

THE ANALYTIC TURN IN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY: AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE — PART 2: ANALYTIC VERSUS CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

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This article continues a reconstruction of the analytic turn in American philosophy between 1940 and 1970. The first part argued that philosophers at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia sought to stimulate ‘humanistic’ approaches to philosophy in their hiring policies and tenure decisions, thereby marginalizing the ‘scientific’ philosophies that were in vogue among their students. This second part unearths some of the mechanisms that contributed to the analytic turn once the movement’s fiercest opponents retired. I argue that a new generation of deans and chairmen initially tried to craft ‘balanced’ departments but that various external variables—competition between elite universities, a shortage of graduates with training in modern logic, and the explosive growth of American higher education—eventually led to major policy shifts. Within a decade, I show, the distorted job market helped tip the balance into the other direction, strongly advantaging departments that had invested in analytic philosophy. By the late 1960s, the movement became so successful that the traditional division between humanistic and scientific approaches began to be replaced by a distinction between analytic and ‘continental’ philosophy, referring to the schools of philosophy were popular across the Atlantic. American philosophy, by then, just was analytic philosophy.

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1. Introduction

When Donald Davidson, chair of Princeton University's Department of Philosophy, sent his annual report to the university president in 1969, his department was widely considered the best in the country. Princeton had the highest-rated graduate faculty according to the American Council on Education (Roose and Anderson 1970, 50), and it employed some of the most sought-after philosophers in the United States: Davidson, Carl Gustav Hempel, and Stuart Hampshire were the stars of Princeton philosophy; Thomas Kuhn led the newly developed history and philosophy of science (HPS) program; and a talented group of junior professors—including Paul Benacerraf, Gilbert Harman, Thomas Nagel, Richard Rorty, and Thomas Scanlon—was rapidly rising through the ranks. In his report, Davidson proudly informed the president that it was “difficult to imagine how things could be much better: a philosopher at Princeton has, I am convinced, both better, and more congenial colleagues than he could find anywhere else.” The “only problem,” Davidson wrote, “is to keep it that way.”¹

Princeton's success was remarkable. The department, we have seen, had been in a state of deep crisis only 20 years before, when advisors had warned the administration that Princeton philosophy was in need of “radical improvement” in “the quality and the quantity of its personnel” (quoted in Verhaegh 2025a, 80).² Within two decades, the department had not only climbed the university rankings, it had also fundamentally changed its philosophical orientation.³ Whereas the previous generation of Princeton professors—Theodor Meyer Greene, Jacques Maritain, Robert Scoon, Edward Gleason Spaulding, and W. T. Stace—had represented various humanistic and religious philosophical movements (e.g., idealism, new realism, and Christian humanism), the department had turned into a bastion of analytic philosophy by 1969. In addition to Benacerraf, Davidson, Hampshire, Hempel, Nagel, Rorty, and Scanlon, the department also briefly employed Alonzo Church, John Kemeny, Saul Kripke, Robert Nozick, and Hilary Putnam.

Davidson's report offers some insights into the hiring policy that had triggered Princeton's transformation. In order to stay on top, the philosopher wrote, the department should cleave to its strategy “of putting considerations of *absolute*

1. Donald Davidson to Robert F. Goheen, June 26, 1969, *Confidential Report to the President for 1968–69*, box 14, folder 2, Office of the President Records: Robert F. Goheen (OPRG), Princeton University Archives.

2. Philosophy Department Advisory Council, *Report on Princeton's Department of Philosophy*, July 19, 1946, box 134, folder 20, Office of the President Records: Harold W. Dodds (OPRD), Princeton University Archives; Ralph Barton Perry to Harold W. Dodds, October 30, 1946, box 134, folder 2, OPRD.

3. See Cartter (1966, 29) for an overview of American Council on Education rankings between 1925 and 1964.

excellence before everything else . . . including ‘*balance*.’”⁴ Whereas previous chairs—in particular, Ledger Wood (1952–60)—had tried to maintain a “balanced distribution of interests,” especially “a balance between the historical and humanistic aspects of philosophy on the one hand and the logical and scientific on the other,” their successors chose a different strategy.⁵ When Gregory Vlastos replaced Wood as chair in 1960, he had vouched to turn a “fine department” into “the best in the country,” aspiring toward “true excellence” in his period as chairman.⁶ Within just a few years’ time, he and his colleagues had turned Princeton into a central hub for analytic philosophy in the United States.

‘Excellence’ and ‘balance’ are ambiguous standards. In a field as divided as philosophy, there is little consensus about what constitutes an ‘excellent’ philosopher. Although it is generally possible to distinguish between a mediocre and a thought-provoking work of philosophy, a phenomenologist, a Marxist, and an analytic philosopher will have very different views about who a university ought to hire if it wants the ‘best’ scholars in the country. Some philosophers believe that Carnap and Quine produced some of the most brilliant work of their generation; others feel that they turned philosophy into a “bleak and technical specialty.”⁷ Some believe that Jacques Derrida was one of the most fascinating philosophers of the postwar era; others are convinced that his work “does not meet accepted standards of clarity and rigour” (Smith et al. 1992).

‘Balance’, too, can mean different things to different philosophers. Whereas Brand Blanshard felt that Yale students would profit greatly from a “balanced department” in which undergraduates are exposed “in turn to a positivist, a Thomist, a Deweyite, and a Whiteheadian,” others believed that balance is achieved if a curriculum covers most philosophical disciplines regardless of intellectual orientation.⁸ While Davidson recognized that his department did not prioritize ‘balance’, for example, his predecessor Hampshire reported that Princeton had one of the “best balanced” departments in the country. Princeton professors mostly had an analytic approach to philosophy, but it had specialists in most philosophical disciplines—that is, logic, ethics, epistemology, philosophy of science, aesthetics, history of philosophy, and philosophy of mind.⁹

4. Davidson to Goheen, *Confidential Report to the President*, June 26, 1969, OPRG; emphasis added.

5. Ledger Wood to Robert F. Goheen, February 22, 1960, box 13, folder 7, OPRG.

6. Gregory Vlastos to Robert F. Goheen, June 4, 1960, box 13, folder 7; Gregory Vlastos to Robert F. Goheen, March 23, 1964, box 14, folder 1, OPRG.

7. Brand Blanshard to Albert Hofstadter, February 3, 1965, box 12, folder 229, Brand Blanshard Papers (BBP), Yale University Archives.

8. Brand Blanshard to A. Whitney Griswold, *Department of Philosophy: Annual Report, 1960–61*, box 34, folder 823, BBP.

9. Davidson to Goheen, *Confidential Report to the President*, June 26, 1969, OPRG; Stuart Hampshire to Robert F. Goheen, *Confidential Report to the President for 1967–68*, August 2, 1968, box 14, folder 2, OPRG.

In this article, I analyze the transformation of US philosophy through a study of the norms that philosophers and university administrators used in shaping departmental policies. Continuing the reconstruction of America's analytic turn, I examine changes in hiring strategies, tenure decisions, and curriculum designs at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia between 1940 and 1970. The first part of this examination showed how philosophers at these departments tried to promote a 'humanistic' conception of philosophy by limiting the role of the 'scientifically' oriented movements that were in vogue among students and junior philosophers (Verhaegh 2025a). This second part unearths some of the mechanisms that contributed to the transition once the skeptics of analytic philosophy began to be outnumbered. I argue that a new generation of chairmen, deans, and philosophy professors was initially keen to craft 'balanced' faculties (secs. 2–5) but that various external variables—competition between elite universities, a shortage of philosophers educated in the analytic tradition, and the explosive growth of American higher education—eventually led to policy shifts at major departments (secs. 6–8). By the late 1960s, the opposition between humanistic and scientific or analytic philosophy started to be replaced by a divide between analytic and *continental* philosophy, referring to the schools of philosophy that played a prominent role across the Atlantic (sec. 9). Although there were some universities that kept emphasizing balance, these mechanisms, I show, strongly advantaged departments that put most of their eggs in one analytic basket.

2. Princeton

In the 1950s, a new generation of chairmen took office at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia. Combined, Robert Scoon (1934–52), Charles W. Hendel (1940–46, 1949–59), and Irwin Edman (1945–53) had led these departments for 42 years, but they all retired or stepped down in a short period of time. Ledger Wood succeeded Scoon at Princeton, Brand Blanshard replaced Hendel at Yale, and James Gutmann took over from Edman as Columbia's 'executive officer'. All three would come to play an important role in helping their departments transition toward a new intellectual culture. Whereas the previous generation had been skeptical about analytic schools of philosophy—in particular, logical positivism—the new chairs were more open to having them represented on staff. Wood and Blanshard believed that a well-led department should be intellectually 'balanced' (secs. 2 and 3). Gutmann had a different approach but was pressured to change his policy in the late 1950s (sec. 4).

