A Theory of Divides

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## 1.	Prelude

There are some who would conceive philosophy as being divided into *Analytic* and *Continental.* This, as John Searle points out, is rather like conceiving America as being divided into *Business* and *Kansas*. Unfortunately Searle's wise saying has not, as yet, received the attention it deserves. It points to the fact that we have in each of these cases a strange sort of divide which separates a certain pre-established domain (America, Philosophy) into parts defined to some degree in spatial terms and to some degree in terms of practices or features of a not directly spatial sort. What follows is a theory of such divides, and of the agglomerations (populations, movements, systems of beliefs) which are subject to division. It offers a general, ontological theory of *us* and *them,* of *here* and *there,* of the *Hegemonic Colonizing Self* and the *Indigenous Colonized Other*.

We begin with a simple mereotopological account of divides in the spatial domain, focusing especially on examples derived from geopolitics. We move from there to investigate how this account would have to be extended to do justice in realist fashion to the ontology of agglomerations and divides in general, and of agglomerations and divides in the realm of beliefs and representations more specifically (and thus in the realm of what might be called 'meme combat'). We conclude
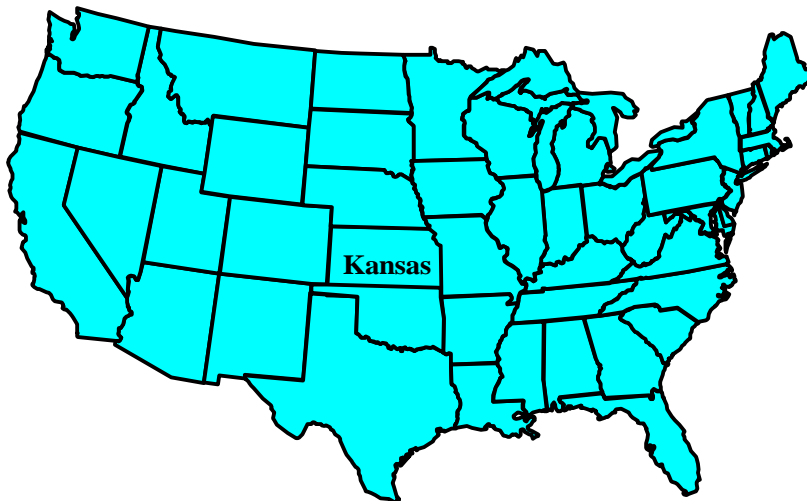
with an application of the theory to the divide between analytics and Continentals in contemporary philosophy.
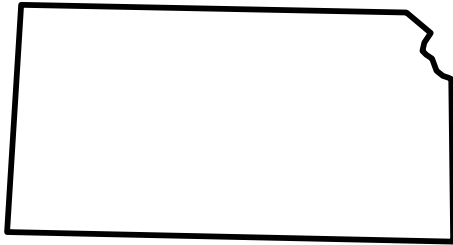
This is a map of Kansas.

This is a map of the Contiguous United States.

This is a map of Kansas and Business (Business is marked in blue)

2.   Agglomerations

Consider aggregates, for example the aggregate consisting of the apples in this bowl or the people in this room. These are wholes made up of simultaneously existing concrete entities, called members or participants.

The examples listed are small-scale wholes consisting of members or participants standing to each other in relations of similarity, and belonging to the domain of everyday human perception and action. Some aggregates, however, transcend this domain. They are such that, if they are perceivable at all, then perceiving them would, under normal conditions, require observations across large parcels of space. I shall reserve the term *agglomeration* to designate large-scale aggregates of this kind. An agglomeration is, technically, a large-scale aggregate of token instances of activities, objects, features, competencies or conditions that are, dispersed through space and whose members stand to each other in relations of similarity broadly conceived. Examples are: Analytic Philosophy, American Capitalism or the species *frog*.

Agglomerations are wholes whose members are concrete realizations of given activities, objects, features, competencies or conditions existing *at given times*. Our perspective will be on the one hand synchronic; we shall be concerned in particular with relations between agglomerations existing now, in the present. Clearly, however, agglomerations also have histories; they constitute traditions; they grow and develop; they have a beginning and an end, and they are in all of these respects comparable to organisms. We shall, therefore, need to consider agglomerations also from the diachronic perspective and to distinguish not only laws of co-existence among agglomerations but also laws of succession.

3.   Principles of Unity and Principles of Identity Through Time

Agglomerations are like organisms also in that they have a principle of unity by which they are held together as agglomerations. The principle of unity of an organization might be a hierarchical structure of authority with a single head. The principle of unity of a biological kind might be a relation of similarity between its instances (determined via shared DNA) conjoined with a principle of descent from a common ancestor. Agglomerations in the biological realm whose principle of unity is defined in terms of relations of similarity between members or instances are called *populations*. Other principles of unity are exhibited by those types of agglomerations we call *clans, tribes, demes, colonies, communities*, *corporations, schools* and *movements*.

Many agglomerations include other sub-agglomerations as parts. Many agglomerations are such that the features or conditions by which they are constituted are realized to different degrees in different spatial areas (for example more or less densely). Many agglomerations are marked by a type of organization which allows us to distinguish an interior of stereotypical or generic instances surrounded by a penumbra of non-standard or borderline instances. Consider: six-fingered persons, albino sheep. Some agglomerations include peripheral sub-agglomerations as parts (for example societies on the geographical and cultural fringes of Europe). Clearly, what appears as a peripheral sub-agglomeration in relation to one overarching mother-agglomeration may appear as core in relation another.

Agglomerations, as Czechs and Slovaks know, may merge and split, and they may spawn further agglomerations. Agglomerations may cease to exist for periods of time and be reconstituted anew. All of this implies the need for some *principle of identity* which is responsible for the continued existence of an agglomeration as something identical through change. Such continued existence will in many cases turn on the fact

that members and properties of an agglomeration endure in such a way as to constitute a series of strands overlapping in time. Consider, for example, the way in which a political party may gain and lose members. That the agglomeration does not break down into a succession of disjoint phases rests in such a case on the fact that the bulk of its members and properties are identical across any given temporal span.

4.   Agglomerations in the Human World

We are interested specifically in agglomerations in the human world, for example in:

Classic Coke, Arabic numerals, the Peruvian Shining Path, chemistry, Deconstructionism, sport utility vehicles, Kentucky mule diving, agriculture, Austrian economics, cannibalism, Esperanto, Opus Dei, sexual harassment, golf.

