

Reply to Professor Jaakko Hintikka's Philosophical Research: Problems and Prospects

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It is indeed a great honour and privilege to respond to Professor Jaakko Hintikka's challenging and provocative paper, 'Philosophical Research: Problems and Prospects'.¹ I have been a long time reader and admirer of Professor Hintikka's work, especially his writings on Husserl, but beginning many years ago with his groundbreaking work on Descartes' *cogito* as performance rather than inference (Hintikka, 2005). I also want to acknowledge publicly the sterling work he performed as Vice-President of the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de Philosophie (FISP) in organizing the very successful 21st World Congress of Philosophy held in Boston in August 1998.² Jaakko Hintikka has worked at the highest level of the profession over many years – he is one of the very few whose work has featured in the Library of Living Philosophers series (Auxier and Hahn, 2006) and he has a six-volume collection of papers published. He has made revolutionary contributions to logic, set theory, semantics, epistemology, and many other areas of formal philosophy, but he has also made a significant contribution to the understanding of Husserlian *phenomenology* and especially its concept of intentionality. What makes Hintikka stand out among contemporary philosophers is that he has always had a creative eye on problems in the *history of philosophy*, especially in Aristotle, Descartes, Kant and other major figures. One can only admire the breadth and depth of his historical knowledge and his informed reference that takes in Frege, Mach, Collingwood, Wittgenstein, Tarski, Quine, Husserl and Gadamer, among other twentieth-century writers. He is therefore well qualified to take a reflective look at the current state of professional philosophy and offer some programmatic assessments.

In order to contextualize my own approach to Hintikka in this paper, I shall outline my own activities in contemporary philosophy. Since the late 1980s I have been active in promoting dialogue and mutual understanding between the main – somewhat antagonistic – philosophical traditions or styles of philosophizing that have dominated the second half of the twentieth century in the Western world. I refer to what are broadly labelled the 'analytic' or 'Anglo-American' and the 'Continental' or mainland European traditions. With the aim of encouraging constructive dialogue and mutual comprehension between the two major traditions or styles of philosophizing, in 1993 I founded the *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, which is now an established and respected international journal. The Editorial Board was initially

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composed of philosophers who were read by both traditions, e.g. the late Paul Ricoeur and Richard Rorty, Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, now Hubert Dreyfus, as well as leading philosophers in their own areas (e.g. Tim Williamson and Tim Crane). I also invited experts in the history of philosophy and especially senior experts in classical philosophy (Jonathan Barnes, Werner Beierwaltes, John Dillon), since clearly both traditions emerge from the same history of Western philosophy. As Editor, I wanted the journal to reflect the plural approaches to philosophy as currently represented in the best research work. I also wanted philosophical research that was informed by serious knowledge of the history of philosophy. Clearly there was need for such an approach as the journal has flourished and is currently appearing in five issues a year, now ably edited by my successor as Editor, Maria Baghramian, who has involved many others in the journal, including Hilary Putnam and Noam Chomsky, both of whom share the interest in dialogue and communication between traditions. More recently (in 2008), as the outcome of a research project funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS), I edited the *Routledge Companion to Twentieth Century Philosophy* again with the aim of encouraging mutual understanding and cross-fertilization and asking contributors as best they could to consider alternative approaches to their topic. More than twenty philosophers participated in that project (including Axel Honneth, Karl-Otto Apel, E. J. Lowe, Stephen Stich, and Mark Sainsbury, to name but a few). In my own research writing, furthermore, I have been examining concepts such as *intentionality*, *empathy* (also known as ‘mind-reading’), *consciousness* and *embodiment*, from the different perspectives of phenomenology (Husserl, Heidegger, Scheler, Merleau-Ponty) on one hand, and philosophy of mind and cognitive science (Searle, Dennett, Dreyfus and Goldman) on the other.

As a result of my own research, I have a strong conviction – which I am pleased to say is shared by Jaakko Hintikka – that there are many common problematics across these different traditions and that we can learn much from others’ approaches. There are, to be sure, plural approaches and different conceptual paradigms and methodologies at work, but the problems are much the same problems, albeit articulated in different technical terms and attacked from different directions. For instance, it is most interesting to me to see how themes such as the nature of consciousness, the first-person perspective, subjectivity, embodiment, perception, the experience of time-consciousness, imagination, intersubjectivity and the understanding of other minds through mind-reading or empathy, and so on, are once again at the centre of current debates, having been missing from twentieth-century philosophy during much of that crowded century. Indeed, in many ways, I view the so-called ‘Anglo-American’ tradition as currently re-discovering certain problems (especially relating to philosophy of mind, consciousness and embodiment) that had been in discussion in phenomenology – and indeed among philosophers such as Henri Bergson or William James – almost a century earlier but which had been bypassed by the detour through language that took place in the mid-century.

In part the delay of almost a hundred years in analytic philosophy’s rediscovering of some of these key issues in the philosophy of mind and consciousness may be explained by the enormous – and still hardly even acknowledged – intellectual vandalism that the naïve embrace of a literally mindless behaviourism inflicted on the sciences of the mind, including empirical psychology. Behaviourism began as a methodological procedure (particularly in the area of the understanding of non-human animals) but quickly rigidified into a mindset or more pervasive ideology, even though it has almost no official promoters in philosophy since Chomsky’s devastating onslaught on Skinner first written in 1959 (Chomsky, 1959).³ It continues not just as a very actively practised methodological approach in psychology but also as a general article of faith among many of those who claim to be scientists. For instance, in 1925, one of the founders of behaviourism, the American psychologist John B. Watson (1878–1958) could proclaim:

... the time has come for psychology to discard all reference to consciousness ... it is neither a definable nor a usable concept, it is merely another word for the 'soul' of more ancient times. . . . No one has ever touched a soul or seen one in a test-tube. Consciousness is just as unprovable, just as unapproachable as the old concept of the soul ... [The Behaviourist] dropped from his scientific vocabulary all subjective terms such as sensation, perception, image, desire, purpose, and even thinking and emotion as they were subjectively defined. (Watson, 1925: 3–6)

Some sixty years later, the philosopher Patricia S. Churchland (1986) was similarly predicting that the very notion of consciousness would be abandoned as outmoded in the new science, having gone the way of 'caloric fluid', 'vital spirit' and other such detritus of the scientific advance. Yet others (e.g. David Chalmers) are convinced that the very existence of consciousness remains the 'hard problem' of the sciences!

