined in philosophy; others, of course, may find it fascinating and adapt to its game almost naturally. Nevertheless, today the gap between philosophy and non-philosophy seems to be a problem:

And if you go back to 50s and 60s, I was just reading about Bryan Magee who used to do a TV show, *Men of ideas* and then... there was some other show... *The Brains Trust* I think it was nicknamed... and had people like Ayer, who would come on and talk. So, the UK has in the past... wanted to do it [create spaces where philosophical ideas could have a broader reach]. But for some reason it moved away from it and, I think, part of it is that analytical philosophy has become kind of dry and technical and doesn't automatically engage with the big questions that ordinary people might want to ask.

(Male, British – BA and PhD in Philosophy)

Philosophers themselves begin as ‘ordinary people’ who, through specific training, engage with the rules and habits of the game of philosophy. To be successful in philosophy they have to find out what exactly the game is. Many times, this is not made explicit in course brochures nor in introductory courses or books. It involves total immersion in the techniques and jargon used in this specific culture. As addressed by Gesler’s study in the USA comparing the texts produced by newcomers to philosophy with those of professional philosophy academics, the former were ‘educated to treat texts and the domain content they contain as a rhetorical affair’,

⁷⁶ Expectations about what this professional way of being is vary through space and time: ‘It is not the same being a professional of philosophy in Germany in the middle of the 17th Century than being one in Burundi at the beginnings of the 20th Century. Although they might coincide, what is reasonable to expect is a difference in the formation, capacitation and credentials required, the kind of activities developed do not coincide, and that what is demanded and assessed radically changes from place to place, from one time to another’ (Santos Herceg, 2015, p. 12; my translation).

nevertheless, 'they were cut off from some of the resources of their indigenous culture, but were not yet privy to the abstraction of the formal academic culture' (Geisler, 1994: 184). In this sense, the experience of this passage leads newcomers into a very difficult position, with a great obstacle to overcome.

Ultimately, the problem identified here has to do with the high expectations and very immediate concerns and interests that can be associated, for the non-philosopher, with the word and world of 'philosophy'. For newcomers, it is usually a case of not knowing what philosophy in HE is about. Of course, this unawareness of the details of such practice is to be expected, as it is impossible to know *a priori* a territory that you have never explored before. Also, philosophy becomes *something else* when it stops being just thinking, reading and talking and it begins to involve assessments related to *writing* and *understanding* in accordance with the criteria of a particular academic culture. Learning how to overcome such a gap implies an involvement in a process of learning that, as in many other modern academic fields, involves active participation in the disenchantment of the world. The specific outcome of this disciplinary process is varied: some will be at home with it, some will struggle but learn, some will suffer but persist, some will escape, and some will become active naysayers.

In the following chapters, I attempt to show in more detail how the enactment of this disciplinary side of philosophy works in the UK. Additionally, I offer an account of the philosophical discipline not only as a series of practices gatekeeping and controlling individuals but also as something embedded within the neoliberal logics of an administrative apparatus. My focus will move from the attempt to understand the gap between expectations and discipline to an examination of the contemporary forces maintaining and changing the discipline of philosophy.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter looked at the experience of being a newcomer to philosophy. In doing so, I addressed the gap between discovering philosophy and engaging with how the discipline of philosophy is exercised at the HE level in the UK. This gap was first explored through the correspondence between a student recently starting his formal education in philosophy and a scholar who 'corrects' his insights and intuitions. Drawing on Plato's notion of *wonder* as the origin of philosophy, I later considered the social experiences that are evident when people discover the existence of philosophy or philosophical problems. I use autobiographical

extracts to present these stories, which were analytically classified as either personal or social experiences. Finally, drawing on ethnographic, narrative and theoretical materials, I returned to the 'gap' between wonder and professional philosophy and addressed disenchantment and the disciplining of minds as aspects promoted by the academic culture of philosophy.

CHAPTER 5

THE MONSTERS OF PHILOSOPHY

About the ‘small terrors’ of Discipline, Neoliberalism and Representation

The sleep of reason produces monsters.

Francisco de Goya (1799)

Frankenstein and the monsters of professional philosophy

When enacting its rigorous rational work, philosophy, as published in mainstream journals in the UK, can look like an enthusiastic participant in the modern project of disenchantment of the world. Indeed, in the papers found in an issue of the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* and written by academics working or educated in the UK’s HE, it is possible to find expressions such as ‘rules of inference’, ‘levels of description’, ‘reflexive disposition’, ‘objection’, ‘consequentialism’, ‘cluelessness’, ‘insufficiently motivated suppositions’, ‘reconstruction of the argument’ and ‘independent reason to reject’ (V. Carr, 2019; List, 2019; Roberts, 2019; Stock, 2019; Yim, 2019). These phrases, part of the disciplinary jargon of contemporary philosophy, rely on the value of formalisation, technical language, clarification, reasonableness, amongst other qualities and speak about a discipline trying to avoid ambiguities and ‘unreasonable’ arguments.⁷⁷ Considering this, it comes as a surprise that a philosophy directed towards a world without magic is, nevertheless, crowded with *monsters*.

⁷⁷ This is, of course, not something exclusive to philosophy. In a way, most academic disciplines –if not all– have had a role in disenchanting the world.

Here emerges the question of what we mean by monsters in philosophy. Different from strictly categorically divided entities, a monster is a blurry and complex hybrid creature that represents and targets the 'anxieties of its time' (Levina & T. Bui, 2013, p. 1). A monster is 'the embodiment of that which is exiled from the self' (Star, 1991, p. 54). Monsters are subject to pain and expand their suffering even to the realm of philosophy. Interestingly, it has been said that 'the encounter with a monster can enable us to stop, wonder and change our attitudes towards technology, our body and each other' (Erle & Hendry, 2020, p. 1).

Before attempting an explanation of the nexus between philosophy and monsters, I will refer to Mary Shelley's classic *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (2010, original from 1818), which I consider to be the horror novel par excellence. In the novel, we are told about the misfortunes of chemist Victor Frankenstein and his implementation of the principles of Galvanism in the creation of a hideous sapient humanoid (although this creature is subject to more sufferings than most humans) that, when left to its own, perpetrates a number of crimes. I would argue that we can find interesting insights to understand the monsters of philosophy in exploring the questions of *who* is (or are) the monsters in this story and *what* makes something or someone 'monstrous'. I believe three possible readings can be made of *Frankenstein*:

1. *The abandoned monster.* The obvious reading of the novel is that the newborn creature is a monster. However, the story suggests that this would not be incarnated by its 'gigantic stature' or the 'deformity of its aspect' (Shelley, 2010, p. 79), but constructed through time and experience. As Latour writes: 'the monster claims that it was not born a monster, but that it became a criminal only after being left alone by his horrified creator, who fled the laboratory once the horrible thing twitched to life' (Latour, 2011, p. 19). Indeed, when it met its creator again, the creature said: 'Believe me, Frankenstein: I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing? they spurn and hate me' (Shelley, 2010, p. 112). Abandoned and denied the possibility of socially interacting with others, the creature *is produced as a monster*.
2. *The monstrous creator.* Another approach is regarding the creature as a victim of the real monster of the novel, Victor Frankenstein. The scientist refers to himself as 'the author of unalterable evils' which he was 'unable to define' and that, as a result, made him 'a miserable wretch, coursed by a curse that shut up every avenue to enjoyment' (ibid. pp. 77, 101, 187). Furthermore, a usual 'trope mistakes the monster, who had no

name, for its creator, Dr. Frankenstein', i.e., 'we confuse Frankenstein for the monster' (Latour, 2011, p. 19). I suggest that this is grounded in the novel and is more than a contemporary 'mistake'. Seen thus, the monster is cursed with being responsible for actively *producing* suffering creatures.

3. *The hopeful monster*. A third reading will re-consider the creature as something that even though is 'wretched', at some point seems hopefully proactive towards its desires: 'I required kindness and sympathy; but I did not believe myself utterly unworthy of it' (Shelley, 2010, p. 155). This is the creature learning the human language in an attempt to reason with its creator and with other humans – even asking Victor Frankenstein for the creation of another similar monster, a companion helping it to overcome its loneliness. The 'hopeful monster' is the acceptance of monstrosity and the work towards an opportunity 'where the necessary incompatibilities, inconsistencies and overlaps come gently and creatively together' (Law, 1990, p. 19). Here, *accepting its hybrid monstrosity*, the monster attempts to enhance its conditions. The problem may come after, in the many cases where the dreams of the monster are shattered by the cruelties of a reality that it is unable to control.

I would suggest that all three kinds of monsters exist, circulate and extend their horrors across the field of philosophy today. Each of them haunts the dreams of the practitioners of philosophy in different ways, regardless of whether these practitioners take or took part in the creation or reproduction of the monsters governing them or if these practitioners just become, tainted by their suffering, victims of the *misery of innocence*.⁷⁸ I would claim that by looking at these monsters, it is possible to identify different kinds of 'small terrors' (Josipovici, 1982; Parini, 1999) whose daily occurrence tends to curse the atmosphere, practice and organisational results of philosophy – they are problems raising questions about how philosophy is done. Here, I plan to use the metaphor of monsters to highlight and describe the twisted form of some of the pressures coming from inside and outside philosophy, and that practitioners of philosophy may experience as horrible or haunting. This can shed light on their fears and dispositions, but also on how they tend to resolve many of their problems in practice. I would suggest that these Frankenstein-inspired monsters multiply their small terrors in philosophy in three forms: discipline, neoliberalism and representation.

⁷⁸ For Shelley, the 'misery of innocence' is 'like a cloud that passes over the fair moon, for a while hides, but cannot tarnish its brightness' (Shelley, 2010, p. 96).

In the case of discipline, during the 19th Century, when natural philosophy research and the proto social sciences were looking to become autonomous experimental disciplines, philosophy as a special professional area of inquiry was born from the intent to overcome being rejected by these new disciplines because of its 'armchair' methods of inquiry (see more details in Chapter 3). Forced to be alone (like Frankenstein's monster), philosophers attempted to be considered serious practitioners, as practitioners of the other sciences were, thus introjecting heavy disciplinary control to avoid and differentiate from the lightness of 'amateur' philosophies. Although in Chapter 4 I explored how disciplinary standards have affected newcomers to philosophy; it is necessary to elaborate more on the ways in which this sovereignty acts over 'the fine grain of individual behaviors' (Foucault, 2009, p. 66) of those following careers in philosophy. In light of this, the first question here is: what sort of terrors does the traditional *disciplinary* component of philosophy in the UK exert over its contemporary practitioners?

As for neoliberalism, since the 1980s, an increasing number of neoliberal reforms and policies in line with managerial logics have been introduced in Higher Education in the UK. These new technologies of power have been created and applied over the whole population of HE, acting as 'apparatuses of security' which 'work, fabricate, organize, and plan a milieu even before the notion was formed and isolated' (ibid. p. 21). This means that educational policy is applied in abstract and in spite of the former particularities held by disciplines, universities or academics. In philosophy, this has raised issues regarding the 'terrors of performativity' (Ball, 2003, p. 216), i.e., neoliberal technologies, especially those relevant to 'quality assurance', challenging and displacing the values of individual souls into the pervasive value for performance. In sum, the introduction of neoliberalism in HE raises the question of how these educational and quality assurance policies and other neoliberal reforms affect what philosophers do.

Finally, since the 1980s we can also find specific groups and associations that, unlike learned societies, are concerned with the representation and organisation of practitioners of philosophy as something more than solely knowledge producers. In this chapter, I focus especially on collectives such as the British Philosophical Association and the Society for Women in Philosophy UK. The main concerns of these groups are, on the one hand, the *material continuity of the profession* and, on the other hand, the *improvement of the conditions* of the human beings who work in philosophy. The curse of their officers comes, however, when supporting the implementation of reforms that, in the name of defending or improving the discipline, makes them accomplices of the dissemination of neoliberal mechanisms producing problematic effects over portions of the population they speak for. The conflicted

nature of these organisations, which resemble hopeful monsters, makes me wonder if there is an alternative to neoliberalism in philosophy and about the possibilities of representation inside philosophy. Again, a couple of questions can be raised from this phenomenon: Are philosophers condemned to manage neoliberalism inside their discipline? Who is represented by this and who is not?

In sum, the focus of these questions is the small terrors that practitioners of philosophy face through their 'discipline', in their relationship with 'neoliberalism', and through being 'represented' by organisations situated between both. Of course, these small terrors are different from *big* political terrors, such as the violence and systematic death committed by Nazi and Stalinist totalitarianism (Arendt, 1979) or Robespierre's Committee of Public Safety (C. Weber, 2003). This said, the scale does not exempt small terrors from being terrors. In workspaces, these produce a 'cycle of fear, anxiety or panic penetrating the atmosphere and tonality' further affecting 'the nervous system, the affects, the emotions' (Lazzarato, 2006). These small terrors can disturb, in many ways, the wellbeing and daily life of academics. In this chapter, I attempt to explore the monsters articulating such terrors.

The Monsters of Philosophy as a Cohesive Discipline

At the end of the 1960s, Talcott Parsons claimed that philosophy faculties were social *only* in the sense that their interests and activities were 'pursued in a disciplined manner' but that, overall, philosophy was recognisable for its 'clear cultural primacy' (Parsons, 1968a, p. 540). In Parson's jargon, this means that philosophy would be better suited for exploring the mysteries of latent culture and grasping what makes sense for a social system than for coordinating social expectations through functions.⁷⁹ Thus, the drama of philosophy is that its *claim for its cultural value* grants it a social existence and that it suffers from a constant questioning as to whether it satisfies a *concrete social function* – in spite of the efforts of some of its practitioners to fabricate such functions. Perhaps the conflict between 'professional' and

⁷⁹ The foundations of Parson's *structural-functionalist* account of society can be found in his book *The Social System* (2005). As part of his theory of the system of social action he proposes the analytic distinction between 'social system' and 'culture', with the first being specialised in the coordination of roles while the second is the source of symbols and values giving sense to life in society. I do not intend to delve into details on his proposal but only to use it as a resource for exploring the problem of philosophy allegedly being 'useless'.

'radical' philosophers that I presented in Chapter 3 is a manifestation of this tension between organisational and transcendental expectations in philosophy.

To illustrate the mismatch between cultural value and social function, I will use two concrete contemporary examples. Every 21st of November the United Nations celebrates the *World Philosophy Day*, an international event organised under the idea that philosophy 'is one of the most important fields of human thought as it aspires to get at the very meaning of life' (United Nations, 2019). The UN's website is emphatic to present philosophy as an 'achievement of humanity' that should be universally taught to 'future generations'. However, the discipline is regularly the object of mockery related to its prospects as a career. An interviewee below claims that even though in the UK there is a certain 'status' associated with being a philosopher, there are still 'lots of jokes such as, "ah, you're a philosopher" then, you know, "can I have some fries with my burger?"' (Male, British – BA and PhD in Philosophy). Philosophy seems to be in a very ambiguous position: it is abstractly valued for its cultural worth but treated disdainfully as a practice in terms of social function.

Amongst contemporary philosophers in the Anglophone world, this ambiguity means that as a profession and discipline philosophy is in conflict. On the one hand, there are practitioners and organisations defending the professional-disciplinary project of philosophy and attempting to find 'ways and means of defining and maintaining their monopoly power' (Tang, 2008, p. 516). On the other hand, there are scholars who claim that philosophy should be 'dedisciplined' to regain and embrace its cultural worth and thus be practised not as a speciality but as a subversive way of thinking *within* other departments or faculties (Frodeman, 2013; Rolfe, 2013). From this, it follows that a tension emerges between philosophy's continuous practical attempt to sustain itself as a discipline and the seductiveness of an idea of dissolution into the broader horizons of academic culture.⁸⁰

I would also suggest that the latter alternative is being increasingly embraced by practitioners of philosophy who are troubled by the inner monsters of the discipline of philosophy. As a discipline, philosophy is full of social practices that create a problematic atmosphere for many of its practitioners. For instance, many issues can be thought from the following comment by a well-positioned philosopher reflecting on the 'cohesiveness' of the discipline:

⁸⁰ Discipline is like Odysseus tied to the mast of a ship. It requires of a practice of self-control from a subject attempting to survive the Sirens' lure embodying the desire of drowning into the sea of passions (see Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002, p. 25ff).

this is one of the features of philosophy and the surplus: it is a *fairly cohesive discipline*. You don't often get people who just have completely different standards. And my understanding is that, is not necessarily so in other humanities' subjects [where] you just get different people with completely different worldviews and approaches who just get wildly different assessments of the same work. That, on the whole, doesn't happen in *my* subject.

(Male, British – Professor of Philosophy at Constituent College of the UoL)

The obvious question to ask is *how* it is possible for philosophy to be so cohesive and *what* sort of effects this has. In other words, how is cohesiveness construed within philosophy and what are the psychosocial costs of such cohesiveness? As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, the creation of the discipline is associated with boundaries and exclusions, with the dissolution of the sense of wonder, with discouraging certain forms of expression. Inspired by Foucault, below I examine the 'micro-physics of power' that can help me understand the construction and the effects that 'law and prohibition' (Collier, 2009, p. 81) have in the discipline of philosophy.

1. Following a career in Philosophy: Introjecting the Discipline

What the disciplinary mind expects from individuals studying philosophy is reflected, for instance, in the following specification of outcomes of a philosophy module: to learn how to 'read, analyse, sum and comment on philosophical texts', 'think dispassionately about important questions of widespread concern' and 'construct and defend arguments for and/or against positions relating to such questions' (University of York, 2018). In light of this, the archetype of the disciplined philosopher would be someone 'dispassionately' dissecting readings and questions while being skilful in the art of taking a position in a clarified field. To understand this ideal as a practice, I will go through some of the ethnographic observations I made at a prestigious *Graduate Philosophy Conference*.

The conference was held in Oxford during a cold winter weekend. In the call for papers, it said that the works submitted could be 'on any topic in philosophy' and that the organising committee – formed of Oxford postgraduate philosophy students – sought to represent 'a broad range of philosophical debates and traditions in [their] final selection'. In practice, the actual selection did not look particularly broad: the papers were on usual philosophical sub-areas within philosophy such as the classics, ethics, philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, process philosophy, and logics. The papers had to be submitted to the organising committee who distributed them across staff members of Oxford's philosophy department.

During the conference, each participant presented their work and received detailed feedback on their work by a staff member.

Below is the description of the interaction between a PhD student from a redbrick university and an Oxford professor. In Figure 13, we can see the student, referred to here as Anna, the young woman raising her hand behind the lectern in front of a whiteboard, defending herself from the comments given by Helen, the middle-aged woman sitting on the left. Anna is looking at Helen directly into her eyes while pointing to a diagram, a visual dispositive previously drawn by Helen during her brief presentation.

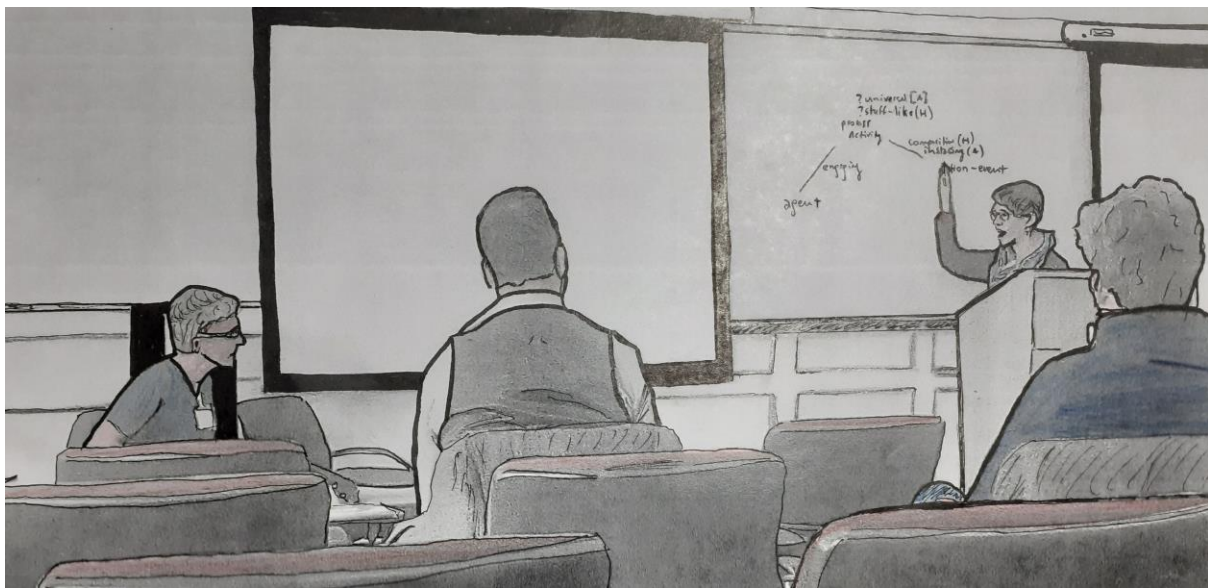


Figure 13. Interaction between Anna and Helen (fictitious names) at a Graduate Philosophy Conference. Source: Own elaboration based on personal observations.

Interestingly, the diagram drawn by Helen is the *correction* of a previous diagram used by Anna in her handout (and probably also in her paper).⁸¹ The diagram presented by Anna sketches a theory of processes where she is able to abstractly concatenate a causal relationship between the concepts of events, instancing, processes, engagement and substances (see Figure 14, left). In her version of the diagram (Figure 14, right), Helen makes an asymmetrical comparison between Anna's proposal ("A", a name) and that of Jennifer Hornsby ("H", a surname), the author used by Anna in her work. The diagram expresses the authority of the Professor and her aim of correcting in many ways: (1) it

⁸¹ This, in the Foucaultian sense of *individual correction*, is a way to 'assure the process of redefining the individual as subject of law [here, into the usual ways of doing within the field of Anglophone philosophy], through the reinforcement of the systems of signs and representations that they circulate' (Foucault, 1991, p. 128).

moves the attention from a causal-abstract relation between concepts into a comparison between the views of the presenter and the author in the literature/tradition; (2) the first scheme is replaced by the second one – in the situation, the first scheme (the one in the handout and that everybody in the audience had) stopped being the focus of attention and now Anna and the public were thinking in the terms proposed by Helen; (3) Helen changes the terms of the discussion: ‘event’ became ‘action-events’, ‘instancing’ are transformed into ‘composition’, ‘processes’ transformed into ‘process activity’; ‘engagement’ was converted into ‘engaging’; and ‘substances’ became ‘agents’.

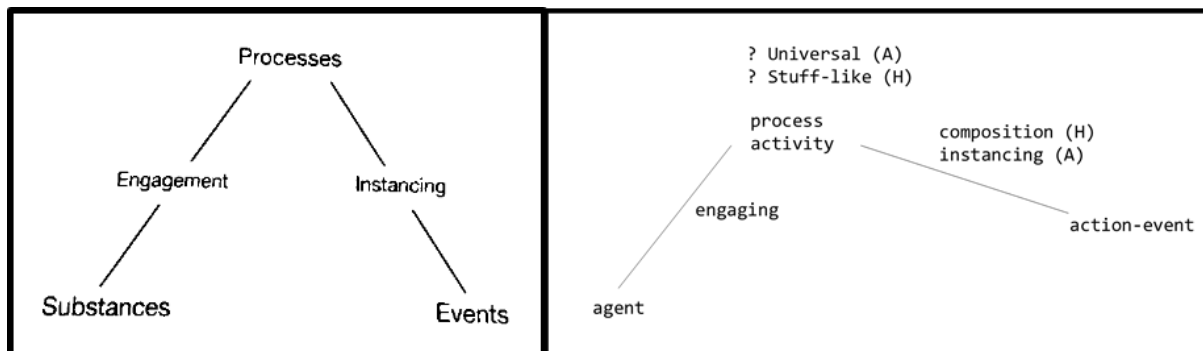


Figure 14. Anna's diagram (left) and Helen's diagram (right). Source: Handout given at the conference and my own elaboration based on observation of what was written on a whiteboard.

This is just a brief illustration of the many detailed practices of correction usually involved in being considered a philosopher. These practices are directed towards the introjection of the usual ways of doing philosophy that, as said by some of my interviewees, involve things such as the following: ‘enjoying puzzles and abstractions’ (Female, British – Student doing a BA at Oxbridge); being ‘extremely logical in problems that are not fully logical’ (Female, Swiss – Lecturer in Constituent College of the UoL); assuming that philosophy is ‘very technical and designed to give philosophers a living as philosophers within universities’ (Male, British – Emeritus Professor, Constituent College of the UoL); and accepting the ‘constraints in creativity’ involved in the philosophy literature (Male, Belgian – Professor in Constituent College of the UoL). The ‘cohesiveness’ of the discipline of philosophy relies on aspects as the aforementioned. In addition, the introjection and enacting of these challenges are especially pressing for early-career philosophers. Below, an interviewee responds to the question of why her first book looked more technical than her later work:

So, my first book was based on my PhD thesis. So it is, very typically, a young's person book [She laughs in a good mood about it]. If you don't mind me being a little rude about the youth...I am being rude about myself – but I've also noticed this in other young academics as well. Is that you tend to be a bit more technical when you are younger because... you don't want that to be – how can I put it – you don't want... you

are more worried about technical challenges. *When you first start working in the discipline you want to make sure that everything is tight and clear.*

(Female, British – Senior Lecturer at Distance Learning University)

Early career philosophers, on the whole, play safe and accommodate to the discipline. Ensuring that everything is ‘tight and clear’ seems to be a strategy used to advance in their careers – they need to publish in a very competitive milieu. This is confirmed by a well-positioned academic: ‘I’d already made my career and I have a secure job and so on, so *it’s easier to be a bit more adventurous*. I think [that it would be more difficult] if I started as someone who’s still trying to get their PhD or still looking for a first job...’ (Female, British – Professor at Traditional Scottish University). Being adventurous is a luxury that early-career philosophers are not usually allowed. A reason for this can be found in a joint survey conducted by the British Philosophical Association and the American Philosophical Association of 43 philosophy journals written in English. A brief analysis of their data shows that, on average, the percentage of accepted papers has remained stable around a low 11% between 2011 and 2013, reaching up to a 2% in top journals (BPA, 2014a). This means that almost nine-tenths of the papers written for Anglophone journals are considered to not meet the professional standards of the discipline, the scope of the journals or, overall, the expectations of harsh reviewers inclined to reject their peers’ work. As a result, publishing is largely limited to an exclusive academic elite that understands (and is willing and able to play by) the rules of strong gatekeepers, or that has a peer recognition that allows them to publish even when being more playful in their writing.

For an interviewee, the situation of philosophy journals is even more complicated as it is becoming increasingly common for editors to do ‘desk rejections’, i.e., to dismiss a paper based on a judgement made before even sending it to a referee for blind review. His estimate is that this happens in about 80% of the cases, and therefore only ‘20% of the submissions actually get to people who are competent to assess the content in a serious way’ (Male, British – Professor at Constituent College of the UoL). If his estimates are right, then this rejection rate is the editors’ responsibility, not referees’. This was reflected in an ethnographic experience I had at a philosophy conference when I overheard an editor proudly describing his newly-formed philosophy journal as being of ‘quality’ for its high rejection rates. Furthermore, according to the aforementioned interviewee, editors are especially keen to reject papers written by doctoral students and early-career philosophers. These papers, he argued, are easy to recognise for their writing and tendency to have many references and scene setting, but only scant original argumentation. This makes sense in a context where a large number of young philosophers desperately seek to publish in order to have the chance of accessing tenure whilst journals are usually managed by a small team. In the USA alone

there are between 15,000 and 20,000 individuals holding a PhD in philosophy (Frodeman & Briggle, 2016, p. 19) while in the UK the annual number of awarded philosophy doctoral degrees has ranged from 104 to 173 between 2000 and 2013 (RAE Philosophy Panel, n.d., p. 3; REF, n.d.). Many of these PhDs strive to publish in prestigious philosophy journals.

The anxieties associated with trying to succeed under such circumstances becomes unsustainable for some philosophers. The excessive control demanded by the discipline transforms into an asphyxiating monster, especially for young philosophers. Such is the case of an interviewee who decided to abandon philosophy early in his career for not having the ‘resilience’ needed to ‘survive’ in the field:

I think that academic philosophy... actually many activities, disciplines, are quite solitary and philosophy even more so. And I probably didn't have the self-confidence at that point [after finishing his PhD] and *I hadn't cultivated the discipline* that I was going to need to be successful if I had to keep working mostly in solitude. At the time that you get together with other academic philosophers, they're not constructive discussions... They might be interesting, it could be informative. You know, people may show you why you're wrong... but the process showing why you're wrong doesn't necessarily feel very nice. [...] Loads of other people [in his peer group] had been in other jobs and, I think, they were older, they were more mature, they had built up a certain *resilience* that I didn't yet have. I was not going to be able to go through that process and *survive*... and I was right. At that stage of my life, I was not going to have survived. So, it was just easier to say “I'm gonna go and do something else”. And I am glad I did.