'Balance' was *the* keyword of Wood's period as Princeton's chair between 1952 and 1960. Shortly after replacing Scoon, who had sought to build up his department on the "humanistic side," Wood wrote that he wanted to "assure balance in

respect to the various point of view in the field of philosophy.”¹⁰ The discipline was divided between ‘humanistic’ and ‘scientific’ philosophers, and both approaches, Wood felt, should be represented in a proper department of philosophy. Indeed, when he looked back on his period as chair some years later, he was proud to report that he knew of few “other major philosophy department[s]” that had so “successfully preserved [the] balance” between the “scientific” and the “humanistic aspects of philosophy.”¹¹

At first, ‘balance’ meant that the department needed to invest in logical empiricism and analytic philosophy. Scoon and Stace, we have seen, had mainly hired ‘humanists’ in the late 1940s (Jacques Maritain, Walter Kaufmann, James Ward Smith, and Arthur Szathmary), such that scientific philosophers were strongly underrepresented when Wood took over. In his first years as chair, Wood mostly used the department’s Hibben Research Fellowship program—funded by a bequest from a Princeton philosophy alumnus—to bring over prominent analytic philosophers as visiting professors (*Princeton Herald* 1949). Between 1952 and 1954, Norman Malcolm, Carl Gustav Hempel, Friedrich Waismann, and Ernest Nagel all spent one semester at Princeton to cover the department’s teaching needs in logic, epistemology, and philosophy of science. In his hires, however, Wood and his colleagues took a more measured approach toward restoring the equilibrium. Between 1952 and 1957, the department appointed four junior philosophers: two with analytic backgrounds (Hilary Putnam and Douglas Arner) and two who had humanistic approaches to philosophy (John Yolton and Bernard Wand). Putnam was a student of Hans Reichenbach who specialized logic and philosophy of science, Arner represented the ordinary-language branch of analytic philosophy, Yolton was a humanist who specialized in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy, and Wand was a historian who had written a dissertation on Hume.¹²

Wood’s strong commitment to balance is also evident in his role in the search for two new senior professors when Scoon and Stace were approaching retirement age. The Princeton philosophers considered several “first rate” candidates—Max Black, Roderick Firth, Everett Hall, Charles Hartshorne, Carl Gustav Hempel,

10. Robert Scoon to Harold W. Dodds, June 4, 1946, box 134, folder 20, OPRD; Ledger Wood, “Memorandum,” December 28, 1953, box 372, Faculty and Professional Staff files (FPSF), Princeton University Archives.

11. Wood to Goheen, February 22, 1960, OPRG.

12. Ledger Wood, “Recommendation of the Appointment of John William Yolton,” December 22, 1952, box 580, folder “Yolton, John,” FPSF. Technically, Putnam was hired to replace John Kemeny, a logician who had been hired the year before but who had accepted an offer to become full professor at Dartmouth College. Kemeny was, strictly speaking, the department’s first analytic hire in the 1950s. See Donald H. Morrison to John Kemeny, February 9, 1953, box 134, folder 20, OPRD.

Ernest Nagel, Charles L. Stevenson, and Gregory Vlastos—to replace the two. But Wood and Princeton’s president Harold W. Dodds agreed that they should not just pick the two most distinguished candidates. One of the appointees had to be “a man who is broadly humanistic in his philosophical orientation,” and the other had to be “logical and scientific in his outlook.”¹³ After a careful search, the department settled on Vlastos, a Cornell University professor who specialized in ancient philosophy and who had strong “humanistic interests,” and Hempel, the logical empiricist who had felt underappreciated at Yale (see Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 5).¹⁴ When the hires were announced in 1955, the university made sure to inform the press that the candidates were selected with the intent to create a “well balanced philosophy department.”¹⁵ The *Daily Princetonian* (1955) reported that Vlastos was “principally interested in the humanistic side,” whereas Hempel focused on “the scientific and logical aspects of philosophy.” The *New York Times* (1955) wrote that the latter would teach “logic and philosophy of science,” whereas the former would study “the relation of philosophy to other humanities.”

Naturally, Wood’s hiring policy also affected Princeton’s philosophy curriculum. The department had always offered a large number of humanistically oriented classes, but some of the new appointees introduced courses with a more analytic focus. By 1958, upper-level undergraduates could not just choose among “American Philosophy,” “Philosophy of Art,” or “Philosophy of Religion” (taught by Smith, Szathmari, and Kaufmann) but they could also take “Philosophy of Mathematics,” “Advanced Logic,” or “Recent and Contemporary Empirical Philosophy” (taught by Putnam and Hempel).¹⁶ Most importantly, several existing classes changed in philosophical orientation too. Whereas Scoon’s “Theory of Value” course had introduced students to a Deweyan perspective, focusing on the “study of valuations in different spheres of interest” and “the social psychology implied in such valuations,” the class was remodeled as an “Ethics” course (taught by Arner) that aimed to analyze “the chief *concepts* used to explain and justify moral thinking.” Similarly, “Theory of Knowledge” changed from a course that focused on the “relation of knowledge to its object” to one that aimed to “elucidate the main *concepts* used in characterizing, analyzing, and appraising what we know and what we believe,” explicitly noting that the readings will be mostly “writings by

13. Ledger Wood to Harold W. Dodds, “Memo: Full Professorships in Philosophy,” December 22, 1954, box 134, folder 3; Ledger Wood to Harold W. Dodds, January 17, 1955, box 134, folder 3, OPRD. Women were still out of the question in the 1950s. The department’s first female hire was Margaret Wilson in 1971.

14. Wood to Dodds, January 17, 1955, OPRD.

15. Ledger Wood to Harold W. Dodds, December 23, 1954, box 134, folder 3, OPRD.

16. *Princeton University Catalogue: Undergraduate Issue, 1958–1959*, Princeton University Archives.

contemporary *analytic* philosophers.”¹⁷ In creating a more diverse teaching staff, Wood had also crafted a more varied curriculum.

3. Yale

Wood was not the only chairman to focus on balance. At Yale, Blanshard advocated a similar policy, writing that balance is an “essential” feature of a well-led department.¹⁸ The chairman said that every university should strive at “variety in its personnel” and that balance can be achieved by viewing every retirement as “a chance to increase . . . departmental range.”¹⁹ In an address to the Association of American Colleges, Blanshard argued that philosophy programs are “educationally deficient” if they are dominated by a single approach or tradition. He believed that students should be introduced to multiple perspectives and that an “ideal philosophy department . . . will represent no one school” (Blanshard 1961, 247–48). Hendel, Blanshard’s predecessor, believed that it would be a “mistake ever to plan an appointment in order to have some *school* of philosophy represented.”²⁰ In contrast, Blanshard explicitly defined Yale’s balance policy in school terms, writing that talented students “will profit greatly by exposure in turn to a positivist, a Thomist, a Deweyite and an Whiteheadian” (247–48).

Blanshard, like Wood, seems to have practiced what he preached. In his period as chair, the department hired five new people representing a variety of schools: Nuel Belnap, Alexander d’Entreves, J. B. Schneewind, Douglas Berggren, and Norwood Russell Hanson.²¹ In one of his annual reports to Yale president Whitney Griswold, Blanshard included a lengthy addendum on “departmental balance,” informing the administration that his colleagues unanimously supported his policy of “diversification” as “the right one to pursue.” Although it had been the professors’ strategy “to select new members primarily for their distinction of mind,” he and his colleagues had been able to build a well-balanced department by securing “able exponents of metaphysics, analysis, symbolic logic, existentialism, and historical scholarship,” thereby offering “an exciting variety” of perspectives to students of philosophy.²²

17. *Princeton University Catalogue: Undergraduate Issue, 1958–1959*; *Princeton University Catalogue: Undergraduate Issue, 1946–1947*; *Princeton University Catalogue: Undergraduate Issue, 1951–1952*, Princeton University Archives; emphases added.

18. Blanshard to Griswold, *Department of Philosophy: Annual Report, 1960–61*, BBP.

19. Brand Blanshard to Marjorie Nicolson, March 1960, box 24, folder 571, BBP.

20. Charles W. Hendel, “Letter to the Executive Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Science,” April 27, 1959, box 105, folder 10, Wilfrid Sellars Papers, Archives of Scientific Philosophy (WSP-ASP), University of Pittsburgh; emphasis added.

21. Hanson was approached by Blanshard in 1961 but started two years later, in September 1963.

22. Blanshard to Griswold, *Department of Philosophy: Annual Report, 1960–61*, BBP.

Blanshard's report shows that he and Wood employed similar norms in thinking about the future of Yale's and Princeton's Departments of Philosophy; however, the two chairmen actually had diverging views about the significance of analytic philosophy—in particular, the logical positivist movement. Blanshard was a well-known opponent of the Vienna Circle and had published various articles warning his colleagues that philosophy would “virtually cease to exist” (1952, 227) if the positivists had their way. He believed that philosophy should offer an integrated vision of reality—helping us better understand “the nature and demands of . . . democracy” and provide “direction and unity to life”—instead of formal tools to analyze clearly delineated, technical puzzles (Blanshard 1945, 10). Wood identified as a humanist but also sympathized with the positivists' views and approach. He had become closely acquainted with Charles L. Stevenson when he had spent a year at Yale in the early 1940s, and he had himself defended the view that values are ultimately subjective in origin.²³ Whereas Blanshard had played an important role in denying Stevenson tenure because his emotivist theory lacked “thorough grounding in philosophy” (see Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 5), Wood had always supported his friend and former colleague (Thilly and Wood 1956, 658), writing that Stevenson's work was a testimony to the “fruitfulness of positivistic analysis in clarifying non-cognitive as well as cognitive statements.”²⁴ The method of analysis, Wood felt, had demonstrated its use in various areas of philosophy—ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, epistemology—and should therefore be an important component of the philosophy curriculum.