The ongoing legacy of behaviourism (more as an attitude than as a strictly methodological approach) means that many scientists have a deep instinct to *deny* the existence of the first-person conscious self and to explain it away at all costs, including using grammatical tools such as that the 'I' is simply a grammatical tool to identify who is speaking at the present (Anscombe, 1975)! The ongoing influence of behaviourism can still be seen not just in Churchland, Quine and others, but in authors who at first sight seem much more favourably disposed to accept consciousness as a real feature of our world. Daniel Dennett (2003), for instance, seeks both to accept behaviourism and to defend the need to discuss consciousness in its own terms (although 'making a home for consciousness in the brain' as he puts it). The distinctly first-person experience has only recently found sophisticated defenders (see, for instance, Zahavi, 2005, Siewert, 2008, Farkas, 2008).

Similarly, sophisticated discussions in the philosophy of language in large part eclipsed and even retarded the development of philosophy of mind for several decades. There was a general tendency, amounting more to a mood than a specific set of doctrines, among Wittgenstein's followers, and especially those of Gilbert Ryle (whose own views are more complex and subtle in this regard, see Ryle (1949)), to oppose not just what were regarded as Cartesian ghosts but also all forms of fully inhabited minds. Of course, on the Continental side of the tradition, it was not all smooth sailing either in relation to the discussion of consciousness, mind and self. The early twentieth-century concern with what Jean Cavaillès called the 'philosophy of consciousness' (as found in Husserl and Bergson) began to be eclipsed during the 1940s and 50s by a concern for a more dispersed intersubjective understanding of language (in Heidegger and Gadamer) as well as by an emphasis on the anonymous dynamics of structural operations, in the structuralist (Lévi-Strauss) and poststructuralist traditions (Derrida, Deleuze) which problematized the nature of meaning and made difficult reference to identifiable subjects over time. There are interesting convergences: Jean Cavaillès (1903–1944), for instance, has been seen as attempting to move beyond the 'philosophy of the subject' and Jan Patočka (1907–1977) similarly proposed an 'asubjective phenomenology' (Patočka, 1991). The sociology of knowledge could be a great help in understanding these problems and the dynamics of these traditions as they evolved side by side and in their intersection with one another. There is an extraordinary flowering of contemporary philosophy, and yet there are identifiable recurrent patterns and themes. With that in mind, let me now turn directly to Hintikka's analysis of the current state of philosophy and its prospects.

In these remarks I shall focus mainly on Hintikka's overall conception of what philosophy is and does, the thorny question of the relation between the history of philosophy and philosophical practices and procedures, and also look in a little more detail at his portrayal of certain twentieth-century movements, specifically hermeneutics, phenomenology and logical positivism. Hintikka's focus is on what is called in many European countries 'theoretical' philosophy (i.e. metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of science, logic) as opposed to what is broadly seen as practical

philosophy or philosophy applied to particular domains (moral, social and political philosophy, aesthetics, philosophy of religion and so on). In responding to Hintikka's assessment of a *crisis* in professional philosophy, both in terms of its overall methodologies and also in its self-image, I too will restrict myself largely to theoretical philosophy. My sense is that the situation that he describes in terms of disunity and fragmentation is probably even more explicitly to be found in the domains of practical philosophy (where sub-disciplines, such as eco-philosophy (or 'ecosophy' – see Arne Naess), carry on a dialogue often completely separated from other parallel disciplines). I agree with him when he worries that emphasis on the application of philosophy (e.g. 'applied ethics') may distract from the core business of philosophy; indeed it is perhaps this pursuit of practicality and application that is part of the very fragmentation of philosophy. Within theoretical philosophy as a whole, Hintikka's concern is with major movements in the twentieth century (phenomenology, logical positivism, linguistic analysis, hermeneutics, pragmatism) and primarily with the impact and transformative effect of philosophical sub-disciplines such as logic, philosophy of science and philosophy of language. In fact, somewhat surprisingly, he has very little to say about *epistemology*, although this is a topic that has undergone a major renewal of interest in recent decades (e.g. the epistemology of testimony, the nature of self-knowledge, avowals and so on), his focus is mainly on philosophies that have interacted with mathematics.

On first reading his paper, it might appear that Hintikka is actually criticizing contemporary philosophy for being overly concerned with the history of philosophy. In this regard, he might appear to be articulating a common analytic theme – summarized in the famous slogan of Gilbert Harman: 'just say no to the history of philosophy'.⁴ But one has to proceed carefully here, and, in fact, Hintikka's approach is precisely the opposite of Harman's; Hintikka is calling for the proper historical contextualization of issues in philosophy so that someone talking about 'sympathy' in Hume, for instance, knows the contours and parameters of that concept in the Scottish thinker. Hintikka believes a proper hermeneutic concern is required in order to appreciate just precisely what a philosophical problem is, how it is framed:

Instead of concentrating on the question of what this or that thinker actually meant, philosophers far too often project their ideas and problems into other philosophers' texts. This tendency is not new. In Oxford this or that philosopher was sometimes accused of treating Aristotle and Plato as if they were 'fellows of another college'. This tendency has become stronger and more widespread. Far too often philosophers doing history have concentrated on their own problems and ideas and have left general intellectual history to be taken over by history or humanities departments instead of philosophy departments.