We are interested still more specifically in populations of beliefs and representations on the part of human beings. Such populations are hosted by determinate but typically changing aggregates of human carriers and they are analogous in this respect to populations of bacteria or viruses. Already historians of philosophy have begun to apply to philosophical schools and movements the same sorts of epidemiological techniques which are applied to the study of biological phenomena. Part of what we are about here is a task of ontological underlabouring for investigations of this sort, investigations into certain facts of natural history.

Agglomerations are spatial objects, but the constituent members of agglomerations of ideas, beliefs, feelings or arguments will be located in space only indirectly, via the spatial locations of their hosts or carriers. Hence we may be confronted with considerable practical difficulties in determining the boundaries and spatial locations of such

agglomerations. (Where, for example, is the agglomeration called *antisemitism*?) These difficulties are in the first place epistemological; they have no implications for the ontological status of agglomerations themselves. (That we find it difficult to know about X, has no implications for the nature and status of X.) Matters are however, as we shall see, complicated by the fact that agglomerations themselves may have what we shall call epistemological components; thus for example two agglomerations may be reciprocally co-determined by the fact that each consists of beliefs about the other.

5.   Business and Kansas

Agglomerations are spatial objects which inherit their spatial properties from the spatial properties of the relevant hosts. Business is in a given spatial region because there are people doing business in that region. Agglomerations are distinguished in this respect from spatial objects, like America and Kansas, which are demarcated directly in territorial fashion. Such *territorially demarcated spatial objects* depend for their coming into existence upon human decisions (on human fiat guided to a greater or lesser extent by topography) and for their continued existence upon certain associated agglomerations of beliefs and actions and feelings. Territorially demarcated spatial objects are artefacts of human practices in relation to space, practices which are themselves spatially dispersed.

Here again we may encounter a sort of reciprocal co-determination. Kansas is sustained in existence as a result of the continued existence of an agglomeration of beliefs about Kansas, beliefs which are in their turn dependent for their existence on Kansas itself. This dependence on human fiat and on associated agglomerations of beliefs and practices will imply that territorially demarcated spatial objects must be distinguished from underlying regions of space. Each territorially demarcated spatial object coincides, at any given time, with some

specific spatial region, but it is never identical therewith. For spatial regions do not have political or historical properties. They do not change shape or location due to historical events.

The prototypical examples of territorially demarcated spatial objects are Spain and Belgium. Where Spain and Belgium are settled creatures of international law, the associated agglomerations, of Spaniards and Belgians, are relatively informal products of habit or convention or of elective affinity. Territorially demarcated spatial objects such as Spain and Belgium (or Sarajevo or Treblinka or Stalingrad) will be important in what follows because it is often in relation to such objects that we situate ourselves and others both geographically and historically. Clearly there are many sorts of agglomerations in the human world which – like German nationalism, the World Cup (and World Congresses of Philosophy) – track territorial demarcations.

6.   The Framework of Mereotopology

We seek a framework for understanding the divides which arise between agglomerations in the human world. The beginnings of such a framework can be established through the study of divides in the realm of territorially demarcated spatial objects. A systematic theory of such divides already exists in the discipline of mereotopology, a marriage of mereology (the theory of part and whole), with qualitative topology (the theory of boundary, adjacency and separation). The mereotopological study of spatial regions yields a family of types of cases which can be illustrated by means of simple examples derived from the sphere of geopolitics, as follows:
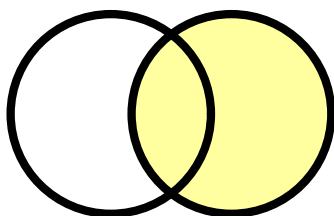
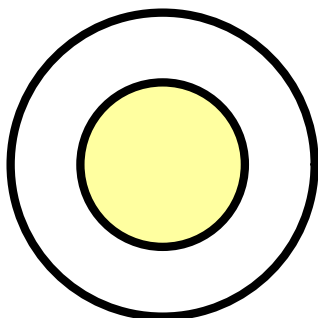# Simple Mereotopological Relations Between Two Territorially Demarcated Spatial Objects
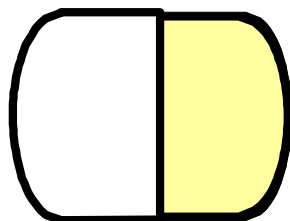
adjacency
(no overlap)
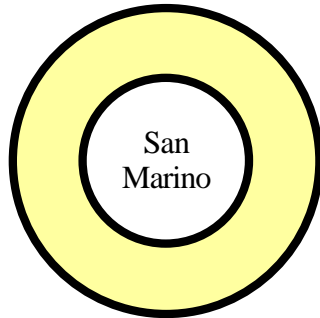*France and Germany*
England and Wales
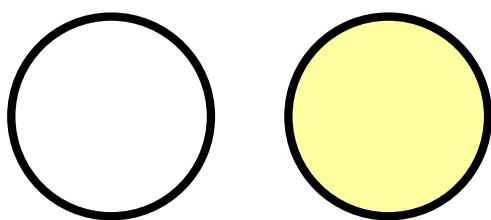
separation
Corsica and Sardinia
Hungary and China

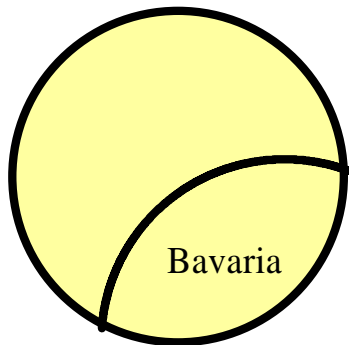overlap
The European Union and NATO
Italy and the Tyrol

inclusion of interior part
with overlap of spatial location
America and Kansas

surrounding
(no overlap of spatial location)
Italy and San Marino
Los Angeles and Beverly Hills

interior tangential part
(common boundary with overlap of
spatial location)
Germany and Bavaria

Here solid circles represent territorially demarcated spatial objects (colours are used as informal markers of object-identity within a given figure; scale should be ignored). Basic mereotopological relations are defined in standard fashion. *Overlap* signifies the sharing of common parts by two objects. *Adjacency* signifies the sharing of boundaries with no sharing of common parts. *Separation* signifies no sharing of common parts and no sharing of boundaries.

The diagrams above do not distinguish sharing of common parts from sharing of location. This is because, for territorially demarcated spatial objects, sharing of location obtains if and only if there is also a sharing of common parts.