(Male, British – Tax Manager with BA, MA and PhD in Philosophy)

2. Effects of a ‘constrictive discipline’: Exclusion and Insularity

Following a career in philosophy in the UK is not only challenging for young researchers but also for people who can be distinctively identified as part of an ever-growing ‘minority’ (of gender, racial, linguistic, etc.) facing some of the problematic effects of the ‘cohesiveness’ of the field. The main problem is that philosophers seem to be ‘practising a profession that [...] appears to encourage dissident thinking and following unlikely paths’ when they are actually ‘working within a profoundly constrictive discipline that polices who can claim to be a member’ (Bastian, 2018, p. 449). ‘The pursuit of truth or objectivity’, valued by many mainstream Anglophone philosophers such as those in the UK,⁸² ‘has been often framed as an aim that

⁸² For instance, De Cruz (2017) conducted a survey of 518 philosophers (mostly from Anglophone countries but also from elsewhere) aiming to understand how philosophers deal with their religious

requires a disregard for “who” pursues it’; however, ‘past inequities may have shaped the present discipline in ways that merely formal attention to averting discrimination fails to address’ (Jenkins & Hutchison, 2013, p. 4).

For instance, in relation to women, data from a 2008-2011 survey conducted by the British Philosophical Association (BPA) and the Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP-UK) shows a steady decline in the participation of women in British philosophy as scholars ascend in the university academic ladder: from 46% at the BA level, women’s participation goes down to 37% at MA level, and 31% at PhD level. Only 28% end up as temporary staff and 24% as permanent staff (Beebee & Saul, 2011, p. 8). According to the report, these figures are worse than those of academic careers in the humanities such as English and History. They, in fact, show similar patterns of underrepresentation to Mathematics and other scientific areas (ibid. p.11).

This numbers probably speak for the fact that women in the field of philosophy experience discrimination. As Haslanger puts it: ‘rage about how I as an individual have been treated in philosophy; rage about how others I know have been treated; and rage about the conditions that I’m sure affect many women and minorities in philosophy, and have caused many others to leave’ (Haslanger, 2008, p. 210). For instance, the dominant ways of validating knowledge in philosophy are at times insensitive to alternative explorations by women philosophers working in unusual topics, with different epistemic tools or with broader philosophical horizons than those typically legitimised in the profession. This is a problem to women in philosophy:

experiences of a lack of encouragement or mentoring, of combative styles of argument at seminars and conferences, and of encountering narrow conceptions of disciplinary philosophy or of the value of pursuing certain topics, often seeming to disqualify areas that are of interest to women.

(Jenkins & Hutchison, 2013, p. 10)

beliefs. The main result of her study is that most philosophers of the sample are atheists (50.2%), followed by theists (25.5%) and agnostics (16.4%). A secondary result is perhaps more interesting: in contrast to analytic philosophers, continental philosophers are more inclined to conceive that their own religious beliefs are subjective preferences that are as valid as those of others. Whereas for analytic philosophers, religious beliefs tended to be valued as ‘fact-like’, holding a definite ‘truth value’ (god/no god; 1/0; truth/false). Therefore, analytic philosophers are likely to think that in a situation of disagreement one of the dissenting parties *must necessarily be wrong*. This is interesting not only for the case of religious beliefs but also as a proxy for how anglophone analytic philosophers could tend to approach (and review) the work of peers with dissenting viewpoints and writing strategies.

As well, after many decades of a male domination, it is not unusual to find situations of abuse and harassment of women in philosophy departments. An indication of this as a problem is the emergence of the equivalent to #metoo for philosophy. 'What is it like to be a woman in philosophy' (Women in Philosophy Task Force, n.d.) is a popular blog where many women researchers working in anglophone philosophy share stories of abuse, harassment and discrimination. One of my interviewees also suffered in this way:

So, well, yeah, this is a more difficult, more sad, more conflictive part of the story... but I think this is a common part of the story for women in the profession because philosophy is a very male-dominated profession and very machist, as is full of the same kinds of problems that you find everywhere; that you find in this very kind of machist professional cultures. So, my supervisor [...] he, basically, ended up falling in love with me. I think he felt that it wasn't just a physical thing, that it was in the intellectual thing, that it had these other dimensions... But in the end, he ended up propositioning me, wanting to sleep with me, to have sex with me, the whole thing. And, on the one hand, I was very vulnerable because I was his student, he was, you know, the expert and the person who mentored, and I... But I was very clear that I didn't want any kind of sexual relationship with him. Of course, you know, he was 30 years older [...] and I, basically, rejected his offer but I also, in rejecting that, of course, I can't continue to work with him. He was my supervisor...

(Female, identity protected)

Experiences such as this make 'the love of philosophy [be] for many women no doubt conjoined with irritation or disappointment in its dominant institutional forms' (Jenkins & Hutchison, 2013, p. 11). It makes many female philosophers with philosophy doctorates prefer pursuing their interests and capacities in 'friendlier cognate fields (such as linguistics, comparative literature, gender studies, or cognitive science), rather than remain within philosophy itself' (ibid.). An example of these validated aggressive attitudes can be found in some entries of the *Leiter Reports*, a popular blog amongst philosophy practitioners in the Anglophone world (see Leiter, 2019). Although this is a website that host some interesting discussions and news about the discipline, it is also a place for harsh comments addressed at and seeking to debunk philosophers with different sensibilities (for instance, calling their views 'stupid' or their projects 'a joke'). Considering the issue of gender, but also summing up its career prospects, it is not surprising that some university philosophy programmes have become less popular than related programmes such as PPE:

Now the philosophy department...the philosophy programme has 40 students, and the PPE [has 400 students, right? [he laughs] ... it just dwarfs those philosophy departments, the combination, you know... it just...dwarfs them and... I think, you know, that's a good thing. I mean, we probably will get the saturation point, because now everybody wants to do PPE. Apparently, philosophy has always had a hard time attracting women, and with keeping women. The retreatment rates for women were always higher. There is all kind of theories about that, you know, it's kind of a *war-game discipline*... you know... how can you handle your argument... And women don't

like that. [...] So, it turns out that PPE attracts men and women at equal rates, and there are no retreatment rates for the women. So, I think, there is a lot of hope really in this PPE.

(Male, Belgian – Professor of Philosophy at Constituent College of the UoL)

Other problems seem to be treated with even less attention in the discipline, for instance, the under-representation of non-Anglophone philosophers amongst academics in the UK (especially, from Asia, Africa and Latin America). Even though this is not a problem affecting philosophy only,⁸³ the discipline of philosophy is testament to the issue of racism in HE in the UK. For example, there is a problematic underrepresentation of black philosophers working as staff members in philosophy departments. As said by one of them: 'I am one of the only five philosophers racialised-as-black employed by a British university – only two of whom (the two men) are employed by a department of philosophy' (Coleman, 2014; also see Coleman's intervention in the "Why isn't my professor black?" panel discussion at UCL, 2014).

The cohesiveness of the field of philosophy in the UK is largely construed by the agency of white Anglophone men. The effect of this is an *insular* atmosphere that is not only produced by the fact that most philosophy scholars in the region are UK nationals (and secondarily, from other Anglophone Countries – especially, the USA and Australia), but also by the fact that the set of exclusions practised makes them reluctant to engage with foreign or different ideas. This is best illustrated by a recent study observing that 97% of the citations in the 12 top Anglophone journals refer to work written in English and that 96% of the members of their editorial boards are scholars housed by institutions in the USA, UK, Australia, Canada and other majority-English speaking countries (Schwitzgebel, Huang, Higgins, & Gonzalez-Cabrera, 2018).⁸⁴ Considering these and other results, the authors of the study conclude that mainstream anglophone philosophy is extremely insular because top philosophers from the USA, UK, Australia or Canada tend to interact with each other and their Anglo native peers, rather than dialoguing with academics from other territories, languages and cultures.

⁸³ Racial inequalities are well extended at universities in the UK. Data from HESA for the 2017/18 period shows that 85.15% of the academic staff with a permanent full-time contract are racialised as 'white' (HESA, 2019); this is added to the fact that, on average, black and minority ethnic staff earn less than their white counterparts and are less likely to achieve professorial positions than the latter (UCU, 2012).

⁸⁴ A very recent example of the latter is a call for new editors from the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* in which it is stated that: 'Due to the location of the Society and its meetings, the successful candidate(s) should be based in the UK or be willing to travel to the editorial board and BSHP management committee meetings' (email to PHILOS-L, September 13, 2019).

More locally, the insularity of professional philosophy, and particularly of some of its specialised subfields, can sometimes be observed in dismissive attitudes towards other humanities that allegedly are less rigorous. Probably, this is a kind of problem present in professional philosophers immersed in interacting mostly with other professional philosophers. As voiced by one of my interviewees:

very often they [philosophers] are definitely the smartest of all the academics – because in other subjects there is no idea as ‘vigorous’. And they do the wishy-washy handwavy rubbish, you know, especially in the other humanities like English Literature or something. I find all sorts of dismissive comments made. So, philosophers are really quite arrogant. They can be when you... when you push them. But, I just... I've never bought it or... I might have done as a grad student for a while, but... exposure to the world of work... certainly, what you get from an undergraduate degree I think is almost nothing, you know...

(Male, British – Public servant with BA, MA and PhD in Philosophy)

This can be said to be a form of double symbolic violence. The humanities dismissed by mainstream philosophers seem to be welcoming philosophy practitioners who have been previously unable to develop academic careers in professional philosophy departments because they found the ‘atmosphere’ unbearable or because there was no place for them in the profession. The vigorous protection of a fragile boundary around what counts as academic philosophy is the main expression of philosophy as a discipline. The discipline is protective of itself and requires compliance with its rules from all those who want to participate in its games. Consequently, this produces anxiety and dissatisfaction amongst practitioners struggling to stay in the discipline and continue working in departments specialised in philosophy.⁸⁵ These are the small, practical but constant, terrors of the discipline.

Neoliberal monsters

The previous description would be insufficient and anachronistic on its own to depict the current ‘state’ of philosophy. Today, practices of disciplinary or normative control over

⁸⁵ A note of caution: the aforementioned description is about philosophy departments where staff mainly work in the traditional areas of metaphysics, philosophy of mind, epistemology and ethics framed within the restrictions of the ‘analytic’ style and culture of philosophy. Philosophers and philosophy departments nurturing relationships with other subjects may have unlike experiences about how philosophy is enacted, with their own specific gains and problems (see Suissa, 2006, on doing philosophy in an education programme).

individuals by gatekeepers concerned with the 'internalization of organizational goals and values' (R. Collins, 1979, p. 31) have to be considered as only one of the layers in the structure of relations producing professional philosophy in the UK. As Foucault argued, there is an analytical level in the study of mechanisms of power, which is interrelated but different from that of sovereignty, namely, *security mechanisms*. These do not address the 'hierarchical and functional distribution of elements' but rather account for a modality of power trying 'to plan a milieu in terms of events or series of events or possible elements' (Foucault, 2009, p. 20). More concretely, philosophy as a discipline is inexorably subsumed into education policy as a 'locus of activity in the myriad of mechanisms of security' (Ball, 2012, p. 44).

Like Dr. Frankenstein, neoliberalism could be described here as a monster creating and distributing these mechanisms of security and responsible for the sorrows and misfortunes they produce over individuals. Particularly, new neoliberal standardisation practices of benchmarking, interventions by big academic publishers, re-assessment frameworks, and the imposition of best-practice have brought about a significant shift in the experience of those working in academic philosophy. More specifically, technologies such as external evaluation and auditing are challenging the differential-autonomous logic that used to be associated with the profession:

That means that professional dominance and the self-control of the professions is substituted by a situation in which there always exists one more observer who evaluates the distinctions that are made, and the success in using them, by the application of a heterogeneous set of distinctions.

(Stichweh, 1997, pp. 99–100)

Nevertheless, unlike Stichweh's formulation, this does not reflect a case in which there is a *substitution* of one mechanism of power for another. These act together as forces affecting the practice of individual philosophers – they are two levels of control working over their academic souls. As I show below, audit technologies and managerial logics, such as research assessments, have multiplied in the UK's HE System since the mid-1980s and have prompted changes inside academic disciplines. I will divide this analysis into two moments. First, I describe some of the features of the Research Assessment Exercise as an innovation brought up in times of financial austerity that attempted to boost the productivity of scholars in a new neoliberal landscape. Second, I describe some of the specific innovations brought about by the Research Excellence Framework, especially through the introduction of an evaluation of the 'impact' of research. Both moments will make clear the existence of policies and logics spreading their conditions over academics in the UK in general and philosophers in particular. The current description also serves as a prologue to matters discussed in Chapter 6.

1. Managerial logics and the RAE

During the 1980s universities in the UK were subject to constant administrative re-structuring, as well as to changes in their funding mechanisms. These transformations, propelled under Thatcher's administration, responded to 'a large [economic] recession between 1980 and 1981', with 'only a sluggish recovery until the mid-1980s' (Hills & Thomas, 2010, p. 285). An important sign of how this impacted academia was the 'decline' of the University Grants Committee as an institution commanded by senior academics and which used to work as a 'buffer between the state and the universities', and as a 'broad framework [...] within which individual universities organized their own affairs' (Willmott, 1995, pp. 1005, 1007). New Right policies responding to 'financial pressures in the 1980s forced British universities to concentrate the teaching of many subjects in fewer institutions' and 'philosophy did not escape these cutbacks' (Brown, 2006a, p. 1945). Between 1981 and 1985, philosophers participating in the *Joint Session* and events by the then recently formed British Society for the History of Philosophy showed their concern about UGC cuts to philosophy departments and the following redundancies. An ethnographic description of one of those meetings, a Joint Session held at Manchester in 1982, can be found in an issue of *Radical Philosophy*:

philosophers at Surrey, Aston, Hull and Stirling faced redundancy. The meeting itself was small, cool and dispassionate, with no mention of union activity. The strong views of the affected philosophers and of the few senior academics who supported them were almost smothered in petty arguments and in the general sense of impotence fostered by some of the more secure members of the profession. That a letter was drafted and a national coordinating committee of philosophers set up to fight the cuts was quite a victory in the circumstances.

(Arthur, 1982, pp. 48–49)

In Arthur's notes, there is a definite sense of *impotence*. This particularly overwhelming feeling is shared by other well-positioned scholars seeing themselves as unable to do much to help their peers when neoliberal logics were at work in times of financial austerity. They could do nothing more than write a complaint letter. These cuts and redundancies had less to do with the outcomes of their gatekeeping practices and more with something beyond their area of disciplinary control. Even the University of London's Bedford Philosophy department, one of the pioneer institutions in giving philosophy degrees to women as well as being the birthplace of the analytic philosophy journal *Analysis*, had to close in 1984 as a consequence of these policies (Brown, 2006a, p. 1945). Since then, many other philosophy departments such as Birmingham, Bradford, Exeter, Heythrop, Hull, Keele, Manchester, Newcastle and St. Mary's have either been closed or threatened with closure and cuts at some point during the last forty

years. Under both Tory and Labour governments, this trend has been exacerbated by the continuous separation between administrative technologies and professional academic knowledge within universities. This logic of cuts and the control of funding was at first implemented under the excuse of managing the crisis; however, it was later established as a common practice with long-lasting effects, especially in disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences.⁸⁶

For over three decades, researchers working in Higher Education in the UK have been required to endure the increasing demands of research assessment and to compete for research funding. The implementation of the first Research Selectivity Exercise in 1986, later rebranded as the RAE, significantly affected UK academia generally, and philosophy particularly. At its core, the RAE relied on 'performance indicators to measure, assess, and reward achievement', commodifying and accumulating the work of researchers (Willmott, 1995, p. 1016). The RAE was a large-scale panel-based research assessment, an administrative apparatus that involved thousands of people working for 'publicly funded research money [to be] directed more selectively to reward performance' (Goldfinch & Yakamoto, 2013, p. 122). As put by the UK's HE funding bodies, the RAE aimed to:

- 'provide authoritative and comprehensible quality ratings for research in all disciplines carried out in universities and colleges across the UK';
- 'inform the funding bodies' allocation of grants for research';
- 'provide both public information and quality assurance for public expenditure on research in higher education'

(Higher Education Funding Council for England, Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, & Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland, 2004, p. 4).

The RAE was an administrative technology intended to ensure the targeting of funding on those departments capable of accounting for the 'high quality' of their research (i.e., research considered valuable by the members of the assessing panel in consideration of the marking criteria established by the government). Through this assessment technology, the government looked to exert greater control over the funding of research and the 'productivity' of scholars, relating funding more directly to social and economic outcomes. This system was underpinned by a rationale which differed dramatically from the traditional values held by scholars, which

⁸⁶ For instance, sociologists also faced difficulties at the time. Holmwood claims that 'the 1980s were hard for sociology' inasmuch as the 'Thatcherite attack upon the welfare state also included sociology as a discipline' (Holmwood, 2015, p. 52). As there were no jobs for them in academia, those times have been depicted as producing a 'lost generation of sociologists' (Roseneil, in Roseneil & Twamley, 2015, p. 66).

were oriented towards knowledge production for its own sake: 'The individual writer/researcher has been reconceptualised as an economic agent or unit or resource. With the RAE, scholarship has been reduced to income generation and entrepreneurship' (Morley, 2004, p. 23). Research grants are now allocated according to a neoliberal logic of accumulative reforms managed by expert administrators – and self-imposed by individual scholars as a 'process of social and ethical transformation' (Ball, 2006, p. 127). In this sense, the RAE could be seen as a security mechanism attempting 'to make sure' that the 'objective' and 'subjective' conditions needed for scholars to be 'productive' are met by means of competitiveness, animated by measures of evaluation. The role of administrative staff inside universities is crucial to accomplish this change in scholars:

[My university] wasn't very happy with its previous [RAE] outcomes. So we were doing... we worked with the Heads of Schools to look at what their staff looked like, at what they were doing, how we can transform them, what kind of narrative we wanted to put around the different research duties that they were doing [...] It's really trying to help people shape their research...

(Female, British – Administrative Staff, Red Brick University)

At the beginning, the legitimisation of the assessment system rested on 'folk tales' of 'unproductive' and 'ineffective' academics, placeholders who would be disciplined or driven away by a system of explicit evaluation. One of the philosophers I interviewed who had started his academic career some years before the first RAE was implemented, and who, in fact, later participated in the RAE assessment panel himself, recalls the changes triggered by this policy in the following way:

[Before the RAE] there is still plenty of people who are very conscientious about teaching and research, but it was very hard to dislodge you if you weren't: there was basically nothing that it could be done. [...] So... although... certainly, [some] people in the period before the first of these research exercises, which came in under Thatcher, [...] were quite unacceptable in the way that they took their jobs. You know... I was a little puritan... And that stopped with RAE. And it took a bit of time. I suppose that's a good effect. It sharpened up a position. A good analogy is some form of medication which has very strong side-effects. So, you first take it and your headache is good, but then... after a bit you really... [he laughs], it is much worse. And that's what happened.

(Male, British – Professor Emeritus, Traditional Scottish University)

The metaphor of the 'medicine' with 'strong side effects' here offers an effective illustration of the kind of logic followed by the RAE: (1) although before the first assessment most academics were diligent and hard-working, some of them were 'unacceptable' in terms of productivity and, therefore, needed to be 'dealt with' to optimise the research system; (2) laziness in academia is an undesirable 'disease' under the puritan work-ethos of the UK's culture; (3)

laziness can be corrected by means of a performance-enhancing medicine such as the RAE; (4) the RAE produces ‘headaches’ as its side-effect. In the RAE, quality and quantity of research get confused: the numeric pressure to publish *more* turned out to be the perverse side effect of the RAE in all subject areas for both unconscientious or conscientious scholars. Particularly in the case of early-career academics, it is the number of papers published – and not necessarily the intellectual relevance of ideas – that ends up as the measure of their worth. As said by the same interviewee, for the case of philosophy:

people will say to you, look, suppose that Wittgenstein would have been involved in one of these [research assessments] ... He only published an article every now and then, etc.⁸⁷ It's also true that [after the implementation of the assessments] you do seem to read some stuff that it's kind of a bit mechanical, and you wonder about why they even bothered to publish it... I don't know... that may have something to do with the RAE. Where I think the effect is more worrying it's at the lower level, because the effects of RAE are appointments, and appointment committees are quite noticeable. Everybody is looking to... they'll publish anything... Would I have enough publications before the next RAE comes along? And supervisors who realise that this is the case would say “look, you must publish something”. I mean, in the old days you would say “forget about publication, write a good thesis. If the thesis is good, it will turn out that to the people where you applied that thesis was good, and you will get the job”. But you cannot say that now; that would be misleading the student.

(Male, British – Professor Emeritus, Traditional Scottish University)

Here, the RAE as a policy becomes a mediator transforming the daily practices defining scholarship. The conditions created by the RAE can be construed as a case of the pressures of productivity displacing the ‘time to think’ in disciplines such as philosophy. Taking the actual time needed to think and write critically about complicated philosophical problems and concepts – ‘the thrall of the impossible real, that share of disaster wherein every reality, safe and sound, sinks’ (Blanchot, 1995, p. 38) – becomes an undesired burden in a regime of performativity. Policy-makers create new mechanisms that as a result produce ‘academic monsters’ who are effective but soulless – like Luigi Galvani’s dead frogs moving only as an effect of programmed electric shocks.⁸⁸ Philosophy also participates of this regime of

⁸⁷ ‘Wittgenstein’s published work was small. In his lifetime, he published just one book, one article and one book review’ (Monk, 2005, p. 5). An even more dramatic case would be that of Socrates – who did not leave any writings at all: ‘Socrates wouldn’t be hired today by any department of philosophy: his way of practising philosophy would be dismissed as hopelessly amateur’ (Frodeman & Briggie, 2016, p. 15).

⁸⁸ This galvanic-like electricity is programmed and unidirectional, being almost the exact opposite to the sort of *social* electricity described by Durkheim when referring to old Australian rites: ‘once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them to an extraordinary height of exaltation. Every emotion expressed resonates without interference in consciousness that are wide open to external impressions, each one echoing the others.

performativity. In fact, the necessary time for thinking and writing interesting thoughts is superimposed on the indefinite time needed to ‘fabricate’ oneself for the purposes of evaluation and comparison (Ball, 1997, 2003), i.e., as a busy and productive soulless scholar. In this sense, the RAE moved the ‘UK research community in the direction of producing the routine research of normal science resulting in slow progress and small advances, while tending to stifle the really good research — the big advances, the exciting innovations, the big breakthroughs’ (Gillies, 2007, p. 70). In philosophy, such a tendency can be observed in those ‘a bit mechanical’ papers referred to by my interviewee and in the inhibition of long-term projects.

2. The REF and its tyrannies

These trends were accentuated when the RAE was replaced for the Research Excellence Framework (REF), put into effect in 2014. While the REF maintains the productivity-orientation and the subject-panel organisation of the RAE, it also makes research accountable for its *impact* outside academia, which is then ‘assessed’ and ‘scored’. As a result of this policy innovation, the first REF increased the costs of the RAE three times (Sayer, 2015). This new policy, first suggested in 2006 under Tony Blair’s administration in a document promising a future ‘metrics-based’ assessment system with less administrative ‘burdens’ (DH, DfES, DTI, & HM Treasury, 2006, p. 3),⁸⁹ has been strongly criticised for being ‘sophisticated’ but increasingly ‘more burdensome’, taking the form of what a critic describes as a ‘Frankenstein monster’ for the academic community (Martin, 2011, p. 248). This monster feeds from increasing attention and actions on behalf of its figure; it challenges and displaces the values of individual souls into the ever-increasing and pervasive value for performance – showing its face as an entity spreading the ‘terrors of performativity’ (Ball, 2003, p. 216).

In philosophy – but also in other research areas with abstract concerns such as theoretical physics or mathematics – the most contentious point has been the inclusion of

The initial impulse is therefore amplified each time it is echoed, like an avalanche that grows as it goes along’ (Durkheim, 1995, pp. 217–218).

⁸⁹ After consultations and pilot studies showed the many concerns from researchers and the technical limitations that metrics currently have to account for the quality of research, the metrics component was at some point scrapped from REF 2014 (see HEFCE, 2007, 2008).

impact as part of the assessment. A key aspect of the REF impact assessment (see next chapter) is demanding the sub-panels to ‘assess the “reach and significance” of impacts on the economy, society and/or culture that were underpinned by excellent research conducted in the submitted unit, as well as the submitted unit’s approach to enabling impact from its research’ (REF, 2012a, p. 6). Such a demand forces at least two faculty in a submitting institution to seek out or ‘produce evidence’ of ‘transformations’ resulting from their work outside academia.

Obviously, this illustrates the bias of this policy towards a particular kind of practical knowledge. In fact, a paper by two social workers optimistically looks at the REF as an opportunity ‘for enhanced partnerships between social work practice and academia’ (Parker & van Teijlingen, 2012). However, despite this practical orientation – seemingly suitable to already existing areas of inquiry such as ‘public sociology’ (Burawoy, 2005) – many social scientists feel that good access to impact cases is an ‘issue of hierarchy’ as only a minority of researchers have access to ‘interactions with policymakers and government’ – the archetypical kinds of impacts encouraged by the REF (Watermeyer, 2014, p. 373). As Battaly claims, the REF is a policy with ‘epistemic insensibility’ as it assumes that research lacking impact has ‘less epistemic value’ than research that can prove to be impactful (Battaly, 2013). Furthermore, as voiced by one of my interviewees, the issue of impact for philosophy is specifically its integration into a system programmed to assure it by means of accountability:

I see it as a stretch but mainly because I think that *they want to measure* the impact. Because I hope that we can have an impact on people... Do you know what I mean? Changing ideas, or a way of looking or questioning things or looking at history and see how things could be different... you know... you know... but you cannot quantify it, you cannot have evidence of that. So, yes, it's hard. And, again, I am all in favour of *we* having a role in society, but I don't know if that is the way you wish to do it.

(Female, Italian – Senior Lecturer at Distance Learning University)

Descriptions like this imply that the problem may not be impact *per se*, but the tyranny of a policy which is fixated with assessing demonstrable short-term impact, and which is indifferent to those impacts that are more diffuse and may grow over time (again, philosophy as *culture*). In this sense, the obsession that the REF has with measuring impact can be regarded as an expression of the ‘tyranny of numbers’ (Ball, 2017). Academics have to produce a good number of papers and get good numbers in the evaluations and re-assessments of those papers, also some of them should be accountable as impact case studies (see details in Chapter 6) – all in very short periods of time.

As a result of this ‘tyranny of numbers’, another tyranny is produced – a *tyranny of the moment*, i.e., something which keeps on filling in the gaps and crowding schedules in a way

that is 'seriously detrimental to creativity' (Hylland, 2001, p. 112). Reflecting Hylland's concept, one of my interviewees sees his work in opposition to a *tyranny of the present*: 'I'm not that much focused on the present. I think... this is a good term.... the *tyranny of the present*. So, you just see what's going on now and you fail to realise that this is just a little part... of something which is... much broader on the macroscope' (Male, German – Professor, working at Constituent College of the UoL). In this practitioner's experience, there is a tension between his practice in the *history of philosophy* (which attempts to converse with philosophers who are dead and understand something 'broader on the macroscope'), and the interruption caused by whatever it is that the present deems important. The present seems tyrannical when it is experienced as an all-encompassing form constraining and governing the orientations of the subject's practice. Therefore, it can be said that the tyranny of the present is reflected in the burdens caused by the always-immediate social demands on academic practitioners, including those doing philosophy.

I would argue that the greater expression of the tyranny of the present for philosophy is when it is confronted with the demand of being useful. This is particularly acute for philosophers as today's society does not hold the same views about philosophy as, for example, the Ancient Greeks did, who saw it as a 'therapy for human souls' (Lenz, 2011, p. 89). These functions are now mostly in the realm of professional therapists, the penitentiary system, or *new-age* practices. Comparisons with other professions do not do philosophy any justice because very often its practitioners struggle to provide practical evidence that their subject matter has a short-term impact or a distinct social purpose, as pointed out by Parsons above. In this way, compared to other human affairs, philosophy is exposed and reduced to the 'useless cleverness' of its practitioners (Dennett, 2013, p. 409). This said, philosophy is constantly assessed and seen in relation to other disciplines when evaluated as a field. In the UK, the distribution of public funding for HE of the Research Council for 2018-2019 by discipline and divided by REF unit of assessment is a clear example of the comparative worth that philosophy faces (see Figure 15).

				Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy. £57,404,150.34	
Clinical Medicine. £92,308,433.25		Biological Sciences. £59,890,602.09			
		Computer Science and Informatics. £45,619,536.68		Physics. £45,245,281.67	
				Business and Management Studies. £42,800,125.51	
				Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care. £36,677,718.35	
General Engineering. £56,765,208.87					
		Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology. £33,146,637.32		Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences. £30,259,818.60	
				English Language and Literature. £28,790,082.52	
				Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Metallurgy and Materials. £28,716,892.31	
				Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory. £25,650,529.11	
Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience. £55,089,148.40				Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science. £16,724,773.92	
		History. £25,437,601.80		Education. £19,990,492.89	
				Social Work and Social Policy. £16,174,661.65	
				Architecture, Built Environment and Planning. £16,112,333.21	
		Chemistry. £33,047,108.67		Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism. £12,941,437.86	
				Economics and Econometrics. £12,672,799.69	
		Law. £20,743,808.81		Sociology. £9,101,497.61	
				Civil and Construction Engineering. £8,525,130.59	
				Anthropology and Development Studies. £7,493,9...	
				Area Studies. £7,046.367.98	
Mathematical Sciences. £53,341,863.89		Aeronautical, Mechanical, Chemical and Manufacturing Engineering. £30,553,667.84		Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management. £12,713,467.71	
		Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts. £20,156,849.21		Philosophy. £8,354,978.70	
		Politics and International Studies. £16,758,396.85		Classics. £6,254,294.58	
				Theology and Religious...	