So in fact, Hintikka believes that philosophers have to be sensitive to the historical context and aware of each philosopher's place in the movement of history. Hintikka is not happy with those who would, for instance, treat a text of Plato as if it were an article published in *Analysis* (an approach that A. J. Ayer advocated, for instance).

Historical awareness, of course, does not rule out bold revisionism. Thus Hintikka quite provocatively looks for an end to what he sees as the current consensus of opposition to *logical positivism* (a movement he sees as having hugely promising beginnings but which lost its impetus because it did not have the technical tools to provide a major interpretation of current scientific theories):

Thus the future of the tradition instantiated by logical positivists depends on the progress of rebuilding its conceptual tools and building better ones.

But again one must be careful. Reviving a new and more sophisticated logical positivism in order to give a philosophical account of the nature of scientific understanding, does not mean

proposing (as the original positivists did) that many traditional philosophical problems are illusory *Scheinprobleme* or even literally nonsensical. Hintikka's commitment to a revival of logical positivism is balanced by his support for a certain kind of hermeneutic questioning and an attempt to understand meaning.

Generally speaking, hermeneutics is still regarded in analytic circles as a foreign Continental practice largely associated with interpreting literary and theological texts and having little to do with formal philosophy as such. Hintikka therefore is being doubly provocative in advocating both a renewed positivism and a hermeneutical approach to understanding problems. This kind of original pluralism is to be applauded.

The current crisis in philosophy

Why does Hintikka think that current philosophy is in crisis? Hintikka thinks philosophy is in a 'state of chassis', as the Irish dramatist Sean O'Casey put it – creatively combining the terms 'chaos' and 'crisis' – in that it has lost its sense of direction and does not have ways of setting itself goals or generate ideas that could point to goals. Contemporary philosophical research is, in Hintikka's words, without a sense of direction (or directions); it is literally chaotic. In his view, it needs a 'stimulus package' to renew itself, akin to what has been effected in the American economy in 2009 to counteract the effects of recession. He believes that philosophy is in need of systematic insight, it needs to set forth its mission in systematic terms, to lay out a philosophical research programme.

Moreover, Hintikka is concerned not just with the many modes in which philosophy has lost its way but also with philosophers' self-image. A certain reform of the philosophical profession is therefore needed. Professional philosophers have, in his view, too readily abandoned the traditional view that philosophy is in pursuit of truth and in that sense is just like the natural sciences. The dispersal of interest over so many domains and topics has led to a weakening of philosopher's self-identity and an abandonment of consensus as to what it is exactly that philosophers *do*.

Overall, Hintikka is worried both by the obvious fragmentation in the philosophical scene and also by the dilettantism of contemporary philosophers. He sees current philosophy not so much split into 'schools', as it was in the Hellenic era or in the academic philosophy of the nineteenth century, but into what might best be described as 'interest groups'. There is a lack of cooperation between different interests and lack of mutual understanding between different sides of the discipline. Hintikka, quite rightly, is against fragmentation – a notion that assumes an uncontested core of what philosophy really is and does, perhaps even a canon – but he is no benign pluralist who wants to see *détente* or 'peaceful coexistence' between different philosophical approaches. In fact he is in favour of something like a war of all against all, or as Mao Zedong put it in 1956, invoking a classical Chinese expression, 'let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend'. Hintikka is definitely not a proponent of philosophical pluralism:

Sometimes recent philosophers have congratulated themselves for the absence of sharp, often bitter disputes between different traditions or 'schools'. I am not sure that this relatively peaceful coexistence is an entirely healthy sign. One possible explanation is that philosophers are tolerant of other views because they are not sure of the truth of their own ideas or because they do not at bottom care about their truth so very much in the first place.

In place of peaceful coexistence, Hintikka is in favour of an agonistic space where reasons are sought and criticized and where positions are contested. But contesting ideas in this way suggests that there is a common standard of reason which can evaluate competing claims to truth. But this is itself precisely what is challenged in contemporary versions of pluralism. Pluralism or toleration

may be understood as the recognition that values, modes of approach, beliefs and indeed forms of reason, are irreducibly plural and that accommodation of fundamentally different perspectives has to be reached in for instance a philosophy department or within the professional association, e.g. the American Philosophical Association (Ingram and Baghramian, 2000).

Philosophy as a rigorous science

As we have seen, Hintikka is a firm believer in the idea of philosophy as a rigorous science, a conception articulated by Brentano, Husserl and the Austrian school generally. In this regard Hintikka is definitely a follower of Husserl. In his 1934 letter addressed to Emanuel Rádl, President of the Eighth International Congress of Philosophy and which was read out at the Congress, Edmund Husserl once wrote:

Philosophy is the organ of a modern, historical existence of humanity, existence from out of the spirit of autonomy. The primordial form (*Urgestalt*) of autonomy is that of the scientific self-responsibility. ... Philosophical self-responsibility necessarily gets itself involved in philosophizing community. ... Herewith the specific sense of European humanity and culture is designated. (Husserl, 1989: 240).

Again, in a tract written for the Congress in 1934, but which was never published, Husserl speaks of the inseparable intertwining of science and philosophy:

Where genuine science lives in practice; there lives philosophy; and where philosophy, there science: an inseparable one-inside-the-other. (Husserl, 1989: 185)

Hintikka would undoubtedly agree with both of Husserl's sentiments. On the other hand, Hintikka also agrees with Husserl that philosophy is not simply an extension of the sciences, in the manner in which W. V. O. Quine often presented it. For Quine (1981), the philosopher and the scientist are both, as it were, in Neurath's boat, carrying out repairs at sea. Good philosophy is simply a part of good science and not prior to it, as in the classical idea of 'first philosophy' (found in Descartes and Husserl). Hintikka sees modern philosophy, correctly, as making its progress through being challenged by the natural sciences by which he primarily means mathematics, physics and recent developments in the neurological sciences. For him the most important intellectual challenge to philosophy in the twentieth century was the revolutionary development of science:

The most important intellectual challenge to philosophy in the twentieth century was revolutionary development of science. It remains a challenge to philosophical research.