Considering their opposing views about the significance of analytic philosophy and logical positivism, it should be no surprise that Blanshard's and Wood's policies played out in different ways. Although both chairmen emphasized the value of a balanced department, Blanshard's analytic hires (Belnap and Hanson) were much less ‘radical’ from a humanistic perspective than the positivists Wood appointed at Princeton (Putnam and Hempel). While the latter hired two relative hardliners and had to assure his president that the appointees would not just be working on “highly technical issues in logic and semantics” like other representatives of the “positivistic . . . school,” Belnap and Hanson were a relatively easy sell.²⁵ The former was a Yale graduate who questioned classical conceptions through his work on relevance logic (Belnap 1960); the latter had just published a book (*Patterns of Discovery*) that undermined some important presuppositions of positivist philosophy of science (Hanson 1958). Although both Belnap and Hanson

23. Ledger Wood to Robert Scoon, November 6, 1941, box 134, folder 19, OPRD.

24. “Summary of the Action Taken with Regard to the Status of Assistant Professor Charles L. Stevenson,” March 7, 1945, box 17, folder 381, BBP.

25. “Summary of the Action,” March 7, 1945, BBP.

identified as analytic philosophers, they could be easily viewed as representatives of a new generation of logicians and philosophers of science who challenged positivistic dogmas from within, helping Yale to become, in Blanshard's words, "a leader in the *responsible* and *critical* interpretation of science." Indeed, Henry Margenau had recommended Hanson to Blanshard precisely because he did not belong to the "camp" that was carried by "Carnap, Gödel, Hempel, Nagel . . . and others."²⁶

Blanshard and Wood did not just have a different approach. They also had different motives. Wood, we have seen, appealed to 'balance' in order to change the status quo. Princeton had mostly hired humanists in the years after the war, and Wood seems to have wanted to restore the equilibrium. Blanshard, on the other hand, mostly appealed to 'balance' to uphold Yale's status as a humanist school. He and his colleagues were "plagued by the thought that analytic philosophy would overtake Yale" (Kuklick 2004, 329) but also recognized that their treatment of Stevenson and Hempel (see Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 5) had damaged the department's reputation.²⁷ Hendel had told Blanshard about rumors that Yale philosophers did "not recogniz[e] clear philosophical talent when we have it" and suggested that they start considering "what other people think of us" if they were to preserve their status as one of the most prominent departments in the country.²⁸ Colleagues outside New Haven, Connecticut, were joking that the philosophers at Yale "were on the side of the angels," and so they started to look "for a good man . . . who would be *reputedly* an analytic or positivist philosopher" after they let Stevenson and Hempel go.²⁹ In summary, Blanshard wanted to both maintain the department's reputation as "a stronghold of metaphysics" *and* to get rid of Yale's image as an outdated department with a bias against analytic philosophy (1962, 429). 'Balance' was the perfect narrative to combine these somewhat conflicting aspirations. In promoting Yale as one of the most intellectually diverse departments in the country, Blanshard could communicate that he and his colleagues were open to a variety of perspectives while restricting the number of hires with an analytic profile. A faculty dominated by analytic philosophers, after all, is not a balanced faculty. During his period as chair, Blanshard went out of his way to warn university administrators about what would happen if they were to allow the analytics to run their departments. In his aforementioned speech for the Association of American Colleges, which aimed to update administrators about the present state of philosophy so that they could "plan wisely for

26. Brand Blanshard to Norwood Russell Hanson, May 16, 1961, emphasis added; Margenau to Brand Blanshard, April 11, 1961, box 105, folder 11, WSP-ASP.

27. Charles W. Hendel to Brand Blanshard, March 23, 1953, box 17, folder 382, BBP.

28. Hendel to Blanshard, March 23, 1953, BBP.

29. Hendel, "Letter to the Executive Committee," April 27, 1959, WSP-ASP.

the future” (Hesburgh 1961, 205), the Yale idealist cautioned his audience that a department of “analysts” will “count for little in the intellectual life of the community” (Blanchard 1961, 244), as it will “sit in some corner of the campus discussing its puzzles with a small coterie of specialists” (248). And in his report to Griswold, the chairman warned the administration that the people who “make it their main business to define terms . . . or to construct a ‘logic of science’,” will “not allow [philosophy] a large place among liberal studies.”³⁰ Whereas Wood appealed to balance to craft a more diverse teaching staff, in other words, Blanshard employed the same principle to keep things more or less as they were.

4. Columbia

It is not without reason that Blanshard’s campaign focused on provosts and college presidents. In the 1950s, university administrators still had an important say in decisions on “curriculum and staffing” (Hesburgh 1961, 205). After the professors at Princeton unanimously decided to pursue Hempel as one of their senior appointees, for example, Wood still had to persuade the dean of faculty that their candidate’s outlook was “more liberal and less doctrinaire than that of most representatives of [the positivistic] school.”³¹ Something similar happened at Yale when Hendel wanted to hire Arthur Pap, author of the aforementioned *Elements of Analytic Philosophy* (Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 8). Pap was supposed to be the department’s “avowed representative of ‘analytic philosophy’” to make up for the school’s damaged reputation on that front. But the provost responded “that the department was not to be permitted to increase the number of persons appointed . . . in the field of logic and the philosophy of science.”³² Nevertheless, the influence of university administrators was most evident at Columbia, home to Dewey’s naturalist school. When the New York philosophers refused to build a more balanced department, the administration forced them to alter their policy.

Columbia’s Department of Philosophy, we have seen, was not just a loose collection of philosophers. It was a tightly-knit school of thought (Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 7).³³ In 1953, when Edman stepped down as the department’s chair, 10 of 11 tenured professors were homegrown philosophers who identified as ‘naturalists’. They were either direct students of Dewey or Woodbridge, or they were students of Dewey’s or Woodbridge’s students. Most of them strongly opposed

30. Blanshard to Griswold, *Department of Philosophy: Annual Report, 1960–61*, BBP.

31. Wood, “Recommendation of the Appointment of Carl Gustav Hempel,” March 14, 1955, FPSE.

32. Hendel, “Letter to the Executive Committee,” April 27, 1959, WSP-ASP. See Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 5. Eventually, Pap was hired in 1957.

33. The following paragraphs are partly based on Verhaegh (2025b).

analytic philosophy and viewed the positivists as a technocratic “cult” that threatened to “kill the enterprise completely” (Edman 1934, 477; see Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 7).³⁴ Although Nagel regularly pleaded for hires in the analytic tradition, the majority of philosophers actively opposed “attempts to invite outsiders who would represent philosophical positions other than their own.” They worried that “new blood” would dilute Columbia’s philosophical heritage and preferred “promoting their own students” who had been raised in the naturalist tradition.³⁵

The department’s new chairman, James Gutmann, continued Edman’s policy in the second half of the 1950s. During his tenure as executive officer, the department hired eight new assistant professors—Arthur Danto, Sidney Gelber, George Kline, Stanley Newburger, Sidney Morgenbesser, Richard Kuhns, Frederic Sommers, and James Walsh—and seven of them had a Columbia PhD. The administration, however, believed that the department’s strategy was unsustainable and feared that it would diminish its reputation. A procedure in which a candidate’s quality is outweighed by their pedigree or scholastic affiliation, they reasoned, would eventually reduce a department’s caliber and standing. Marjorie Nicolson, chair of the faculty’s Committee of Instruction, repeatedly warned the provost in a series of increasingly alarming reports:

- January 1955: “Our Committee has been disturbed by the fact that this department is somewhat inbred—most of the older men having been students of Dewey, most of the younger men students of the older professors.”³⁶
- January 1957: “The Department of Philosophy . . . for many years has been top-heavy in the professorial rank. Even now they have nine full professors. They incur a certain amount of criticism because practically all these professors are Columbia trained and followers of Dewey. A department of philosophy—even more than most departments—needs representatives of many schools of thought.”³⁷
- May 1959: “Both at home and abroad several of us . . . heard the statement that Columbia [has] lost its place in the philosophical sun. A majority of senior professors in the department have little reputation outside New York. Most of them were trained by either Dewey or Woodbridge—to one or the other of whom they seem to have . . . a ‘father fixation’.

34. John H. Randall Jr. to Sidney Hook, October 25, 1951, box 22, folder 9, Sidney Hook Papers (SHP), Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University.

35. Marjorie Nicolson, *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Promotion of George Kline*, ca. May 1959, box 9, folder 6, Office Files, 1939–2006, Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs records, series 1. Columbia University Archives (OVPR-CUA).

36. Marjorie Nicolson to John A. Krout, January 21, 1955, box 379, folder 18, Central Files, 1895–1971, Office of the President records, series 1, Columbia University Archives (OPR-CUA).