Figure 15. Britain's QR funding for 2018-2019 by REF Unit of Assessment, philosophy highlighted. Source: Own elaboration using data from Research England (2019).

Figure 15 above shows that the 'social worth' of philosophical research in the UK, at least in economic terms, seems to be very limited. What is more, the distribution of funding suggests that *philosophy is pressured to remain small* in comparison to other areas. Of course, philosophy is not a national priority. This discipline is placed in the lowest tier of funding priorities, in a similar position to sociology, but slightly better positioned than, for example, anthropology, classics and theology. Most funds are allocated to *high-cost laboratory and*

clinical subjects, requiring and accountable for expensive equipment, complex systems, and the employment of a great number of practitioners. The social function of these subjects is clear: they are tightly woven into the business of saving lives, improving well-being and making contributions to economic development and competitiveness. By comparison, disciplines such as philosophy find it hard to justify their abstract research interests but are nonetheless forced to compete for a relatively scarce amount of funding. If contemporary neoliberal academic life is a place to embody heartfelt stories of despair and struggle with an audit culture (Pelias, 2004; Sparkes, 2007), these feelings intensify and create an atmosphere of terror when being part of a discipline whose material continuity always seems endangered.

The monsters of representation

In addition to the 'small terrors' produced by neoliberalism, some practitioners of philosophy are critical of certain aspects of philosophy as it is practised today in the UK. An important group, who have historically raised their voice against the injustices of the field and *identified* its problems, have been feminist philosophers (see Alcoff & Kittay, 2007; also, the introduction to Fricker, 2007), later followed by other philosophers with similar sensibilities. These practitioners have created organisations to confront the monsters described above, the devices creating uncertainty for newcomers and early career philosophers, the systematic exclusion of certain groups of people, and the oversaturation of assessments, amongst others. It could be said that their aim is a normative rationalisation of the institutions where philosophy is practised or, in Habermasian terms, to confront 'pathologies' affecting their lifeworld (Habermas, 1987, p. 143ff). In this sense, the agenda of these practitioners is to *advance towards the enhancement* of the practice of professional philosophy by overcoming some of its problematic tendencies. This notwithstanding, as we shall see, in their fight for improvements of the field, these organisations often behave as 'hopeful monsters' (Law, 1990), which unintentionally or under the excuse of the lesser evil, produce or legitimate new and old sufferings and pains.

There are two types of organisations with these characteristics in philosophy. I propose to call them *active* and *defensive* representative associations. On the one hand, organisations

such as the Society for Women in Philosophy⁹⁰ and Minorities in Philosophy⁹¹ were formed in the last decades to put pressure on the profession for a change. These organisations are the reflection of people feeling, to a certain extent, foreigners inside philosophy (Erlenbusch, 2018), which is not surprising given the fact that most of the secure positions and permanent contracts in the profession are still held by white men. Their actions and organisational activities are aimed to improve the position of those who participate in the field as part of a minority. On the other hand, the National Committee for Philosophy⁹² looked ‘for the defence of philosophy as a discipline’ (Jewell, 2007), in the same way as its successor, the British Philosophical Association who since its onset has had the objective of ‘strengthen[ing] the position of philosophy in the UK’ (Evans, 2003). The latter philosophy associations have adopted the continuity of the profession as their main task; they act as shields for the philosophy profession in the neoliberal milieu.

In other words, ‘active’ organisations look toward the *improvement of the conditions of human beings* inside the profession while ‘defensive’ associations pursue the *material continuity of the profession*. However, one of the main issues affecting both is pressures pushing them towards neoliberal reforms. It is in this sense that I believe all these organisations to be ‘hopeful monsters’. Through these organisations, long-term orientations and short-term reactions come together in practical interventions in social reality resulting in incompatibilities and inconsistencies showcasing, and sometimes re-enforcing, the tyranny of the present, of the moment, of numbers, etc. Paradoxes are deeply embedded in hopeful monsters. Using Weberian terms in a playful way, it could be said that hopeful monster-like representative organisations are sites for the collision of ‘instrumental’, ‘value-rational’, ‘affectual’ and ‘traditional’ orientations mobilised by individual and collective actors (see M.

⁹⁰ SWIP-UK was formed in 1989 and aims, among many other things, to ‘raise public awareness’ and ‘end all forms of discrimination and marginalisation directed at women in philosophy’ (SWIP UK, 2019).

⁹¹ MAP-UK, founded in 2014, defines itself as the ‘UK arm of a worldwide network of philosophy students, academic staff and non-academic philosophers aiming to change philosophy and its public perception for the better’ encouraging diversity and equality while discouraging philosophical insularity (MAP UK, 2019).

⁹² The NCP ran between 1985 and 2002, having representatives of many mainstream philosophy learned societies in Britain, including members of Mind, the Aristotelian Society, The Society for Applied Philosophy, and The Analysis Committee. Their main link to the philosophy profession was through philosophy departments affiliated to this organisation (BPA, n.d.-b).

Weber, 1978, pp. 24–25). In this way, these organisations present affections as normative rationalities, while they are instrumentally used to sustain ingrained habituation.

I will illustrate this with the *Good Practice Scheme* launched by the BPA and SWIP-UK to encourage the representation of women in philosophy. In response to the important underrepresentation of women in philosophy in the UK described by a joint report previously produced by these organisations (see Beebee & Saul, 2011), they generated a set of normative guidelines to redress this problem. These guidelines tackle crucial gender issues in philosophy such as unconscious gender bias and stereotypes, underrepresentation of women in conferences, sexual harassment, consideration of caregivers, and romantic or sexual relationships between academics, and teachers and students (see, BPA, n.d.-c). These guidelines were well-received by departments, practitioners, and institutions inside and outside the UK. As mentioned by the BPA's executive committee in a newsletter directed to their members:

The BPA/SWIP Women in Philosophy Committee launched a Good Practice Scheme in 2014. The scheme is aimed at philosophy departments (or equivalent units), learned societies, and journal editors in the UK, and is about moving from increased acknowledgement of gender issues towards practical actions. [...] We know that many universities are keen to have departments get involved with the Athena SWAN programme (to which departments in the Arts and Humanities are now eligible), and we think the GPS dovetails nicely with its mission. As a direct result of the BPA/SWIP Good Practice Scheme, the American Philosophical Association is currently considering devising its own international good practice scheme for underrepresented groups, based closely on elements of the GPS.

(BPA, 2016, p. 7)

Interestingly, the reasons given for adopting the guidelines are neither moral nor ethical but rather organisational-strategical. The rationale of their application is a way of putting performative thinking into practice. In fact, adopting the scheme is something that looks good, that is, it is proudly showcased as a medal in departments, on the websites of learned societies, brochures, call for papers, and advertising (see Figure 16). Here it is clear that these symbols of commitment to diversity are used as a 'selling point' for philosophy departments, learned societies and other institutions related to philosophy.

Department of Philosophy
 Home > Philosophy > Women in Philosophy > BPA / SWIP Good Practice Guidelines

The department has decided to adopt the British Philosophical Association (BPA) and Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP) Good Practice Guidelines in their entirety. We believe strongly in creating a welcoming environment for all philosophers, and in particular for members of groups that are underrepresented.



What we are doing

BPA/SWIP Good Practice Guidelines

The department is committed to following the [British Philosophical Association \(BPA\)](#) and [Society for Women in Philosophy \(SWIP\)](#) Good Practice Guidelines. The guidelines deal with gender bias, conference and seminars, sexual harassment, caregivers and staff-student relationships.

LSE Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method aims to adopt policies and put procedures in place that encourage better representation of women and other underrepresented groups in philosophy.

BPA/SWIP good practice guidelines

The unit is committed to following the [British Philosophical Association \(BPA\)](#) and [Society for Women in Philosophy \(SWIP\)](#) good practice guidelines.



We adopt the BPA/SWIP Good Practice Scheme

Figure 16. Announcements on the websites of some of the UK philosophy learned societies and departments adopting the BPA/SWIP good practice scheme. Source: UK Philosophy websites.

The case that seems more complicated, however, is the attempt to make this ‘good practice’ scheme fit the Athena SWAN programme, which is a competitive fund orientated towards ‘gender equality’ and participation in the ‘equality charters’ offered by the company Advance HE. Advance HE sees *equality* as a commodity that is needed to remain ‘competitive’ in the market economy: ‘The charters aim to drive forward the cultural and systemic changes needed if institutions are to remain competitive and attractive to talented staff and potential students in a global market’ (Equality Challenge Unit, 2019). Gender equality, or the improvement of the conditions of women in philosophy, is not mobilised as a value *per se*, but as a commodity that can be instrumentalised. In addition, at the local level, these ‘guidelines’ are incorporated just as a step forward in an application process to Athena SWAN funds, which has been criticised as representing only ‘moderate feminism’ (Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019). This has shown problems of implementation in universities where it usually becomes a burden for already marginalised practitioners pressured by their institutions to bring external funding to them.⁹³

The Good Practice Scheme has also circulated internationally. Even though the programme is tailored to redress gender problems as presented in philosophy departments in

⁹³ The array of problems also extends to the *gender pay gap*. As stated by the UCU general secretary in the *Equal Day Pay*, the mean hourly wage of women is 15.1% lower than that of men: ‘I know that our employers encourage us to pour our time and energy into initiatives like Athena Swan – but sadly there is little evidence that Athena Swan awards have a positive impact on pay equality’ (email from Jo Grady to academic staff, November 14, 2019).

the UK, it is possible to see in the BPA's newsletter that the American Philosophical Association intends to create international standards based on this. Although the results of the study assessing the effectiveness of the scheme to improve the situation of women in philosophy have not been released, the model of best practice is already being exported. Such practice has gone even further. For instance, the Philosophical Association of Japan organised a workshop led by a BPA member to have its members 'learn' about this good practice scheme (日本哲学会, 2017). The instrumental rationale through which research and teaching institutions integrate frameworks like this is very problematic. The international spread of this framework also raises the issue of its global circulation as a 'civilising' instrument, i.e. as a normative apparatus produced in the north, with the north in mind, and that it is exported to the south through 'transmission of packages' (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1974, p. 109) that are indifferent to the particular stories, feminist struggles or cultural-religious circumstances of the contexts where they are eventually implemented.

In a highly neoliberal environment, this bureaucratic modality is imposed as the only feasible way of carrying out changes; it is part of a 'necessarian logic' meant to interact with ever new protocols and moves (Ball, 2016b, p. 1048). One of the pressures of a tyrannical present is for academic disciplines such as philosophy to be successful in managing these logics, for which it requires skilful administrators who are capable of producing and managing useful policies of rapid circulation. I do not deny that these policies may have positive effects (for instance, in increasing the participation of women in philosophy events) but the price to pay is ever-increasing administrative burdens for those doing philosophy. Practical transformations in philosophy seem to come at the expense of playing the game of neoliberalism; *hopeful monsters shall be prepared to make deals with the devil*.

Closing Remarks: Embracing, Confronting and Accepting the Nightmare

In this chapter I have explored how the subjectivities and social relationships of the practitioners of philosophy are 'intensively governed' (N. Rose, 1999, p. 1) by the (apparently) conflicting forces of old-school professional dispositions and neoliberal audit mechanisms of performativity and quality assurance. Overall, these forces raise issues about *who philosophers are* and *what they do*. Both these questions are closely related to the intricate labyrinth linking the definitions of the self of each practitioner with the discipline's professional expectations and the social practices resulting from philosophers' relations with other philosophers and their relationship with the world of education. This results in the nightmarish

articulation of philosophy, monsters and small terrors. Such articulation is portrayed in the cover of a magazine dedicated to the dissemination of philosophy that was recently published (Figure 17).⁹⁴

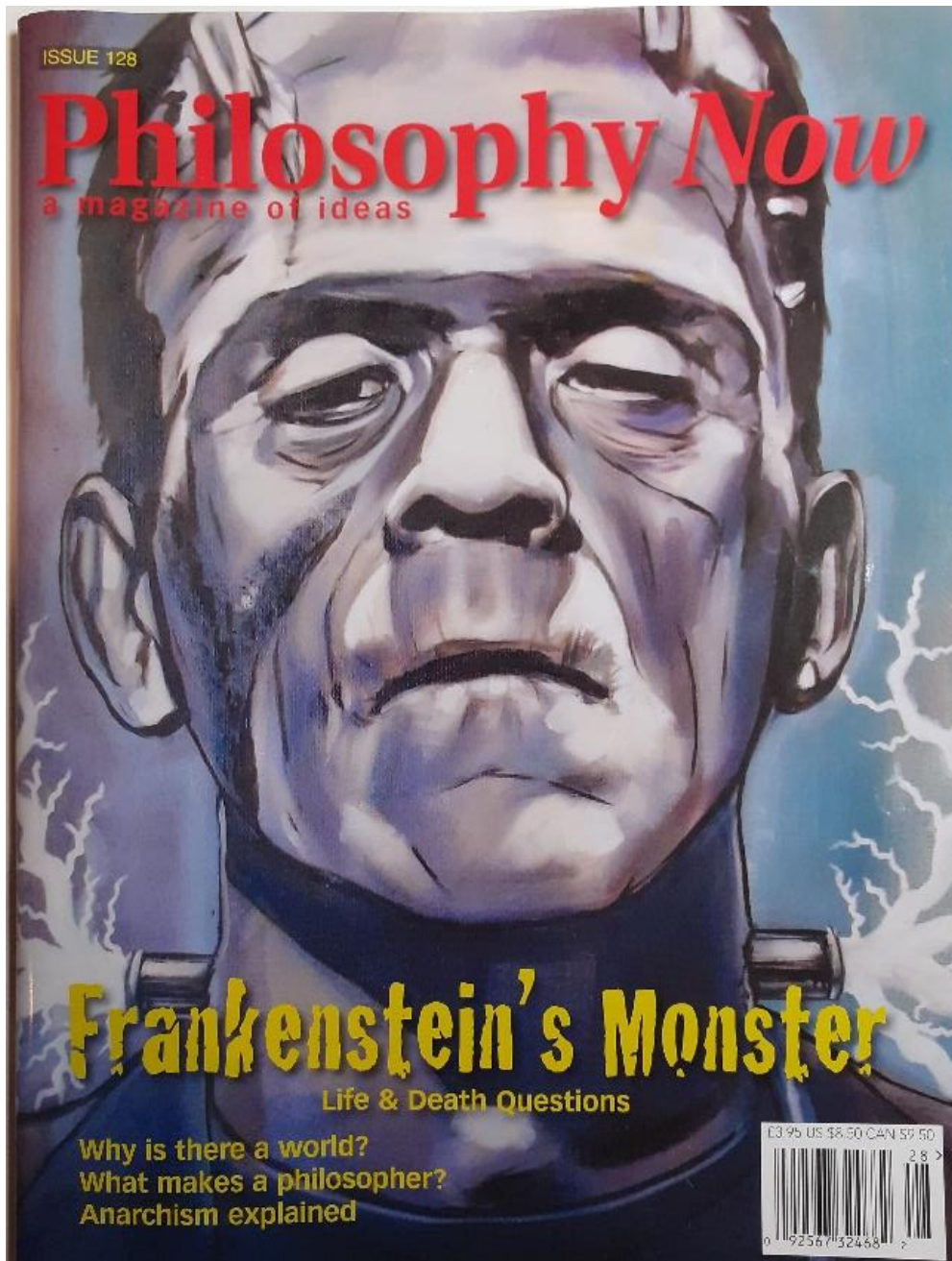


Figure 17. Frankenstein's Monster in the cover page of *Philosophy Now*. Source: Issue 128 Oct/Nov 2018

⁹⁴ Of course, the contributors to the issue aimed to do philosophical reflections *about* Frankenstein and not on how Frankenstein-like monsters affect philosophy. It is at least an amusing coincidence that there is here an articulation between 'Philosophy Now' and 'Frankenstein's Monster'.

Academic philosophy has many monsters. In the (always incomplete) way of defining and accounting for its social form, it has terrorised many practitioners in their daily lives. I would suggest that denying these day-to-day small terrors is unhealthy. Embracing, confronting or, at the very least, accepting the existence of these nightmarish components is important. Denying monsters is a fantasy that may result in extending the scope of the terrors they reinforce. As said by Nietzsche: 'False values and words of delusion: these are the worst monsters for mortals – long does doom sleep and wait in them' (Nietzsche, 2006, p. 70). At this point, it should be clear that philosophy is full of social problems and challenges, and that these do not have easy solutions and demand reflexive recognition before being subject to practical intervention by philosophers. The soul of the individual philosopher, the continuity of the discipline of philosophy, the neoliberal order of things and the paradoxical nature of contemporary forms of critique are interconnected sites of struggle.

Overview of the Chapter

Inspired by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, I began this chapter exploring three kinds of monsters: the abandoned, the creative and the hopeful. These categories helped me explore the 'small terrors' of philosophy in the UK, i.e., the anxieties and other psychosocial effects of practice that many philosophers experience in their daily lives. I first discussed the condition of philosophy as a discipline that is 'abandoned' by others at the onset of modernity and that tries to preserve its social legitimacy, creating a sense of dread that is particularly detrimental for early-career academics and 'minorities'. I then discussed the creativity of neoliberalism as a monster allowing the emergence of a number of fears and terrors. Managerial logics and assessments oriented towards quality 'assurance' such as the RAE and the REF work together with the aforementioned disciplinary mechanisms and spread amongst philosophers what I have identified as the terrors of performativity, the tyranny of numbers, and the tyranny of the present. Finally, I suggested that hopeful monsters inhabit a paradoxical area between old and new terrors. Representative organisations attempting to actively 'improve' the discipline of philosophy or 'defend' it from neoliberalism are also accomplices of neoliberalism when they promote their aims, which results in the propagation of new complications and anxieties for philosophers. With this as a backdrop, I suggested that these problems cannot be denied; instead, they require recognition, reflection and action.

EXCURSUS 2

INSIDE THE BRITISH PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION

Looking for documents for this research I came across the British Philosophical Association's website. On the upper left corner of their home page, the motto of the organisation says: 'representing professional philosophers in the UK' (Figure 18). Since I first read this, I have been thinking about the practical ways and the extent to which philosophers could be represented in their diversity by this organisation. Additionally, I became immediately curious about the kind of boundary work operating in the BPA's definition of philosophy as a profession. This is especially important when considering that the BPA claims to be more open than its predecessor, the National Committee for Philosophy (NCP), as it attempts to include not only philosophers working inside philosophy departments but also people who studied philosophy but did not pursue a career in philosophy, philosophers with different sensibilities working outside philosophy departments, independent scholars (e.g. freelance writers) and schoolteachers.



Figure 18. Logo of the BPA. Source: BPA (n.d.-a)

The BPA's webpage has reports, newsletters, good practice schemes and statements based on positions and guidelines agreed by its executive committee. The topics addressed are as diverse as careers, teaching assistant conditions, open access, metrics for assessments and impact in the REF (see, for instance, Beebee, 2011; Bortolan, Fernandes, Pippa, & Stern, 2017; BPA, 2009, 2013b, 2013a, 2014b; Phillips, 2011). Interestingly, they have also uploaded the minutes of their meetings between 2005 and 2014, which are inscriptions documenting

the tasks, projects, accomplishments and discussions of their organisation.⁹⁵ Rather than only having the 'ready-made' official position of the association, here we have at least a grasp of their deliberation processes 'in the making' (Latour, 1987, p. 4). A brief look at them can provide some insights into the contemporary organisational issues that have concerned the philosophy practitioners sitting on the BPA's executive committee. For instance, we can learn the following:

- That the Mind Association was the main patron of the BPA back in 2005 when they contributed with £5,000 of the £7,000 they got for a 'reserve fund', or 'fighting fund', directed towards acting timely and appropriately when facing events affecting the profession.
- That in 2009, during the preparation for the REF, there was a session devoted to discussing the *impact* of philosophical research and the definition provided by the government. That session had the participation of representatives of a broad range of learned societies, philosophy departments and assessment panels (see Chapter 6).
- That an ongoing concern of the executive members of the BPA has been to look for ways to attract new members. For instance, in the meetings from 2010, there is a record of (i) the BPA offering free membership to the University of London's Institute of Philosophy upon subscription to the BPA, and (ii) of the BPA offering free membership to postgraduate students participating in the British Postgraduate Philosophical Association. Also, a usual practice of the BPA is offering discounts to members on books by certain publishers in partnership with the association such as Routledge, Palgrave and Bloomsbury.
- That during 2013, when creating their models of 'best practices' for teaching assistant payments, there was some discussion on whether these 'fictional models' could really help heads of departments when actually, in their universities, the budget for this purpose usually did not depend on them but on administrative staff.

Interested in this material, I emailed the BPA asking if it was possible to access some of their minutes after 2014. Following some email exchanges with one of the BPA's leading figures, in which I shared some details on my research and why I was interested in these materials, not only did I receive a positive reply to my request (together with minutes from the period 2015-2017) but I was also invited to observe one of their executive committee meetings.

⁹⁵ Unfortunately, at the time of submitting this document the BPA has stopped sharing their minutes publicly.

Three days after these emails, I attended the BPA meeting, which was held at one of the constituent colleges of the University of London located in central London. The session took place in a small room that had a big TV, a long table and capacity for around ten people. At its peak of attendance, including me, there were eight people in the room (see Figure 19) – three women and five men, all white. About five members of the executive committee were excused from attending the meeting. Fortunately, not everybody came, had all the members of the committee attended, there may have been issues with space related to my use of a chair, which could have caused inconveniences of a practical nature.

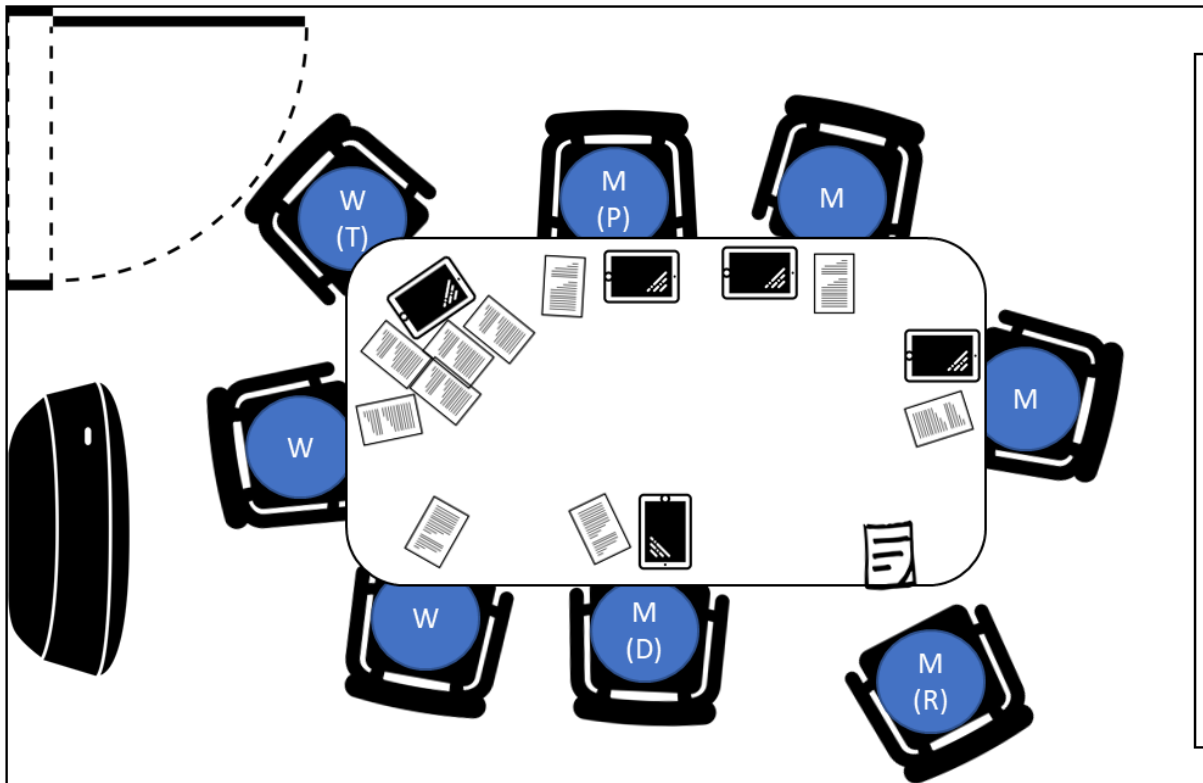


Figure 19. Diagram of a room holding a BPA executive meeting. W: Woman; M: Man; (T): Treasurer; (P): President; (D): Director; (R): Researcher. Source: Own elaboration based in observation.

It was a busy meeting, lasting a bit longer than the scheduled three hours and going through various matters, including, internal organisational concerns as well as extra-organisational, financial and policy ones. The practice of the BPA is a good example of what Latour calls *organising*, understood as a mode of existence ‘where we learn to live sequentially, from crisis to crisis, under and above scripts’, i.e., organising what is disorganised, re-organising, interpreting and creating the materials needed to fulfil deadlines and to mobilise the organisation to a future where it still exists (Latour, 2012, p. 176, also, 2013, p. 381ff). Indeed, the aim of ‘representing philosophers’ is pursued in many practical ways.

While the meeting lasted, the small room morphed into the headquarters of the BPA and, as such, was overloaded by concerns coming from the tyranny of the present and the

monsters of discipline affecting professionals of philosophy in the UK. To confront this, the meeting was articulated around some fixed moments – a Director’s report, a financial report, and some remarks from its President. The meeting was also open for the members to raise other issues. As shown in Figure 20, the topics addressed during the conversation were many. The participants presented these topics as problems or reports of affairs (for instance, judgements about past interventions or description of circumstances). This was followed by some brainstorming usually concluding in a line of action for the foreseeable future (a proposal, commitments, more work, etc.) that was sometimes decided collectively and at times resolved by the uncontested argument of one of the participants of the meeting.

Area of concern	Description of affairs / Problems	Proposed or possible lines of action
<i>Intra-organisational</i>	It looks as if the BPA could have more individual philosophers as members than what it currently does	Get a spot for an evening event at the Joint Session and offer a wine reception to attract new members
	There is a problem with scheduling BPA meeting dates by email	The date for the next meeting will be agreed by the end of each session. Members should expect one meeting per term unless there is no business
	The members of the BPA are creating a new webpage and there is some concern about making clear that their organisation is not only directed to professional university philosophers	It is claimed that the webpage is an ongoing project. Therefore, matters like this can still be improved
	A participant claims that they need to find some pictures to upload to their new webpage	Suggested pictures raised in a brainstorming: someone looking at Rodin’s “thinker”, people discussing or abstract forms and figures such as those possible to find in Radical Philosophy
<i>Financial</i>	The treasurer presents what they call a “list of shame” with the name of eight departments not paying their annual membership. Perhaps not casually, most of them were big philosophy departments	Some people offered to contact staff they know at those departments to remind them about this payment
	The treasurer says that the current resources seem enough to operate but not to be involved in bigger projects	Ask resourceful learned societies for contributions
<i>Extra-organisational/ Environmental</i>	A participant expresses concerns in relation to representatives from learned societies not wanting the BPA to organise conferences nor academic events	They discuss other kinds of public activities that they could do without upsetting the learned societies
	Considering recent twitter debates about a transgender philosopher, ⁹⁶ there is a	In general, they reacted with reluctance but considered that it may be useful to provide a

⁹⁶ Actually, a big and complicated debate confronting a trans philosopher who claims being forced to leave the profession because of the increase of voice of ‘trans-exclusionary radical feminists’, and a

	discussion on whether the BPA should provide professional philosophers with a blog to discuss conflicts, as the APA does	channel where people could be more engaged with the subject. Also, it would be a way to acknowledge the existence of a 'blogosphere'
	There is a motion about trying to raise the profile of philosophy in mass media	It was suggested that they could contact philosophers with experience in this, as Nigel Warburton or Jonathan Wolff, and see what is possible to do. It was also mentioned that they need more presence at the BBC
	The director informs that Hull's philosophy department was saved from closure; however, it was forced to shut down their honours degree programme eventually. They depict the situation as feeling very desperate for a while. However, a public letter written by the BPA and the article in The Guardian by Julian Baggini seemed to have been useful interventions	The participants of the meeting reacted with relief
<i>Reaction to policy</i>	One of the members of the committee is the chair of the REF panel and has a 'pitch' that he presented to the Heads of Departments in a previous meeting about how 3* and 4* look like in the REF. Other participants ask him on whether he could write it down.	He declines because if he did so people would think that they are official REF guidelines
<i>Policy-making</i>	The BPA created some 'best practice' guidelines in relation to minorities in philosophy. The Minorities and Philosophy Group (MAP) also made theirs so there seem to be duplicated efforts	Contact MAP and find a solution

Figure 20. Matters discussed at the BPA meeting and lines of action proposed. Source: Own elaboration based in observation.