Mereotopological Relations amongst Agglomerations
What, now, of the mereotopological relations amongst agglomerations?
Here again we can begin with rather simple cases of binary relations
which arise amongst agglomerations in virtue of the mereotopological
relations among the underlying spatial regions. The study of such simple
cases will be useful not only as a starting point for a complete theory of
the relations among agglomerations themselves; it will be of value also
because, as we shall see, it captures important features of geosocial
reality that are not directly connected to space.

As for territorially demarcated spatial objects so also for
agglomerations, overlap of parts implies also overlap of spatial location.
For agglomerations, however, the converse does not hold. That is,
agglomerations, like events and processes, may overlap spatially (may
occupy overlapping spatial regions) without sharing common parts. This
can arise in virtue of an incommensurability of ontological categories.
Thus for example the agglomeration of redheaded people overlaps
spatially, but not mereologically, with the agglomeration *philosophy*.
This is because the parts of philosophy are not people (redheaded or
otherwise), but certain activities and features of people (including their
thoughts and beliefs) together with the products of these activities (for
example in the form of printed artefacts).

Accordingly our diagrams will incorporate a distinction, where
agglomerations overlap in their spatial locations, between two sorts of
cases, depending on whether such spatial overlap does or does not
involve an overlap of parts. *Co-location* signifies the relationship
between two spatial entities which share a spatial region in common.

Simple Mereotopological Relations
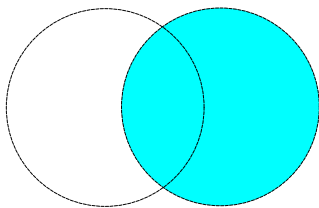# Between Two Agglomerations
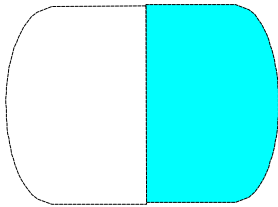
adjacency
Serbs and Croats in old Croatia
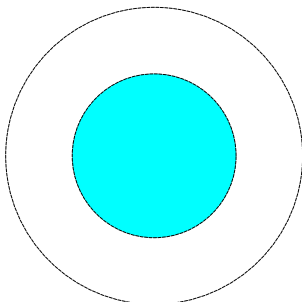*Francophones and Anglophones in Quebec*
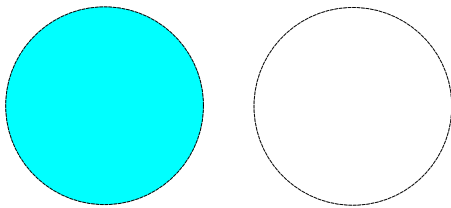
spatial separation
viticulture and reindeer herding
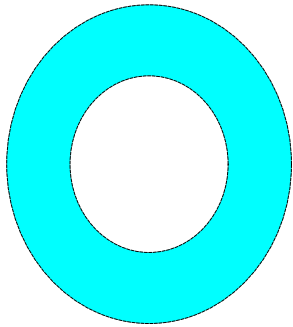*philosophy and violent crime*

spatial overlap
with overlap of parts: *analytic philosophy and relativism*
without overlap of parts: *Continental philosophy and eating*

inclusion with spatial overlap
with overlap of parts: *whales and mammals*
without overlap of parts: *lamas and sexual reproduction*

surrounding
Allied forces and Axis forces towards the end of WWII
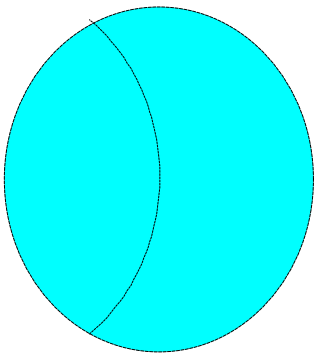
interior tangential part
(common boundary with spatial overlap)
with overlap of parts: *Irishmen and poets*
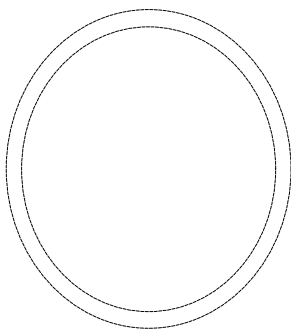without overlap of parts: *Protestantism and Christians
in Europe ca. 1700*

co-location
with overlap of parts: *playing chess and sacrificing pawns*
without overlap of parts: *Poles and Polish patriotic feeling*

# 7. Agglomerations and Territorially Demarcated Spatial Objects

Many territorially demarcated spatial objects such as Wales or Finland evolved historically against a background of prior agglomerations. The consciousness of belonging to a group came first; claims on behalf of this group to occupy a specific territory developed later, sometimes via (or as a result of resistance against) violent conquest. Over the course of the last 200 years or so, in a historical process which received powerful forward impetus from the Treaty of Westphalia (and from the geopolitical rationalism of Woodrow Wilson), the land surface of the globe has been subjected incrementally to what is now an exhaustive tiling into territorially demarcated spatial objects at the level of nation states. This does not mean, of course, that the order of territorially demarcated spatial objects and the counterpart order of agglomerations have been brought into perfect harmony with each other. Indeed, given the frangible nature of human agglomerations the very idea of such a perfect harmony may be incoherent. But it is nonetheless a tenacious idea, and there are many regions of the globe where conflicts arise because populations which lack fixed territories of their own become mobilized in ways which threaten to encroach upon the established geo-spatial order, often in response to repressive measures on behalf of its beneficiaries. A theory of the relations between territorially demarcated spatial objects and agglomerations will thus have a quite special significance in providing the basis for a taxonomy of actual and possible conflicts of this sort.