37. Marjorie Nicolson to John A. Krout, January 25, 1957, box 379, folder 19, OPR-CUA.

They have not only been living largely upon the reputation of their teachers, but have tended to build up a department that is seriously inbred.”³⁸

Nicolson was not the only one. Nagel, we saw, had already protested the department’s policy in the mid-1940s, complaining that his colleagues were “so damned smug that [they think] all philosophical virtue has been conceived in Morningside Heights” (see Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 7).³⁹ By the late 1950s, his dissent had spread to a number of colleagues such that a “minority group” within the department felt that the school had “been steadily deteriorating” and that it had “lost the important position it once held in American philosophy.” This simmering conflict came to a head in May 1959 when this minority group took a stand and attempted to block the promotion of George Kline, one of the department’s most recent hires with a Columbia PhD.⁴⁰

To salvage the situation, Columbia president Grayson Louis Kirk installed a special committee, again led by Nicolson, to investigate the state and the future of the once esteemed Philosophy Department.⁴¹ Their report, which appeared in May 1960, describes several “long-standing” and “fairly deep-seated personality conflicts” and presents more details about the two warring factions within the school. A minority group consisting of Nagel, the logician John Cooley, the philosopher of science Morgenbesser, and Charles Frankel and Albert Hofstadter felt that a good department requires representatives of many schools of thought.⁴² The majority of philosophers, however, was “content with the *status quo*” and opposed “attempts to invite outsiders.” This conflict, in turn, was intertwined with a more deeply rooted disagreement concerning the nature of philosophy itself. Whereas the minority group complained that the department overemphasized humanistic approaches and “historical philosophy,” the majority complained that “the ‘analytical’ school” was “unsympathetic towards the history of philosophy” and emphasized “the philosophical fashions of the day: the philosophy of science and symbolic logic.”⁴³ Ironically, the first group was backed by Blanshard, who Nicolson approached as an external advisor. In a letter, the Yale professor informed Nicolson that the minority’s “charge of narrowness and unbalance is true,” although

38. Nicolson, *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee*, ca. May 1959, OVPR-CUA.

39. Ernest Nagel to Sidney Hook, November 25, 1946, 22.09, SHP.

40. Nicolson, *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee*, ca. May 1959, OVPR-CUA.

41. Marjorie Nicolson to Grayson L. Kirk, February 12, 1960, box 379, folder 20, OPR-CUA.

42. *Report of the Committee on the Future Planning of the Philosophy Department*, May 25, 1960, box 379, folder 20, OPR-CUA; Nicolson to Krout, January 25, 1957, OPR-CUA.

43. *Report of the Committee on the Future Planning*, May 25, 1960, OPR-CUA; Paul O. Kristeller to Philip Wiener, April 13, 1957, box 61, folder 3, Paul Oskar Kristeller Papers, Columbia University Archives. Nicolson, *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee*, ca. May 1959, OVPR-CUA.

he added that Nagel, too, was a student of Dewey and did “not seem philosophically to be of a very different stripe.”⁴⁴

To improve the department’s prospects, Nicolson and her committee recommended a number of significant reforms. Future upper-level appointments were “not [to] be left solely to the Department, because of [its] factionalism and imbalance.” And as several philosophers “felt a lack of leadership under . . . Gutmann,” the committee proposed that he be succeeded by Robert Cumming, who was liked by all members of staff.⁴⁵ Jacques Barzun, Columbia’s provost, received the report in May 1960 and quickly implemented most of the recommendations. Although Gutmann had only recently been reappointed as chairman, Cumming became the department’s new executive officer. Barzun promised Cumming “two new lines for full professors” but instructed him (1) to acquire “outside endorsement” for these appointments and (2) to use the new funds in such a way as to “preserve the ‘balance’ . . . between ‘analysts’ and ‘humanists’.”⁴⁶ The department, meanwhile, had a discussion about its “tendency to ‘inbreeding’ in the appointment of younger men” and decided to terminate the contracts of three assistant professors.⁴⁷ However, the first budget proposals after the investigation show that the philosophers had only partly understood the message. They had taken a vote on suitable candidates for the two new lines and decided to reserve one for a historian and one for a theoretical philosopher. They planned to approach, among others, Peter Strawson, Suzanne Bachelard, Elizabeth Anscombe, Bernard Williams, and David Pears for the theoretical position, but only one candidate survived consecutive rounds of voting for the position in the history of philosophy: Alan Gewirth, a Chicago professor with a Columbia PhD.⁴⁸

5. Inclusion and Exclusion

As the above reconstructions show, balance was a policy strategy that helped both philosophers and university administrators manage a deep-seated methodological

44. Blanshard to Nicolson, March 1960, BBP.

45. *Report of the Committee on the Future Planning*, May 25, 1960, OPR-CUA.

46. Richard Herpers to James Gutmann, December 5, 1958, box 437, folder 23, OPR-CUA; Jacques Barzun to Robert Cumming, June 22, 1960, box 9, folder 6, OVPR-CUA; Robert Cumming to Mullins, June 9, 1960, box 9, folder 6, OVPR-CUA; Robert Cumming to Ernest Nagel, May 16, 1960, box 1, folder 20, Ernest Nagel Papers, Columbia University Archives (ENP-CUA).

47. They were Newburger, Sommers, and Kuhns, who all held a Columbia PhD. Kuhns’s contract was eventually retained and he stayed at Columbia until 1993. See *Report of the Committee on the Future Planning*, May 25, 1960, OPR-CUA; James Gutmann’s letters to Stanley Newburger, Richard Kuhns, and Frederic Sommers, February 6, 1960, box 9, folder 6, OVPR-CUA.

48. Robert Cumming to John M. Mullins, June 9, 1960; Robert Cumming to Jacques Barzun, May 31, 1961, box 9, folder 6, OVPR-CUA.

conflict. Princeton, Yale, and Columbia promoted intellectual diversity for a variety of reasons, but all three connected it to the split between humanistic and scientific/analytic approaches to philosophy. After the quasi-boycott of the positivists in the 1940s, 'balance' presented a relatively stable compromise that kept both parties satisfied, at least for a brief period: analytic philosophers started to be better represented while their humanistic colleagues were protected against a hostile takeover. Moreover, 'balance' was a sufficiently flexible concept that it could be used for a variety of policy goals while maintaining an air of neutrality.⁴⁹

The idea that 'balance' was primarily a strategy to pacify two competing movements becomes even more plausible when one examines how narrow the departments' notion of intellectual diversity actually was. Many schools of philosophy were excluded in the chairmen's efforts to create diverse departments. It is striking, for example, that not one of the principal actors at Princeton, Yale, or Columbia said that a balanced staff should also include specialists in, for example, Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology, and non-Western philosophy. Wood exclusively focused on the distinction between humanistic and scientific approaches and seems to have believed that recent European movements were sufficiently covered in Walter Kaufmann's course on "Hegel, Nietzsche, and Existentialism."⁵⁰ Columbia had just one specialist in contemporary European philosophy in a staff of 16. Blanshard, finally, acknowledged that existentialism dominated philosophy on the continent but suggested that there were good reasons not to hire them: "We want our students to be able to write clearly and think straight, and these things the existentialists cannot teach because they seem never to have learned them. They may be profound and prophetic; they may be able to produce Delphic pronouncements on call from their cavernous subjectivity; but after all, the Delphic oracles were commonly enigmas, and philosophy exists to banish enigmas" (1962, 230). It is telling, indeed, that Blanshard exclusively listed 'American' movements when he said that Yale students would profit greatly from being exposed "in turn to a positivist, a Thomist, a Deweyite, and a Whiteheadian" (248). Whereas the chairman recognized that Marxist perspectives dictated the conversation "behind the curtain," he never attempted to appoint a philosopher with a Marxist background. Yale offered a course in Marxist theory, but it did not adhere to Blanshard's principle that philosophy professors should be utterly "convinced" (248) of the ideas they are teaching. Quite the contrary. The course Yale offered was titled "Critical Study of Marxist Theory," and it was not

49. The ideas of 'balance' and 'neutrality' seem to have resonated with the consensus culture of post-war American society. I thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

50. *Princeton University Catalogue, 1958-59*, Princeton University Archives.

taught by a Marxist but by a series of professors, directed by Hendel, who sought to submit the movement to a critical “evaluation.”⁵¹

There is an obvious reason why chairmen such as Blanshard were not eager to hire Marxist or existentialist philosophers. They were working in a political climate in which even the suspicion of communist sympathies could end an academic career. “Red hunters” inside and outside academia pressured universities not to hire philosophers with “un-American” views, and scientists who were suspected of being “fellow travelers” could lose their position. Ellen Schrecker (1986) has identified nine philosophers who were investigated by academic and governmental committees and has shown that several of them—including Barrows Dunham (Temple University), Herbert Philipps (University of Washington), and Stanley Moore (Reed College)—were fired because of alleged communist sympathies. Although many philosophers publicly or silently opposed this witch hunt—Blanshard, for example, published a letter in which he suggested that Joseph McCarthy had done more to help the Russians undermine America’s values than the cranks who actually supported communism—it was probably clear to them that it would not be smart to hire a committed Marxist, even if they had wanted to.⁵² The widespread focus on ‘balance’, therefore, was not just a strategy to manage a deep-seated methodological conflict. It also helped philosophers justify an exclusionary practice. Chairmen and administrators could say that they were committed to building an intellectually diverse department of philosophy without having to hire politically controversial candidates.

It is well established that anticommunist rhetoric disadvantaged Marxist and existentialist philosophy in the 1950s (Rayman 2010). It is equally clear that the Cold War influenced the internal development of analytic philosophy. Don Howard (2003) and George Reisch (2005) have shown how logical empiricism developed from a socially and politically engaged movement into a “scrupulously nonpolitical project in applied logic and semantics” (Reisch 2005, xiii). And Joel Isaac (2013) has reconstructed how military funding and anticommunist sentiments advantaged specific research programs within the analytic tradition. It would be an overstatement, though, to conclude that McCarthyism was a decisive factor in the analytic turn itself. The main philosophical opposition, even before the “Red Scare,” was the one between scientific and humanistic approaches, and neither of these groups was a target of Red hunters.⁵³ Princeton, Yale, and

51. *The Annual Report of the Department of Philosophy, 1950–51* and *The Annual Report of the Department of Philosophy, 1952–53*, box 17, folder 382, BBP.