It is clear that Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Frege, Russell, Husserl, Wittgenstein, Dummett, Quine, Putnam and others, have been driven by issues in mathematics and logic. Moreover, Hintikka is surely right when he says:

The weakening of genuine interaction between on the one hand philosophers and other hand scientists and mathematicians has led to a tremendous loss of the relevance of philosophical research in a wider perspective. Hundred years ago most leading mathematicians – Poincaré, Hilbert, Brouwer, Weyl, Borel, you name them – were intensively involved in discussions about the foundations of mathematics, because the most issues were found by them to be of vital importance for their own subject. To-day most working mathematicians could not care less about, say, debates about realism in mathematics.

But not all twentieth-century philosophers have felt the need to respond to challenges thrown up by the sciences, if by science is primarily meant the formal mathematical sciences and the issues at the

foundations of subjects such as physics and mathematics. There are other equally genuine styles of philosophizing that have been more concerned with meaning and value, and with the whole context of human existence and its meaningfulness, finitude, historicity, culture, art, religious symbolism and so on. These philosophers have been concerned to make sense of human life and have been drawn to the existential questions. In the twentieth century one can invoke philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche (who admittedly died in 1900 but who was by his own admission a ‘posthumous man’ whose influence has grown through the twentieth century), Wilhelm Dilthey, R. G. Collingwood, Jean-Paul Sartre and Hans-Georg Gadamer, as belonging to this broader tradition that inquires into meaning (Collingwood, for instance, found inspiration in archaeology rather than mathematics, and Gadamer was concerned with the nature of historical tradition and cultural formation, the process known as *Bildung*). To be fair, Hintikka does include many of these figures under the general title of hermeneutics; but one has to be careful not to import a naïve idea of progress that is appropriate within the natural sciences into our overall conception of philosophy as a cultural form. Philosophy is a reflective endeavour, driven by what is meaningful and puzzling in human life. Philosophers can take their inspiration and their puzzlement from the foundations of mathematics *or*, with equal validity, from the manner in which an artwork manifests meaning or in the attempt to interpret theological or cultural insights. One approach ought not to be given a higher status than the other (at least not without offering an argument for that prioritization). Here Hintikka is, I believe, simply responding to what was an historical – and contingent – fact about much of the philosophical evolution of the twentieth century and is reading the whole tradition in the light of his own interests. It is certainly true that many of the greatest philosophers of the first half of that century (including Frege, Husserl, Russell, Wittgenstein, Carnap and so on) were fascinated by the evident theoretical problems at the foundations of mathematics and logic (inspired by Hilbert, Poincaré and others) and attempted to frame theories of truth and meaningfulness. One could indeed compare the explosion of interest in the new mathematical logic in the early twentieth century to the earlier breakthrough of Cartesian philosophy that responded to the revolutionary Galilean mathematical transformation of the natural sciences, or to an earlier age (in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) when philosophers responded creatively to the rediscovery of the scientific texts of the ancient Greek world, including works on physics, meteorology, metaphysics and so on (one thinks of Aquinas or Roger Bacon here). There is undoubtedly a noble lineage of philosophers responding to revolutions in the mathematical sciences.

But alongside this very fruitful tradition of philosophy as responding to scientific achievement lies a much longer tradition of philosophers responding to the mysteries of the human condition, from Plato through Augustine, to Pascal and Kierkegaard. It would be too easy to re-inscribe these contrasting ways of philosophizing into the opposition between the natural and the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*). Philosophers who were deeply inspired by science (such as Husserl or Wittgenstein or more recently Putnam) also went on to prioritize ways of being human and the nature of meaningfulness as the proper object of philosophical concern. Indeed, in his *Crisis of the European Sciences*, Husserl regarded the crisis in the human sciences as even more pernicious than the theoretical problems in the natural sciences, and earlier in his ‘Philosophy as a Rigorous Science’ essay (1910/1911), Husserl places just as much emphasis on historicism in the human sciences as being as destructive as a naturalistic outlook in the natural sciences.

Fragmentation or philosophy as inquiry into truth

Hintikka presents a stark diagnosis: philosophy must either continue to fragment into numerous and apparently disconnected specialist sub-disciplines and practices of textual reading and commentary (what he calls broadly ‘cultural discourse for the sake of discourse’ – reminiscent of

Richard Rorty's notion of 'edifying philosophy' where the point is that conversations must be kept going and cannot be assumed to converge on the truth, see Rorty, 1979: 377) or it must regain its commitment to the search for truth. Hintikka believes that all philosophers ought to be concerned with truth, since philosophy itself has been, from its Greek beginning, the pursuit of truth. In its search for truth, furthermore, philosophy can both inform and be informed by the sciences. Hintikka is worried that 'truth has lost its crucial role':

A specific symptom of this syndrome is the fate of the notion of truth in philosophical discussion. Truth has lost its crucial role. Some so-called theories of truth seek to explain away truth in terms like 'assertability' or 'coherence'. Instead of construing philosophical activity as a search for truth, some philosophers are turning it into a form of cultural discourse for the sake of discourse.