Many of the problems depicted here (increasing number of members, using images that appeal to philosophers, making institutions pay, being aware of institutional limits, helping departments in danger of closure, etc.) have to do with the representational aim of the BPA. A way of understanding re-presentation is as 'making present what is actually absent' (Arendt, 1981, p. 76). In this sense, I would like to argue that the list of multiple concerns and actions governing the BPA's regular meetings could be read as attempts to be attuned with the demands of/on the philosophers and discipline for whom they speak. Between the members of the BPA executive committee, there seems to be a shared preoccupation about philosophy

philosopher who gave a paper about *Sexual Orientation* at the Aristotelian Society (the reference to the published paper is Stock, 2019; details about the debate, see Weinberg, 2019).

in the UK for being a practice whose continuity can only be defended if institutions such as theirs play a political and organisational role in the game of neoliberalism:

Universities have changed, they are increasingly neoliberal, increasingly driven by a managerial culture... So, maybe 50 years ago, or maybe 30 years ago, it would be possible for someone to think: “look, philosophers should just go and take lectureships and professorships in philosophy departments but they should be able to sort of remain independent of the kind of politics in the universities and they also should be able to sort of remain university-independent and not having a need for these sorts of associations as the BPA”. But... that picture... I think that it really has changed, that the evolution of the Research Excellence Framework, originally the RAE and now the REF, as it is known, and with the differences that it has made in the universities, really has just changed the way in which we think the employment relations within universities. And it is more neoliberal, and it is more about money... Philosophers are in danger of being isolated within universities because they don't bring the kind of financial returns that you may see in science subjects. And I don't think that any of the learned societies will have any reasons to have any kind of disagreements to the BPA when we say “well, even when we are not a trade union, we do think that there is some kind of value in being organised as philosophy”.

(Male, British – Member of the BPA's Executive Committee).

In his narrative, my interviewee depicts philosophy as shifting from having a secured elite position in universities to being under threat after many decades of holding an outlier position in the new neoliberal order. Furthermore, it is interesting his emphasis on the BPA *not wanting to be seen as a trade union*. During the meeting, I overheard another member of the committee saying that if they presented themselves as a trade union, it would be very difficult for them to ask for money to some learned societies that may be suspicious of left-wing ideological agendas. Indeed, some of their actions have been interpreted as unionist by some philosophers:

... we have encountered in the past some people that see the BPA as being a little bit like a trade union. So... when we say things like “we stand up against... for the philosophers”, particularly when philosophy departments are under attack or in danger of being shut down, sometimes that can look a little bit like... I suppose that can look a little bit like left-wing agitating, pushing back against a kind of managerial class within universities... But things are not like that, in some respect...

(Male, British – Member of the BPA's Executive Committee)

Leaving the legal fact of their constitution aside, I wonder why ‘in some respect’ they are not a trade union and to what extent this may be a manifestation of the problem of trying to represent the whole spectrum of philosophy practitioners and ‘philosophy’ as a field. My hypothesis is, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, that this may have to do with a paradoxical situation in which the attempt to *defend philosophy as a profession* can sometimes be in contraposition with trying to *stand up against managerial practices*. Indeed, in the name

of the survival of philosophy, sometimes the BPA has urged philosophy practitioners to adapt to policy reforms that may feel inappropriate to these practitioners.

I will illustrate this last point by considering the case of a reform to the Philosophy A-Level curriculum. This reform started in 2013 when the circulation of a letter, involving the secretary of State for Education Michael Gove, and projecting a reform to A-level qualifications raised some alarm amongst the members of the executive committee of the BPA. A minute expressed their anxiety about the effects of the closure of the 'Philosophy and Religious Studies' A-Level: 'we might expect to see a drop in numbers of philosophy students at university level from 2017 onwards' (BPA minute, May 2013). As fewer students would mean less money raised by philosophy departments and, therefore, redundancies, such a scenario seemed threatening to philosophers working in universities. Furthermore, its implementation seemed nightmarish for philosophy schoolteachers that would see the end of their source of labour and income.

A minute from the BPA shows that six months after reading Gove's letter, AQA, the exam board providing the Philosophy A-level, approached the BPA 'to revise the Philosophy A level, partly in response to on-going concerns about the contents of the syllabus, the open-ended and unclear nature of the questions, and the quality of marking and assessment' (BPA minute, November 2013). As my interviewee at the BPA later told me: 'the worry [of the government] was that there were too many options students could pick. There was a lot of choice in the curriculum' (Male, British – Member of the BPA's Executive Committee), which translated into the philosophy A-level being difficult to assess in a 'rigorous way'. In this sense, for the AQA the main problem seemed to be the curriculum being too flexible and not very well standardized. However, not everybody in academia agreed about these being good reasons to reform it. For instance, an article in *The Guardian* considered the old A-level had many benefits:

What has impressed me about this course is that students are expected to study philosophical texts such as the Republic by Plato as well as extracts from philosophers such as Hobbes, Hume or Mill. I can think of no A-level course that provides a better preparation for undergraduate study – not just for the humanities or social sciences but also for the natural sciences

(Furedi, 2014)

Despite considerations such as the one above, after meetings between the AQA, the BPA and other representatives from professional philosophy, the A-level was restructured, and the subject was substantially reformed. In effect, the A-level was reduced to four topics: 'epistemology', 'moral philosophy', 'metaphysics of God' and 'metaphysics of mind'. This meant a dismissal of, for instance, 'political philosophy' despite the fact that, according to my

BPA interviewee, 'loads of schoolteachers enjoyed teaching and had found that their students really got involved with it'. Nevertheless, the 'expert panel' did not consider it to be a *core* philosophical topic and decided to remove it. The BPA defended these actions as being necessary to save the qualification despite schoolteachers approaching them to show their concern:

And a lot of them wrote emails to the BPA sort of saying, you know, "this is terrible they are ruining it". But, in fact, we were there as a kind of intermediary to say, well... actually, they are going to shut this A-Level down. They're going to get rid of it unless it's reformed. So, what we want to see here is the best outcome, which is, "the A-Level continues but it does have to change". And so... we want to hear from all the members and all the teachers about what they think is important but, at the same time, we know that they can't just have everything that they want because the government wants to change this thing.

(Male, British – Member of the BPA's Executive Committee)

However, the BPA is certain about its intervention. In one of their recent newsletters they highlight that unlike archaeology, history of art, statistics and classical civilisation, philosophy was saved and remains an AQA A-level. Moreover, they stress that 'schools and colleges [are] being impressed by the quality of the [reformed] AS/A-levels in Philosophy', seeing them as 'engaging, rigorous and likely to be beneficial to their students no matter which subjects they choose to study in Higher Education' (BPA, 2019, p. 9). With the curricular intervention of the BPA, philosophy was secured for adolescents in secondary schools. However, now fully certified by experts, the contents of the philosophy A-level were narrowed down and subject to further disciplinary curricular control (the changes reflect what professional philosophers conceive as core philosophy areas), and functional to the needs of schools and the educational system in general. Perhaps, as a result, this makes it more difficult for schools to offer experiences of philosophical wonder to newer generations of students in favour of pleasing those with a more 'disciplinary' mindset.

In sum, situations like this and some of the other issues noted in this excursus show that the BPA participates of some of the paradoxical situations of British Philosophy's neoliberal-professional nexus and the difficulties associated with trying to represent philosophers and philosophy in all their variety.

CHAPTER 6

FOLLOWING IMPACT AND PHILOSOPHY REFIGURATIONS

Policy, Circulation and Effects

The parasite straightens things out, creating an irreversible circulation, a meaning, making meaning. As we have seen above, it constructs gates to fit its demands.

Michel Serres (1982, p. 185)

Circulation, Policy and Philosophy: Texts and Practices

I will now explore in more detail one of the neoliberal monsters most actively haunting the imagination and practice of those working in academic philosophy in the UK: the REF impact agenda. The REF impact agenda is not 'monstrous' because it is *per se* 'bad', but rather because it is an administrative innovation creating many anxieties amongst academic practitioners, including many philosophers. As Foucault (1984, p. 343) would put it, it is 'dangerous'.

This chapter addresses two sets of problems relating this policy to the practice of philosophy. I first start with questions about *stabilisation*. Considering that at the time of its first announcement, philosophers were worried about and opposed to the idea of implementing an impact element in a research assessment such as the REF, it is important to ask ourselves how a controversial policy like this could become integrated into the practice of philosophy. In other words, what were the processes, mechanisms and discussions that made impact be accepted and acceptable as part of the academic activities of philosophers? Second, and expanding this issue, there are questions about circulation, translation and the making of impact as a matter of *practical* concern for philosophers. What are the concrete places, people and documents that enable impact to enter philosophy? In what sort of spaces is impact manifest and what effects does its enactment have on its meaning and the practitioners

relating to it? These are questions about technologies and people (policymakers, philosophers in different roles, administrators); about security mechanisms and the discipline of philosophy; about circulations, defiance, negotiations and its always indefinite crystallisations. My concerns, following Sin (2014), have to do with the concrete sites of circulation and the interrelation of beliefs about policy texts creating an ‘enacted ontology’ where policy becomes socially objectified.

Here I understand policy as a site of ‘mobility and mutation [...] rather than transfer, transit and transaction’ (Peck & Theodore, 2010, p. 169). This means that policy is in a constant process of social construction that cannot be reduced to the set of definitions made by policy experts and which cannot deny their agency either. Moreover, the sum of the contextual aspects occurring in the circulation of policy can be read as producing a ‘network of uncertainty’ relating the many things that at first could be unexpected to policy planners (Crisosto & Salinas, 2017). For decades, scholars have argued that *top-down* models of policy – as something ‘macro’ applied over ‘micro’ contexts – are misleading because policy production and implementation is a rather messy process full of ‘heuristics’ and ‘*ad hocery*’ (Ball, 1993; Berman, 1978). Policy enactment involves circulation, communication and hermeneutics; it encompasses the *recontextualisation* of policy ideas in a complex arena:

Policy is complexly encoded in sets of texts and various documents and it is also decoded in complex ways. Policy enactment involves creative processes of interpretation and translation, that is, the recontextualisation – through reading, writing and talking – of the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualised practices.

(Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011, p. 586)

My aim in this chapter is to show the complex processes of encoding, decoding and *re-coding* of the REF impact component in relation to practices going on inside the discipline of philosophy. These are stories about meetings, testimonies, and texts that only make sense as a complex sociological process of concatenating expectations (and not a ready-made engineering circuit) by ‘following’ the different sites of practice involved in the policy (Ball, 2016a; McCann & Ward, 2012). Of course, my analysis does not intend to follow the complete chains of events making the REF impact policy and its circumstances. Nevertheless, I attempt to show a certain degree of continuity between texts and meetings by zooming into certain interactions, definitions, re-definitions, materials and discussions. I start describing how impact came to be formulated by REF policy-makers between 2007 and 2009; after this, I follow some of the circumstances connecting philosophers with this policy as a matter of practical concern from 2009 onwards. First, I focus on the crisis that this new policy generated amongst philosophers and describe some of their attempts to resist it. Then, I track some of the practices of the REF philosophy assessment panel, attempting to reconstruct their particular

reading of the REF assessment guidelines when evaluating philosophy impacts and case studies. After this, I address some of the *effects* produced by this policy amongst philosophy staff in the UK. I finish this chapter with some remarks about the ‘value’ produced by this circulation process.

The birth of impact and its encounter with philosophy

Addressing impact in philosophy also means following some policy movements by individuals working in institutions outside philosophy. The movement discussed in the following sections begins with the description of a policy object introduced as an innovation for research assessments. My narrative is about how this innovation came to be conceived as an actual object producing many conflicts when it appeared to philosophers. The story of impact in philosophy is about a moving object of concern that transforms, creates, and asks for many different practices from academics – philosophers amongst them. In a way, I follow the trajectory of a policy creation (impact) that during its circulation pushes people to *interpretation* that is, ‘engagement with the language of policy’, and *translation*, ‘the iterative process of making institutional texts and putting those texts into action’ (Maguire, Ball, Braun, Hoskins, & Perryman, 2012, p. 45).

1. The making of impact

This story starts in November 2007 with the publication of a policy document outlining the details of a new assessment and funding framework intended to replace the RAE. At the core of this proposal, it is possible to find that the then ‘REF 2013’ was going to be a system based on metrics – an aspect that was scrapped after two consultations. Interestingly, at the beginning of the text, it is possible to find a very brief section entitled ‘User value, applied research and economic impact’. Here, HEFCE describes the concern of ‘stakeholders’⁹⁷ aiming to ‘recognise particular features of certain types of research activity such as applied research and work of immediate and direct relevance to the needs of research users’

⁹⁷ The document is vague about who these ‘stakeholders’ are – but it is safe to say that it refers to members of the funding bodies.

(HEFCE, 2007, p. 15). HEFCE's concern was whether and how the REF could 'capture' such features.

What seemed like a secondary concern, one that did not occupy more than a page in the HEFCE document, became the focus of a meeting at the British Academy on 31st October 2008. A new neoliberal monster was being created that Halloween. There, three white men from Universities UK and HEFCE led a workshop entitled *User-valued research in the Research Excellence Framework (REF)*. According to its programme, the event aimed to 'identify a practical way forward for assessing user-valued research in the REF'. In the PowerPoint presentation of one of these men, it is possible to find a definition of what user-valued research stands for: 'It is widely held that RAE does not deal well with certain research activity which is valued by users but which is not recognised for excellence within the academic community in the usual way for its field' (Sweeney, 2008b). That day, a new area of possibilities was being openly discussed between policymakers: the field of non-academic users of academic research.

A month later, the HEFCE Director of Research, Innovation and Skills wrote to the heads of HE institutions that the workshop served as an 'exploration' of how the REF could take into account research that is valued by users. In the circular letter, this was worded as a series of security, continuity, refining and optimisation challenges:

- how to ensure that the criteria for excellence give due weight to the rigour and originality of all types of research, while recognising different audiences in terms of the significance of different types of research
- how to build on efforts made in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) to further encourage institutions to put forward a wide range of work for assessment in the REF
- how to refine the existing business research element of quality-related (QR) research funding, introduced as an initial proxy for user value, and include an appropriate range of evidence to take account of user value and engagement with research users
- how best to seek inputs from a wide range of research users into the assessment process.

(Sweeney, 2008a)

Retrospectively, this looks like a strange shape-shifting and indefinite creature: it resembles the experience of the boat of fools before *madness* was categorised as such, or the agency of certain entities before Pasteur invented them as *microbes* (see, respectively, Foucault, 2006; Latour, 1988). A magmatic form without a clear name was being discussed – one that later came to be known as *impact*. This began to consolidate as *impact* after three meetings occurring between February and June 2009. HEFCE met with their newly formed Expert Advisory Groups composed of 110 members – mostly former panel members from the RAE 2008, but also representatives of research councils and enterprises such as IBM,

GlaxoSmithKline and Blitz Games Studios. Impact was a prominent topic of debate in these sessions. In a summary document, it is possible to find the following considerations in relation to impact:

- 'most members agreed or accepted that the impact of research should be assessed as part of the REF';
- 'members agreed that the definition of impact should be broad and should include benefits to the economy, society, public policy and services, culture, health, wellbeing and quality of life';
- 'There was a general consensus that impact should be assessed through a combination of narrative evidence, indicators and case studies';
- there were discussions on whether impact should weight 10%, 20% or 25% of the assessment;
- 'It was felt that it could be more difficult to find direct evidence of impact for arts and humanities disciplines than for sciences.'

(HEFCE, 2009a, pp. 25, 45–46)

Interestingly, although the document shows that there was general consensus amongst the EAGs about something called impact and about some of its mechanisms, it is possible to observe certain 'points of arbitrariness' (such as the weight of impact) and 'ambiguity' (such as evidence in A&H) hampering the decisions that had to be made about this 'object of government' (see Ramos Zincke, 2015). In addition to this, a pilot study showed that various institutions struggled to understand 'what was meant by evidence' (Technopolis Group, 2010, p. 15). These struggles may have been some of the reasons that led David Willets, the then Universities and Science Minister, to postpone the REF to 2014 on the grounds that 'he had yet to be convinced by the efficacy of the impact measure' (Baker, 2010). At some point during 2010-2011, he was convinced. This probably happened after the RAND report commissioned by HEFCE found, in a scrapped Australian research assessment, a 'tested' model for evidence-based impact which was never 'implemented' due to a change of government (Grant, Brutscher, Kirk, Butler, & Wooding, 2010, p. x). When the impact assessment was confirmed, in March 2011, its only major change from the earlier proposal was the weight of impact dropping from the 25% proposed in late 2009 to 20% (HEFCE, 2009b; REF, 2011). However, the ambiguity of the policy was not eradicated as a result of this; it was transferred to universities and their practitioners who still needed to overcome the initial crisis to learn how to interpret this policy and to be able to translate it into their contexts:

From the institution's perspective, I think it was big when impact came in... because we did not recall it...we didn't understand what impact was at that point. It wouldn't be quoted anywhere – no one was thinking of it very systematically... We shouldn't even dare doing it. There were lots of that happening, nobody really thought about it [...] So, there was a huge talk going on, actually trying to find out what was going on. [...] And then these kinds of consulting elements, particularly with Human Science's impact... Actually, it tends to be this whole range of different interventions waiting for

a claim of change. How do you show that the intervention that you've made have some... any particular impact for your discipline? So, there are very conceptual things... making heads wrap trying to make sense to those narratives together.

(Female, British – Administrative Staff, Red Brick University)

This brief story about impact in the REF shows its circulation from being a secondary idea to becoming a central aspect of the education policy debate. What started being a concern of less than a page in a 22-page policy document was suddenly exerting pressure over university staff and academics all around the UK. HE institutions had to start dealing with this. Inside those institutions, philosophers were particularly surprised and irritated when confronted with this new form of assessment. Below I outline the series of events that made impact become an object of concern within philosophy.

2. The adventures of impact into the AHRC and philosophy

The REF 'user-value' or 'impact' agenda was also an expression of the particular interest in and interests of the UK's cultural industries. According to one policy text, impact articulated 'the Government's fundamental belief in the role of public funding to stimulate creativity and sharpen Britain's creative edge' in addition to the idea that the UK is 'a country that values excellence in the arts and culture, a population rich in creative talent, and an innovative and flourishing creative economy' (DCMS, 2008, p. 6). This triangulation between 'public funding', 'arts and culture' and 'innovation' had strong repercussions on the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the main research body funding philosophy:

The AHRC works closely with the other Research Councils in furthering the impact of the world-class research it funds. Together with the other Councils it has developed a broad description of impact that draws upon our Royal Charter imperatives and HM Treasury guidance on the assessment of economic impact, which includes effectiveness of public services and quality of life. The AHRC will develop an increasingly sophisticated means of articulating and measuring the impacts of the research it funds.

(AHRC, 2009a, p. 11)

AHRC's approach to the matter assumes a direct link between 'academic excellence' and impact on culture, policy, society and economy (see Figure 21, left). In this model, peer-reviewed A&H academic work has positive effects on intellectual and cultural life, local communities, government departments and non-governmental organisations and a 'healthy economy' (ibid. pp. 12-13). Additionally, as seen in Figure 21 (right), this model actively proposes shaping the funding modalities offered by the AHRC with specific research themes.

The AHRC's 'strategic approach to research' is a direct attempt to channel the contents and style of research in line with the impact agenda.

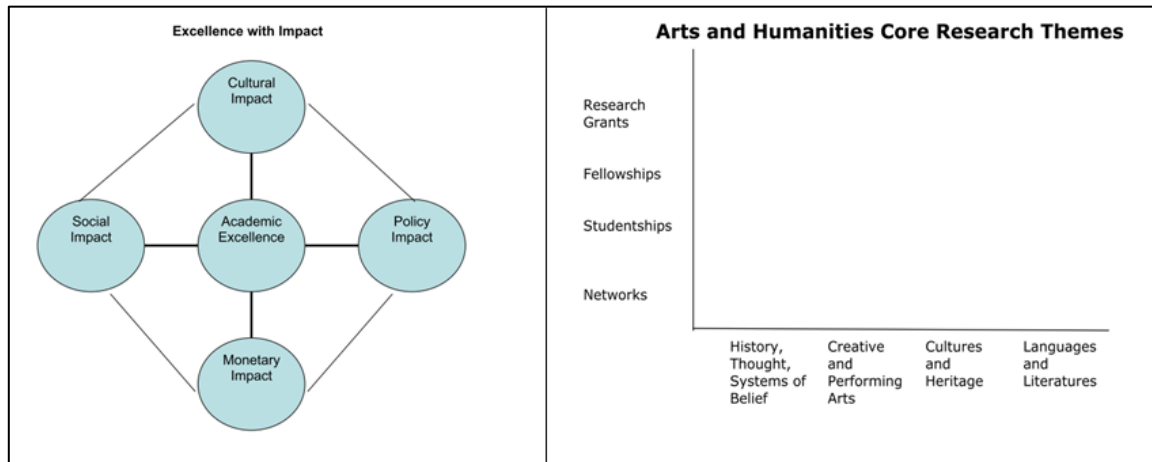


Figure 21. AHRC's illustration of the relationship between 'excellence' and 'impact' (left) and its 'strategic approach to research' (right). Source: AHRC (2009a, pp. 5, 12).

The philosophers who attended the BPA meeting in April 2009 saw these new policies with great concern. According to the minute of the meeting, the discipline of philosophy was extremely likely to be affected by both the short-term demonstrable impact agenda and the themes prioritised by the AHRC's research strategy. The first was considered to be detrimental to the 'genuine' impact of philosophy in the long-term; the second would exclude core areas practised by philosophers in the UK. The minute states the following about impact:

Nonetheless, a general concern remained that the focus on short-term, local impact could be detrimental to philosophy, where it is more difficult to demonstrate short-term impact than in some A&H disciplines, and, thereby, to the genuine impact of philosophy in the longer term. It was noted, for example, that many disciplines have their roots in philosophy (psychology, indeed all the sciences ...); that the invention of the computer has its roots in analytic philosophy and in particular logic; and that welfare economics has its roots in utilitarianism.

(BPA minute, April 2009)

The core research themes were addressed as follows:

The first category (Philosophy's most appropriate home) – 'History, Thought and Systems of Belief' – did explicitly mention the 'ethical [etc.] bases of human behaviour', but entirely focused on human beings and their thought, values and behaviour, thus leaving out e.g. metaphysics and philosophy of science, and also non-ethical normative areas, in particular epistemology.

(ibid.)

Small terrors emerged amongst the BPA members when they learnt that the AHRC had committed to providing 'evidence' of the 'demonstrable benefits' (value and impact) that the arts and humanities have (AHRC, 2009b, p. 5). However, this implementation (that in practice

meant having to attach an impact statement to every AHRC funding application) was not the straw that broke the camel's back, but when the impact agenda was put forward for the REF after HEFCE's second consultation. Early on Sunday 27 September 2009, members of the PHILOS-L mailing list⁹⁸ received a message by a Cambridge philosopher in which he wrote: 'the issues the consultation document raises for the future of philosophy do seem pretty serious to me'. He also presented a link to his blog, where he developed his worries further:

Right. Let me see if I understand. If you are a medieval historian, an editor of Euripides, a Shakespeare scholar, or indeed just a logician trying to understand the philosophical significance of Gentzen's work on the consistency of arithmetic, then 25% of your score in son-of-RAE is going to be for "impacts" utterly irrelevant to your projects and concerns? [...] Brilliant. Well, I know [what] will happen; you know what will happen; HEFCE no doubt know what will happen when traditional humanities departments come to fill in the impact case studies on which 25% of their overall rating is going to depend.

They'll have to bullshit.

Smith (2009)

Here it is useful to return to Ball's notion of 'fabrication' (Ball, 1997). The new impact policy was perceived by Smith as a mechanism pressuring academics in the humanities to do something that they would not normally do, only for the sake of complying with policy. Unsurprisingly, more than a dozen philosophers replied to his email and other PHILOS-L emails during the first week of October expressing their concern and looking for ways to resist this policy imposition. Someone even raised a motion to 'boycott' the REF, while many suggested milder agendas aiming to communicate with academics across disciplines to pressure for a change in the impact agenda. However, the latter was a difficult course of action given that many humanities subjects had welcomed the new impact assessment, claiming 'they stand to gain in the short term'. To counter this, some participants in these e-mail exchanges suggested that the best way forward would be to make alliances 'with other traditional disciplines' or 'congregating thinkers'. Among philosophers, the irruption of impact was seen as an object of political preoccupation, i.e., it acted as a technology charged with political intentions and pressuring actors to take a position in every event.

One of the e-mails of this thread was sent by Alexander Bird, a philosopher who participated as a member of HEFCE's EAGs. Bird observed that politics was so embedded in

⁹⁸ Founded in 1989 by Liverpool's emeritus Professor Stephen Clark, the PHILOS-L or 'Liverpool List' is the biggest Philosophy email list in the world. It has over 13,000 members from more than 60 countries. It is considered to be 'mostly a place for philosophers worldwide to share information and ask questions' (Department of Philosophy, n.d.).

the policy that it was unlikely that there would be any change in the minds of the government's servants and politicians. Nevertheless, he expressed his vision that a cautious and coordinated intervention with other humanities was still a necessary step forward:

The impact component of the REF is entirely politically motivated. A first draft of the Hefce REF consultation (already with a hefty impact element) was sent to BIS [Department for Business, Innovation and Skills], who sent it back demanding a greater emphasis on impact. We should certainly argue very strongly about the impact component. However, I would be surprised if it changed by much. Perhaps they can be beaten down to 20%. Of course, the louder we shout the greater the chance of change. [...] In the end, we as academics hold a powerful hand. If we refuse to sit on the panels, the exercise cannot run. But that means coordination. And not just across philosophy (it wouldn't do us good to be the only nay-sayers), but across at least the other humanities subjects, and beyond. I hope the BPA will be talking to its sister subject associations.

(E-mail to PHILOS-L, October 2009)

Eventually, this inter-disciplinary resistance did not succeed. Instead, the BPA became the spotlight for many conversations and actions in relation to impact during the following months. In short, the story of this process reflects how the philosophers' original antagonistic position against the impact agenda was talk rather than action. Indeed, their discourse tended to become less combative as the REF approached.

3. Philosophical Impact: from antagonism to compliance

On Thursday 29 October 2009 the BPA held an *impact meeting* with the participation of 31 philosophers (10 women and 21 men). The meeting was constituted in the following way: 11 BPA executive committee members, 2 members of the Mind Association, 2 members of the Institute of Philosophy, 1 member of RAE 2008 philosophy sub-panel, 1 member of the Higher Education Academy, 1 member of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, and 13 philosophers having their philosophy department as an affiliation. According to the minutes of the meeting, this was done in the context of 'the government [...] putting increasing pressure on researchers to ensure that their work has 'impact'', specifically, through the 'impact statements' required by the AHRC and the REF for researchers and departments to access funding (BPA minute, October 2009). Even though the participants of the meeting felt relieved about impact not being considered only as 'economic impact', they still felt the urge to articulate what impact in philosophy was and to what extent it could be reasonably measured for cases brought by practitioners of philosophy. In their discussion, doing an interpretation of the policy, the participants of the meeting identified the following 'kinds' of impact that would make sense in day-to-day practice of philosophers:

- Attracting overseas postgraduates and scholars (economic impact)
- Popular philosophy books (communicational impact)
- Podcasts (communicational impact)
- Impact within the discipline (organisational impact)
- Translation of philosophical works into other languages (international impact)
- Membership of committees (for instance, ethics) (policy impact)
- Radio discussion programmes (communicational impact)
- 'Retooling' schoolteachers of philosophy (educational impact)

(BPA minute, October 2009)

Together with identifying these possible areas of impact, the philosophers attending the meeting expressed their concern that most of these impact activities would not, in fact, be considered as direct results of what the REF classified as research activities. In their words: 'epistemological issues' are raised when trying to trace 'causal connections between high-quality research and impact'. The key problem was, as written by the BPA in the minute of a meeting they had later the same day, 'whether and how the kinds of impact that philosophy has can be measured within the constraints of the REF' (ibid.). Considering these issues, a month later the BPA published a position paper in relation to impact and argued that for over 2500 years philosophy has 'made a difference' and therefore 'has impact in the broadest sense' (BPA, 2009, p. 2). Thus, they stated their tragic situation as philosophers: 'we can and should point out to HEFCE that philosophy can and does have impact in ways that cannot reasonably be measured in the context of the REF' (ibid.).

Helen Beebee, the then Director of the BPA, sent two letters on behalf of the institution hoping to change the course of the policy. The first letter was addressed to the British Academy. In this letter, Beebee says that the BPA is against the idea that 'non-academic impact of research is in any sense a measure of its quality' and requests 'the British Academy to exert its influence on policy-makers to reconsider the "impact" component of the Research Excellence Framework' (Letter to Professor Roberts, June 2010). There are no records available of a response from the British Academy to this request. However, we do know more about what happened to the second letter sent by Beebee.