Simple Mereotopological Relations between Territorially Demarcated Spatial Objects and Agglomerations
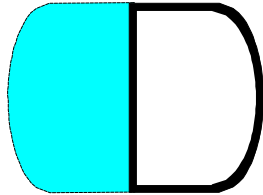
adjacency
Iraqi troops massing on the borders of Kuwait in 1990
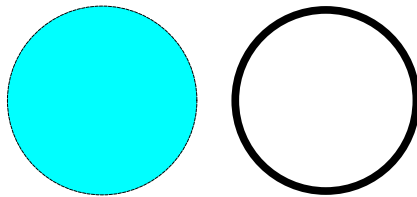
separateness
Deconstruction and the Harvard University Department of Philosophy
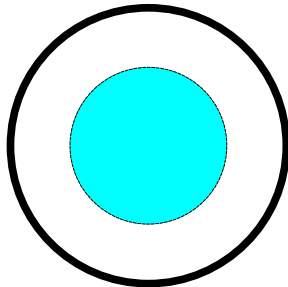
inclusion
(with overlap of territory)
The Maori in New Zealand
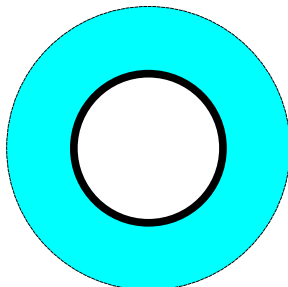
surrounding
(no overlap of territory)
Business and North Korea
Barbarians and Greece
China and "Tribes"
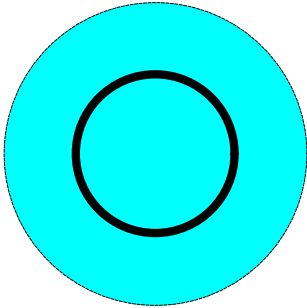
surrounding (with overlap of territory)
Arabs and Libya
Poles and the old Duchy of Warsaw
Business and Kansas
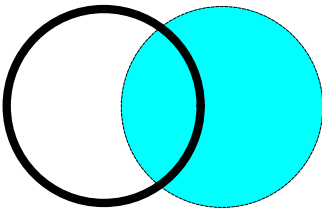
overlap
Albanians and Serbia
German-speakers and Switzerland
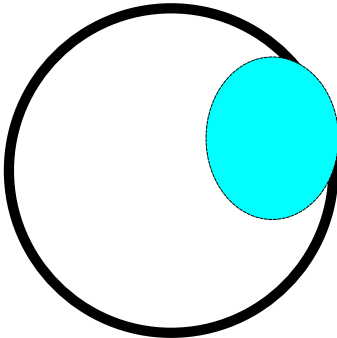
interior tangential part (with overlap)
Basque Separatists and Spain
Cornish Separatists and England
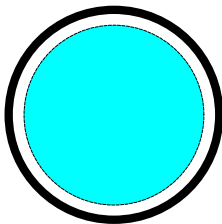
coincidence (pervasive scattering)
Poles in Poland

More complex cases arise when we consider simple mereotopological relations involving spatially non-connected relata, for example:

**Relations between
One Connected Territorially Demarcated Spatial
Object and One Non-Connected Agglomeration**

inclusion
(with overlap of territory)
Puerto Ricans and the United States

adjacency
(with overlap of territory)
*Palestinians and Israel
Russians and Lithuania*

common internal boundary
(with overlap of territory)
*Ireland and the Anglo-Irish
Diaspora*
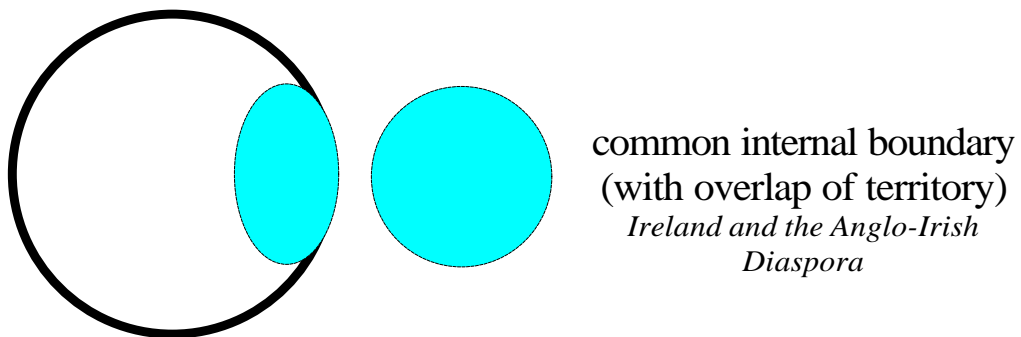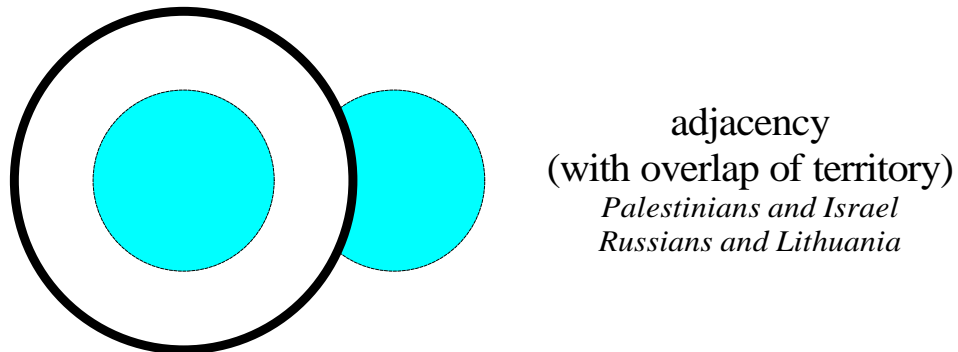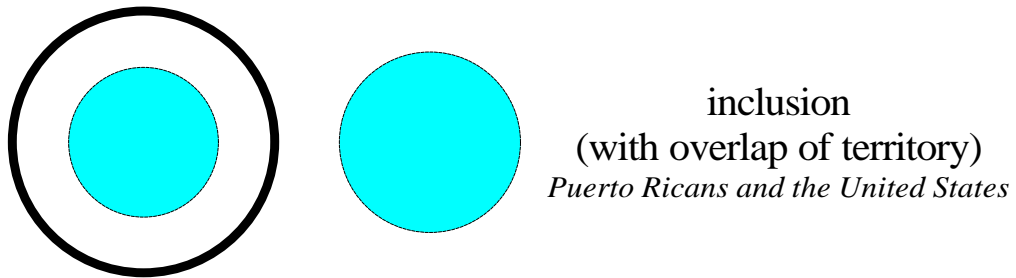
8.   Ontology and Epistemology

There is a deeply rooted tendency to conceptualize even widely scattered and rapidly changing agglomerations as compact, object-like entities. Social and political agglomerations of many varieties are in many sorts of contexts standardly conceived, for good or ill, as objects in this sense, and for this reason the study of the repertoire of simple mereotopological relations amongst agglomerations of the sort initiated above can be of value also as a tool in understanding human cognition and action in the geosocial realm.

For there is a no less deeply entrenched tendency to conceive the agglomerations in which we humans are involved in terms of simple binary relations (of *us* and *them*, of *self* and *other,* of *analytics* and *Continentals*). This is in part the reflection of quite general constraints on the degree of complication we can hold in our minds for purposes of comparison. It is in part because of the central role of the logical opposition between positive and negative in human thinking. It is connected also with features of our moral and emotional economy, and with the game-theoretic instability of three-sided conflicts. Hence, even though philosophy is of course a much more complicated affair than talk of any simple (analytic-Continental) divide might suggest, to focus on this bipolar opposition can be useful nonetheless and it can help us to capture something true and important.