52. *New York Times*, “Letter to The Times: McCarthy Activities Criticized,” June 11, 1953.

53. See Rayman (2010) for a similar argument. Rayman argues that while anticommunist hysteria disadvantaged what we now call ‘continental’ approaches to philosophy, it “had nothing to do with pragmatism’s fall from dominance” (107).

Columbia were not only explicitly committed to balance the two approaches, they also continued to hire humanistic philosophers throughout the 1950s.⁵⁴ While Princeton and Yale's archival records reveal that university administrators regularly dismissed candidates because they were secular or Jewish (see Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 6), there is no evidence that humanistic philosophers were treated with more suspicion than their scientific or analytic colleagues (*pace* McCumber 2001, 2016).

6. 'Excellence'

While most chairmen and university administrators tried to craft balanced curricula in the 1950s, some departments decided to get rid of the policy by the end of the decade. Ironically, it was Gregory Vlastos, Princeton's humanistic hire, who broke with the policy and turned his department into "one of the world's great centers of analytic philosophy" in just a few years' time (Soames 2014, 9). Although Ledger Wood was convinced that his successor shared his "ideal of a philosophy department," the Turkish American philosopher had different plans. In conversations with Robert F. Goheen, the university's new president, Vlastos expressed "an aspiration towards true excellence," asking him whether he could count on the administration's support for his ambition to turn an already "fine department" into "the best in the country."⁵⁵ His candidacy was backed by Hempel, who shared his colleague's ambitions to implement "the same standards" that had enhanced the prestige and reputation of Princeton's Departments of Physics and Mathematics.⁵⁶ Together, the Vlastos-Hempel tandem dropped Wood's strategy and replaced it with a new approach, summarized by Davidson's aforementioned observation that the department began to put "considerations of absolute excellence before everything else . . . including 'balance'."⁵⁷

Excellence and balance need not be conflicting values. There are outstanding scholars in every philosophical tradition, so it should be possible to build a

54. So did UCLA, arguably the university most affected by the witch hunt. Although the university was headed by Robert Allen, "America's leading academic Red Hunter" (McCumber 2016, 136), two out of five philosophers appointed had a broadly humanist approach to philosophy: Nathaniel Lawrence Jr., a process philosopher with a Harvard PhD, and Ernest Moody, a product of the Columbia school who had written a dissertation on Ockham under Richard McKeon.

55. Wood to Goheen, February 22, 1960; Gregory Vlastos to Robert F. Goheen, October 18, 1959, box 13, folder 7; Vlastos to Goheen, March 23, 1964, OPRG.

56. Carl G. Hempel to Robert F. Goheen, December 1, 1959, box 13, folder 7, OPRG.

57. Davidson to Goheen, *Confidential Report to the President*, June 26, 1969, OPRG; emphasis added. See Lowen (1997) for an analysis of how 'excellence' became an organizing principle for universities more generally.

department comprising world-class academics representing a variety of schools. Vlastos and Hempel, however, equated excellence with one particular approach to philosophy and turned the department into an analytic stronghold in just a few years' time. Princeton hired about a dozen new people in the first half of the 1960s, and all of them were either analytic philosophers (Paul Benacerraf, Richard Rorty, Joel Feinberg, Stuart Hampshire, Robert Nozick, Dennis O'Brien, George Pitcher, and Gilbert Harman) or philosophers or historians of science (Thomas Kuhn and John Murdoch) who were hired to help build the university's new HPS program, which had been initiated by, among others, Hempel and Putnam.⁵⁸ Alonzo Church, the logician who had always been kept at arm's length by Scoon and Wood (see Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 6) became a member of the department in 1962, and Vlastos went out of his way to get Saul Kripke, the "young genius" who spent two semesters at Princeton and was "flooded with offers."⁵⁹ By the end of his tenure as head of the department, Princeton had not only acquired some of the most sought-after analytic philosophers of the country, but Vlastos had built the most successful graduate school in the discipline. Princeton's application numbers almost doubled in just three years' time (from 68 in 1961 to 130 in 1964), and the program received "a larger number of first-class applications than any philosophy department in the country."⁶⁰ Many of these students—Jerry Fodor, J. J. Katz, Jaegwon Kim, Robert Nozick, G. H. Massey, Lawrence Sklar, Alvin Goldman and Robert Stalnaker—wrote dissertations on technical topics and became prominent analytic philosophers in their own right (Princeton University 2022).

It is no coincidence that Vlastos and Hempel were on the same page concerning the course of Princeton philosophy. Although the Plato specialist had been hired as a 'humanist', he propagated an analytic approach to the study of ancient philosophy. Like Ryle and Austin in England, Vlastos played a crucial role in promoting the use of analytic tools in the study of classical texts. His approach to ancient philosophy is now called the "analytic school" (Menn 2010, 194), and he was convinced that "the importation of techniques of logical and semantic analysis" would lead to a "better understand[ing] . . . of the problems Plato attempted to solve" (Vlastos 1978, vii). Vlastos's seminal paper on the *Parmenides*, for example, presented a detailed analysis of "the logical structure" of the "Third Man argument" (1954, 319) and has been called the "single precipitating event"

58. "History and Philosophy of Science," Historical Subject Files Collection, box 37, folder 5, Princeton University Archives. Richard Rorty and Dennis O'Brien identified as analytic philosophers in the first stage of their careers but shifted away from the tradition in the 1970s.

59. Carl G. Hempel to Alonzo Church, November 27, 1962, box 52, folder 1, Alonzo Church Papers (ACP), Princeton University Archives; Vlastos to Goheen, March 23, 1964, OPRG.

60. Vlastos to Goheen, March 23, 1964, OPRG.

(Mourelatos 2015, 3) of the analytic turn in American ancient philosophy. Considering his background, it should not be a surprise that the Harvard University graduate primarily focused on analytic philosophy in his attempts to turn the department into the best in the country.

It is unclear whether Wood and his colleagues were aware of Vlastos's analytic inclinations when they approached him for a position in 1955. At the time, the Cornell professor had published only one book—a humanistic study titled *Christian Faith and Democracy*—and his aforementioned paper on the Third Man argument had appeared only some months before.⁶¹ If they were not, it probably became clear to them during his first months at Princeton. Vlastos and Hempel had been colleagues before, teaching at Queens College in the mid-1940s, and immediately acted as a united front. They were both determined “to strengthen the department in the lower ranks” and helped Wood ‘re-evaluate’ the assistant professors and instructors in the weeks after they arrived. One of the victims of this reevaluation was John Yolton, who had been hired by Wood in 1953.⁶² They felt that his publications were competent but lacked “the originality of a first rate philosophical mind” and recommended not to promote him unless “very strong affirmative evidence” would present itself in the following year.⁶³ Yolton viewed the situation as “nothing short of insulting” and resigned shortly thereafter.⁶⁴

Although Wood was “impressed by the forthrightness and decisiveness of . . . Hempel and Vlastos,” not all his (former) colleagues were excited about their approach.⁶⁵ When W. T. Stace learned that Vlastos also did not want to promote two of the remaining humanists—Walter Kaufmann and James Ward Smith—because they were not “good enough to be promoted,” he wrote a letter to the dean to warn him about the situation. The professor emeritus applauded Vlastos's ambitions but worried that he would poison the morale if he pitched “his standards *too* high.” It would be an “injustice” to keep Kaufmann and Smith at the associate level as they had been around for more than 13 years and were “easily good enough for promotion” to full professor.⁶⁶ The president, however, believed that the issue was “none of Stace's business” because he was a retired professor, and backed Vlastos's decision.⁶⁷ A few years' later, Kaufmann and Smith did get their

61. Vlastos's analytic turn in the 1950s was likely inspired by Max Black, his former colleague at Cornell, whom he generously thanks in a footnote in his *Parmenides* paper (Vlastos 1954, 349n53).

62. Ledger Wood to Douglas J. Brown, October 13, 1955, box 580, folder “Yolton, John”; Wood, “Recommendation of the Appointment of John Yolton,” December 22, 1952, FPSE.