This second letter, signed by representatives of 17 philosophy learned societies and the Heads of 42 Philosophy Departments, was directed to the Conservative Minister David Willets. There, philosophy representatives re-stated their opposition to the assessment of impact. The main arguments in this letter were: (1) that the impact of philosophy cannot be 'meaningfully' addressed in the short-term; (2) that although HEFCE claimed there was 'widespread acceptance or support' of this policy, this was not completely true because impact was widely condemned by many researchers; and (3) that the impact assessment would

'distort the work of philosophers' as it diverted 'staff towards acquiring skills extrinsic to the research itself' (Letter to David Willets, July 2010). Willets responded two months later, stating that he appreciated the 'doubts about whether it is possible to develop an assessment methodology which is robust and broadly applicable across disciplines' (Letter to Helen Beebee, September 2010). In his reply, he also explained that the REF had been delayed for a year as some further consultations were underway and that HEFCE's methodology 'would only consider the impact arising from excellent research' – with other impacts being 'deemed "unclassified"' (ibid.). The consultation was actually a decision: more resources were being spent on impact so the process was becoming more 'obdurate' (see Hommels, 2005) and unlikely to change even though more consultations were undertaken and evidence collected.

At a BPA meeting during the summer term of 2011, and a few months after the announcement that impact would officially count as 20% of the REF, there was a general feeling that impact could not be stopped and that, as philosophers, they were essentially fighting a *losing battle*. Considering this, they agreed that 'the discipline's interests are best served by making sure that departments are well informed about the requirements for impact case studies and are helped to think creatively about the kinds of activity that might result in good case studies' (BPA minute, May 2011). The REF date was coming closer, with impact now being inevitable, the BPA concluded that they could not stand against impact anymore and that they needed to focus their energies on helping inform their confused philosophy colleagues about the details of this policy. From non-existence to a polemical political-epistemic device, now impact was a practical reality and a matter of practical managerial concern.

Assessing Impact, being assessed: UOA 32 and philosophers

Philosophers in the aforementioned 2011 BPA meeting shared a sense of defeat. Their hope that the REF would not be a complete disaster for philosophy now seemed to rely heavily on the REF philosophy sub-panel. The philosophers attending the *impact meeting* of 2009 had already alluded to the importance of the hermeneutical judgement of the philosophers assessing impact:

The panel responsible for philosophy will have some effect on how the guidelines and criteria are to be interpreted (i.e. in a way that is relevant to philosophy). We shouldn't expect the formal guidelines to be very decisive about the correlation between research and impact, given that they need to cover all disciplines.

(BPA minute, October 2009)

Therefore, *who* these people would be and *how* they would interpret the REF policy seemed to be a decisive question. What Maguire et al (2012, p. 44) call *peopling policy* or ‘identifying responsible persons’ for managing the impact policy and its translation into philosophy became crucial. The selection process of panel members for the assessment became of major importance, which was especially salient for philosophy owing to the fact that the panel members had been subjected to suspicion in the past. For instance, in 1997 the radical-continental philosopher Sean Sayers expressed his concern regarding the mystery surrounding the criteria used to choose panel members for the RAE and the suitability of these people for evaluating all kinds of philosophical research (Sayers, 1997, p. 2).⁹⁹ Nevertheless, from the last years of the RAE to the REF, the process had become more transparent. In fact, the guidelines of the selection process are clearly detailed in a document directed to prospective applicants (see REF, 2010), and the list of nominating bodies is also publicly available (see REF, 2012b).

In relation to this last point, Figure 22 below shows a list of the nominating bodies likely recommending members for the REF philosophy sub-panel (interestingly, some continental philosophy associations also play a role here). In addition, through the BPA minutes, it is possible to see that the BPA relied on the judgement of Heads of Departments to make their nominations to REF philosophy sub-panel members, and that Alexander Bird became an obvious choice for the position of REF sub-panel chair, not only because of his active involvement in the REF discussion but also because he had the support of the BPA and ‘several learned societies’ (BPA Minute, September 2010). It was also possible to nominate oneself – although those cases would have been less likely to be selected if there was a lack of endorsement.

⁹⁹ Sayers is suspicious that continental philosophers would be an injured party out of this: ‘It is only a few years since a number of prominent philosophers opposed the award of a Cambridge honorary degree to Derrida [...] Are such philosophers suitable to conduct a ‘peer review’ of the work of the followers of Derrida? Indeed, what constitutes a ‘peer’ group in a subject like philosophy? Questions like these must be answered before the title of ‘peer review’ can have any credibility’ (Sayers, 1997, p. 2).

▪ Aristotelian Society	▪ British Society for the History of Philosophy	▪ Modern Humanities Research Association
▪ Arts and Humanities Research Council	▪ British Society for the Philosophy of Science	▪ Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain
▪ British Academy	▪ Council of University Deans of Arts and Humanities	▪ Royal Institute of Philosophy
▪ British Philosophical Association	▪ Friedrich Nietzsche Society of Great Britain	▪ Scottish Philosophical Association
▪ British Philosophy of Sports Association (BPSA)	▪ Hegel Society of Great Britain	▪ Society for Applied Philosophy
▪ British Society for Phenomenology	▪ Marx and Philosophy Society	▪ Society for European Philosophy
▪ British Society for Philosophy of Religion	▪ Mind Association	

Figure 22. Nominating bodies for REF 2014 potentially informing the UOA 32 philosophy sub-panel. Source: REF (2012b).

Having clarified this, I would like to explore impact in relation to issues regarding the activities of the REF philosophy sub-panel, the nature of assessment and the experience of being assessed. First, I focus on the organisation of the REF philosophy sub-panel, its composition, hierarchy, characteristics and location. Second, I explore some of their practical insights used to evaluate impact in philosophy. Third, I try to understand these principles as a practice by comparing two philosophy impact case studies, one top-rated and one poorly evaluated and receiving no funding. This raises more questions than answers about impact in philosophy.

1. The UOA 32 sub-panel

In terms of bureaucratic hierarchy, during the REF 2014 the philosophy sub-panel responded to Main Panel D, chaired by the designer Bruce Brown, which covered ten areas of the Arts, Communications and Humanities. The official name of the sub-panel was *Unit of Assessment 32: Philosophy* and had UOA 32 as a code for administrative purposes. They started to work during 2011. Initially, it was constituted by 15 people (chair, deputy chair and 13 members), including three or four people working as ‘research users’, i.e., ‘non-academics who had some engagement with philosophy’ and who acted as ‘kind of outsiders’ helping ‘to assess the impact’ (Female, Participant of REF philosophy sub-panel). Even though HEFCE had the last word about who was selected for these posts, according to some panel members I interviewed, the chair also had some influence on these decisions.

Once constituted, Main Panel D established a series of planning meetings with the newly formed sub-panels. The aim of these meetings was to unify and standardise assessing criteria between the arts, humanities and communications sub-panels. In addition, this space was designed to prevent any ‘inconsistencies’ between disciplines such as those apparently

occurring during the last RAE because of the ‘flexibility’ it gave to sub-panel members. Now, consistency was formally secured by means of inflexible online platforms: ‘So, we... just to come back to materiality... the way we dealt with the paperwork and recording information... All that kind of thing was really kind of secure in an online web where we didn’t have any chance to mess with that’ (Female, Participant of REF philosophy sub-panel).

The chair also carried out informative tasks. For instance, during 2012, the BPA organised a Heads of Department Meeting which included a REF Q&A segment with Alexander Bird. There, the chair of the philosophy sub-panel answered questions raised by the 25 representatives of philosophy departments attending the meeting. Most of the questions had to do with technicalities concerning impact: (1) doubts about how small philosophy departments (with, for instance, three members of staff) could deal with doing two impact cases; (2) concerns about “underpinning research” informing impact that is not submitted to the outputs; (3) questions about case studies shared by more than one unit of assessment; (4) queries about exceptional cases, promises of impact, maturity of impact cases, REF2020, etc. (BPA HoD Meeting Notes, September 2012). These questions reflected a feeling of angst amongst the attendees in relation to impact; impact *per se* was not in question anymore, only the concrete ways to accomplish it in line with how the sub-panel was likely to read it.

In preparation for the assessment phase, the sub-panel extended its membership between 2013 and 2014, reaching 23 participants (5 of whom I had the opportunity of interviewing), including more assessors and two secretaries. Of these, 61% were men, none were Oxbridge staff, and 13% came from a traditional constituent college of the University of London. Interestingly, 73.9% had studied or had a previous post at Oxbridge or the UoL (especially Oxbridge – a 65%), with only 26% of them not having past appointments, studies or careers in any of these institutions. Only the secretaries and 4 other members did not follow this specific biographic trajectory. Even if this is disguised by the fact that they currently have affiliations to small and big universities all around the UK, the rough data I recovered from the sub-panel member internet profiles shows that the composition of the philosophy sub-panel is a mirror of well-established trends in the history of philosophy in the UK: the gatekeepers of the discipline tend to be men with trajectories in English ancient universities¹⁰⁰ and/or London. The only novelty in terms of a break with the tradition is that the membership is broadly even

¹⁰⁰ The ‘Oxbridge Conspiracy’, as put by Ellis (1995), seems to be a sensitive topic arising every time that matters about power, authority and elites are discussed in the UK.

in relation to the analytic/continental camps. About ten of the twenty-one assessing members work with continental authors or in practical philosophy informed by it or by mixed approaches while the other half can be said to be experts in areas of philosophical inquiry traditionally cultivated in the UK (philosophy of mind, analytic philosophy, philosophy of science, epistemology, etc.).

The task of this group was to assess the submissions of 40 philosophy departments in 2014. By the end of 2013, philosophers sent to the REF a total of 2,174 research outputs, 101 impact case studies and one environmental template per submitting unit (REF, 2015, p. 69). The managers of the REF suggested certain processes to keep off the assessing panels from over-interpreting their guidelines: (1) a portion of outputs and impact submissions went through a 'calibration exercise' where members of the main panel and sub-panels had to agree on how the evaluation of different items would be put into practice – as the name suggests, here assessment and panel members were conceived as instruments of measurement, and their evaluations were to be graduated and conducted in specific ways; (2) there was some 'auditing' of staff, outputs and impact case studies to control circumstances such as the following: staff under inadequate contractual relations with the submitting institutions, papers not published as open access outputs for the REF assessing period and impact cases with no proof about the underpinning research informing the impact. All these items were categorised as 'unclassified' (U/C) and excluded from grading; (3) the panel members were frequently reminded to opt-out when there were conflicts of interests – for instance, in discussions about submissions sent by their own department (see REF, 2013, also, "Main Panel D" and "32 - Philosophy", in REF, 2014).

According to one interviewee, in the assessing process there 'was a careful balance, I would say, between allowing the sub-disciplines to make judgments about what they were comfortable with and making sure they weren't massively out of line with the rest of the sub-panels' (Female, Participant of REF philosophy sub-panel). Some of the interviewees also suggest that the review of the impact cases involved much work because it was an unprecedented evaluation and they had to be extra careful with establishing how to assess each case. Thus, they agreed that the most time-consuming task was the evaluation of research outputs which, unlike practices in other UOAs, they proudly described as being read in full by two panel members (the chair and the deputy chair were also readers). Certainly, this implied thorough and conscientious work for several months:

So, I think I was given around 200 items to review. Of those, about 30 were books, and the rest of them were papers. Maybe 250, that's the best sort of dimension anyway. And, I had five months to do it, you know, and I didn't spend all of those, that

five months doing it. I mean... my department gave me time off to do this. And so, each day I was doing it, I would read maybe four papers. Two in the morning, two in the afternoon. And if you do four a day... for three months.... [he explodes in laughter].

(Male, Participant of REF philosophy sub-panel)

However, this does not mean that assessment for the REF was only a desk job. Various face-to-face meetings were held as part of the process. There were eight Main Panel D meetings, which the chair of UOA 32 attended. All of them took place in London (the majority at the HEFCE offices on Furnival Street). By contrast, the eight philosophy sub-panel meetings were held in different parts of the country (see Figure 23). My interviewees pointed out that the travelling involved was not without its difficulties: even though they tended to be positive about the experience of conversing with others about the philosophy submissions, staying away from their families for two or three days every time (each meeting lasted two complete days), sometimes staying at ‘terrible hotels’ with ‘terrible meals’, was considered to be something ‘intense’ and ‘time-consuming’.



Figure 23. Locations of UOA 32 meetings between February and October 2014 (no information available about the first meeting). Source: Own elaboration based on REF (2014)

These meetings were a space to ‘calibrate’ instruments, discuss conflicts of interest and to compare scores. The meetings also worked as checkpoints to make sure that the participants of the panel were doing their job. In fact, for session 3 (March) the sub-panel was asked to have all the impact case studies assessed; session 4 (May) was the deadline to have 33% of

the outputs scored; session 5 (July) had as a milestone 50% of the outputs, and three weeks before session 6 (September) the score for every output had to be uploaded to the platform. It could be said that sub-panel members were trained by REF texts and meetings to become themselves *calibrating machines* or practitioners subject to the *monsters of enumeration*, i.e., cyborgs disciplined to prioritise certain entities through standardised numeric evaluations of a big amount of inputs due on specific dates.¹⁰¹ Their practice does not differ greatly from usual academic activities such as ‘marking’, but this work is done in a larger scale and, as the distribution of money is at stake, is subject to stricter peer and administrative control.

2. Enacting the criteria to assess ‘Philosophical Impact’

In simple terms, ‘impact’ in philosophy was enacted in REF 2014 through the articulation of three main actors: (1) REF-HEFCE staff creating the rules of the game and defining its guidelines and instruments; (2) philosophers and departments responding to these demands in more or less successful ways – success that is measured by the amount of ‘stars’ and ‘money’ they were able to get from the REF; and (3) UOA 32 members and assessors making judgements about the 40 impact templates and 101 case studies received using the REF’s scoring system.

Interestingly, two specific digital documents were mediating the actions of these three kinds of actors: the ‘Impact template’ and the ‘Impact case study template’ (see Figure 24). According to their Microsoft Word properties, these documents were created by Anna Dickinson, a policy advisor at HEFCE. These templates establish the categories condensing and concretising pages and pages of guidelines and providing the editable empty fields to be filled with words accounting for ‘impacts’ in philosophy departments and elsewhere. These act as non-human *mediators* that ‘transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry’ (Latour, 2005, p. 39). The alleged effects of philosophy research outside academia have to be encapsulated within these margins; the instrument presupposes a capacity of identifying, exposing and summarising evidence of research and impact in very precise ways. It supposes a familiarity that is acquired through practices of

¹⁰¹ Here a cyborg is understood in the sense of Haraway, i.e., as an ‘hybrid of machine and organism’ (Haraway, 2016, p. 5). Unlike Haraway, I am less inclined to see an emancipatory potential in this emergent reality. Perhaps this is informed by my pessimistic readings of Heidegger, Latour and Marx on technology.

interpretation and translation of the texts and face-to-face meetings where academics are exposed to this policy. Moreover, impacts do not exist outside of these templates; only impacts in this format are considered by the assessing panels to be impacts as such.

Impact template (REF3a)	REF2014 Research Excellence Framework	Impact case study (REF3b)	REF2014 Research Excellence Framework
Institution:		Institution:	
Unit of Assessment:		Unit of Assessment:	
a. Context		Title of case study:	
b. Approach to impact		1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)	
c. Strategy and plans		2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)	
d. Relationship to case studies		3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)	
		4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)	
		5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)	

Figure 24. REF impact and impact case study. Source: Dickinson (2013b, 2013a)

Another aspect of the assessment of impact in philosophy has to do with the transformation of the assessment criteria when we follow their movement from the text of the general REF guidelines to texts with more contextualised aims in mind and, and finally, to the testimony of the academics concretely assessing the impact of philosophical work. As we shall see, a relevant aspect of this movement is that although the philosophy sub-panel attempts to comply with core elements of the guidelines in their decisions, they are also very keen to adapt or *re-calibrate* others with the intention of being sensitive to the actual kinds of impact submissions received in the context of the philosophy discipline, thus enacting ‘instances of agreement reaching and critique as intimately linked occurrences within a single continuum of action’ (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991, p. 25).

The initial reference point in this chain of transformation is the ‘four-starred quality levels’ used all over the REF to score the three different aspects of the assessment (outputs, impact and environment). In this scoring system, 4* (the top score) stands for ‘quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour’; 3* for ‘quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence’; 2* for ‘quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour’; and 1* (the lower tier) refers to ‘quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour’ (REF, 2012a, pp. 43–44). These quality profiles are arranged according to a logic that values the global over the particular as a proxy of high quality and, each time that this is applied over an item of assessment, only those getting 4*s or 3*s are granted REF funding, which completely excludes 1*s and 2*s from the pot of money. Twenty percent of the economic benefits that an academic unit can get from the REF depends

on getting 4*s and 3*s in the impact assessment, with the ‘underpinning research’ of the impact cases at least having to look like a 2* in terms of quality for it to be acceptable as a worthy impact study.

Main Panel D offers a document seeing impact in more operational ways than just thinking about this star system. They highlight that the relevant criteria for having a good impact case in the A&H is through concretely addressing the *evidence* (verifiable links between underpinning research and impact), *reach* (extent or diversity of people benefited by the impact) and *significance* (strength of influence or transformation made by the impact) informing it (REF, 2012c, pp. 89–93). Interestingly, neither the *geographical emphasis* of the REF star-system nor the *conceptual-operational emphasis* expressed by Main Panel D is what governed the practical decisions of the philosophy sub-panel. Of course, the 1-4 stars, evidence, reach, and significance are all variables that the participants of the philosophy sub-panel had to consider in their actions because they are key aspects of the order of discourse governing the official communications about the REF and its paperwork. This notwithstanding, in a document reporting the official results of the REF 2014 for philosophy, the sub-panel presents itself as having a specific *ad hoc* strategy when evaluating impact. They also seize the opportunity to make some critical suggestions regarding problems with the information available in the impact templates:

In several cases of very worthwhile impacts, HEIs struggled to meet the REF requirements for a demonstrable link between the detailed contents of the research and the impact. *The sub-panel agreed that valuable impact can occur when the contribution made by a researcher arises from their general expertise as a researcher in the field rather than being generated by specific instances of their cutting-edge research*, and felt that this should be made clear to the research community.

The sub-panel observed that some impact case studies and templates failed to achieve the highest scores because of weakness in presentation. *It might assist both HEIs and panellists if the pro formas for impact cases studies were more explicit regarding the information to be included* (e.g. specific questions on the dates of the impacts in order to assist with making threshold judgments concerning eligibility).

(REF, 2015, p. 73, the emphasis is mine)

This turn is interesting not only because it conveys a defiant attitude towards the inflexibility of the REF evaluation instruments, but also because it reveals a point of ambiguity in the panel’s assessment process. Indeed, during a HoD meeting, Chairman Bird refers to ‘evidence’ between published research and impact as a ‘grey area’ and that the panel took ‘a liberal line’ in this respect, ‘but the more that you can show that there’s some interaction, the better’ (BPA’s HoD meeting, January 2015). Here, when stating that what counted as impact could be generated by the overall expertise of a philosopher (for instance, by the fact that a

philosopher could be talking at a school because he or she is an expert rather than for their concrete expertise), the REF philosophy sub-panel re-interprets Minister Willets' claim that the REF 'would only consider the impact arising from excellent research'. In addition, they emphasise the formal 'presentation' of the impact as a key aspect (probably referring to the clarity of their writing and evidence), which is not necessarily stressed by the policy. Further *ad hoc* considerations arose in the interviews I had with some panel members:

[...] people have to remember that impact is being assessed by philosophers. It's a peer-review process. So, it's not a bunch of like-bureaucrats who know nothing about philosophy trying to assess us on impact. It's people who know what philosophy is and know what it is reasonable to expect from philosophy. So, for that reason, in a way, a kind of criteria we had with us was that *you can't have an absolute measure*. Philosophy cannot have the same impact as medicine. Medicine saves thousands of lives, you know... Philosophy... does not have the... It's not the appropriate measure, So... you're measuring impacts relative to the kind of impact that is possible. So, if you could get as much impact... really... *the maximum impact that work such as yours could possibly achieve*, that's kind of four marks, even if that hasn't changed the world very much.

(Male, Participant of REF philosophy sub-panel)

[...] because of the grading system, you know... the 0 to 4 stars... nobody really quite knew how to apply that to impact. So, what did excellent impact? What work did not look like impact? What impact looked like in philosophy? Well... the only real way you can come up with an answer is really just looking at the case studies – *seeing which ones look the best*. So, it was a formative exercise... it was a learning exercise. People could think through those propositions.

(Female, Participant of REF philosophy sub-panel)

Two strategies are highlighted here: on the one hand, in a somewhat Aristotelian fashion, analysing the fulfilment of the internal potential held by an impact case;¹⁰² on the other, making comparisons between these cases to figure out which ones look better. Such practical considerations are not only allegedly put into practice when assessing impact, but they also interact with the aforementioned guidelines and statements. Again, it consists of practical operations of interpretation and translation. To have a better idea of how this actually works, below I look at the philosophy impact studies themselves.

¹⁰² A discussion on the potentials and limits of 'casuistry', i.e., case-to-case reasoning, can be found in Jonsen & Toulmin (1989).

3. Successful and unsuccessful philosophy impact studies

A recent study by Hicks & Holbrook (2019) involved 58 of the REF impact case narratives in philosophy and proposed five broad categories composing the ‘cartography’ of impact in philosophy: *Dissemination to the public* – examination of ‘big questions’ based on a philosopher’s scholarship in several talks with public invited or in the media; *Engagement* – conversation, roundtables and technical reports involving public or particular interest groups; *Provocation* – raising controversial views on topics that attract the attention of non-academic audiences and that are likely to resonate in the press and internet forums; *Living philosophy* – integration of scholarly work and the non-academic life of a philosopher (e.g. founding a non-profit organisation, working for a political party, etc.); *Philosophy of X* (being X something relevant outside academia) – doing philosophical work on that topic and engaging with the industry, service providers or cultural institutions in the area of interest. The usefulness of these analytical categories lies in demonstrating the scope and variety of impact studies submitted to the REF. However, it falls short of providing information about what kind of submissions were more highly valued as impacts in philosophy. Next, I address this task.

Considering the official REF results, it is possible to see that the philosophy departments best evaluated in terms of impact were Keele and Birmingham, both of them obtaining 80% 4* and 20% 3*. On the other end of the spectrum, we can find Aberdeen (40% 2* and 60% 1*) and Oxford Brookes (80% 2* and 20% 1*) which received £0 in REF impact funding. To better understand what led to such different results, the figure below compares the ‘impact template’ of two of these borderline cases – Keele and Aberdeen (see Figure 25).

	Keele University 4 staff members; Impact: 4* 80%; 3* 20%	University of Aberdeen (13.25 staff members) 13.25 staff members – Impact: 2* 40%; 1* 60%
<i>Context</i>	They argue they have a ‘long-lasting tradition of engagement’ with non-academics by means of a series of public lectures and their active participation at the university’s Centre for Professional Ethics. They claim that <i>all</i> their staff members engaged with non-academics during the REF period.	They start by pointing out that they are a new unit but that they have secured grants from at least 4 funding bodies. They address a commitment to impact ‘notwithstanding the highly technical nature of the unit’s research’. They vaguely claim to have impact through public engagement with schools, charities, etc., dissemination through ‘new and on-line media’, interactive live presentations with non-academic audiences in public venues, etc. They also highlight receiving ‘considerable’ support from the university for impact-related initiatives.
<i>Approach to impact</i>	Separated with subtitles, they describe their (1) ‘engagement with practitioners’ through a workshop on Ethical Policing which was attended by many policymakers; also, one of their academics presented at an important conference of medical professionals; (2) ‘impact on public policy’ by presenting a textbook edited by Keele	Separated with subtitles, they describe their (1) ‘underpinning research’ as having ‘fundamental philosophical questions’ as <i>content</i> and ‘the practice of cooperative inquiry’ as a <i>method</i> . They then describe two projects, ‘Relativism and Rational Tolerance’ and ‘Basic Knowledge’, as having important funding, producing many outputs and

	philosophers and whose foreword was written by an influential policy-maker; (3) 'media presence, public lectures and festivals' with their academics presenting at several radio and TV programmes (national and international); one of them won an award in Iran for helping a local scholar translate one of Rorty's books into their language.	being the basis for impact activities such as public engagement events, and a podcast, amongst others. (2) They present their "activities and beneficiaries" as follows: philosophy courses led by PhD students at primary and secondary schools, philosophy sessions with prisoners, homeless, and unemployed people, public lectures with 35-40 participants, a podcast downloaded more than 60,000 times and the unit's most distinguished philosopher walking 286 miles through the Pennine Way giving talks to increase public awareness of the public importance of philosophical research.
<i>Strategy and plans</i>	They describe 'impact planning' as an explicit aspect of their research culture, with regular monitoring of staff and with impact being an essential criterion for career progression. They also highlight the work of one of their staff members recording a song and performing with 'some of the best-known jazz musicians in the UK' and other 'developing a Kantian justificatory framework able to guide legislators and policy-makers' which resulted in the incorporation of a Turkish post-doctoral fellow in their department.	They describe how they are currently seeking and applying for external funding with a firm connection between 'best research' and 'non-academic impact'. They also discuss plans for preserving and expanding current initiatives and 'reinforc[ing] its impact-related activity'.
<i>Relationship with case studies</i>	They describe their case studies as equally promoting 'excellence in research' and 'public engagement'. The first one, on public health ethics, claims to influence policy statements and ethics codes by medical and pharmaceutical societies; the second, on sex selection and organ donation influenced the wording of a parliamentary act and 'policy formation processes'. Overall, they argue that both studies had 'beneficial effects' on public health and health care policy as well as on 'improving the quality of ethical debates in the media'.	Their Northern Institute Philosophy (NIP) impact case groups and the aforementioned initiatives provide 'descriptive and quantitative details of their impact'. In addition, their '10-Minute Puzzle Podcast Series exemplifies the public dissemination of departmental research via new media'.

Figure 25. Comparison of the impact templates submitted to REF UOA 32 by the philosophy departments of Keele and Aberdeen. Source: Own elaboration based on REF 2014 case studies.

As the table shows, the most notable difference between both submissions has to do with the display of the 'art of academic persuasion' (Watermeyer & Hedgecoe, 2016, p. 653) by means of acts of fabrication such as rhetorical devices, degree of security expressed when referring to impacts, the capacity of concretising the relationship between the work going on inside the department, clearness of definitions about the kind of impact accomplished, etc. According to their impact templates, Keele seems stronger than Aberdeen in all these aspects. In addition, although Keele was a small department with only 4 staff, they used this to their advantage by emphasising that in their unit *all* academics were involved with impact in one way or another. By contrast, Aberdeen attempts to use its condition of being a new department that is actively working to get funding. Highlighting such a condition probably leaves little room to conceive them as having a 'vibrant impact culture'. Both departments attempt to show that their staff are engaged in exciting activities with extra-academic audiences. The clearest difference between both forms lies in the *relationship with case studies* section. While Keele is very articulate in showing how the impact case studies are coherent with the departmental

approach to impact (one on the ethics of public health and the other about sex selection and organ donation), the Aberdeen philosophy department only give a broad-brush mention of impact cases by engaging with non-philosophers through the NIP and a podcast.

The impact cases submitted by these institutions also have noticeable differences. For example, one of Keele's impact cases (see REF 2014 impact case study 23237) starts by stating that Stephen Wilkinson's research influenced policy processes and challenged 'conventional wisdom' about his areas of inquiry. After that, it presents seven years of publications by Wilkinson on ethical problems related to 'saviour siblings', 'social sex selection' and 'eugenics'. The case later claims that these publications had impact through 'targeted interventions in policymaking processes', whose evidence is proven with references to work in Parliamentary memorandums and Wilkinson's participation in ethical advisory groups, amongst others; and through 'public and stakeholder engagement' proven through reports and interviews in the media, seminars (attended by activists, health care professionals, policy-makers, etc.) and dissemination through essays covered by international media and the writing of popular entries in blogs. These various aspects are backed up by ten sources and three corroborators. In terms of presentation, Aberdeen's *10 minute Puzzle Podcasts* impact case seems less developed compared to Keele's (see REF 2014 impact case study 43372). Throughout the document, there is confusing data about how many times the podcast was actually downloaded. The relation between the underpinning research and the impact is vague (it seems that the ones *using* the research were the responsible researchers themselves – as a resource for the podcasts); it claims that there is 'a growing demand for academic podcasts among laypersons', but does not provide sources supporting this. Perhaps the most problematic aspect is the unclear identification of the kinds of transformative effects that the podcast had on people (e.g., seven schoolteachers stated in a survey that 'they [would] use episodes as a teaching resource in the future').

Coming back to the categories identified by Hicks & Holbrook (2019), the greatest difference between these cases has to do with the number of impact types involved in each one: while in Keele's case there is engagement, dissemination to the public, and even some provocations, Aberdeen's case relies exclusively on dissemination. Considering that the first case had impact on influential people in an area with recognised immediate effects on human life (medicine), and that the second one is vague about who and what it affects, we can begin to see the articulation of practical comparative criteria about what counts as impact when there is no 'absolute measure' of it as stated by the sub-panel members.