Recall our remark to the effect that agglomerations may comprehend what we called epistemological components. The beliefs human beings have about agglomerations are themselves such as to form agglomerations in their own right. Antisemitism has its place here, as also do agglomerations of both true and false beliefs about antisemitism. Antisemitism is, be it noted, a *parasitic* agglomeration, an agglomeration of such a sort that it can exist only because there is another agglomeration towards which it is directed.

Now, however, we can observe that such epistemological components may play a role in transforming even spatially highly dispersed human agglomerations into unities that are able to preserve their identities over time. Indonesia and Denmark (and the English language) are unities, in spite of spatial gaps in their existence, in no small part because of widespread beliefs to this effect on the part of human beings. Poland and Israel (and the Hebrew language) are identical through time, in spite of temporal gaps in their existence, in no small part because of widespread beliefs to this effect on the part of human beings.

From this, however, it follows that the simplifications in our diagrams above harbour an important ontological insight: both agglomerations and territorially demarcated spatial objects may be ontologically unified even in spite of the spatial scattering of their parts, because there exist agglomerations of pertinent beliefs on the part of human subjects which maintain them in existence as such. These are on the one hand beliefs on the part of the participants involved; but on the other hand they may also include beliefs on the part of outsiders, for example outsiders sitting in international courts of justice (whose powers are similarly dependent on agglomerations of beliefs widely dispersed among associated populations).
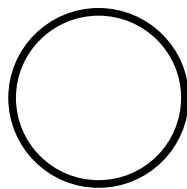
is thus a mereotopologically adequate representation of territorially demarcated spatial objects such as Indonesia or Denmark (but not, of course, of the underlying spatial regions). What is spatially scattered may yet be ontologically unified (in a sense I cannot even begin, here, to explain).
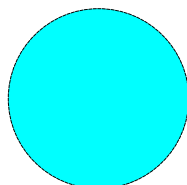
is similarly a mereotopologically adequate representation of agglomerations such as the Hasidim or hermeneutics. Such agglomerations, to the extent that they exist at all as unities and as identities through change, are socially constructed entities. They are maintained in existence as the products of associated agglomerations of beliefs on the part of those involved.

9.   The Agglomeration-Relativity of Belief

Could it be, as idealists claim, that the whole of reality is socially constructed in this fashion, that it is turtles all the way down in endless chains of dependence on agglomerations of beliefs? Against a view of this sort we can point to what science tells us about beliefs: that they are dependent for their existence upon associated states of people's brains. These brains, and the physical bodies which house them, and the physical environments in which these bodies themselves are housed (and thus ultimately the whole of the mundane physical world) must thus be accepted as bedrock existents by those who talk of social construction, for otherwise it would become inexplicable that beliefs themselves would have been able to arise. Science tells us further that if there are to be agglomerations of beliefs of the sort which can lead to the construction of large-scale social wholes such as Poland or NATO or the Rupee, then there must be widely dispersed stocks of (broadly) similar beliefs on the part of separate human beings, and thus also a widely dispersed stock of similar sorts of states of human brains and similar sorts of speech acts interpreted in similar sorts of ways across space and time. And similar sorts of actions in the physical domain.

Some friends of social construction are however also enemies of science. They argue that the sciences themselves have their place only within certain surrounding agglomerations, and that their claims are therefore tainted by the (social, political, economic) contexts – the shifting nexuses of power – which circumclude them.

The fundamental presupposition of science to the effect that its claims can be evaluated in disinterested fashion according to their truth or falsity is hereby suspended. Indeed 'truth' and 'falsity' themselves are presented as being – like all ideas, concepts and meanings – always local and frangible, a product of specific and ever-changing contexts and of ephemeral constellations of influence and authority. Certainly truth and falsity cannot claim any transcendent status as standards against which beliefs in general would properly be judged. To suppose that they do serve in this way is to countenance some god's eye perspective (some mother-of-all-agglomerations) that would be somehow free of all parochial taint and independent of every surrounding nexus of power.

Call this the argument to agglomeration-relativity of all truth claims. It has an obvious counter, namely that the argument itself puts itself forward as being true in precisely the agglomeration-transcendent sense which it would at the same time seek to exclude. For if it does not claim to be true in this sense, true of *all* agglomerations, then it leaves open the possibility that some agglomerations are of such a sort that they do not, in the pertinent sense, taint the beliefs which are housed within them. This in turn, however, leaves those to whom the argument is addressed with the option to choose for themselves agglomerations of this truth-friendly, rather than of the truth-excluding, sort.

10.   Essentialism

Before moving to the task of constructing an all-encompassing ontology of agglomerations in this spirit (an ontology broad enough to include room for all points of view on the issue of truth and falsehood), we must confront a still more radical strain in contemporary Continental philosophy (and in those disciplines and social movements subject to its influence) to the effect that any talk of what we are here calling agglomerations as unities and identities through time should be ruled out entirely:

> There are [it is averred] no 'societies' or 'cultures', but only infinitely hybridizing sites for negotiatory crossfertilization and heteroglossic *bricolage* … for the narrative of 'societies' or 'cultures' implies oppositions and oppositional discourse and it implies the privileging of a single hegemonic perspective. ... Postcolonial thinking, in contrast, gravitates towards folds of interinfluence, of random mutations, of rupture and suspension; it seeks a 'nomadics' of dissimulation and metastasizing difference in what is always provisional, shifting, always able to be redefined, reconstructed, in an endless 'play' of signifiers. And so forth. [I am making this up.]

There is a small granule of truth in such pronouncements. The world of agglomerations does, clearly, exhibit a lower degree of mereotopological tidiness than do the worlds of sovereign political objects or of ecclesiastical subdivisions. It is a world marked commonly by continuous rather than discrete transitions, by border *zones* rather than border *lines*, a world that is, when viewed from the perspective of spatial location, subject to massively interpenetrating diasporas and archipelagos.

The Continental identophobe draws an erroneous conclusion from this, however, analogous to a conclusion to the effect that, because (1) two

opposing armies are such as to interpenetrate spatially at points of conflict, are divided by constantly shifting border zones, harbor pockets of fifth columnists and innocent victims of the draft who did not really want to belong to the army anyway and who occasionally exchange friendly cigarettes with each other at the front, then it follows that (2) there are not two opposing armies at all, but rather a single pullulating power mass that has been subjected to a 'metaphorical' narrative of 'oppositional discourse'.