63. Wood to Brown, October 13, 1955, FPSE.

64. John Yolton to Brown, April 24, 1956, box 580, folder “Yolton, John,” FPSE.

65. Wood to Brown, October 13, 1955, FPSE.

66. W. T. Stace to Brown, June 13, 1960, box 13, folder 7, OPRG.

67. Robert F. Goheen to Brown, July 16, 1960, box 13, folder 7, OPRG.

promotions but only after substantial discussion among the Princeton philosophers. In Smith's case, for example, Vlastos added a statement that he and his colleagues felt that the editor of *Religion in American Life* was not one of the "leading contributors to his . . . field." The chairman recommended a promotion only on the condition that it would "not limit *in any way* the chances of a subsequent appointment at (or promotion to) this rank" of someone "who *is* a front-rank contributor to his field."⁶⁸

Naturally, the two humanists themselves were not too happy about the course of the department either. Kaufmann wrote a letter to the president, for example, warning him that Princeton philosophy was "in very great danger of becoming rather one-sided." Although he recognized that the department's "excellence seems to be generally acknowledged," Kaufmann worried that there were quite some areas "we tend to neglect," cautioning the president "in strict confidence" about this "very serious matter."⁶⁹ Vlastos, in turn, was not convinced of Kaufmann's scholarly virtues and qualified the philosopher as "a very sensitive man." When he had to recommend one of Princeton's philosophers for the McCosh professorship during his second term as chair in the early 1970s—the period in which he hired, among others, David Lewis and Richard Jeffrey—he wrote that he would like to have recommended Kaufmann but that his work was simply not up to standards: "Other things being equal I would have preferred to see the chair go to a humanist than to a logician. Unhappily other things are not equal. Though Walter has great talents and learning, his published work has been of very uneven quality . . . [something] we cannot ignore in our concern for Princeton's prestige."⁷⁰

7. Supply and Demand

Princeton was not the only university to hire a substantial number of analytic philosophers. The US student population grew from 2.6 million to 8.0 million between 1949 and 1969, and even the chairmen who maintained a strict 'balance' policy were desperately looking for talented graduates with a background in logic, philosophical analysis, and philosophy of science (National Center of Education Statistics 2025). Jonathan Strassfeld (2020, 850–51) has studied the growth of 11 prominent philosophy departments between 1945 and 1969 and estimates that these institutes grew from 6.3 to 17.3 assistant, associate, and

68. Gregory Vlastos to Brown, November 26, 1963, box 631, folder "Smith, James Ward," FPSF; emphasis added.

69. Walter A. Kaufmann to Robert F. Goheen, February 23, 1970, box 14, folder 2, OPRG.

70. Gregory Vlastos to Robert F. Goheen, September 18, 1971, box 14, folder 2, OPRG.

full professors on average. All of these departments had to hire multiple philosophers with an analytic profile to diversify their faculty, even if they, like Blanshard, wanted to limit the movement's influence.

The problem, however, was that there were few graduates with training in the analytic tradition. Because several schools had boycotted the positivists in the 1940s, there was a serious shortage of suitable candidates specializing in subjects such as logic and philosophy of science. Although there were dozens of students graduating in philosophy, only a small proportion of them had a background in technical subjects. Many students who graduated in this period were interested in analytic philosophy (see Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 3) but never received formal training. They employed a humanist approach because they had been educated in this tradition and wisely ignored subjects their teachers despised. Morton White, for example, was interested in philosophy of science but wrote a dissertation on the origins of Dewey's instrumentalism. In his autobiography, White talks about an "instinct for survival," suggesting that "many who might have written daring philosophical theses were led to the comparative safety of historical theses" (1999, 32).

As a result, even prestigious universities like Princeton, Yale, and Columbia had serious problems finding people when they did start to hire analytic philosophers. Blanshard, for instance, started a search for a promising philosopher of science when he became chair in 1959 but had great difficulties finding a suitable candidate: "For two years we have been searching the horizon for a young philosopher of science. . . . Good candidates in this field are not numerous, and we have gone over the list again and again. To several promising younger men we have actually extended invitations, but so high a premium is set on them in these days that in each case we were outbid."⁷¹ Something similar happened at Columbia when the department started looking for a logician. In a series of letters to Cumming, Nagel listed a small number of capable logicians but noted that they were "probably impossible to get." One of the candidates "eliminated himself by his salary request," another had unrealistic expectations concerning teaching load, and still another was simply "not available." In the end, Nagel had to admit that "no other names have occurred to me," noting that "good logicians who also have a genuine philosophical flair are not easy to find."⁷² The situation on the job market was perhaps best summarized by Herbert Feigl, at the time director of the Minnesota Center for Philosophy of Science. When he received a letter asking whether he could recommend *any* philosopher of science for an open position,

71. Blanshard to Griswold, *Department of Philosophy: Annual Report, 1960–61*, BBP.

72. Ernest Nagel to Robert Cumming, March 2, April 5, April 11, May 16, 1960, box 1, folder 20, ENP-CUA.

he responded that he was “very sorry” that he could not help his colleague: “The demand in this area exceeds by far the supply. I get dozens of inquiries every year. We just haven’t produced enough ‘offspring’.”⁷³

It is a fundamental economic law that prices go up when demand outweighs supply. Philosophers with formal training received “oodles of offers” and regularly used them to renegotiate their contracts and task assignments.⁷⁴ Hempel, for example, received increasingly generous offers from Harvard, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Washington, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and New York University, and his university continuously had to raise his salary, spurred by Vlastos who urged his administration to do “everything possible to keep [him].”⁷⁵ As a result, Hempel’s salary almost doubled during his first 10 years at Princeton. By 1966, he earned about 50% more than Wood, who had been appointed professor six years before him.⁷⁶ Kaufmann and Smith, both full professors at the time, earned even less than Wood and were closer to the salaries of Pitcher and Rorty, who were still associate professors.⁷⁷ And this is just salary. When Hempel received an offer including “minimal teaching obligations” from Rockefeller University, he was also able to negotiate an annual teaching-free semester, a reduced teaching load, and limited administrative duties. Whereas Kaufmann was a member of three departmental committees and taught five full courses per year, Hempel was excused from having to serve as chair and taught only one regular course and one graduate seminar.⁷⁸

The job market did not just benefit established analytic philosophers. Recent graduates and junior professors were “flooded with offers” too.⁷⁹ The logician John Kemeny was offered a full professorship just a few months after he had been appointed assistant professor at Princeton. Yale lost a bidding war over Alvin Plantinga, who decided to remain at Wayne State University after the department

73. Herbert Feigl to David Wieck, March 27, 1967, HF-04-89-01, Herbert Feigl Papers (HFP), Elmer L. Andersen Library, University of Minnesota Libraries.

74. Gregory Vlastos to Robert F. Goheen, May 24, 1966, box 14, folder 1, OPRG.

75. Gregory Vlastos to Robert F. Goheen, June 16, 1967, box 228, folder “Hempel, Carl Gustav,” FPSE.

76. Hempel’s salary grew from \$12,000 per year in 1956 to \$23,500 in 1966. The inflation in this period was just 19.1%. See box 228, folder “Hempel, Carl Gustav,” FPSE; Brown to Robert F. Goheen, May 5, 1965, box 14, folder 1, OPRG; US Inflation Calculator (<https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>).

77. Box 573, folder “Wood, Ledger”; box 269, folder “Kaufmann, Walter Arnold”; box 631, folder “Smith, James Ward,” FPSE. “Philosophy: Rockefeller Fund Release Time,” June 7, 1966, box 14, folder 1, OPRG.

78. *Princeton University Catalogue 1966–67* and *Princeton University Catalogue 1967–68*. Vlastos to Goheen, June 16, 1967; Robert F. Goheen to Brown, July 16, 1967, box 228, folder: “Hempel, Carl Gustav,” FPSE.

79. Vlastos to Goheen, March 23, 1964, OPRG.

offered him “massive baits” to stay. Joel Feinberg, a student of Stevenson, was offered full professorships at UCLA and the University of Texas, one of them at a salary similar to Hempel’s, just three years after he had been hired as assistant professor.⁸⁰ Nor was Princeton was an outlier. At Harvard, Quine’s salary increased with 213% in response to numerous outside offers between 1952 and 1965.⁸¹ He was guaranteed “the maximum salary” within Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences in response to an offer from University of California, Berkeley; he was promised never to have to serve as chair after he was invited to spend a year at Oxford University; he was named Edgar Pierce Professor after he had reopened negotiations with Berkeley; and he was able to negotiate a strongly reduced teaching load, limiting his assignment to just two courses per year, after he received five additional offers in the mid-1960s (Quine 1985, 229; Murphy 2012, 104).⁸²

Even at Columbia, where a majority of philosophers was deeply skeptical about analytic philosophy, the job market seems to have been a factor in determining the outcome of the power struggle. Nagel was the only full professor to regularly receive offers from prestigious universities, and his colleagues recognized his growing reputation despite their contempt for his focus on the “philosophical fashions of the day” (see sec. 4). When Nagel received invitations from “several colleges” in 1955, Gutmann went out of his way to improve his position so as to keep him in New York.⁸³ He created a special John Dewey Chair and approached a number of wealthy friends of the Columbia school to collect money for a fund that should guarantee Nagel “a salary worthy of John Dewey’s name.”⁸⁴ By 1960, when Nicolson published her report on the state of the department, Nagel earned substantially more than his humanist colleagues John Herman Randall Jr. and Horace L. Friess, who both had been hired 10 years before him.⁸⁵ The department faced the “constant possibility” that Nagel would leave and the philosophers knew that the school’s “reputation . . . would . . . be damaged immeasurably if [he] were to go.”⁸⁶ It is not unlikely, therefore, that Nicolson and the administration mostly sided with Nagel and his followers

80. Morrison to Kemeny, February 9, 1953, OPRD; Stuart Hampshire to Brown, December 20, 1965; Brand Blanshard, “Memorandum to Senior Professors,” January 3, 1961, box 105, folder 11, WSP-ASP; Gregory Vlastos to Brown, January 4, 1966, box 14, folder 1, OPRG.

81. W. V. Quine to G. P. Adams, March 15, 1952, box 40, folder 1129; W. V. Quine to Nathan Pusey, March 26, 1965, box 18, folder 479, W. V. Quine Papers (WVQP), Houghton Library.