The aftermath of the impact assessment

In the REF 2014 *Overview Report*, the philosophy sub-panel claims to be 'pleased' with the 'impressively broad range of types of impact' and the 'imagination' put forward by philosophy departments and researchers to exploit the 'impact potential' of their research (REF, 2015, p. 72). These results were a surprise for the members of the sub-panel, who were prepared for a different, perhaps even disastrous scenario:

And then they were kind of struggling a bit before they saw any of the submissions, thinking about what we'll get and how good it might be... And I think there was a kind of real sense of surprise that, positively, when the case studies came in and people suddenly realised that, actually, philosophers were just as engaged but in a very different way... as other disciplines. So, you know, I think they found a real positive experience in that sense... They were concerned that they didn't want to come out of the exercise looking like they couldn't do impact... So, they wanted to make sure that that was good within their... you know... within what they thought was possible – or within the boundaries of what they thought was possible...

(Female, Participant of philosophy sub-panel)

Although the result of the addition of the 2*s and 1*s (26%) (ibid. p. 17) meant that philosophy was the area with the lowest impact scores in Main Panel D, the sub-panel members were pleased to have discovered that 'real' impact cases were possible in philosophy. However, in terms of the overall results and subject branding operations, philosophy did not seem especially damaged by impact and philosophy departments were managerially successful in showing that they were able to play this game. However, this raises the question of the individual and social costs of this mild success for the subject of philosophy and the concrete subjects crafting these fabrications. The transformations inside philosophy departments, the managerial expectations over academics, and the new instrumental mindset of philosophers toward impact all seem to be big changes in the ways in which philosophy has been nurtured in the UK for almost a century and a half.

One of the biggest burdens of the REF in philosophy is normalising the idea that philosophers need to seek impact outside philosophy. This is a way of governing philosophy in a non-philosophical way. It is a way of reducing the actual territory for doing philosophy but keeping the brand *philosophy* nonetheless. Many philosophers subjected to this policy experience impact as something distracting them from what they consider to be their real priorities as philosophers and academics:

So, my concern about impact... and I confess there's an aspect of sour grapes to this... because it's a struggle for us... It's encouraging us to do things that aren't really

valuable, to spend our time simply chasing... getting impact for its own sake when we could be doing more useful things.

(Female, British – Senior Lecturer at Distance Learning University)

I have a colleague who has a book in which he interviews top 20th century moral philosophers. You know, it sounds pretty good, it got nice pictures in it... really good photographer – it captures the essence of those philosophers. It sounds pretty well and I think a lot of laypeople out there would be “oh, you know? Interviews with top moral philosophers, let’s take a look at that”. And he did a really good job, and it doesn’t count [as impact for the REF] ... And that, you know...but then I am writing an essay, that goes to a think tank, who delivers it to the government... Right... an impact on the direction of the sustainability policies in the Netherlands... That does count... Come on! It’s just... there’s just something deeply wrong about the whole thing.

(Male, Belgian – Professor of Philosophy at Constituent College of the UoL)

In my interviews, all the participants agreed that impact created problems of this sort, even, to a certain extent, those participating of the REF panel.¹⁰³ However, this is not the focus of the latter when performing their role as assessment cyborgs. Enrolled to help to manage the REF, those involved in the logics of this apparatus are likely to become attached to some of its processes and the small achievements that are conceivable in this administrative milieu. In fact, if we look at a PowerPoint presentation used by Bird in the 2015 HoD meeting (see Figure 26), the overall results of philosophy (4* 31%; 3* 42%; 2* 24%; 1* 3%) are not so different to the national averages amongst all disciplines (4* 30%; 3* 46%; 2* 20%; 1* 3%). Interestingly, and in spite of the REF philosophy sub-panel actually using other kinds of criteria for the assessment, here the chair of the sub-panel ‘sells’ the discipline in terms of the international hierarchy valued by the REF for branding purposes. With this new data, it is possible for Bird to present philosophy in the UK as being mostly *world-leading* and *internationally excellent*.

¹⁰³ Of course, there are some philosophers enthusiastic about the idea of seeing their colleagues travelling outside academic philosophy. For instance, so called ‘field philosophers’ see in impact a source from which to ‘imagine a more balanced world of academic humanities where every department self-consciously establishes a certain ratio of disciplinary and non-disciplinary research as part of their identity’ (Frodeman & Briggie, 2016, p. 150). In theory, this looks positive and healthy. However, in the context of an all-pervading neoliberal order, this has the practical effect of encouraging philosophers to behave as ‘entrepreneurs’ focused in marketing themselves and others (see Solomon, 1995). Perhaps, future generations of impact-driven philosophers will be less likely to be critical and reflexive about the world (or its fragments) and willingly seeing themselves as tools or resources helping in the multiplication of markets. Such conformism with the overall order of discourse would possibly be not that healthy at all.

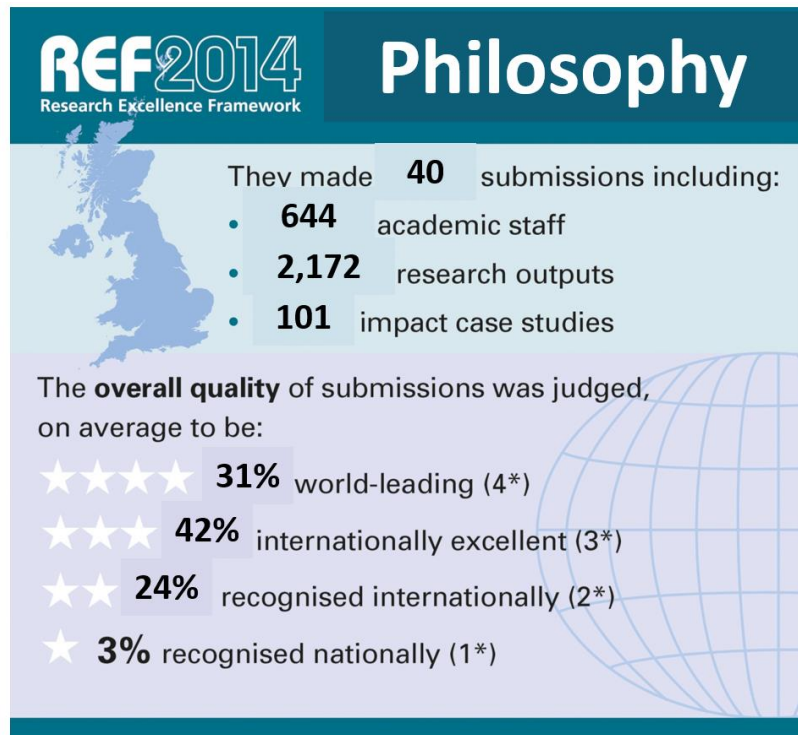


Figure 26. Overall REF 2014 results for philosophy. Source: Alexander Bird's PPT presentation at the BPA's HoD meeting, January 2015

During the same HoD meeting, there was an interesting intervention by one of the participants. He or she seemed tired of the game of the REF and brought up the radical possibility of dismissing this policy altogether. The answer by the REF philosophy sub-panel chair was very interesting as he defended some of the apparent achievements brought about by the REF and referred to many of the activities considered in this policy as indisputable to common sense, i.e., as particles of the order of discourse. Below is this Q&A in more detail:

Q. The more that the REF appears like it's a game to be played (e.g. fractional appointments etc), the more the value of the exercise is diminished. The enormous cost, the huge amount of strategic game playing stuff, the huge amount of pressure from university administration: it all speaks in favour of scrapping the entire process.

A. Here are a couple of last things on this general issue. If we look back over the recent history of academic philosophy, it's more meritocratic than it used to be, and this is very positive. Whether this is directly because of things like the REF, and whether it could be continued without something like the REF, we don't know. But what is certain is that we'd have to think about how to give out public money, and what's also clear is that the research councils are much less transparent than this process has been. For example: the BPA played a role in choosing REF panel members, and that's important; the judgement comes from within philosophy.

(BPA's HoD meeting, January 2015)

Bird does not seem to have a specific attachment to the REF; instead, he is attached to some of the things that the REF ostensibly does. Here I highlight two: (1) encouraging meritocracy

and (2) letting philosophy be judged by philosophers. The first of these aspects is particularly interesting as it implies that some of the inherited monsters of discipline (see Chapter 5) can be fought through a pact with the devil, i.e., supporting neoliberal policies such as the REF. However, there is no evidence – as Bird acknowledges – about there being any causal relation between ‘meritocracy’ and the ‘REF’. On the contrary, as we have seen before, in the name of saving or improving the discipline many new small terrors and new modalities of government can arise. With regards to the second point, the REF changes philosophy by introducing new demands to its practitioners, but it also provides the panel with the fantasy of philosophy being under disciplinary control rather than controlled by new demands for discipline; however, the former is only relative and subject to the latter through heavy supervisions and negotiations with many non-philosophy actors.

The priorities of philosophy departments are also being modified to match the new impact demands by the REF. The *Draft Guidance on Submissions* report already establishes that for 2021 the weight of impact will increase to 25% of the REF weight. One of my interviewees raised serious concerns about impact possibly being an aspect which distorts and damages the academic priorities of philosophy departments at the moment of hiring new academics:

I mean, you will want to... if you have a choice between two people, one has a potential impact case study and the other doesn't... they otherwise look the same on paper and you, as a department, need an impact case. I know what you would do. You would pick – and you might even pick that person over... I hope it doesn't happen, but it might happen – over its philosophy, philosophical output and so on.

(Male, German – Professor of Philosophy at Constituent College of the UoL)

When the REF philosophy sub-panel highlights the ‘imagination’ shown by philosophy departments and researchers at the time of generating impact cases, it fails to acknowledge a problematic trend associated with it: the time needed to concretise the impact imagination is often in conflict with the time needed to do philosophy. In fact, most of my interviewees are already thinking in terms of potential impact cases for REF 2021. They are often pressured by their departments: ‘I have been strongly encouraged by the department. And I am now working on an impact case with a Professor in the Management Department’ (Female, Swiss – Lecturer in Constituent College of the UoL). ‘I may make an impact case study for the next REF. I was asked to do that. And I have been thinking about it in particular with respect to the future research project on African literature and African philosophy’ (Female, Czech – Professor at Constituent College of the UoL). The new policy framework ‘encourages’ philosophers to put forward impact agendas, to think about how their research can account for impact. It disciplines them, shapes their practice and their self-perceptions.

So, what have the effects of impact been on philosophy? Is it a burden distancing philosophers from 'philosophical work' and rendering them scholars who seek to instrumentalise non-philosophy publics to comply with policy? Perhaps. One thing is clear, however: after this policy innovation was enacted, some of the everyday tasks involved in doing philosophical research in philosophy departments in the UK have also been re-shaped to include many actions that are not *per se* philosophical.

Closing Remarks: The 'value' of the circulation of impact

Now I return to the claim made by the participant of the 2015 HoD meeting, who, it will be recalled, raised issues about how having to engage with the administrative games posed by the REF to be successful in the assessment *diminished* the 'value of the exercise'. Perhaps, this academic refers to the failure to fulfil the REF's original promise of reducing the administrative burdens, or being cheaper than the RAE, etc. However, by looking at the circulation of just one aspect of the REF (impact), a different scenario seems to be the case: the REF is something creating and accumulating value as it is put in practice – its production and movement has the effect of *reinforcing* the collective value of the assessment, even inside philosophy.

At the onset of this story, I presented impact in its magmatic form: undefined and even as the object of suspicion by a government Minister. In the end, we found it crystallised, and multiplied everywhere. We saw how resistance to it weakened, and how, in fact, it developed allies in unexpected places such as philosophy departments themselves. The various spaces of production and implementation of impact as a practice act not only as sites for the assessment of research but, also as concrete venues from where to 'enrol' or 'enlist' academic actors (Callon & Law, 1982) into the practice of instrumentalising the non-academic world as 'Refable'. A good example of this was Alexander Bird, who moved his position from encouraging philosophers to refuse to sit on the panel, to actually chairing the philosophy-subpanel himself, and later defending, on behalf of the panel, the effects it had on philosophers. I would suggest that the constant exposure and efforts orientated to comply with, negotiate and or manage a policy trigger forms of affective *attachment* working through the 'making *and* being made by the relationships and the objects that hold us together' (Hennion, 2017, p. 118). The circulation of impact creates value by exposing an ever-increasing number of scholars to affective relations with impact and all it entails – it becomes an inescapable object, capturing the attention and actions of academics.

The value-making process of impact resembles the 'Kula circle' described by the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in his 19th century classic ethnography in New Guinea. The exchange of items carried out between the inhabitants of different islands was mediated and 'saturated with myth and legendary tales, with the strange adventures, hopes and fears of generations of native sailors' (Malinowski, 2005, p. 169). By the same token, the circulation of an abstract policy object such as impact accumulates experiences, terrors, aspirations and stories of academics, administrators and policy-makers. As an array, these actors create impact as an evaluative tool that gives value to itself through the constant creation of practices as it is translated into time and space. Furthermore, the circulation of impact creates a landscape where positively-valued cases take the spotlight through which future impacts are justified and reified as models of 'best practice' (see, for instance, Donovan, 2011). In the case of philosophers, they are encouraged to look through and study the Impact Case Studies publicly available in the REF 2014 webpage. They are also invited to work intensively on their impact cases for 2021, editing and developing the text, and keeping a record of everything surrounding the case study:

Impact advice: start early (don't hang around). [...] Look through the ICSs that were submitted this time, they're all public (and while the scores for each one aren't available, the REF results indicate places which put in some good ones, and it's possible to get a sense of the differences involved), get an idea of the whole range of things that you could submit. Also: don't neglect to collect evidence and record everything that you do - better to cut out from an abundance of data than to have too little to support your case.

(BPA's HoD meeting, January 2015)

The impact policy feeds on the energies and efforts that justify it. It thus becomes something that is desirable for those who invest their energies and efforts in producing, managing and working on impact. Regardless of whether the short term 'philosophical impact' is 'true' or 'false', or whether actual philosophers like it or not, impact is now a practical reality demanding the attention and practice of those involved in academic philosophy. It is a real social force with the capacity to transform the practice of philosophy within academic institutions. Furthermore, it inspires the training and hiring of philosophers who are not only interested in philosophical authors and problems but are also skilful in the art of fabricating or 'discovering' evidence of philosophy as something useful outside the 'Ivory Tower'. Through impact, the REF has taken the form of an incubus re-shaping the traditional disciplinary representations of what philosophy is, as a self-referencing dispositive encouraging the *REFiguration* of the practice of philosophy.

Overview of the Chapter

With some of the propositions from the literature on 'policy enactments' as a backdrop, this chapter addressed the circulation of the REF impact policy as an object first managed by policy-makers but later released as an object of concern for academics, including philosophers. Through the chapter, I articulated texts, events and testimonies about the doings of impact with a special interest in its creation, its polemical encounter with philosophers, its management by the REF philosophy sub-panel, and issues about its definition and the assessment criteria used and experienced by philosophers. I concluded the chapter with some remarks on the effects that the circulation and writing of impact case studies had on producing a social valorisation and attachment to impact, even amongst philosophers.

CHAPTER 7

LOST IN TRANSLATION?

A first person account of philosophy across territories

Psychology and aesthetics match again: the states of the soul are a newer version of the Apollonian forms; the shakiness of the mind mobilise self-creative forces. The idea of transfiguration goes from tragic art to perspectivism, from the dance of forms to the oscillations of the body and the health.

Martín Hopenhayn (2005, p. 190, my translation)

The metamorphosis of philosophy

What is philosophy? This is the main metaphilosophical question, which does not have an easy answer. This is especially so in light of the multi-layered complications involved in philosophy understood as an embedded social practice, i.e., as something done by philosophers working individually and as a collective and relating to a set of heterogeneous conceptual, physical and social entities. As I have shown in the previous chapters, philosophy has many faces. It relates to the sociological question about a practice that seems to become ill with ease when it is practised. It can be understood through the tools of metaphilosophy if we open its reflexiveness to the practical social forces helping its construction. It therefore is a socio-historically constructed, construed and contested institution. In exploring philosophy in the UK, I have considered some of the complexities associated with entry into the disciplinary field of philosophy and, furthermore, some of the disciplinary, neoliberal and representational monsters that generate anxieties amongst many philosophy practitioners. Together with this, I followed philosophers and managers as they were creating philosophy as one of the multiple sites where impact is fabricated. Philosophy as a practice can be explored from a 'granular' perspective, as sociologists have done before with scientific knowledge (see H. Collins, 1983), with each event, story and controversy adding a particle to the picture in which philosophy is a participant and product of social reality. Unescapably, the academic life of a philosopher is situated within these coordinates.

In this chapter I intend to explore one further aspect of the practice of philosophy. Here, I return to some of the experiences highlighted in the previous chapters but through the testimony of one individual philosopher, a female non-English anglophone practitioner who has worked as a philosopher not only in England but also in my home country, Chile. Based on her trajectory, I want to highlight three points: (1) that the social 'objectivity' of philosophy as a profession is subjectively and practically embodied in the biography of a person doing philosophy; (2) that as a foreigner, this philosopher acts as though she were an ethnographer trying to make sense of alien cultures and, therefore, is able to identify some of the contingent cultural aspects governing, relating, and differentiating philosophy as practised in different geographies; and (3) that, as discussed in Chapter 2, autobiographies are relevant sites to explore, in first person, the affects and practices involved in the 'I' of doing philosophy and in her intuitions and sensibilities when facing the social conditions of being a philosopher.¹⁰⁴ Overall, I aim to present a more nuanced version of the 'sociological categories' (wonder, discipline, monsters, fabrications, etc.) I have used in this document.

Jane's experience – the interviewee introduced here – differs from mine as she was trained and socialised within an Anglophone version of philosophy before going to do philosophy in Latin America. My situation – described in the introduction of this thesis – is the opposite. However, we both have the same overall impression of the geographical metamorphosis of philosophy: it is practised very differently in England and Chile. The pressing questions are *how* and *why* is this so? Therefore, here I attempt to dialogue with my interviewee's first person narrative to understand the extent to which philosophy gets lost in translation when crossing the barriers of language, tradition and culture. In addition, I attempt to identify what, if anything, survives the perils of translation, if there is any sort of *immutable object*, i.e., 'something that moves around but also holds its shape' (Law & Singleton, 2005, p. 335).

Considering these issues, I follow the testimony of a philosopher as she travels through different regions. Using the distinction made by the Argentinian writer Julio Cortázar between *del lado de allá* [on that side] and *del lado de acá* [on this side] (Cortázar, 2006), I divide this chapter in terms of my interviewee's experiences in the Anglophone world and Chile correspondingly. In the first part, I follow her testimony to describe how she came to grips with the Anglophone University system during her early experience of philosophy as a student in

¹⁰⁴ In Chapter 2 I focused on autobiographical texts. Here the emphasis is on an autobiographical oral narration which I transcribed. The focus remains the experience of the 'I'.

an anglophone country outside England, how she dealt with doing a PhD in Oxbridge, and how she perceived the years she spent as an academic at a philosophy department in England. In the second part, I use her testimony to compare philosophy in England with philosophy as practised in Chile and identify three differences: philosophy as a game, in terms of its religious basis, and in relation to the specific emphases. Additionally, I address some of the internationalisation problems and inequalities that come to the fore when comparing both realities. I give special emphasis to the fact that philosophers in Chile have to face major tensions between their inherited disciplinary culture and the pressures that require them to accommodate their practice to Anglophone ‘international’ trends – an acculturation problem that is not an issue for philosophers in England. This chapter concludes with some remarks concerning the dependency of the discipline of philosophy on the political-epistemic circumstances of the HE system governing its practice locally and internationally.

Del lado de allá. Becoming a professional philosopher in the Anglophone world

I met Jane¹⁰⁵ at a café in central Santiago, Chile, a couple of months after the 2019 social protests had noticeably changed the landscape of the city and its atmosphere. The city was still in a state of unrest. The streets were covered with graffiti expressing anger against the government and the police due to the violation of basic human rights, and criticising the cost of living and the overarching inequalities in the country. At the time, it was inconceivable to think that just a few months after, these same streets, once crowded with thousands of protesters, would be empty due to the lockdown implemented to mitigate the Coronavirus pandemic. After being served coffee, we started the interview, which took us for some time far away from what was happening outside on the streets.

Although both of us speak Spanish, we agreed to conduct the interview in English. However, Spanish did sneak into the conversation at times. I told her about my thesis and showed her a draft version of the table of contents, which she looked at with interest. I told her that one of the main factors encouraging me to write a thesis about the ‘doings’ of philosophers in the UK was my interest in understanding why philosophy was so different in the UK and Chile. Having the opportunity to speak with her could give me some insights into how that

¹⁰⁵ Not her actual name, but an alias. All the quotes that follow are from our interview unless otherwise specified.

difference was experienced by professional philosophers. I invited Jane to narrate how she became a philosopher and how she did philosophy. I asked her to tell me about the places that she had worked at as a philosopher and the differences she identified in these different places. I was also interested in knowing about her background, about how she discovered philosophy, how she engaged with the practice of philosophy, and how she became an academic philosopher.

1. Jane's experience discovering philosophy

During her childhood, Jane was exposed to knowledge and learned culture. She grew up at a home 'with books on the shelves' owned by a family of professional psychiatrists and psychologists who shared and passed their cultural capital to her. Jane remembers her home as a place where there was 'a lot of reflection': discussions about patients and abstract conceptual questions were common to her as a child. Although the school education she had did not encourage students to address philosophical problems, the particularities of Jane's family triggered her intellectual development, making her engage with abstract, practical and existential matters. Probably this led her to undertake an interdisciplinary BA in a college devoted to the humanities. This college education encompassed four years of reading Western thought classics such as Aristotle, Darwin, Galileo, Herodotus, Kant, Kepler, Pascal, Plato and Virgil chronologically. She has vivid memories of those years and the pedagogical techniques her teachers used to engage students in reading and discussing these texts:

So, that was my undergraduate degree. And as part of it, I studied a lot of philosophy, but without ever taking a lecture... because part of the program was... it was all seminar-based. So, you are in a room and the text is the authority; there is no person who kind of incarnates an intellectual authority – *is the text*. So, you are always in the seminar table and you are always in conversation with your peers about the text that you have there. So, we didn't have any lecture courses. This module also had something kind of Socratic in it. It is through dialogue, through conversation, question and answers that a group of peers can lead itself towards the truth. That is somehow the basic idea. I had a wonderful time, I completely loved it. It was very inspiring to me.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

This initial experience of study is very interesting. While most people trained in philosophy departments are subjected to technical aspects of logic, methodologies and specific interpretations of philosophical debates, Jane had the chance to debate openly and with few disciplinary constraints about some of the landmarks of Western philosophical and scientific thought. At this point, she had not yet felt the pressures of the monsters of philosophy as a discipline and, indeed, her approach to knowledge, questions and the intellectual enterprise

was still, in a way, 'pristine'. Jane was experiencing philosophy as wonder. Her phenomenological experience of discovering philosophy can be said to have been the joy of engaging with classical texts.

After finishing her undergraduate studies, this sense of wonder was reinforced by personal involvement with Buddhism and the practice of Zen. In this context, Jane worked in a hospice, assisting people to die. There she embraced a tradition and practice where existential questions had a central place:

I had exposure to death and grief quite early, so that was part of my interest in death. But it also had to do with this interest in the largest questions to do with the meaning of life and how we ought to live – and these questions that are ultimately philosophical. And Zen, you know... it was a route into answering these questions. Very rich and, you know, a very developed tradition of contemplation that deals with those kinds of questions. And *I was very enchanted* about having a powerful experience there.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

Jane loved her time studying the classics and was also enchanted by her involvement in the practice of caring for people in their last days of life. These two experiences converged and led her to pursue an MA in religious studies:

At that point, flirting with the idea that I really liked this kind of liminal space between... in-between life and death... I was also drawn into these rites of passage that are opportunities for asking these very big questions about ultimate values and about life: what for?

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

It was not until doing this MA, which was surrounded by an active religious environment, that she realised that her vocation was philosophical rather than religious. Jane was interested in big questions but did not see herself as a person of faith:

I took a little bit of Theology, but not a lot. I focused more on the Philosophy of Religion. That was very interesting to me. And while I was these two years studying for this Master's Degree, I realised that more and more, the questions that were moving me, that were animating me, were not only philosophical in nature but the answers that were more interesting to me were also philosophical, as opposed to a kind of religious answers *per se*. [...] But while I was there, I felt my lack of religion to be an impediment somehow. Like... I couldn't really enter into these questions from a religious point of view because not belonging to a tradition makes you an outsider. So, in the end, what came up from all that kind of experience was "now I want to go on in my study, to do a PhD, probably in philosophy or something around there".

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

Jane had in mind a philosophical project to be developed as a doctoral thesis in the same university where she did her MA. She even got funding and a supervisor in a centre for Social Theory. However, her enchantment with academic life was suddenly paralysed when she

noticed the tense and competitive atmosphere of the university where she was studying and planning to pursue a doctoral degree:

but before I started the PhD, I became disillusioned with academic life because I found this university really kind of unbearable, the environment very high-stress, very high pressure. In the court, people don't say "hey, how are you?", they say "hey, how is your work going?" Very tense. And people are not having fun; they are not enjoying themselves, and I started to feel alienated, plus the winters... I don't know, the whole picture...

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

Jane's concerns led her to look for other options. She needed a fresh start at an institution where she could feel less alienated from academic life. A friend suggested that she apply to Oxbridge as it was a 'wholly different world' from what she had experienced in her graduate studies until then. She applied and got accepted to do a second MA instead of a PhD.

2. Doing a PhD in Philosophy

Jane did one of the typical intensive 1-year MA's offered by universities in England. She did an MA specialising in the Philosophy of Science: 'I found it very different, very refreshing... and I decided to stay' (Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University). Studying in a small city surrounded by learned people with genuine intellectual interests was very attractive to Jane and encouraged her to pursue a PhD at Oxbridge. More than dealing with the wonder/disenchantment dichotomy, here she experienced a shock with the cultural specificities of how graduate research supervision is understood and undertaken:

I started to work with my supervisor, and this goes back to *cultural styles*. [...] I don't know how much it applies in the UK, but certainly to my university. Super hands-off. You know, it's like: you are kind of expected to be a sort of independent genius and very self-directed and you do everything on your own and, occasionally, you just get in touch with them to show them what you've done and they give you their opinion... and then you go off on your own again. So, it is very hands-off, especially with how a PhD goes on in [my home country] where there is coursework at first and after that, it is very directed and much more directed. *It was never very directed*. Having said that, she would read very carefully my drafts and she was always very brutal... very brutal about my work. And... I look back in retrospect and she was like that with everyone, but at the time I took it very personally and I thought: "oh no, this is crap. Oh no, this is terrible". Of course, she was like that with everyone – that's the way in which it's done. "But, what do I know? I think I am a unique failure, that my work does not go very well, blah blah blah..." Because, also, I was used to a more American style which is much more encouragement, much more smile, much more feedback, much more encouragement in the end. Much more "yes, you have to do a little more of this, and we believe in you, blah blah blah". And in the UK is so deadpan... so deadpan. [...] Well, it was kind of brutal, but I wasted a lot of

time in the end in this lack of confidence that this generated in me because I think I would have worked faster and then been more motivated if I had had more positive feedback. I didn't know what to do with this coldness and this kind of emptiness. It was very disorienting for me and I wasted time feeling ugly about myself and my work when that was so beside the point, you know? So, but I only realised that after the whole process was done, you know... I only came to understand... "ahh! all of these things I've been surfing and cursing... what a waste!" Ah... I shouldn't... I... I didn't see that this was just a way of doing that is not to do with me and I had to charge the head... oh!

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

Jane was experiencing in first person the 'wholly different world' her friend had told her about. Here, she encountered pedagogical forms with which she was unfamiliar and, as a result, had to confront the usual 'small terrors' a foreign PhD student experiences in England, some of which were, in fact, very familiar to my own. However, this was not her only challenge. She also had to familiarise herself with researching in philosophy as a discipline as her BA education was not structured to train students as 'professional philosophers'. For instance, she struggled with the secondary literature that was relevant for her research:

It took me a long time to get involved really in the right way with the secondary literature. I think I spent a lot of time thinking my own ideas, almost like in a vacuum without realising the extent of it I needed to be in conversation with the literature. And that also was a realisation that took me a little bit late, you know. So, I think I finally got that, and when I got that I can run it and finish it. But it took me a while to get that. And it's also, maybe, it has to do with my undergraduate degree which was, you know, you read the primary resources and who cares about what people nowadays think about Plato? No, you just read Plato.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

This secondary literature was not just *any* secondary literature. Jane's doctoral thesis was about a German author, which made me think whether she was to read some books and papers in German or not in her programme. This was not her experience in spite of being a matter which triggered some inner struggles

So, I was mainly engaged with the anglophone literature and I had... I got very little pressure to engage with the German literature and very little guilt about not engaging with the German literature. There was a sense of "ooh you should try to learn German". But I've never felt that was a serious obligation. I went to Germany at one point and I studied at the Goethe Institute for one summer for a couple of months and I tried a bit with the German. [...] But I've never tried very seriously, and I never was really made to believe that I have to learn German. [...] There, it was like taken for granted, in a sense, that like all of the really interesting that's happening now is happening in English. "*The whole world, its work, is being published out in English* – so, don't worry about it". That was a little bit the implicit message. Nobody would have said that explicitly, but that was a little bit the implicit message. But that was a departure because my supervisor, yes, does speak German and has a handling of the German's texts that it's much better than mine. So that was demanded of her in a way; that was never demanded on me. You see? So, there was a generational change, I think, in the context of my university in the UK. Or it

may have been in my own case that she never wanted to be that demanding – but I don't think that's true. I think there are many others who also study this author there who've never forced to really get into the German. Some people at their own will might have gone and involved themselves but there was no incentive that you had to do it... there was the sense that you should maybe be seen to try... but be seen to try...