The error here arises in part from the inadequate ontological tools which are at the disposal of identophobic thinkers. But it derives more precisely from the false assumption that every social or cultural whole, if it is to exist at all, must have a principle of unity of a certain quite specific kind, based on some special ingredient – called an 'essence' – which all and only the members of the whole in question must share in common. Against the background of this assumption, those who hold that social or cultural wholes do indeed exist can be disparaged as 'essentialists', and racism, nationalism, patriotism, and also the belief in distinct genders can all be charged equally with being embodiments of the same ontological error. (We can understand, against this background, why members of the deconstructionist movement are so keen to insist that there is "no such thing as deconstructionism". No agglomeration *at all* is allowed to exist, from the anti-essentialist perspective, not even the agglomeration of those who share this very perspective itself. If anti-essentialism exists at all, we might say, then it is and by its own lights false.)

11.   Intrinsic vs. Cognitively Mediated Agglomerations
We have argued that mereotopology can provide a general framework within which the most basic patterns of relationships between agglomerations – separation, adjacency, overlap, inclusion, co-location – can be represented. As we have seen, these basic patterns of

relationships exist on two levels: first, as relationships holding directly between agglomerations themselves; second, as relationships which hold between given agglomerations A only in virtue of the existence of associated agglomerations B, agglomerations of beliefs.

Such B-agglomerations may comprehend either true or false beliefs, but they are in every case real, and they may have significant causal-historical consequences. Some B-agglomerations comprehend beliefs of a self-verifying sort: beliefs which are true in virtue of their own powers to bring corresponding A-agglomerations into being. The Polish aristocracy exists as a unitary A-agglomeration in part precisely because of widespread beliefs to this effect on the parts of its members, beliefs which are *ipso facto* true.

12.   Bona Fide vs. Fiat Agglomerations

The world of geosocial agglomerations is, it will be clear, affected to a large degree by human beliefs and practices. There must, however, be some agglomerations which are, in their own right, genuine parts of the causal order of what happens and is the case. This is so in relation to brain states of people and it holds also of galaxies or colonies of single-celled organisms. As already noted, it was out of belief-independent agglomerations of these sorts that beliefs and other higher-order cognitive phenomena first evolved. We shall introduce the term *bona fide agglomeration* to designate agglomerations which exist independently of all human demarcation in the given sense, and *fiat agglomeration* to designate agglomerations which fall short of bona fide status because they are discriminated from their surroundings as a result of human decision or convention.

Bona fide agglomerations would exist, and they would be set into relief in relation to their surroundings, even independently of all human discrimination or conceptualization. Fiat agglomerations are, like

Kansas, the spatial shadows of human cognition: they begin to exist and they are sustained in existence only as a result of certain cognitive habits on the parts of human beings. (Hence, trivially, there are no fiat agglomerations in the extra-human world.) But they are also like Kansas in comprehending matter, raw stuff, bona fide ingredients, which would exist even independently of our human demarcations.

The line between bona fide and fiat agglomerations is a difficult one to draw. This is not least because our very modes of designating even bona fide agglomerations involve the use of concepts which are the products of human cognition and which will convey the appearance of cognition-dependence to the objects which they designate. Idealist doctrines to the effect that everything that exists is the product of human cognition draw their sustenance from this.

Matters are further complicated by the fact that many agglomerations comprehend a mixture of both bona fide and fiat determinations. For our present purposes, however, it is sufficient to point to a continuum of cases between agglomerations which are to a high degree bona fide at one extreme and agglomerations which exhibit a pronouncedly fiat (or 'arbitrary' or 'artefactual') character at the other.

13.   Race and Racism
Even agglomerations of a pronouncedly fiat sort, for example the totality of redheaded philosophers, are not fictitious entities. They are parts of reality which may grow and develop, and this in such a way as to preserve their identity. They may also come to be transformed, over time, into bona fide agglomerations.

Assume, for the sake of argument, that there are no physical or bio-logical or other bona fide differences between two groups – say: Serbs and Croats – who live on opposite sides of a great river. Assume also

however that the Serbs and Croats themselves are convinced that such differences do indeed exist. The Serb and Croat populations would then constitute agglomerations which are of a pronouncedly fiat character in the sense explained. They would be marked by certain residual bona fide differences, but these, at least initially, will be differences which are either purely geographical or purely psychological.

It is somewhere about here that the phenomena of race and racism find their place. The starting point of these phenomena, ontologically, is a certain agglomeration: the totality of human beings. This totality can be divided into sub-agglomerations along a variety of axes. Some of these axes track more or less bona fide boundary lines, some are exclusively or primarily the product of fiat.

A candidate example of a pronouncedly fiat partition is provided by the division of the human species into Americans and non-Americans. Americans themselves are divided along various further fiat axes, for example into 'Hispanics' and 'non-Hispanics'.

Here again, what begins as a fiat partition may acquire a degree of physical reality through the workings of time, geography, war, politics, and other factors.

14.   Feminist Theory

One candidate example of a bona fide partition is provided by the division of the human species into males and females. This example is not uncontested. Some American feminist theorists conceive the human species as made up of sexually dimorphic bodies which are assigned to male or female genders as a result of the workings of what they call hegemonic patriarchal sign-systems. Their arguments on behalf of this thesis are of a type we have already met; they amount to a claim that, because there are borderline cases – human beings who for one reason

or another cannot be clearly assigned to either gender – it follows that there are no genders at all, but rather only infinitely hybridizing sites for negotiatory crossfertilization and heteroglossic *bricolage*. And so forth.

Of course, like many natural kinds, the two human genders exhibit the familiar structure whereby a core of standard or typical instances is surrounded by a penumbra of non-standard or borderline instances. To point to examples in this penumbra as evidence of the non-existence of the respective cores is analogous to pointing to the existence of six-fingered human beings as evidence for a universal conspiracy on behalf of a mythical 'essentialistic' norm of five-fingeredness.

The response to this argument from feminist theorists is along these lines: the concepts *male* and *female* as these are employed in any given society are, they insist, fiat categories constituted out of a diffuse and unstable bundle of features which has changed over time and which differs from the bundles of features employed for similar purposes in other societies. That we employ this specific bundle of features to this end in our society is at least in part a product of imposition by powerful social forces and could in principle be changed. In any event, there is nothing 'real' to the opposition between *male* and *female* as codified in any given socio-political context.