Hintikka opposes popular current accounts of truth that reduce it, deflate it, translate it into other concepts such as 'superassertability' (a position developed and defended by Crispin Wright (1992)).⁵ Hintikka believes, *contra* Tarski, that truth can be defined for each level of discourse, including for the level of ordinary language. There is no need for the postulation of metalevels. Deflationists, in Hintikka's view, have been misled by an overreliance on Tarski. Hintikka thinks that Tarski's understanding of truth (1944) as undefinable was arrived at because of his dependence on the logical tools available to him at that time: 'if a richer logic is used, truth is no longer undefinable.' I am not sufficiently expert in the theory of truth to have a definitive view on whether truth is definable in the sense Hintikka suggests. I am, however, instinctively inclined to agree with Hintikka's general reasoning in rejecting non-definability. To say something is undefinable is often a way of avoiding further analysis. I am, however, worried that truth in this sense is assumed to be a single entity or property.⁶ Truth – like being – is said in many ways. We need accounts of truth that are as diverse as the manner truth itself functions in our different cultural practices. In some sense truth is irreducibly plural and yet there must be a way of speaking of truth in a way that allows different discourses to be compared. I think Hintikka himself believes this but his focus remains on theoretical accounts of truth that depend on the Tarskian approach. Theoretical clarification of the nature of truth must surely be a pressing philosophical project across all domains; although it is unlikely that this will conclude in the adoption of a single account of truth.

A deep motivating factor in Hintikka's approach is his conviction that philosophy can somehow be successful, in the manner of the sciences, and by that he means that it can eventually 'hit the target: truth'. In this sense, he believes in the possibility of discovery and progress in philosophy as getting incrementally nearer to the truth. I am not so sure that we so clearly separate the supposed scientific truth-seeking side of philosophy from its role as cultural mirror of the age. We do not have to go all the way to Richard Rorty's view of philosophy as a kind of ongoing ennobling conversation to believe there is something right in Hegel's view that philosophy is 'its time comprehended in thought' and that philosophical outlooks emerge and disappear reflecting the pressing concerns of the age. There clearly cannot be a concept of direct progress in philosophy in the way in which, as Theodor Adorno once put it, there is progress from 'the slingshot to the megaton bomb' (1973: 320). There is of course progress in the sense that many paths have been identified as dead-ends and many strategies of argumentation have been shown to be flawed, and this is also true in the progress of scientific theories. But it is rare that an overall outlook or stance such as philosophy offers (e.g. idealism, materialism, naturalism) – and in this case it is not the same as science – is ever completely accepted or completely killed off. There seems to be a certain inevitability to the recurrence in new forms of older philosophical stances. This is part of what is most fascinating and most frustrating about philosophy. Philosophy offers a kind of 'canopy' (to adopt Peter Berge's concept of the 'sacred canopy' as he described the religious worldview) rather than

simply a mirror of a pre-existing reality. Philosophy's role in providing an overall outlook is both its strength and its weakness. Indeed, I would venture to suggest, this is where the hermeneutic element which Hintikka himself endorses must come in. It would be wrong to impose an alien model of what constitutes success in the formal or natural sciences on philosophy, which, if anything, is a *sui generis* system of knowledge (it is always difficult to use 'science' to apply to philosophy in English as there 'science' always means the natural, experimental sciences).

Philosophy as exegesis

Hintikka contrasts the philosophical concern for truth with what he calls 'exegesis', simply setting out the views of philosophy; doing variations on a theme, philosophical finger exercises on a particular topic or person, without having truth in view. He writes:

A philosopher was like a scientist in that he or she was searching for truth, albeit perhaps a different and higher kind of truth than is pursued in departmental sciences. In our days, the predominant paradigm of a philosopher's activity is not a scientific inquiry, but rather exegesis of sacred texts or perhaps creative interpretation of the great works of world literature. We might call this 'the exegetical turn'.

As we have seen, he also terms this practice 'cultural discourse'. At times in his paper Hintikka associates this kind of textual exegesis with a specific kind of hermeneutic approach that he sees as obscurantist in that it seems to be concerned to simply layer interpretation on interpretation with no end in sight. I will come back to that. On the other hand, he embraces a more liberating conception of hermeneutics according to which ideas have to be in some kind of dynamic interplay with historical and cultural forms. Radically, and somewhat surprisingly, he sees the hermeneutics of questioning as practised by Heidegger – or Collingwood and this is an interesting innovation on Hintikka's part – as part of any proposed stimulus package for philosophy.

Philosophy and the history of philosophy: the hermeneutic approach

Although I greatly applaud Hintikka's stress on the importance of a proper, contextualized understanding of the history of philosophy, I think there is considerable tension in his account of the relationships between philosophy and its history that is to be found in his remarks on hermeneutics. As we have seen, Hintikka is both worried by a turn to dilettantism (a mere reporting of what philosophers in the past have said) and by the historical pursuit of problems for their own sake, but, somewhat paradoxically, he is also worried that philosophers are not historically accurate in their interpretation of other philosophers (e.g. Wittgenstein). In this case, he is worried that ancient philosophers are taken out of context and treated as having answers to problems they could not have foreseen. More needs to be done to clarify the different ideas concerning history of philosophy and its impact on philosophical practice that need to be teased out here. What is meant here by accuracy? Does it harbour a correspondence view of truth, whereby interpretations of texts can somehow be measured against the objective meaning of the text itself? Instead of a trajectory of understanding to an ideal goal, one could have an alternative view of hermeneutic understanding as aiming at enriched disclosure, much as different adaptations of a play may reveal that play in different lights, without there being any one standard against which all adaptations can be measured. Hermeneutical interpretation raises many complex and subtle problems here that I believe Hintikka underestimates in his paper.