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

Contemporary philosophers in the Anglophone world are not expected to know other languages even if colleagues are conducting important discussions in those languages. Philosophers in the UK, Australia, Canada and the USA and elsewhere see English as a *lingua franca* for every important debate. As seen in Chapters 2 and 5, this attitude towards the knowledge expressed in languages other than English can be seen as a manifestation of philosophy in 'separation from philosophy itself' (it does not take into account everything that is produced in philosophy) or 'insularity' (in the sense that it is secluded) (see McCumber, 2012; Schwitzgebel, Huang, Higgins, et al., 2018). This is, in fact, a matter that could be studied from the viewpoint of agnotology, i.e., the production and circulation of ignorance (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008). In practical terms, for my interviewee and philosophers of her generation, this philological burden was less problematic than it was for the generation of philosophers educated at a time when English was not the dominant international academic language that it is today.

3. Working as a philosopher in England

Even in elite environments such as Oxbridge, finding a job after graduation is a practical concern for philosophers. As shown in Chapter 5, the current job market is saturated with competitive candidates, which means that only few young philosophers are likely to get a secure position in a university. When I asked Jane what her peers had told her about their experience in the job market, she highlighted how their advice varied depending on whether the colleague she spoke to was fortunate in making a career or not:

I think it depended a lot on whether people have had an easy or a hard time at the job market. There is some people who have bounced around to adjunct, to adjunct, to adjunct, from postdoc to postdoc to postdoc, for years without ever finding a permanent position. And those people, in general, grow bitter and disillusioned with the academic profession and they would look at my situation and say: "oh God!" For any reason for them not to give you an interview and, like, "best of luck!". You know, they are kind of worrisome... And then the people who have had an easier time, for whatever reason, getting a job, who would say "hey, it will be fine. As long as you are good it would be fine. Philosophy departments will interview you and you just have to *prove that you can play that game*. But you'll get interviews...". So, I've got mixed advice from people.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

On the one hand, those peers with negative experiences are likely to be disappointed in philosophy as an academic career as the gatekeepers of philosophy do not let them in. On the other hand, young philosophers with successful early careers tend to justify the game that is played and emphasise the value of *being* a good player. This reminds me of a passage of *The Inheritors*: 'The philosophy student does not and cannot see himself as a future philosophy teacher, because he needs to forget that destination in order to reach it. Here, mystified experience is one of the conditions for adherence to the values involved in one's very practice' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, p. 59). 'Mystified experience' is a way of naturalising personal trajectories of adaptation in the academic game as if they were intrinsic capabilities when, actually, achieving a position is in important ways governed by 'chance' (see M. Weber, 2012, p. 28).

After finishing her PhD Jane did have some anxiety about finding a job. She was especially worried about the lack of direction she had from her supervisor and other philosophy staff at her university: 'You are like an independent genius and the practical world is far away from us, so nobody gave me any practical advice. I mean, zero. So, I went into the job market with nothing, no publications, nothing... I was, whatever... fine' (Female, Non-English anglophone– Philosopher working at Chilean University). In spite of this, she was offered a job after her second interview. Just three months after her viva, Jane got a temporary lectureship, covering a philosopher who was on maternity leave at a philosophy department in a small English city.

The position was very demanding. Jane had to work on four new courses in various areas of philosophy (ethics, philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, and applied ethics) whose syllabi had to be created from scratch and then be taught. While preparing the lectures, she was also applying for other permanent jobs. She told me that, at the time, she used to sleep around three hours a night. Her sacrifice was rewarded, however, as her teaching was well regarded by the students and she even got a teaching award from the university. She was recognised as a valuable academic and was soon offered a permanent contract despite only having one or two publications.

Jane spent six years working in this philosophy department. Even though her contractual condition improved, she still had a very heavy workload, in addition to having a long commute as she was living in London with her husband and child. In spite of this, she was motivated by her work and developed a good relationship with most of her colleagues. However, taking this position collided with the introduction of the REF, which meant that many new worries arose in the atmosphere of this small philosophy department. Because of a

maternity leave and her status as an early career academic she was not as pressured by the assessment as most of her colleagues were. In fact, for REF 2014, she was not asked to publish *as much* as others in the department. Nevertheless, this by no means made her an outsider to very concrete pressures:

I remember that my Head of Department at some point sat down with me and said “send your articles now, because we need them for the REF”. And, it was very good that he told me that in those terms because, otherwise, I was... I don't know... I was “it is not perfect yet... I would like to take my time and I have to do this other thing...”. But he was like: “You just have to send them out because we have to submit them for the REF”. So, I did.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

Jane witnessed and was subjected to the effects that the REF produced in the academic culture of her department. Below, I quote *in extenso* a description of the changes that the REF triggered in her surroundings. These include, amongst other things, an increasing number of strategic meetings and internal evaluations, productivity-focused recruitments, a growing intensity that wore away the more relaxed aspects of their previous organisational culture, the transformation of the department into a *factory*, the re-shaping of philosophy to include many non-philosophical practices, and the privatisation of the spirit of inquiry:

[...] there was an internal panel that was trying to guess how you are going to be evaluated in these articles – all this internal thing. And that grew to be more and more while I was there. While I was there, this culture of trying to guess how the REF panel was going to react – all this grew very significantly. And then, all these strategy meetings about the REF documents and drafts... all of this grew and grew and grew. And also, they were many hires that were very clearly motivated. “Look, this is a young guy who wants to do nothing but write in great journals and is very focused in the career in this kind of strategic in this check, check, check, check kind of way. Take him! We need someone who can generate articles, generate publication”. Of course, from a certain perspective this feels like a *perversion of the calling that is philosophy* because you think this is about reflection and... isn't it better that in some way there is something organic about the process? When something is ready to meet the world, well, it meets the world... But this sense that *we have to be like a factory*, pumping out... That was already very entrenched, and my colleagues will kind of laugh when they remember how it used to be when we went to the pub out for lunch, having a pint in the middle of the day sometimes... You know, how life used to be before... So, there was a sense of nostalgia for what it had been like, and also an acknowledgement that the older generation was not producing at the rhythm and the rate that it was expected. So, they had to bring in new people who had not been part of this older formation, who had no expectations ever of having a pint at lunchtime, who had no expectation ever of evolving intellectually according to their own rhythm... but when meeting the professional task with a sense of urgency, with a sense of pumping it out, pumping it out... So, in particular, there was a couple of young, very nerd guys who went on board and *were like little machines*, who had no life and that was what they did... you know? And there is still people there like that. And they were keeping us all afloat somehow. It was like all the hope was on them: they were like a factory. So, but the whole question of how one's own intellectual development should be like or should be felt like from the inside, that question was like overly erased. It was like a question that you

couldn't even ask. Like, basically, if you are considering your intellectual development from your own internal point of view, you don't ask the question about output: you ask the question about the questions you are interested in. Those are philosophical questions! You know, and the question of your intellectual development is driven by the truth that you seek, you know, the questions that are motivating you. And maybe outputs are the consequence, the secondary results of that project. But it was all turned on its head. So, it was like output, output, output, and then you had to ask, well... what research question you could find that allows me to produce the output. You see how the logic was completely reverse. So, in fact, the perspective that you needed to inhabit, at least for me, to really advance in a genuine philosophical spirit, that perspective was all over abandoned in the public sphere. I think privately, or else how people write or think anything... privately each person had to find a way to recover a spirit of inquiry for themselves. Or else, how do you really write anything? You have to do that. But how do you manage to do that with all that pressure and with this notion of output first, first output, first to find the output, find the output...? Everybody was on their own to try to recover that perspective from which it is actually possible to be interested in a question or to pursue a question without putting the notion of an output first, without putting the notion of impact first... Because it was outputs and impacts... Those were the two words that were like, aahg! Output, impact! Output, impact! And impact became this really complicated idea because it became like, no... Because you will think like "oh, I am having an impact by teaching because I have to form humans, the new generations?". And is "no, no, that doesn't count as impact". Instrumentalise non-philosophy publics to comply with policy? Perhaps. One thing is clear though: after this policy innovation was put into effect, some of the everyday tasks involved in doing philosophical research at philosophy departments in the UK also have been re-shaped to include many actions that are not *per se* philosophical.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

In her narrative, which serves as a first person summary of the main trends I have addressed so far in this thesis, the tyranny of the present and the monsters involved in security mechanisms such as the REF created and encouraged a new *productive* and *accelerated* subjectivity and transformed this UK philosophy department into a factory. The professional philosophy-REF nexus can be said to have created an 'iron cage' involving 'mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance' and 'specialists without spirit' (M. Weber, 2001, p. 124), This is almost certainly the case for the new 'productive' generation of philosophers mentioned by Jane in her testimony. Yet, as voiced by Jane, there may also be some soul left somewhere in the bodies of tired neoliberal philosophy practitioners who need experiences of wonder to make sense of their own practice in a world of fabrications. The tragedy here is that the distortion of the *philosophical calling* experienced by new generations of academics makes the possibility of wonder increasingly unlikely.

Del lado de acá. Working as a philosopher in Chile

My conversation with Jane lasted two hours. Halfway through the interview, the focus started to shift towards her experience working as a philosopher in Chile. I was particularly interested in seeing whether Jane perceived that working as a philosopher at a university in Chile was too different from working as one in England. Are these experiences incommensurable? Is there any point of continuity or connection? Jane's experience shows how philosophy as practised in a Latin American country is seen from the viewpoint of an Anglophone philosopher. Conceptions and experiences involving internationalisation, cultural differences, and academic careers became the focus of the final half of our interview. The overarching topic of conversation was the translation process involved in moving *del lado de allá* to *el lado de acá*, which also illustrates some of the sacrifices and complications involved in being an academic affiliated to a university in one of the southernmost countries of the Global South.

1. Arriving in a second 'wholly different world'

When I interviewed Jane, she had lived in Chile for almost three years. Her decision to migrate from the UK to Chile was prompted by family circumstances and that, after six years, she was tired of her day-to-day labour situation in England. Even though her working conditions at the small English university were not bad, she was tired of living in London and having to spend four hours a day travelling to and from her workplace. Also, neither Jane nor her partner thought that the beautiful but not very international small city where the university was located was an exciting place to live in or raise their child. Even though they enjoyed living in London and thought that a good job for her there would have been a desirable prospect for them, they were also aware of the competitiveness of the UK's capital city academic market. Considering Jane's daily hardships and the unlikely possibility of finding a job in London, she saw an opportunity when she found a job vacancy in Chile:

... And, of course, everybody wants to get permanent in London... Is like... what are the odds? And also, quality of life, family help, is too expensive, blah blah... So, we said: "let's try". So, they opened the *concurso* [call for position] at a Chilean University. So, "let me try... let's see...". I got the job. So, I said: "Should we try Chile? Let's try".

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

Jane moved to Chile with her family. Before the interview, she told me that she had few opportunities to think thoroughly about the consequences and practicalities derived from her

decision to move to a South American country. Nonetheless, she was surprised by some of the ‘games’ played by philosophers in Chile and, for instance, the very dissimilar judgements about the journals that matter:

I suppose... In a way it’s interesting, because it is a wonderful opportunity in this interview because I haven’t had a chance to actually reflect about this... So... in some ways... oh, God! It was a long story coming here... I mean, in some ways I have been surprised at how little there is in common between the academic worlds. I think like... I don’t know what I expected, but in a way, I thought that they were all playing the same game, ultimately. But they are not. I don’t think that we are; the journals that matter here... it’s different... it’s completely different!

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

Jane learnt that there was a completely different academic world of philosophy in Chile. Figure 27 below highlights three main differences between the practice of philosophy in the UK and Chile that she identified. Of course, these divisions are not absolute – a typology based on personal perceptions does not imply a universal generalisation; it only gives clues about cultural patterns. With this in mind, below I elaborate on how philosophy in the UK and Chile seem to be different in terms of the game played, their religious basis, and their specific emphases.

	Philosophy in the UK	Philosophy in Chile
<i>Game</i>	Chess and cleverness in a technical debate	Big existential questions such as the ‘meaning of life’ or ‘being’
<i>Religious basis</i>	Protestant	Catholic
<i>Emphasis</i>	Questions and answers in specialised fields with discussions in English	Original text and language; historical figures

Figure 27. Comparison between the characteristics of philosophy in the UK and Chile. Source: Own elaboration based on the interview with Jane.

1.1. Game

A game can be understood as what actors play or are expected to play in a determined social space. As such, it has its own rules, ways of winning and losing, tensions between seriousness and relaxation, actors with uneven levels of fluency and varieties of commitment, etc. (see Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66ff). The game refers to the order of things in a particular social domain, i.e., to the ‘normality’ that informs performance. In the case of philosophy in the UK, and in line with something that has been discussed many times throughout this document, Jane perceives the game of philosophy through the metaphor of chess:

People are... in their philosophical writing... It's very... people are *playing the game as if it's chess*: tackling problems and trying to solve problems – and trying to do it in a clever way... Come up with really clever arguments; moving pieces in a debate that is very technical.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher at Chilean University)

While philosophers in the UK are generally described as chess players, philosophers in Chile seem to be playing a more 'existential' game. In Chile, philosophers tend to engage in debates such as those involving notions of 'meaning', the 'world' and human existence. Jane puts this in the following terms:

And here [in Chile] ... I find that people are more willing to engage with this larger sense of what is meaningful about a question... or how does this kind of touch on these larger themes... almost *existential themes*... and is kind of way of finding philosophical questions that is much more... it feels much more grounded in the end, in a sense of meaning, rather than solving technical problems... solving technical puzzles.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

Interestingly, what philosophers in Chile seem to highlight as philosophical is exactly what mainstream philosophers in the UK are likely to avoid. This reminds me of UK philosopher Simon Critchley's quote I used in Chapter 2, in which he describes a philosopher 'with an embarrassed smile' explaining that 'the academic study of philosophy' is not about issues such as the 'meaning of life' (Critchley, 2001, p. 3). Employing comparison, Jane suggests that such demarcation is not about 'academic philosophy' but rather a cultural specificity:

Yes, and people talk about that [in Chile], the *meaning of life*, and so. Stuff that people in the UK will turn red with embarrassment if you dared to mention that and here... There is no common ground to talk about these *big questions* [in the UK]; about the thing that really matters to a person.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher working at Chilean University)

The metaphilosophical problem of *disagreement* shows a new layer of complication here. Philosophers may not only disagree about what the definition of philosophy is, but they may even disagree about what its game is about. The 'rule of recognition', i.e., what is conceived as being a priority for philosophers (Norrie, 2018), is different in the UK and Chile. Returning to something addressed in the introduction of this thesis, there seems to be an unfathomable gap between giving priority to technical puzzles and seeking big existential questions.

1.2. Religious basis

My interviewee suggests an appealing hypothesis about why philosophers in the UK are 'chess players' compared to Chilean 'existential seekers'. Jane observes that there are very different historically constructed cultural traditions in the two countries. On the one hand, puritan religious ideas and practices, and on the other one, a Catholic worldview. She contends that the different religious backgrounds can explain some of the differences in style and aims of philosophy in these two regions:

[In the UK] this sense of mattering, of what matters, is *so privatised*, is so private... what matters to you, what matters to me... and your mattering and my mattering should never touch because it would be so... you know... you lived in the UK... And here [in Chile], this notion that there is this common mattering; there is common stuff that matters to us all in the most fundamental way, and we can talk about it, and we should talk about it. And we have a language in which we should talk about it which is very aligned with the Catholic language or the language of the Catholic Church – a language that is now inherited from the Catholic Church... this is all taken for granted, and it makes conversation bigger, richer, more interesting... I think. And, in general, when I hear philosophy talks here [in Chile] ... also, people feel very free to kind of... *I think people are freer*... I mean, there [in the UK], again... I feel like you have to prove that you can be... you can solve these very technical problems... and is all the time trying to prove that. And here [in Chile] people are more relaxed, I think about, somehow, engaging in what matters to them in a way that, I find, there is a little bit more of freedom in a way, or less anxiety somehow. [...] Well, because the British are so kind of constipated, maybe, especially in philosophy... And so, the question of "who is cleverer?" I find that is just a terrible, terribly fraught question for philosophers in the UK. People are very self-conscious about whether they appear as smart or not smart. And here I almost feel like this is a non-issue.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher at Chilean University)

According to Jane, philosophers are subjected to cultural trends emphasising aspects such as the 'privatisation' of the self and the subjective need to prove oneself worthy. In this sense, it may not be a coincidence that in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber describes some of the theological aspects of Puritanism – especially Calvinism, but also Anglicanism and other sects – as producing an individualistic subject, struggling to be detached from affects and 'illusions':

There was not only no magical means of attaining the grace of God for those to whom God had decided to deny it, but no means whatever. Combined with the harsh doctrines of the absolute transcendentality of God and the corruption of everything pertaining to the flesh, this inner isolation of the individual contains, on the one hand, the reason for the entirely negative attitude of Puritanism to all the sensuous and emotional elements in culture and in religion, because they are of no use toward salvation and promote sentimental illusions and idolatrous superstitions. Thus it provides a basis for a fundamental antagonism to sensuous culture of all kinds. On the other hand, it forms

one of the roots of that disillusioned and pessimistically inclined individualism which can even to-day be identified in the national characters and the institutions of the peoples with a Puritan past [...]

(M. Weber, 2001, pp. 61–62)

In the light of this, philosophical puzzle-solving can be interpreted as one of the many lasting expressions of British Puritanism's quest to overcome the distance between humans and God. It has to do with individuals looking for signs of their own salvation in work and professional success.¹⁰⁶ Such an *ethos* is very different from the trends of Latin American culture, which has been described by some scholars in the continent as being 'Catholic', '*mestiza*', 'collective', 'celebratory', 'oral' and, overall, 'expressive' and 'baroque' (Methol Ferré, 1981; Morandé, 2017; Paz, 1999). Intellectuals and philosophers in countries like Chile have inherited a culture with theological principles about 'salvation' that are more relaxed than Puritan ones. In fact, for believers, the Catholic church is seen as having a surplus of magic that is transmitted to humans through the ritual of the Eucharist. The practice of this ritual is seen as an infinite source of forgiveness for the sins of the user – despite having or not any ethical merits. In Catholic cultures, salvation is a given. In philosophy, this is what Jane referred to as more discussion and questions about the metaphysical beings populating a world where magic and miracles are at least thinkable. In contrast to a Puritan culture, a culture influenced by Catholicism is subjected to fewer worries about finding signs of one's salvation through being recognised as 'good' in their specialised work. Pushed to its limit, this *ethos* can be reflected in concrete practical attitudes such as being less worried about being considered 'clever' or 'brilliant' by others, unlike Anglophone scholars.

1.3. Emphasis

As noted earlier, in the UK, philosophers tend to take for granted that all the important discussions are carried out in English and that philosophy is about clever questions and the making of careful and professionally-curated answers. By contrast, philosophical work in Chile is closely associated with the authority of classical texts which philosophers conceive as, ideally, having to be understood in their language of production. Having recognisable expertise in these texts would make these scholars worthy and 'learned' enough to teach and write

¹⁰⁶ Also expressed in the technical aims of the modern specialised scientific enterprise: 'I bring you here the demonstration of divine providence in the anatomy of a louse' (Swammerdam in M. Weber, 2012, p. 344).

about issues arising from these 'classics' and their commentaries. For Jane, this is the reason why in Chile philosophers usually know more than two languages (for instance, Spanish, English, Greek and German) while philosophers in the UK are less likely to do so:

[Chilean philosophers are closer] to the sort of classical model which, sadly, it has been eroded especially in the Anglo world, partly because the whole world is coming to us. Everybody is publishing in English, so people have got lazy. So, we can get away without knowing these other languages. So sad that I think that we have lost some of that. In the same way, in the UK, I found that "oh, I won't learn that stuff". No, here [in Chile] I feel like it is *muy exigente, súper importante y, de hecho, ahora, me siento...* [very demanding, very important and, in fact, now I feel...] I feel a little bit bad... like my German should be better [...] But it doesn't matter much in my work, actually. And here [in Chile], the fact that the German doesn't matter as such in my work is such an embarrassment, that you could never... it should not be allowed... Because, the model is that, of course, you should read the original language... And, yeah, I have a lot of respect for that, especially because in that we think about philosophy as much more philologically informed whereas part of why it has become possible to depart from that emphasis on the original languages... I mean, in [the Anglophone] tradition is partially because all the things that matter are the questions. You know? And that's the fundament! Not, the text; the questions. So, that's a shift, that's a massive shift, I think. Because if you say that what really matters are the texts, then, of course, you have to get in touch with the language. But, if you say that what really matters are the questions and the quality of the answers to them, then it doesn't have to be the original language... you just have to understand the question in whatever language. So that change of emphasis that you see in the Anglo-Saxon tradition is part of what then has allowed these expectations on the languages to be relaxed.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher at Chilean University)

On the one hand, the contemporary linguistic domination of English as a global academic language¹⁰⁷ – with major journals, conferences, publishers, resources, translations and the very notion of the *international* being conceived in English – explains why UK philosophers may be 'lazy' about knowing other languages. On the other hand, the fact that philosophers in Chile are more interested in learning foreign languages in order to read authors in their original language can be thought of as an epiphenomenon of intellectual activities in the country traditionally practised by members of social elites seeking to differentiate from others culturally (see Vicuña, 2001). With both emphases something gets lost: a big amount of philosophy in the Anglophone world ignores the detail of what is being (and has been) discussed in other linguistic contexts; in the polyglot Chilean model, philosophers isolate knowledge as the realm

¹⁰⁷ In his book *Linguistic Imperialism*, the critical linguist Robert Phillipson finds it amusing that countries such as the UK, where people are not recognised for learning foreign languages, are the centres managing and encouraging a global business of English as a Foreign Language: 'It is also ironical that this transnational business [English as a foreign language] has its headquarters in Britain and the USA, countries which are renowned for their backwardness in foreign language learning' (Phillipson, 1992, p. 5).

of the few who can learn languages and, with it, construct a major cultural barrier to entering philosophy.

Furthermore, a philosophy emphasising the study of texts tends to be more closely related to the study of historical figures. Contemporary philosophers playing this game attempt to cope with the distance in time employing hermeneutical tools (such as those proposed by Gadamer, 2004). By contrast, conceiving philosophy as focused on problems, questions, and answers is something more likely to create specialised niches with contemporary figures having leading roles or popular arguments in those areas of research (for instance, Susan Haack in epistemology or Jonathan Wolff in political philosophy). According to Jane, Chilean philosophy seems to embody the first model while UK philosophy, the second:

But I would say that the point of reference feels more historical here [in Chile] ... Like, there is a figure like Heidegger or... yeah... the German tradition seems to do a lot: phenomenology, in general. Also, French phenomenology seems to be a big thing. You know, phenomenology and Heidegger and maybe, to a certain extent, Husserl. I don't know... It seems very big here. So, it's kind of post-Kantian German tradition what seems very big. But, in general, the sense that there is a contemporary literature that forms kind of a common point of reference for the debates seems less... You know, and maybe that's just because I am a foreigner, because the contemporary literature that is the point of reference is a Spanish literature, so, I am not familiar, so, I don't see it [...] For example, in the UK, I feel like it is taken for granted that... just the kind of spectrum of, you know, in any sub-discipline, wherever you go there is going to be contemporary thinkers that you just know that everybody would have read. There is a contemporary set of reference points in every sub-discipline that is just taken for granted. And I don't know if that is the case here; I have the impression that is less the case.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher at Chilean University)

2. Academic dependency, isolation and accounting for the local monsters

It would be naïve to think of philosophy in the UK and Chile as being just 'culturally different' without addressing their uneven positioning as part of a complex global system of academic power. Universities and scholars tend to reproduce North-South dynamics, with the former acting as the centre of global knowledge exchange and the latter as *academically dependent* and in a peripheral position:

the social sciences [and the humanities] in intellectually dependent societies are dependent on institutions and ideas of western social science such that research agendas, the definition of problems areas, methods of research and standards of excellence are determined by or borrowed from the West.

(Farid, 2003, p. 603)

Such a diagnosis gives rise to a pressing question for philosophy: under these global conditions, what happens to a Catholically informed philosophical style seeking to address existential questions and focused on the hermeneutics of classical texts in their original language? To put it differently, Chilean philosophers seem to struggle between their 'autonomy' and their 'heteronomy' to a global context (see Beigel, 2016).

An answer to this concern is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, through Jane's experience, it is possible to have an overview of the North-South relations in philosophy. For instance, according to Jane, she barely spoke any Spanish when she was interviewed for her first academic job in Chile (which was conducted in Spanish). Although she said she performed 'terribly' in the interview, to her surprise she did get the position. In retrospect, she sees North-South asymmetries and dynamics as being relevant to her success:

And then they got back and offered me the job... And I was shocked! I thought: "but how...?" You know, I think I have a good CV, I published in good places, I studied with good people, I come from a good university... But I was like... "How...?" And then, in here, I understand more like "OK. Here I am, coming from Oxbridge, I published blah blah blah, my supervisor is famous... *Of course! I am from the world that they want to bring here...*" Like, who's coming here from there? Nobody is coming here from there. Of course, I could have sound... I could have struggled with the language seven more times and probably they would have taken me. But I didn't appreciate that at the time. I didn't know that.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher at Chilean University)

Since *Modernismo*, a Latin American literary movement born at the end of the 19th century, there has been a long-lasting tradition of scholars and people from the local cultural elites who have seen Northern and, to a lesser extent, Asian technological and cultural development, but above all the European one, as a *desire*.¹⁰⁸ The willingness to be part of this Other, of integrating into this otherness, is a concern defining (and sometimes even governing) the attitude of many people in the region. When saying that 'I am the world that they want to bring here', Jane makes explicit that she understands her privileged position in this context. In Chile, HE 'internationalisation' policy follows and reflects this desire for integration and inclusion in the academic networks of the Global North. This *globalisation desire* manifests itself through Chilean policy documents encouraging fiscal expenditure on internationalisation measures

¹⁰⁸ In terms of the poet Rubén Darío's version of *Modernismo*, modernity for Latin Americans can be understood as 'Venus de Milo's impossible hug' [*el abrazo imposible de la Venus de Milo*] (Darío, 1915, p. 157; more about Darío and Modernismo in Paz, 1991).