The counter to this response is tediously empirical. It is to point to anthropological data which establishes a universality of the male-female opposition in human cultures and to a high degree of commonality and stability in the set of features associated with each. Evolutionary biology gives impressive explanations as to why this should be so. Some feminist theorists have responded to this data by denouncing anthropology and biology themselves as ingredients in what they see as the conspiracy to impose patriarchal gender norms.

15.   Colonialism

We have seen that some agglomerations have the peculiar feature that they are dependent for their existence upon other agglomerations. Such dependence relations may be reciprocal: the Irish Republican Army and the Ulster Defense Regiment are twin stars, the existence of each being to a degree parasitic upon that of the other. A parasitic agglomeration, in our technical sense, is not merely dependent upon its host or carrier medium, but strives to destroy or to harm this host; it derives its own existence from this striving. Hence, also, it may flourish in spatial proximity to its host.

Dependence relations may also be one-sided. Consider, for example, the relation between that agglomeration which we call entymology and its target agglomeration: insects. This relationship of one-sided dependence with spatial separation we might represent as follows:
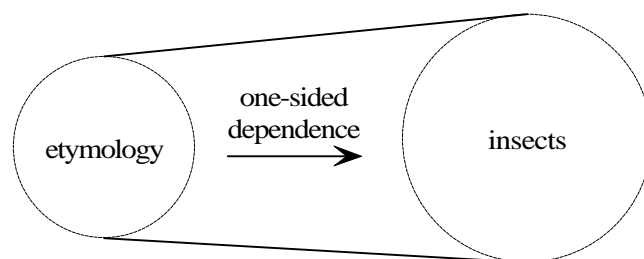
Populations of viruses or beliefs are one-sidedly dependent on their human or animal hosts, in a relationship involving spatial overlap which we might depict as follows.

Colonies are one-sidedly dependent upon their respective colonial powers. Such one-sided dependence relations may form chains: an agglomeration of West Indian immigrants in Brixton is dependent for its existence as an agglomeration upon a correlated agglomeration of

Trinidadian compatriots, who are in turn dependent for their existence as an agglomeration (as 'colonial body') on their former colonial masters.

Spatial separation – of British colonial members of the Indian Civil Service – need not imply ontological separation, for the agglomeration called 'Indian Civil Service' stands in a relation of one-sided dependence to another, spatially remote mother-agglomeration, called 'England' or 'home':
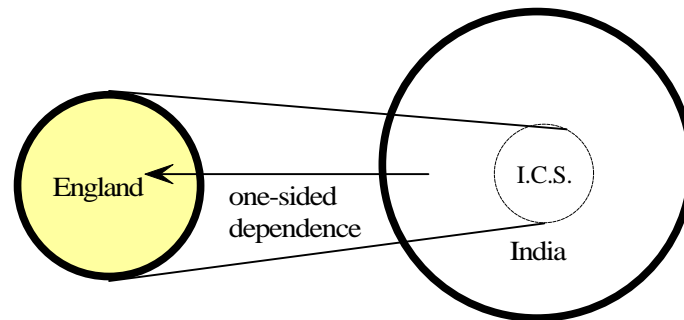
16.   On Continental and Analytic Philosophy
In terms of these notions, now, we can finally address the question of the nature of the divide between Continental and analytic philosophy. We can begin by noting that while agglomerations of humans have long engaged in a struggle for territory, land is not the only type of carrier medium in relation to which agglomerations may compete. Something analogous to wars are fought also between agglomerations of bacteria and viruses (competing for underlying carrier organisms), and there is also, in the human world, a type of *meme combat*, where different systems of beliefs and representations compete with each other for the occupation of human minds.

Two questions must be separated here: one is the (synchronic) question of the nature of Continental and analytic philosophy as agglomerations of activities of individuals existing now; another is the (diachronic) question of the nature of Continental and analytic philosophy as traditions that have evolved through time.

As to the first, we begin with philosophy as a whole, which is itself an agglomeration, spatially extended across the world and clustered in certain centres called 'universities'. Within this larger agglomeration, Continental and analytic philosophy exist as sub-agglomerations equally susceptible to epidemiological study. There are at least two robust ways of drawing the divide.

On the one hand is a criterion of division implicit in the self-understanding of many philosophers in continental Europe, to the effect that Continental philosophy as it exists today is: all philosophy growing out of the work of the high patriarchs of (above all) German philosophy, from Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel to Dilthey and the *Lebensphilosophie*. Much Continental philosophy in this broad sense is practiced in Berlin and Tübingen and Paris today.

On the other hand is the criterion of division that is embodied in the practice of self-described 'Continental philosophers' in the Anglo-Saxon world, where Heidegger, Levinas, Foucault, Derrida, Luce Irigaray, *et al.* play the determinative role.

We shall concentrate here on the latter, not because we think that the former is insignificant, but because we take seriously the arguments (for example as expressed by Peter Simons) to the effect that it was not until around the time of Heidegger that we can properly speak of a *divide* between the two traditions.

Both analytic philosophy, and Continental philosophy in the just distinguished narrow sense, are held together, like other human sub-agglomerations, by a variety of means – for example by the fact that present practitioners or carriers had imprinted upon them by their teachers certain shared patterns of thinking and speaking and by the fact that these present practitioners share an obeisance to certain privileged texts and masters. Trivially, however, there is one clear respect in which Continental philosophy is to a higher degree than analytic philosophy a creature of the fiat world. For where the latter arose naturally, its boundaries having been determined by an interplay of internal features – styles of writing, methods of philosophizing, specific objects or problems (logic, language, mind) – the boundaries of Continental philosophy have been determined by institutional fiat. For Continental philosophy, as it exists and flourishes in the North-American university and in its colonies abroad, is, like 'Women's Studies' and 'Multicultural Studies', primarily a creature of academic syllabi.

To understand why an agglomeration called 'Continental philosophy' should have established itself academically in this fashion, we need to address the second question, the question of the division between analytic and Continental philosophy as traditions evolving over time.

The term 'Continental philosophy' misleads, of course, in that the courses and textbooks under this heading deal only with a certain restricted slice of philosophy on the continent of Europe as a whole, within which Heidegger is awarded a central role, and around him a cluster of mainly French thinkers, which changes with current fashions. The later Husserl, Heidegger's teacher, is sometimes taken account of in all of this, but not Husserl's teacher Brentano, and not, for example, such twentieth-century German philosophers as Ernst Cassirer or Nicolai Hartmann or (if I am right) Jürgen Habermas. French philo-sophers working in the tradition of Poincaré (or Bergson or Gilson) are

similarly ignored, as, of course, are Austrian or Polish or Scandinavian or Czech philosophers.