Hintikka's discussion of hermeneutics is most welcome. He believes that hermeneutics offers a rich and fruitful approach although it is often pursued in a one-sided and even obscurantist manner. He does acknowledge the 'deep and suggestive' hermeneutic insight that reality may be approached like a complex text (and he refers to the history of that view as found in Hans Blumenberg in *The Readability of the World*). But he criticizes Heidegger for using non-discursive language to articulate textual meaning. Despite his appreciation of hermeneutics, I think Hintikka's approach is too limited. He appears to hold that there are absolute facts about history and that hermeneutics is a kind of relativism. He has a strong distaste for relativism and anything-goes pluralism. He speaks about 'soi-disant hermeneutical philosophers' rejection of discursive, especially the logical methods for the purposes of interpretation, as being ill conceived. He is clearly against the benign kind of hermeneutics – would he also be against Davidsonian principles of charity? He writes:

Everything should be permissible, in addition perhaps to the proverbial duo of war and love, also in hermeneutics, at least methodologically. Only in this way can the hermeneutical tradition carry out its own basic intentions.

His suggestion is that the history of philosophy is best pursued by identifying *errors* in previous philosophers' work and correcting those errors. Hermeneutics, then, for Hintikka, also targets truth. Hintikka tends to think of hermeneutics as akin to philosophers employing a meta-language. He thinks analytical tools can show the need to abandon meta-languages especially hermeneutical ones. But this is a very strange view of hermeneutics. Moreover, hermeneutics does not (except in certain Heideggerian formulations) reject logic. Hermeneutics reads contexts as interacting with the meanings. To approach a philosophical problem as a text is to appreciate the concealed dynamics at work, to understand how the concepts depend on certain metaphorical approaches, and so on.

Hintikka is frustrated by what he sees as a lack of historical and contextual accuracy in current philosophy and he instances Wittgenstein, who did not actually hold many of the popular positions that have been attributed to him by commentators. I greatly sympathize with Hintikka's general point; there is a mini-industry already of books and articles along the line of why Descartes is not a Cartesian, why Kant is not a Kantian, the myths of Hegel and so on. The popular misattribution of certain ideas to particular figures is a peculiar philosophical licence which appears not to trouble professional philosophers apart from those explicitly concerned with the history of philosophy. This peculiar licence is facilitated by the peculiar tendency of philosophers to generate adjectival forms of proper names, so we have 'Platonic theories of justice', 'Cartesian concepts of space' and so on. But this tradition has a very long history and it is hard to see how it can be uprooted. Creative misunderstanding and misinterpretation is at the very heart of philosophical hermeneutics (as Gadamer teaches us). Sure only of the paradigmatic cases of creative misrepresentation is Aristotle's selective treatment of the Pre-Socratics in terms of where they fitted in Aristotle's own scheme of the four causes. Creative misunderstanding has also been at the heart of the practice of poets in relation to the tradition in which they find themselves (Bloom, 1973). Clearly philosophical history has a different relation to its practice than say the relation of history of mathematics to the current practices of mathematics. Heidegger's notorious misreadings of the history of philosophy are certainly a creative tool that can be used as a lens to view these historical figures anew. It is one of the features of the history of philosophy that one cannot predict what new concerns will emerge. In this respect, the history of philosophy is akin to the history of mathematics, which on Jean Cavallès' creative reading consists in the generation of new concepts which cannot be predicted from within the existing concepts although they emerge dialectically from them.

Hintikka wants exactitude, historical accuracy and contextual sensitivity in the treatment of philosophical figures. He believes more careful and thorough study of the history of philosophy will

show the convergences and continuities between many figures who are more regularly opposed, e.g. Frege and Husserl; or Mach and Husserl. I am in agreement that both analytic philosophy and phenomenology involve the same kind of conceptual analysis, but I would like to hear more about what Hintikka thinks differentiates conceptual analysis from the kind of explication or clarification that he is unhappy about. Hintikka complains about the practice of philosophy as merely the explication of concepts and intuitions. As he puts it: ‘merely expressing oneself more clearly is not explication’. I think that’s right. But getting a grip on what genuine conceptual analysis of the philosophical kind involves is not that easy either. A few years ago I participated in a conference organized by Michael Beaney (2007) on the hundredth anniversary of Bertrand Russell’s *On Denoting*, an article often taken as one of the paradigmatic instances of the practice of analytic philosophy as conceptual analysis. What did ‘analysis’ mean? It is clear that there were very many different ways in which concepts could be analysed. The clarification of concepts was a goal of Husserl as much as Wittgenstein. But it often meant different things. I always insist that even if Wittgenstein was right and the meaning of a concept is its use, he ought to recognize that there are different traditions and histories of that ‘use’. A concept can have a different legacy of meanings in different traditions.

The problem with appeals to intuition

The concept of ‘intuition’ presents particularly thorny problems of interpretation in philosophy. Intuition is precisely one of those concepts whose meaning varies with each philosopher from Descartes through Kant, on the one hand, to Bergson, Husserl and others, on the other hand. Intuition can refer to common sense (as invoked by the empiricists), to folk psychological embedded notions (selfhood, personhood, intentional stance), to the outlook of what Husserl calls the pre-scientific, natural attitude with its assumptions about causality, temporality, spatiality and so on, or it can refer to the very framework of sensibility as in Kant. As part of his salvo against a certain kind of philosophical practice that measures what concepts mean by what kind of intuitions people have, Hintikka claims this strategy of appeal to intuition (whether simply accepted or whether documented through empirical study of intuitions) is ‘seriously flawed’. Hintikka issues a categorical imperative: “The entire process of using intuition ought to be stopped”. Intuition, for Hintikka, cannot be a source of evidence because in itself it has no evidential value. Hintikka points to the danger that one can arrive at a special kind of necessity through examining intuitions or that ‘we can reach truths by examining postulated possible worlds’. However, against Hintikka I do not believe proponents of intuitions claim that philosophers have special access to intuitions. Hintikka writes:

Intuition is best understood, not as a source of truths or of evidence but as a legitimate source of promising but usually tentative insights, not unlike C.S. Peirce’s ‘faculty of guessing right’.