82. W. V. Quine to Rogers Garland Albritton, June 9, 1967, box 18, folder 471; Franklin L. Ford to W. V. Quine, March 29, 1965, box 40, folder 1129; W. V. Quine to Manley Thompson, March 25, 1965, box 40, folder 1132, WVQP.

83. *Report of the Committee on the Future Planning*, May 25, 1960, OPR-CUA; James Gutmann to Walter D. Fletcher, January 21, 1955, box 437, folder 22, OPR-CUA.

84. Gutmann to Fletcher, January 21, 1955, OPR-CUA.

85. Cumming to Mullins, June 9, 1960, OVPR-CUA.

86. James Gutmann to Jacques Barzun, February 27, 1958, box 437, folder 23, OPR-CUA.

to keep the philosopher of science satisfied. The Nicolson committee concurred with the minority's "negative decision in the case of Professor Kline" and wrote a report that bolstered Nagel's enduring campaign to hire more outside philosophers.⁸⁷ Indeed, even before Nicolson began warning the dean about the course of the department, she had written a letter to John Krout, then vice president, urging "the administration to make every attempt to keep Professor Nagel at Columbia, even if this would result in a salary higher than any now paid to a member of the Faculty of Philosophy."⁸⁸

8. Winners and Losers

The analytic turn was, in part, a self-reinforcing development. In the 1950s and 1960s, analytic philosophers were in high demand, forcing departments to increase their salaries and research time to keep them satisfied or to persuade them to accept a position at their university. The analytics used their bargaining power to acquire increasingly prestigious positions, making them even more appealing to universities who wanted to hire 'excellent' scholars, and so on and so forth. Although the rise of analytic philosophy was, at bottom, a generational transition, temporarily stalled by the Great Depression and World War II (Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 5), this subsequent cycle of growing prestige and improved positions was made possible by the spectacular increase of the US student population and the concurrent shortage of graduates with formal training. Because departmental chairs were operating in a system in which (1) salaries were not capped by collective labor agreements, (2) competition between universities was fierce, and (3) academics were recruited through private offers instead of publicly advertised positions, analytic philosophers were able to make maximum use of the distorted job market, thereby creating a flywheel effect that gave the movement wings. University administrators saw the philosophers' market value as a measure of the quality of their work, and even chairmen who recognized that their humanist staff started to be seriously "undervalued" knew that their analytic faculty had greater "market value" and that they had to pay them "competitive salaries" if they wanted to retain them.⁸⁹

Departments that could not or would not compete quickly fell behind. Columbia wanted to invest more in logic and philosophy of science following the

87. Nicolson, *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee*, ca. May 1959, OVPR-CUA; *Report of the Committee on the Future Planning*, May 25, 1960, OPR-CUA; cf. Strassfeld (2022, 122–24) for a slightly different reading.

88. Marjorie Nicolson to John A. Krout, January 12, 1955, box 379, folder 18, OPR-CUA.

89. Stuart Hampshire to R. R. Palmer, August 12, 1967, box 269, folder "Kaufmann, Walter Arnold," FPSF; Davidson to Goheen, *Confidential Report to the President*, June 26, 1969, OPRG.

publication of Nicolson's report—in particular, when Friess, Gutmann, and Randall retired in the mid-1960s—but had great problems persuading candidates to come to Morningside Heights. Analytic philosophers associated Columbia with an approach to philosophy that had long “lost its place in the philosophical sun,” and the school had serious difficulties matching the candidates' financial demands.⁹⁰ The university was going through a financial crisis in the early 1960s, and this made it increasingly difficult to offer competitive salaries. The New York philosophers had a higher teaching load than their colleagues at other institutions, and they had to “cut down on the number of graduate students” in response to the university's “financial plight.”⁹¹ Gutmann had already worried that Nagel would be “invited to go elsewhere at a salary beyond that which Columbia can . . . afford,” but the university really started “losing ground” in the early 1960s.⁹² Whereas Princeton profited from a \$250,000 bequest to up its game, Columbia had problems keeping up with the “salaries” paid at “other institutions.” (Davidson 1999, 47).⁹³ They could not get John Myhill, a student of Quine, because of his “impossible financial conditions.”⁹⁴ They could not get the British analytics Strawson and Richard Wollheim, who turned down their offers straight away. And they could not get James Thomson, who preferred a position with a “negligible teaching load” at MIT.⁹⁵ After several of these “frustrated effort[s] to add competent outsiders,” Cumming simply had to conclude that his department could “no longer compete successfully for either staff or students.”⁹⁶

Yale was in a healthier situation financially speaking but refused to play along.⁹⁷ In the early 1960s, Blanshard was succeeded by John E. Smith, a philosopher of religion in the pragmatist tradition who was as skeptical about analytic philosophy as his predecessor. He characterized the movement as “naïve,”

90. Nicolson, *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee*, ca. May 1959, OVPR-CUA.

91. Robert Cumming to Ralph S. Halford, November 28, 1961; Robert Cumming to E. L. Phillips, December 7, 1961, box 9, folder 6, OVPR-CUA; Nagel to Cumming, April 5, 1960, ENP-CUA.

92. Gutmann to Barzun, February 27, 1958, OPR-CUA; Cumming to Mullins, June 9, 1960, OVPR-CUA.

93. Cumming to Mullins, June 9, 1960, OVPR-CUA. In 1961, Laurance Rockefeller, chairman of the department's advisory council, created a fund to improve Princeton's Philosophy Department after conversations with Vlastos and Goheen. The fund was mostly used to hire additional people and to release faculty time for research. Davidson later recognized that the fund had played a crucial role in Princeton's “recruitment of first-rate philosophers” in the 1960s. See box 508, folder 5 “Rockefeller, Laurance S / Philosophy Fund”; Donald Davidson to Robert F. Goheen, November 26, 1968, box 14, folder 2, OPRG.

94. Nagel to Cumming, April 11, 1960, ENP-CUA.

95. Cumming to Barzun, May 31, 1961; Robert Cumming to Ralph S. Halford, July 31, 1962, box 9, folder 6, OVPR-CUA.

96. Cumming to Halford, November 28, 1961, OVPR-CUA.

97. Hanson, for example, had a higher salary than any philosopher at Princeton. See Norwood Russell Hanson to John E. Smith, January 3, 1963, box 105, folder 11, WSP-ASP.

“scholastic” and “limited” (Smith 1957, 295) and doubled down on Yale’s humanistic approach and strong focus on preserving “a balanced department.”⁹⁸ When the university started to pressure Smith about the department’s “neglect of science,” he tried to accommodate the critique by proposing an alternative program in philosophy of science, based on the assumption that “methodological discussion has worn thin” and that philosophers at Yale should raise “more substantial questions about science and about its place in the modern world.”⁹⁹ It is unclear how the department’s analytic faculty responded to Smith’s leadership, but it is tempting to conclude that they did not feel appreciated. In just two years, Yale lost four (mostly analytic) philosophers to the University of Pittsburgh, a growing stronghold in philosophy of science led by Adolf Grünbaum, a former student who had completed his dissertation under the supervision of Hempel when he was still an associate professor at Yale. Wilfrid Sellars, the department’s most prominent analytic philosopher, accepted an invitation from Grünbaum to help him build one of the most successful philosophy programs in the United States. Nuel Belnap, Jerome Schneewind, and Alan Anderson followed him to Pittsburgh shortly thereafter. Meanwhile, Smith did very little to persuade them to stay. Belnap was one of the most promising logicians of his generation but was not offered a reappointment as assistant professor in the “second grade.” Schneewind was in the final year of his contract but could get no more than a one-year extension (Belnap 2014, 386).¹⁰⁰ In fact, it is likely that Sellars’s move was partly prompted by the department’s decision not to reappoint Belnap. The young logician received the news in December 1962, and Sellars accepted an offer from Pittsburgh a few weeks later, helping Belnap (2014, 385) to make the same move.¹⁰¹

After Sellars and his colleagues moved to Pittsburgh, Yale’s department fell apart into two opposing groups. Some professors felt that a pluralist unit should also include analytic philosophy. Others followed Smith’s line, previously introduced by Hendel, that Yale should resist the “vast secular movement to ‘logicise’ everything in the philosophical panoply of learning.”¹⁰² Robert Stalnaker, who started at Yale in 1967, remembers that the department was “seriously dysfunctional” and that the humanistic professors worried that Hanson and his group “were plotting departmental revolution” (Robert Stalnaker, email to author, November 15, 2023). Bruce

98. John E. Smith to Paul Weiss and Wilfrid Sellars, September 17, 1962, box 105, folder 11, WSP-ASP.

99. John E. Smith to Wilfrid Sellars, April 6, 1962, box 105, folder 11, WSP-ASP.

100. John E. Smith to Wilfrid Sellars, September 25, 1962, box 105, folder 11, WSP-ASP.

101. John E. Smith to Nuel Belnap, December 17, 1962, and Wilfrid Sellars to Kurt, March 3, 1963, box 105, folder 11, WSP-ASP; Carl G. Hempel to Adolf Grünbaum, February 8, 1963, Carl Gustav Hempel Papers, Archives of Scientific Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh.