(CNIC, 2013) and through data showing the places where Chilean students from courses in the humanities (many of them philosophers) travel to with the support of government funding to pursue postgraduate studies (see Figure 27). Indeed, the data shows the UK, Spain and the USA as the most common graduate education destinations in Chile.¹⁰⁹

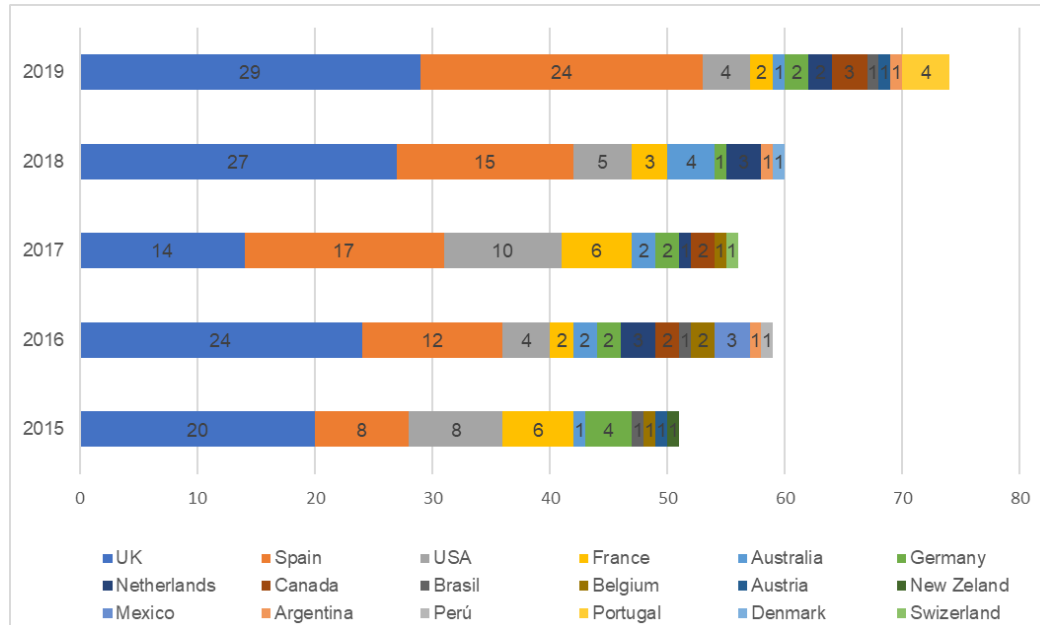


Figure 28. PhD scholarships provided by CONICYT to do PhD humanities studies abroad (2015-2019). Source: Own elaboration based in CONICYT (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019)

In the specific case of philosophy, a new generation of Chilean PhDs trained in the UK and elsewhere are returning to Chile with a new ‘acculturated’ style. In light of this, we can now see more clearly what was suggested in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* five years ago: a ‘younger generation who were trained abroad and whose work upon returning to the country started to have an impact in the field. Time will tell when a clearly defined new period can be added for an extended examination of the history of Chilean philosophy’ (Jaksic, 2005). Trained in ways unlike the traditional ways of doing philosophy in Chile, this new generation is slowly making curricular changes in the philosophy university scene intended to introduce philosophical problems such as the ones discussed in anglophone analytic philosophy. To be more precise, this is a new movement in an already existing ‘normalisation’ and ‘naturalisation’ of Eurocentrism in Chilean philosophy (Santos Herceg, 2012), which now includes new

¹⁰⁹ In the last few years, CONICYT has implemented standardised university rankings to score the applications. With this, it is likely that scholarships to Spain are going to decrease in time (specially to universities in Madrid which do not have as high scores in these rankings as those in Barcelona).

productive pressures to play the Anglophone game of philosophy and to publish in the journals whose gatekeepers are their philosophers.¹¹⁰

This new generation of scholars actively attempts to ritualise the introduction of Anglophone philosophy as a normal practice in situations such as the one illustrated in Figure 29. Figure 29 shows how State-funded research grants are routinely used by Chilean philosophers to invite famous Anglo-Saxon ‘specialists’ to present their work in Chile. However, other than using the ‘international name’ of the philosopher invited to help to sustain the ‘local prestige’ of a university, department, or the scholar organising the event, these instances do not usually have major educational effects in Chilean philosophy. The new generation of philosophers struggles to incorporate their newly learned philosophical concerns and networks into a local academic culture that still plays philosophy more traditionally. The organisers of these events are always worried about having low levels of attendance and make great efforts to prevent these situations during these costly events, which many times do not overlap with the areas of inquiry and actual interests of their students and colleagues.

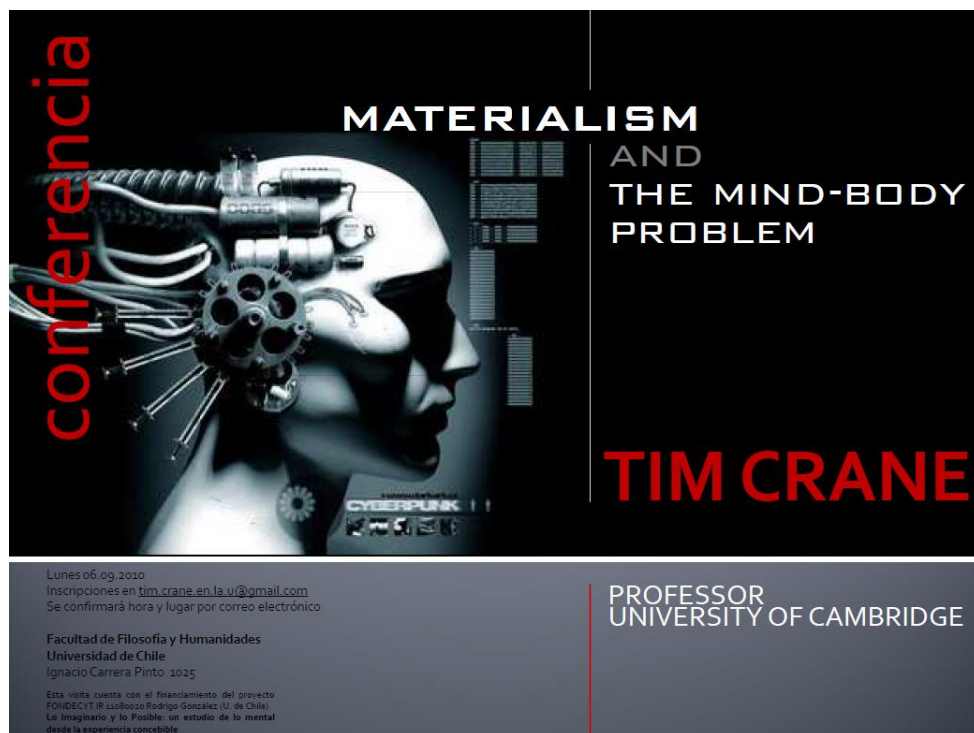


Figure 29. Poster announcing a conference by UK philosopher Tim Crane at the Universidad de Chile. Source: Pereira (2010).

¹¹⁰ Such effort also involves expenses in the market of academic ‘proof-readers’ and ‘translators’ working with non-native English-speaking scholars.

This desire for integration into the academic circuits of the globalised north shown by a new generation of Chilean philosophers is not reciprocated by philosophers in the UK and elsewhere in the Global North. Anglophone philosophers who take up posts in countries like Chile do not usually do it because they are genuinely attracted by the local ways of doing philosophy; instead, they are pushed to take these offers owing to a saturated European-US job market. In light of some of the questions that Jane was asked during her interview for the Chilean university job, she felt that the panel thought that this was her case:

So, they were asking about why I wanted to come to Chile, how I was going to adapt... So, they wanted to know if I was coming *para quedarse* [to stay] ... I know that the job market is now so saturated that some people that have no link to Latin America, no link to Chile, want to come and just clock a few years while... they get their first job here and then they come back to the States or Europe or whatever.

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher at Chilean University)

Even though Jane does plan to stay in Chile for a long time, she is herself not very involved in the traditional local game of philosophy. She still attempts to play the Anglophone version of it although she feels 'distant from the circuit'. The Anglophone circuit is ever-expanding. It has many resources and is associated with the commercial interests and weight of the big publishing houses. The label 'international' has an intimate link with the production of the leading Anglophone countries' capacity to attract scholars coming from everywhere else. In contrast, the more limited resources of local Chilean philosophy make it seem less international although it is part of an existing transnational Ibero-American philosophy network. Understandably, Jane does not see as a project to remake herself completely in order to cope with the issues of a less international academic world:

... I did not have interest in gaining points or strengths in that academic game [the Chilean one]. That's what I felt. I still feel that. I feel like it doesn't matter to me... I don't want to be published in Spanish journals... I don't care about Spanish language journals... It's horrible, and I am being honest with you. I think that maybe, eventually, I will feel differently. [...] I think, if you are going to try so hard and struggle so much, of course you want to be speaking to the world, not to this kind of little ghetto, doing its own thing... [...] And is also what you are trained to do, and is the connexions you already have... and that would be really to start from zero if I decided that now my goal is to be published in Spanish journals... I would be like remaking myself from the very beginning. And I didn't come here at forty-something thinking that I wanted to remake myself from the beginning. No! I wanted to continue on the trajectory I had already developed. So, that's the challenge. It's like how to stay in this trajectory while being here? And it is a challenge because you have different resources, you are further out of the circuit, but, of course, people travel more and you can keep... I travel now back for a conference here, conference there... I was recently in the States, I went back here and these other things... invitations keep coming. But it's harder to keep up those meetings here: it's further away, more custody, I don't know... climate change, going to the plane all the

time... And you are not in the same conversation, you are not talking to the people who are writing the things that you are reading and... So, it's a challenge.

(Female, Non-English anglophone– Philosopher at Chilean University)

Even though she continues to play the Anglophone game of philosophy, Jane has begun to perceive difficulties arising from geographical distance. Distance means that she misses out some of the discussions that her Northern Hemisphere colleagues are having. Also, she has to face the local neoliberal monsters of Chilean academia operating in a parallel world to those of the UK, that are creating new – and sometimes incomprehensible – pressures for Jane. She is expected to behave as an academic entrepreneur in seemingly incommensurable terms to those she knew as a researcher in the UK. In Chile, Jane was expected by her employer to acquire funding by applying to local public tenders:

Yeah, CONICYT is the pressure! FONDECYT is the pressure...I've been lucky because I won two projects since I've been here so... *I feel like now in the world, I kind of exist.* I mean, at the university [in Chile] I applied and did not make *asociado* [associate lecturer] because I didn't have CONICYT projects. But my career was in the UK... why would I have a CONICYT project? Chile does not exist in the UK... CONICYT does not exist in the UK... "Oh, no, no, no... but you have to have a CONICYT project". So, the norms and the standards are still very parochial even when they are beginning to bring *extranjeros*... [foreigners] but they haven't adapted the standards to...

(Female, Non-English anglophone – Philosopher at Chilean University)

These competitive funding mechanisms are the local monsters tormenting the imagination of researchers in Chile. Even though Jane is not interested in doing philosophy in the way that the locals do, she is forced to perform in a determined way to remain 'competitive' in the local struggle for resources. At the end of the day, she may not be playing the same philosophical game as most philosophers in the region; however, she follows many of the institutional actions expected from a local philosopher. Philosophy may be avoided, but not the boundaries of its socially constructed institutional monsters.

Closing Remarks: The political-epistemic space

Drawing on the first person experience of an academic's subjectivity, in this chapter, I have shown that through looking at the mobility of philosophy, its discipline and practice acquire new layers of complication. When seeing philosophy across territories through these lenses, a process of translation comes to the fore. This process not only addresses different cultural styles, normative horizons, philosophical pretensions and texts of reference, but also uneven resources and relative positions of advantage and disadvantage in a system of power.

Jane's story is, on the one hand, a story of involvement with contingent and historically determined ways of being disciplined as a philosopher and subjected to policy and the concomitant expectations of local colleagues and bureaucratic systems. On the other hand, her biography provides us with insights into the recurring aspects of philosophy practised in Chile and the UK despite their differences and the concrete social force of institutional pressures. In this regard, what the Chilean philosopher, Cecilia Sánchez, wrote about the philosophical institution in Chile reflects its counterpart in the UK. Philosophy is a discipline which answers to the logics and discursive order of the political-epistemic space of the university and the policies governing it:

Every university knowledge policy is perceptible in each phrase of a module or seminar, in each act of writing, reading or interpreting a philosophical text. These are ways proposing an institutional model – a form or a “good” order – which assembles the exchange, the hierarchy for interpreting, assessing, producing and inheriting certain knowledge. Thence the university institution is, first and foremost, the “structure of an interpretation”, i.e., a political-epistemic space whose link with the politico-governmental space depends on the layout of its borders.

(Sánchez, 1992, p. 82; my translation)

In Chile and the UK, philosophy responds to the political-epistemic circumstances of the academic world in which it is set even if this is seemingly ridiculous or derisory. This occurs when the claims of institutional knowledge come together with a tacit (and sometimes straightforward) imposition of limits and borders to what is possible to do. On the one hand, the REF and other administrative apparatuses introduced in the UK are pressuring philosophy departments to fabricate themselves as *world-leading* institutions having impact across the world despite philosophers usually being indifferent to philosophical production in non-European/Anglophone contexts. On the other hand, the Eurocentric mind of the Chilean HE institutions and policies such as CONICYT's, foster the incorporation of philosophers as consumers of the English-speaking international academic system.

But what is exactly 'epistemic' about this politically driven boundary-making? For me, it is something embodied in desires to know, distinctions, projects of inquiry and intellectual careers that are being domesticated, conducted and subjected to change by the contingencies of policy and HE. It is not that the subject's knowledge capabilities are determined by policy, but that the experience of thinking and dealing with concepts and intellectual propositions in a skilful way is constantly interrupted by funding and bureaucratic pressures affecting and shaping the borders of philosophical practice. The language of neoliberalism is perhaps a harder currency than English as an academic language and something that unfortunately does not get lost in translation. Its pressures persist regardless of what specific philosophers do as philosophers.

The big question then is: what are the precise political-epistemic conditions needed for an academic and intellectual space to grow in a way that does not create small terrors for philosophy practitioners along the way? For the moment, the only answer I can give is that having moments of joy and wonder is something that must not be forgotten in academic philosophy particularly and in academic life generally. As well, other strategies transcending those observed in this study are conceivable (e.g. Intellectual stubbornness). It is possible to resist and become something else than trivial machines when we embrace our wonder and face discipline with less devotion. Jane's story shows that situations of wonder come and go continuously through our academic trajectories, wherever we are.

Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, I followed the narrative articulated by Jane, a non-English anglophone philosopher who worked and lived in the UK and then Chile. Through her testimony, I asked myself about the changes implied in the translation of philosophy across territories. Through Jane's words, I first reconstructed her experience of doing postgraduate studies and later working in England, highlighting her moments of wonder with philosophy, and her cultural shocks, and environmental pressures. Subsequently, and following the story of how she moved to work as a philosopher in Chile, I compared some aspects of philosophy as practised in the UK and Chile (in terms of the game played, religious basis, and emphases). After this, I looked at the asymmetries between the practice of philosophy in the north and in the south, and the academic dependencies that emerge. The chapter concluded with some remarks about the political-epistemic conditions of philosophy and the place and importance of nurturing biographies capable of wonder or other strategies for resisting the pressures of neoliberal policies at universities.

AFTERWORD

DOING SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

Challenges for a Programme of Inquiry

As I argued, pragmatic models insist on the social context and social practice of communication, and they study a plurality of historically changing discursive sites and practices. As a result, these approaches offer us the possibility of thinking of social identities as complex, changing, and discursively construed.

Nancy Fraser (2013, p. 157)

The lack of a conclusion

At this point, it is important to repeat that the aim of this thesis is not to achieve a 'generalised' and 'definitive' answer to the question of what philosophers do. In fact, I do not claim to have achieved a comprehensive account of the doings of philosophy practitioners: that would be unrealistic. Instead, my humbler aim has been to provide arguments, questions, materials and stories that shed light on the existence of philosophy as a social practice that can indeed be explored sociologically. Inspired by Fraser's quote above, I hope to have been able to show convincingly part of the complexity, change, conflicts and discursive construction involved in the practice of philosophy in the UK.

My thesis explores this in many ways: (1) depicting the story of how the professionalisation of philosophy in the UK was the condition of possibility for analytic philosophers to create the boundaries to what is usually regarded as 'normal' philosophical practices in contemporary philosophy departments; (2) by attending to the expectations and manifold experiences of newcomers to the field of philosophy and some of the ways in which they interact with the disciplined normality of philosophy; (3) by exploring some of the fissures,

exclusions, tensions and anxieties that this normality has created for many practitioners and their 'abnormal' sensibilities; (4) by giving an account of how normal practices are not set in stone and how, for instance, new set of 'impact' has become integrated into what academic philosophers do. Of course, this last point also raises the question as to whether some of the ritualised practices of exclusion in the field of philosophy are likely to change as well. For philosophy, these exclusions are enacted in the form of assertions of the normative, procedural and existential questions that philosophers themselves 'have to' tackle in different contexts of practice. Sociologically, this thesis identifies the contingency of 'normality', and its significance for those inside philosophy but outside 'the normal' and on the borderline of what is regarded as philosophy by philosophers.

To finish writing something does not mean that the object of inquiry has been either exhausted or tamed by the inquirer. It only means that one of the many possible assemblages of words, quotes and arguments *about* that area of interest has been completed. However, my hope is that this specific array might open up new spaces of concern and curiosity about philosophy. Constant transformations, re-arrangements, interventions and silent interactions re-shape what philosophy is about and create new limits about what is possible to write in the present. The social form of philosophy *speaks* its social reality whenever it is a practice whose many expressions overflow any definitive capture.

To write this thesis, I had to select some of the materials that I have produced while reading, observing, and interviewing philosophers for four years. To avoid exceeding the word limit of this document, I had to exclude the development of many ideas and possibilities for analysis. In fact, a different version of this thesis or an impossible 'volume 2' of it could have had a table of contents highlighting the following and other aspects:

- A discussion on hierarchy using an ethnographic description I wrote of a presidential address to the Aristotelian Society.
- A description of the social interactions amongst analytic philosophers using ethnographic evidence that I gathered participating in many sessions of the Logic, Epistemology and Metaphysics Forum organised at Senate House in London.
- A character study of Slavoj Žižek as a controversial figure for Anglophone philosophers. This would include notes and drawings I have constructed participating in a seminar led by Žižek himself at Birkbeck.
- A detailed description of the formation, first events, and hierarchical organisation of the *Theory and Philosophy of Higher Education Society*.
- An exploration of the aims and limits of the sub-discipline of African Philosophy as practised in the UK.

- An analysis of the characteristics and very specific working conditions of philosophers working at distance-learning universities.
- A deep analysis of the experiences, views about philosophy, and decisions made by philosophy graduates who did not follow careers in philosophy but in other sectors, especially in the City of London.
- The failed project (by my lack of networks and the ability to convince gatekeepers) of doing an in-depth and long ethnographic study about the social life of *one* philosophy department.

These are some of the problems, stories and anecdotes that I could not include here. A potential extension of the inquiry, of course, could go even further. Every time philosophers meet, many other social situations – some of them unpredictable to me – arise as a result of what they do.

Possible futures

I write these last words amidst a lockdown intended to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus worldwide. All the media report news about the spread, deaths, and stress caused by the virus. As for education, the news highlights how university and schoolteachers are putting up with the challenge of having to teach through online platforms, even though most of them do not have any training in this way of delivering education. The medical world and governments experiment with complex and expensive plans to confront the circulation of the virus – the latest buzzword is ‘social isolation’. Now, amidst what seems to be the worst crisis ever faced by neoliberalism, the idea of the future becomes as blurry and uncertain as it can get. The same uncertainty confronts a research programme whose starting point is a doctoral thesis concerned with philosophy as an abstract epistemic territory which is studied as a practice. What might be the future for this sort of academic interest in a society that is in a panic state?

What kind of new world awaits us as university practitioners? Are intellectual projects going to be even imaginable when it is foreseeable that academic resources are going to be more decidedly allocated to face viruses and other emergent hazards? We are facing times that will test one of Kant’s projective assertions about metaphysics, which could well apply to the intellectual enterprise as a whole: that it ‘would remain even if all the [other sciences] were swallowed up by an all-consuming barbarism’ (Kant, 1998, p. B xiv). Can the practice of philosophy and reflective social sciences survive our times? On the one hand, further cuts to the funding of the social sciences and humanities can be surely expected. Our institutional-

material continuity may be in danger except for some notable sub-fields (the philosophy of medicine and 'biopolitics' are likely to be at their peak). On the other hand, it is unlikely that the vocation that attempts to understand how everything works is going to end; its breadth is huge, especially in times of crises when the world cannot be taken for granted. I would like to believe that intellectually driven agendas will somehow survive this new stage of constraints.

In my case, the thinkable research arenas derived from what I have advanced in this thesis are manifold. First, there is the possibility of continuing doing research about philosophy and being a philosopher in different contexts of practice. Likewise, extending my approach to the practice of philosophers to other epistemic territories is also conceivable and tempting. This leads to a second possible avenue of inquiry, which, in fact, responds to my increasing interest in what professions and professionals do to the knowledge territories they claim and that they associate with their practice and rituals. A third area of concern would be the other side of the same coin: doing studies in the *agnotology* of professions, i.e., on how the knowledge pretensions of a profession are always connected to specific ways of producing ignorance.

There is a fine thread joining the aforementioned research areas. My biggest intellectual challenge is contributing to maintaining the vitality of fields such as those of the sociology of knowledge and ideas, sociology of philosophy, intellectual history, metaphilosophy, and social theory, amongst others. I would suggest that such a task makes sense only if we are aware of and accept that knowledge and concepts are 'impure' because they are inexorably embedded in the social practice informing them. When accepting this, it is possible to understand intellectual products not only as tautologic entities used for the discursive defence of the Ivory Tower, but also as sites that participate in the production of social life and, that are, therefore, subjected to struggles. What is more, they are even capable of creating inputs that could be used against a commodified system of HE. Showing the contingencies involved in its practice and processes gives us a new perspective about what we experience as natural and obvious.

Overall, my intellectual predilection is to argue that research curiosity about the strange practical labyrinth made by humans in the name of knowledge is a legitimate thing to have. Although some of the matters studied may seem obvious, I strongly believe in the intellectual satisfaction of discovering that they are those that are not so obvious. This is the reason why I have repeated at various moments in this thesis that philosophy has many aspects that *are not per se philosophical*. This means that philosophy is involved in many social practices that are not specific to philosophy but are broader social problems and processes that are evident in other contexts of practice and that produce specific effects in the subjectivity, aims and

doings of philosophers, many of which are not so obvious. Exploring the social knowledge production of knowledge territories such as the philosophical is an invitation to study the regularities and contingencies involved in how intellectual life is performed.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF INSTITUTIONAL MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE UK

In Figure 30, I present a list of some of the main institutional events in 473 years of UK's philosophy. This list starts with an arbitrary landmark –the first publication of philosophy in English– and ends with some of the events that were contemporary to my research (considering up to 2018). With Borges (1974), here I assume that 'it is notorious that there is no classification of the universe that is not arbitrary and conjectural' (p. 708, my translation). This is certainly the case for a broad list attempting to say something about almost five centuries of institutional re-arrangements of philosophy in a territory. Without a doubt, with a different background and other practical aims in mind, more (or less) elements could have been considered in the composition of the list above.

My attempt here is to provide an archive of the institutions that, in different moments, have been the condition of possibility for the philosophical discourse. This is by no means the sort of lists that can be found in books about the *history of philosophy* where names of philosophers and their books succeed each other in chronological order. Moreover, the list devised here has only one book (a random starting point: what scholars in philosophy consider to be the first philosophical text in English that is distinct to theology) and afterwards I limit myself to announce the date of birth and demise of a plethora of institutions related to philosophy or that have been sites where philosophy has been practised (chairs, learner societies, academies, funding bodies, academic departments, organised groups, courses, journals, magazines, assessment exercises, an e-mail list, etc.).

As time passes by, a clear trend in this list is the multiplication and differentiation of the institutions specialised in philosophy. There are two institutional aspects notably not shown by this list: (1) the date of birth of most philosophy departments in the UK (in their webpages they usually do not speak about their past, but rather prefer to show their performance in assessments such as the REF or TEF); and (2) international institutions (most practitioners of

philosophy in the UK participate in some of them, especially in the USA, but also in Europe, Australia and elsewhere).

Year	Event
1605	Publication of the first English Language philosophy book (Francis Bacon's <i>Advancement of Learning</i>)
1621	Oxford's first chair of Moral Philosophy
1660	Foundation of the Royal Society
1683	Cambridge's first Knightbridge Professorship of Philosophy
1683	Foundation of the Dublin Philosophical Society
1708	Establishment of four chairs of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh
	Last meeting of the Dublin Philosophical Society
1747	St. Andrew's found the chair of Logic, Rhetoric and Metaphysics, as well, that in Ethics and Pneumatics
1787	Foundation of Conway's Ethical Society at London
1802	Foundation of The Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow
1830	UCL's first chair in Logic and the philosophy of mind (later known as the <i>Grote Chair of Philosophy of Mind and Logic</i>)
1866	First number of <i>The Contemporary Review</i>
1867	Foundation of the Philosophy Tripos at Cambridge
1869	Foundation of London's Metaphysical Society
1876	First issue of <i>Mind</i>
1877	KCL's First chair of Philosophy
1880	Last meeting of London's Metaphysical Society
	Foundation of the Aristotelian Society
1888	First issue of the <i>Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society</i>
1896	Foundation of the Synthetic Society
1900	Foundation of the Scots Philosophical Club (later renamed as the Scots Philosophical Association)
	Foundation of the Mind Association
1902	Foundation of the Royal Academy
1906	Foundation of Bedford's Philosophy Department
1908	Last meeting of the Synthetic Society
1912	Foundation of KCL's Philosophy Department
1913	The Philosophical Society of England
1914	First 'Philosophical Lecture' at the British Academy

1918	First Joint Session between the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association
1919	Foundation of the University Grants Committee (UGC)
1924	Foundation of Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford
1925	Foundation of the Royal Institute of Philosophy
1926	First Issue of <i>The Journal of Philosophical Studies</i> (later renamed as <i>Philosophy</i>)
1927	Foundation of UCL's Philosophy Department First teachings of Philosophy courses at Hull
1930	Foundation of Birkbeck's Philosophy Department
1933	First issue of the journal <i>Analysis</i>
1946	Foundation of LSE's department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method
1948	Constitution of the British Society for the Philosophy of Science
1950	First issue of the <i>British Journal for the Philosophy of Science</i>
1960	Foundation of the British Society of Aesthetics
1962	Foundation of the Irish Philosophical Society
1964	Foundation of the Welsh Philosophical Society Foundation of The Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain
1967	Foundation of the British Journal of Phenomenology
1970	First issue of the <i>Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology</i> (JBSP)
1971	The Heythrop College is established as a college of the University of London specializing in Theology and Philosophy Foundation of the Radical Philosophy Group
1972	First issue of the journal <i>Radical Philosophy</i>
1979	Foundation of the Hegel Society
1982	Foundation of the Society for Applied Philosophy
1984	The British Society for the History of Philosophy is launched Closure of the Bedford College
1985	Constitution of the National Committee for Philosophy Introduction of the first Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) to academic research, including philosophy
1989	Creation of the PHILOS-L email list Formation of the Society for woman in philosophy (SWIP-UK) End of the University Grants Committee
1991	First issue of <i>Philosophy Now</i>
1992	Foundation of the Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE)
1993	Foundation of the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion First issue of the <i>British Journal for the History of Philosophy</i>
1994	Foundation of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP) at Middlesex

	Foundation of the UK Kant Society
1995	Foundation of the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB)
1996	Foundation of the Society for European Philosophy
1997	First issue of <i>The Philosopher's Magazine</i>
2000	Foundation of the National Postgraduate Philosophy Association (Now known as the British Postgraduate Philosophy Association - BPPA)
2001	Foundation of the Faculty of Philosophy, Oxford
2002	Dissolution of the National Committee for Philosophy Constitution of the British Philosophical Association
2003	Marx & Philosophy Society Foundation of the British Philosophy of Sport Association
2005	Foundation of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Foundation of The Institute of Philosophy at the University of London's School of Advanced Study
2007	Foundation of the Philosophy Foundation Foundation of the British Wittgenstein Society Foundation of the International Journal of Žižek Studies
2008	Last RAE Formation of the Arts and Humanities User Group (A-HUG), later renamed as The Arts and Humanities Alliance
2010	Establishment of the Royal Association Music and Philosophy Study Group Closure of Middlesex' philosophy department and transfer of the CRMEP to Kingston's University
2012	Last number of <i>The Contemporary Review</i>
2013	Formation of the "Co-authored Anarcho-Philosophical Diary" <i>Against Professional Philosophy</i>
2014	Establishment of UK regional "Minorities and Philosophy" (MAP) group First Research Excellence Framework (REF) to academic research, including that in philosophy
2016	Introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in UK's universities
2018	Inauguration of the Society of Christian Philosophers, UK Threats of closure to Hull's Philosophy Department Closure of Heythrop College

Figure 30. Institutional History of Philosophy in the UK. Source: Own elaboration based on multiple sources (Arts & Humanities Alliance, n.d.; Baggini, 2018b; British Journal for the History of Philosophy, 2019; British Philosophy of Sport Association, 2003; British Postgraduate Philosophical Association, n.d.; British Society for the History of Philosophy, n.d.; Brown, 2006c, 2006a, pp. 1944–1946, 2006b, p. 2158; BSPR, n.d.; BSPS, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; R. H. Calder, 2006, p. 2777; Cockburn, 2014; Conisbee,

2008; Conway Hall, 2019; Department of Philosophy, n.d., 2018; Duddy, 2006, pp. 895–896; Evans, 2003; Faculty of Philosophy, n.d.; Gillies, 2007; Haase, 2015; Heythrop College, 2018; G. D. Hicks, 1928, p. 468; HSGB, 2017; Institute of Philosophy, 2019; International Journal of Žižek Studies, 2016; Irish Philosophical Society, 2018; Jago, 2006, p. 594; Jewell, 2007; C. Keene, 2006, p. 704; C. A. Keene, 2006; Macpherson & Read, 2002; Mander, n.d.-a; MAP UK, n.d.; Marx & Philosophy Society, 2019; Mullen, 2012; Music and Philosophy Study Group, n.d.; Philosophical Society of England, n.d.; Philosophy Kingston University, 2013; Philosophy Now, 2019; Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, 2018; Preston, 2006a, 2006b, pp. 2203–2204; Radical Philosophy Group, 1972a, 1972d; “RAE 2008,” n.d.; REF, 2019; Rogers, 2006, p. 2777; SAPERE, 2019; Society for Applied Philosophy, n.d.; Society for European Philosophy, n.d.; Sorley, 1965, p. 14; Stephens, 2006b, p. 2406, 2006a, p. 533; The British Academy, 2019; The British Society of Aesthetics, 2019; The Philosophers’ Magazine, 2017; The Philosophy Foundation, 2019; UCL, n.d.-c; UK Kant Society, n.d.; University of Hull, 2019; W, X, Y, & Z, 2013; Women in Philosophy, 1989).