Dennett, for instance, likes to use certain scenarios as what he calls an ‘intuition pump’. Writing in his *Elbow Room* (1984), Dennett says:

A popular strategy in philosophy is to construct a certain sort of thought experiment I call an *intuition pump* [...]. Intuition pumps are cunningly designed to focus the reader’s attention on ‘the important’ features, and to deflect the reader from bogging down in hard-to-follow details. There is nothing wrong with this in principle. Indeed one of philosophy’s highest callings is finding ways of helping people see the forest and not just the trees. But intuition pumps are often abused, though seldom deliberately. (Dennett, 1984: 12)

I agree with Hintikka in his attack on the peculiar manner of the invocation of intuition in contemporary analytic philosophy in particular. But there is a danger here of trying to call in what I

might call ‘the philosophy police’! Philosophers often feel they hold a licence (rather like a police badge) which gives them authority to determine who is or is not a real philosopher. ‘But that’s not philosophy’ is a common judgment that all professional philosophers have made at some point. But philosophers ought to be careful about attempting to legislate for and against particular practices that undoubtedly can be found legitimized somewhere in the history of philosophy. It is worth bearing in mind that Plato wrote both the *Theaetetus* (often considered an analytic exploration of the definition of knowledge as justified true belief) and the *Timaeus* (often considered a kind of myth-making that appeals more to Continental minds). In relation to ‘intuition’, it is a concept that has at least one mathematical meaning and also several meanings in philosophy. This is just one of those facts with which philosophy has to deal. One cannot say that one use of intuition is the primary sense and the others are to be measured against this primary sense. Philosophers are over inclined to treat all analogy as *pros hen* analogy.

The future of phenomenology

Following his discussion of problems inherent in the analytical and hermeneutical traditions, Hintikka includes a very interesting section (§ 5) on the future of phenomenology, one of the twentieth-century’s most popular and influential philosophical movements. He first of all – and this is indeed historically accurate – presents Husserlian phenomenology as a continuation of the project of Ernst Mach; one could also mention Richard Avenarius (2005) whose concept of the ‘natural conception of the world’ inspired Husserl’s concept of *Lebenswelt*. Although Hintikka does not point this out, Husserl explicitly cites Mach as one of the forerunners of phenomenology in his Amsterdam Lectures. Hintikka goes on to distinguish phenomenology from phenomenalism and to characterize phenomenology as a return to the given, understood as experience as it is immediately accessed in first-person awareness. Hintikka, however, points out both the problems with the notion of the given which are recurrent in twentieth-century philosophy, e.g. Sellars’ diagnosis of the ‘myth of the given’ (1997).⁷ But he emphasizes another obstacle to the phenomenological programme of grasping the given through some kind of transcendental reduction:

the massive fact is that contemporary neuroscience has revealed that the most primitive and apparently unedited data of consciousness are in reality products of an enormously complicated processing by our central nervous system.

Since there is a deep pre-conscious processing system at work in our experience (he cites Marr’s work on colour vision), there is no prospect of success from an inquiry that wants to remain with consciousness. According to Hintikka, phenomenology needs to entirely reverse its strategy:

Phenomenology can survive as a study of phenomena if those phenomena are thought of as the conceptual fabric of the output of human constitutive process, not of its consciously inaccessible input. The project of phenomenology should be reversed. Instead of trying to register the input into human cognitive processes, phenomenologists are well advised to study their output. Perhaps one could even suggest that this is what rightly understood phenomenology has always been at its best.

To give primacy to the ‘outputs’ of the brain means to pay attention to the phenomenology of colour vision for instance. For instance, phenomenology can be employed to describe what a system of colour vision is aiming at (complementing what Marr has discovered). The aim is to spell out conceptually ‘what our human cognitive systems have to accomplish’. But is it true that phenomenology tried to understand the inputs into human cognitive processes rather than the outputs? Even

talking about human cognitive processes here seems to be a slide away from the phenomenological approach that begins with lived first-person experience. We never primarily encounter cognitive processes but rather as Husserl states we are preoccupied with the world, its things and affairs. It is precisely in attending to how these are given (perceptually, for instance) that certain conceptual features of the perceiving consciousness can be ascertained (e.g. its temporal flow, its perspectival nature and so on). Indeed, in regard to the pre-conscious systems that Hintikka is discussing, it is precisely these features that Husserl (and later Merleau-Ponty) thought they could track in the elucidation of the layers of passively experienced meanings. Experience presents itself as already glued together through some kind of primitive association, where the like reminds one of the like and so on.

In explicating the meaning of phenomenology, Hintikka questions the identification of Husserlian *noemata* with Fregean *Sinne*. He writes:

Phenomenology has been interpreted as a theory of intentionality, that is, as a generalized meaning theory, partly analogous to Frege's. In this analogy, Fregean senses (*Sinne*) are supposed to correspond to Husserl's *noemata*. But in both cases the precise nature of these meaning entities is far from obvious. Thus a clarification of this crucial question is needed before we can understand the nature of phenomenology and to evaluate its prospects.

What kinds of entities are these 'senses'? Furthermore, Hintikka asks about the status of senses or *Sinne*: how – as abstract universals – they can be literally present in consciousness. Since a universal bears an intrinsic necessary relation to other universals (e.g. two must bear within it the relation to the cube root of eight) how can these appear in consciousness? This is a version of the problem of intensionality with an 's'. Hintikka does appear to endorse Husserl's conception of eidetic intuition based on sensory seeing of groups of fives ('One presumably acquires the concept of number five from seeing configurations of five objects. One can, in some genuine sense of 'see', see the number five'). But he thinks Husserl's account of *Wesensschau* ('seeing of essences') leads to it being seen as a mysterious faculty. In this regard Hintikka's critique of Husserlian *Wesensschau* is reminiscent of the logical positivist Moritz Schlick's much earlier critique (1918). Schlick also thought that seeing essences was a kind of intellectual intuition which was mysterious. He – like Hintikka – explicitly denies that intuition of any kind can yield knowledge. In a 1932 paper, Schlick puts it simply: 'Intuition is enjoyment, enjoyment is life, not knowledge' (1979: 323). For him, the pure content of intuitive experience was inexpressible:

The difference between structure and material, between form and content is, roughly speaking, the difference between that which can be expressed and that which cannot be expressed. (Schlick, 1979: 291)

And he goes on to say:

Since content is essentially incommunicable by language, it cannot be conveyed to a seeing man any more or any better than to a blind one. (Schlick, 1979: 295)

For Schlick, one can *see* a green leaf and *say* that one sees the green leaf, but one's saying it does not communicate the intuitive *content* 'green'. This is his position against phenomenology. Pure intuiting, for Schlick, could not have the status of knowing. Husserl, on the other hand, thought of intuition as an immediate non-inferential grasp of the meaning and truth of a complex situation or state of affairs that are built on what is sensuously given but which communicate something more, an *Überschuss*, or excess. To see that the paper is white is more than just seeing white paper. We

simply apprehend what's going on. These are the true matters themselves (*die Sache selbst*) and, for Husserl, intuition is simply what humans do all the time in cognizing their world. Much more needs to be said then about Hintikka's project for re-appropriating phenomenology as a methodology precisely by inverting it to move backwards from outputs to cognitive brain inputs. Let us turn now to another of Hintikka's provocative proposals.

Reviving logical positivism

Hintikka thinks we are now at the end of the reaction against logical positivism (the reaction being that of Popper, Kuhn and Quine). In this respect Hintikka is expecting a new positivism. Hintikka thinks that logical positivism lost steam because it did not make the breakthroughs it needed to make in, for instance, interpreting the latest sciences, e.g. fixing the meaning of general relativity theories. If it had made these breakthroughs, according to Hintikka, 'we would all be logical positivists now'. This in fact echoes what Husserl says earlier – phenomenologists for him are the true positivists. Hintikka does believe the initial logical positivist project failed because of the inadequacy of its conceptual tools and especially its logical apparatus. But this perspective ignores the central problem: the criterion of meaningfulness used by the logical positivists was itself nonsensical and hence unworkable. I believe it is precisely because of its inability to articulate moral and human values, rather than its inability to cope with general relativity, that logical positivism lost ground. As Husserl warned in his *Crisis*, positivism decapitates philosophy. It attempts to remove the 'human face' that Putnam seeks to restore to scientific theorizing. I believe *contra* Hintikka that it is unlikely that logical positivism will be revived or that Kuhn's work could be made better by more historical awareness of the development of science.

The meaning of philosophy: the legacy of the twentieth century

I would like to end by highlighting a final point of difference between Hintikka and myself concerning the interpretation of twentieth-century thought. There is no doubt that twentieth-century philosophy developed in the shadow of Kant and of transcendental philosophy. We continue to live in the critical turn. But we also live in the conceptual world opened up by the later Wittgenstein among others, where there simply *are* different forms of life and a plurality of language games that we are all caught up in. Pluralism is a new philosophical given and philosophy as a rigorous science has to adapt to the new landscape.

One threat to philosophy as a professional discipline has not been discussed but I believe it is deeply threatening to philosophy as the pursuit of truth and that is the attempt internationally to conceive of the evaluation and assessment of philosophical research as if it were a quantitative scientific research discipline. This is particularly prominent in countries where university research is largely funded by the state, as in most countries in Europe, in Australia. It is assumed that philosophy can be objectively assessed by 'results', that results are ranked according to importance and published accordingly in appropriately ranked journals, that philosophy departments can be objectively ranked in terms of some notion of 'excellence', that their graduate students can be ranked and so on. All of this in terms of crude quantification, impact factor, h-index and so on. I believe this pseudo-scientific attempt to measure the outputs of philosophy and its impact are going to be deeply detrimental to the practice of philosophy and must be resisted. Otherwise, genuine philosophy will be driven out of the academy and what is practised in the universities will be an irrelevancy, as it was in the time of Descartes who protested against the 'schools'.

Finally, I would like to end on a note of hope. As Hintikka knows through his service with the international philosophical community, it is important to recognize the truly global nature of

philosophy in our day. Philosophy, if we don't accept the view that it means strictly the Greek version, means different things in different countries. We need to consider the wisdom traditions of other cultures and to reflect on the wisdom tradition of our own culture. The next great challenge for philosophy is to become truly international; this will involve enormous hermeneutic challenges. While Western science is now a global phenomenon, it is clear that different cultures still have remarkably different and resilient intellectual systems and approaches that demand further study and reflection. This is the real future of philosophy.

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2. The contents of the ten volumes of the Proceedings of that conference can be found at <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/index.html>.
3. On Skinner and consciousness, see Baars (2003). For a recent resurrection of behaviourism, see Cotterill (2000).
4. Supposedly this notice was pinned to the office door of the American philosopher Gilbert Harman at Princeton. This story is recounted in Williams (2002). See also Romano (2003). For a measured discussion, see Sorell and Rogers (2005). In fact, Harman confirms he did indeed post such a sign on his door – a parody of Nancy Reagan's 'just say no to drugs' campaign.
5. Wright also defends a view called 'truth pluralism' that claims there is more than one kind of property of a proposition that marks it as true, see Wright (2001). In general, Wright argues that the constitution of truth is different in different discourses. For a critique of Wright's position, see Williamson (1994), who argues that a pluralist view of truth would make a nonsense of certain logical operations such as conjunction and disjunction.
6. See Lynch (2009) for an interesting account of truth as both a monistic univocal property and also as a set of plural properties. For an excellent critical discussion, see Tappolet (2010).
7. For a recent discussion of what exactly Sellars meant, see O'Shea (2002).

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