The principle of identity through time of the tradition of Continental philosophy in our narrow sense is not, then, geographic. Rather, it is to be understood in terms of common descent and always in light of the central role of Heidegger, to whom all defining post-war figures of this tradition owe some allegiance. Older thinkers such as Nietzsche or Kierkegaard are likewise drawn into the Continental canon only to the extent that they are in some way allied with the Messner from Messkirch in doctrine or method. And as far as contemporary philosophical writing is concerned, only the right sort of deference to Nietzsche (or Hegel, or Marx, or Freud) – one that is mediated (roughly) through deference to Heidegger – will bring it about that what results will properly be counted as belonging to 'Continental philosophy'. Intriguingly, historical scholarship on Heidegger (or Nietzsche, or Hegel) does not count.

Now it might be argued that the tradition of Continental philosophy is in this respect exactly analogous to its analytic counterpart. For surely all analytic philosophers are required to situate themselves similarly in relation to the ideas and writings of Frege. The two traditions must therefore, from the epidemiological perspective, be likened to two neighbouring tribal dynasties, each with its founding patriarchs and founding doctrines, each with its own high priests and medicine men, its fringe adherents, and its apostates. Occasionally, above all when members of the two tribes are brought together spatially (in Departments of Philosophy), tribal warfare will break out. The fighting will then take the form not, as one might expect, of reasoned philosophical argument, but rather of ugly intrigues *ad hominem,* issuing in banishments, and sometimes – as in Sydney or Binhamton or StonyBrook or Irvine – in secessions.

In both cases, then, it might be argued, that the content and method of philosophizing have a secondary role in constituting the identity of the respective traditions over time. The primary factors are rather a matter of personnel – a matter, above all, of standing in the right relation to the founding patriachs and to the canon of original master texts. Consider what we would say if we discovered the writings of a hitherto unknown school of Chinese philosophers, isolated completely from Western logico-philosophical traditions, and found that these writings contained doctrines very similar to Frege's doctrine of, say, sense and reference. Would we refer to members of this school as 'analytic philosophers'? Certainly we would not admit to the tradition of 'Continental philosophy' a thinker who had succeeded in mimicking the methods and content of Continental philosophy but did not cite in appropriately approving fashion the prior Continental masters.

Clearly, however, both analytic and Continental philosophy are unified to a degree by certain attitudes which their respective members share in common. If we ask what the attitudes shared in common by analytic philosophers are, then we discover that these are primarily inwardly directed: they relate to the already mentioned features of analytic philosophy itself, features of style and method, features relating to the centrality of logic, language, mind, to an appreciation of the hard-headed attitudes of the natural scientist. Analytic philosophy is to this degree (like Business) a self-constituting and self-sustaining agglomeration. It is a fringe phenomenon in relation to the realm of scientific activity as a whole (as the study of, say, Amerindian languages is a fringe phenomenon in relation to the realm of native American culture.)

When, however, we raise the parallel question in relation to Continental philosophy, then we receive a different sort of answer. For consider: what are the doctrines or attitudes which are shared in common by the

prototypical Continental philosophers? What is the moment of unity which links together Heidegger, Levinas, Foucault, Derrida, Luce Irigaray, *et al.*?

The answer, I would claim, is: *antipathy to science*, or more broadly: antipathy to the methods and to the successes of the tradition of Western reason – of which not only natural science and reasoned argument but also modern industrial technology and the political institutions of liberal democracy form a part. Continental philosophy is in this sense, like antisemitism or anti-Americanism, a parasitic agglomeration.

To put the matter in another way: Continental philosophy is what we earlier referred to as a truth-precluding agglomeration, of a sort very much at home in certain corners of the contemporary North-American academy. It is an agglomeration of those, motivated by an antipathy to science that is to a large degree rooted in Heidegger, who sincerely believe that there are no 'pure' beliefs which could be evaluated according to their truth or falsity, that 'truth' and 'falsity' are themselves mere local agglomeremes, at home in some surrounding contexts but not in others.

How, in summary, are we to understand the divide between Continental philosophy and analytic philosophy in terms of the simple relations allowed by our mereotopological theory? In something like the following way:
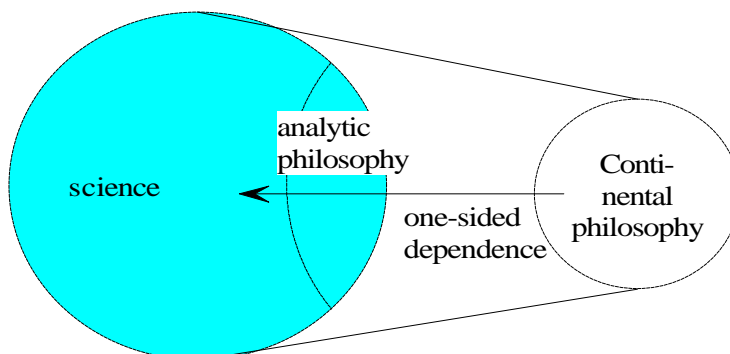
This diagram simplifies, above all in that it neglects the degree to which Continental philosophers have been friendly to certain disciplines which are scientific in the broad sense but which fall outside the orbit of the natural sciences strictly conceived – disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, Freudian psychoanalysis, prison history, comparative literature. We can conclude by addressing the question why it is that those with an interest in the areas to which such disciplines relate – precisely the areas of direct and pressing human concern, areas of life and death, of freedom and destiny, of power and subjugation – should at the same time have embraced sceptical and irrationalistic attitudes and a generalized suspicion in relation to the worlds of logic and natural science. The answer, I believe, sheds a negative light on much of *analytic* philosophy. For a major factor in the growth of Continental philosophy in the contemporary American academy in the last decades turns on the fact that analytic philosophers for long systematically ignored precisely these central areas of human concern. They devoted their energies, instead, to a degree unequalled in the entire history of our discipline, to logic and to certain technical questions (of language and meaning). In this way those individuals in the Anglo-Saxon world who were interested in addressing the central problems of traditional

philosophical concern found themselves excluded from the philosophical mainstream. In response, they reacted against what they saw as the determining characteristics of this meanstream, and embraced as their heroes alien philosophers who were known for their radical sceptical and irrationalistic views. It is here, I believe, that we find the essence of the Continental-analytic divide

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