102. Hendel, “Letter to the Executive Committee,” April 27, 1959, WSP-ASP.

Kuklick, who joined the department two years later, writes about two “hostile camps” and a growing “division between . . . warring bands” (2004, 332).¹⁰³ Smith and his followers started to obstruct the promotions of analytic faculty, and the others did the same for Yale’s humanist appointments, thereby creating an impasse “that prevented virtually any new hirings or tenurings for most of the 1970s” (Allen 1998, 52). What had started out as an attempt to preserve Yale’s identity as a center for humanistic philosophy had become an ugly “war over methodology” (50).¹⁰⁴ By 1972, an alarming report about the state of Yale philosophy concluded that the department lacked even one “truly distinguished member” (Howard R. Lamar to Kingman Brewster, May 10, 1972, cited in Kuklick 2004, 333).

Columbia and Yale could not or would not play along. As a result, their reputations declined as quickly as the analytic approach started to take over American philosophy. While Princeton had bet on the right horse and rose from sixth to second to first place in American Council of Education surveys between 1957 and 1982, Yale dropped from second to seventh to thirteenth place in the same period (Roose and Anderson 1970, 50; Jones et al. 1982, 148–58).¹⁰⁵ Columbia, which had been the country’s number two department in 1925, fell even deeper, dropping to fourth, to eighth, and to fourteenth place in the first decades after the war (Carter 1966, 29; Roose and Anderson 1970, 50; Jones et al. 1982, 148–58). Their positions were taken over by departments such as Pittsburgh, which heavily invested in analytic philosophy and rose from eighth to fourth to third place between 1964 and 1982 (Roose and Anderson 1970, 50; Jones et al. 1982, 148–58). Although Columbia and Yale were eventually able to appoint a few skilled analytic philosophers in senior positions—Isaac Levi and Howard Stein (Columbia), Ruth Barcan Marcus and Harry Frankfurt (Yale)—it would take both departments decades to regain their reputations as top departments of philosophy in North America.

9. Analytics and Continentals

Analytic philosophy did not just become America’s most prominent school of thought. It came to dominate US philosophy. The best ranked departments—Princeton, Harvard, University of Michigan, Pittsburgh, and Cornell—all had

103. Hendel already speaks about “an unhappy division” that has “infected the attitudes of different persons toward the whole logical discipline” in 1959; “Letter to the Executive Committee,” April 27, 1959, WSP-ASP. Van Fraassen has more positive memories about his period at Yale in the late 1960s but also recalls that there were “a lot of tensions of all sorts.” See Bas van Fraassen, interview by Fons Dewulf, January 2023.

104. Between 1957 and 1979, only 2 of 43 assistant professors hired by Yale were granted tenure (Strassfeld 2022, 226).

105. Princeton was ranked as the number one department in the 1969 survey. In 1982, Princeton shared the number one position with Harvard.

an analytically oriented faculty, and the country's most prestigious journals almost exclusively published articles in the analytic tradition. Strassfeld (2020, 864) estimates that in 1969, about two-thirds of the philosophers at 11 leading departments worked in the analytic tradition, whereas only a third of them specialized in history of philosophy (25%) or phenomenology and existentialism (10%). *The Philosophical Review*, edited by the Sage School of Philosophy at Cornell, shifted toward analytic philosophy in the early 1950s, shortly after the department hired Black, Malcolm, and Vlastos (Katzav and Vaesen 2017). The *Journal of Philosophy* followed in the mid-1960s, when Danto, Morgenbesser, and Walsh succeeded Cumming as editors in chief (Katzav 2018).¹⁰⁶ Even the prestigious Carus Lectures, organized by the American Philosophical Association (APA), clearly showcases the magnitude of the analytic turn. While the APA invited philosophers with a wide variety of backgrounds in the first decades after World War II, only analytics were invited in the 20 years thereafter.¹⁰⁷

As a result of this shift, the distinction between analytic and humanistic approaches quickly lost relevance. Although various philosophers kept working in the humanist tradition, they were pushed to the margins by the analytic mainstream. Pragmatist themes were still an important factor through the work of, among others, Nagel, Putnam, Quine, Rorty, and White, but all these philosophers approached pragmatist ideas through an analytic lens, as C. I. Lewis had done before (Talisce 2007, 133; Misak 2013, 155–56). The opposition between analytic and humanist approaches had played a crucial role in departmental decision-making in the 1950s and early 1960s, but the former had become so dominant that it started to be replaced by a new one: the now familiar opposition between analytic and continental philosophy. Whereas this distinction is virtually absent in departmental records up until approximately 1965, one can frequently find it in policy documents from the late 1960s and early 1970s.

106. *Report of the Committee on the Future Planning*, May 25, 1960, OPR-CUA. Nicolson's 1960 report suggests that there is a connection between the two. In their complaints about Columbia's strong focus on "historical philosophy," Nagel and his followers had pointed out "that the emphasis of philosophical learned journals has so changed during the last twenty years that it is rare to find a single historical paper in the *Philosophical Review*," thereby suggesting that the department's approach was outdated. A few pages later, Nicolson writes that the editorial policy of the Columbia-led *Journal of Philosophy* was a course of "dissension" too, noting that "various members" of the department "expressed concern of the deterioration of the periodical, which has lost the respected position it once held in the philosophical world." It is not unlikely, therefore, that Danto, Morgenbesser, and Walsh wanted to re-style the journal after *Philosophical Review*.

107. Between 1946 and 1965, the Carus Lecturers were C. J. Ducasse, J. Loewenberg, A. E. Murphy, George Boas, Brand Blanshard, Ernest Nagel, Stephen Pepper, and Richard McKeon. Between 1966 and 1985, the lecturers were Roderick Chisholm, Carl Gustav Hempel, W. V. Quine, William Frankena, Gregory Vlastos, Wilfrid Sellars, Donald Davidson, Paul Grice, and Hilary Putnam.

The category of ‘continental’ philosophy was not entirely new. Greg Frost-Arnold (2017, 22–23) traces the concept to 1953, when a large crowd of philosophers assembled in Brussels for the eleventh International Congress of Philosophy, one of the first intercontinental meetings in the years after the war. The conference attracted both prominent analytics (e.g., Ayer, Popper, Quine, Ryle, Strawson, and Tarski) and phenomenologists, existentialists, and Catholic philosophers (e.g., Etienne Gilson, Aron Gurwitsch, Hans Jonas, Ludwig Landgrebe, and Johannes Lotz)—and the former appear to have concluded that these continental movements were not to be taken seriously. Max Rieser wrote about a “deep cleavage between Anglo-American . . . and Continental philosophy” in a report about the conference for *Journal of Philosophy*, describing how the continentals aroused “bewilderment and incredulity among the English-speaking philosophers” (1954, 100–101). Walter Cerf published a piece about the meeting in *Philosophical Review*, describing a “disturbing lack of communication” between the “existentialists and empiricists” (1954, 280). Sidney Hook, in a letter to Nagel, finally signaled the participants’ unwillingness to acquaint themselves with other traditions. Commenting on a talk by Richard McKeon, who tried to reconcile the views of Sartre and Dewey, Hook noted that “all of our empirical friends—Quine, Tarski . . . etc. either don’t show up or walk around with a superior smile on their face saying it is not worth commenting on while the dyed in the wool obscurantists are convinced that they have unassailable positions.”¹⁰⁸

At first, the concept of ‘continental philosophy’ was of little use to chairmen and university administrators. It was a style of philosophy that was predominantly practiced on the other side of the Atlantic, and most departments, we have seen, were happy to exclude it in a period when ‘un-American’ schools of thought were viewed with suspicion (see sec. 5). The situation changed, however, when American universities were confronted with student protests in the late 1960s. The baby boom generation was not just worried about civil rights and the Vietnam War, they were also reading Hannah Arendt, Simone de Beauvoir, and Herbert Marcuse. A report on Princeton’s undergraduate program, for example, describes how their philosophy majors repeatedly “complain” that the department does not offer enough “existentialism, phenomenology, political philosophy, and philosophy of religion” and that “courses of a more abstract or technical nature” are “too dry.”¹⁰⁹ A second report, by the department’s advisory council, states that the “largely analytic orientation of the

108. Sidney Hook to Ernest Nagel, August 23, 1953, Ernest Nagel Papers, Archives of Scientific Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh. I thank Fons Dewulf for sharing this letter.

109. Scanlon and Ernest Nagel, *Report on the Undergraduate Program, 1969–1971*, box 14, folder 2, OPRG.

department” has become “a source of some dissatisfaction” and notes that the relevant committees have tried to adapt the curriculum in response to the “demand for work in recent Continental philosophy.” The problem, however, was that the Princeton philosophers were limited in their power to maneuver because they had only “few faculty members . . . equipped to teach [these courses].”¹¹⁰ Kaufmann, we have seen, had already warned about the department’s “one-sided” composition in a letter to the president a few years before, noting that his colleagues neglected “precisely those [areas] in which our undergraduates are most interested.”¹¹¹

In response to the pressure to update its curriculum, Princeton took a number of measures. It changed its course “Recent Philosophy” to “Recent Continental Philosophy” and hired Michael Sukale and David Hoy to have more expertise in phenomenology and existentialism. Moreover, Princeton approached Marcuse for a visiting position to increase its offerings in continental political philosophy.¹¹² The invitation to Marcuse, especially, was a sensitive issue because of his “fame as an ideological leader.” The president was reluctant to sign off on the offer but eventually approved the invite on the condition that he be appointed only “*on scholarly grounds*.”¹¹³ In 1973, the department added Arendt to its advisory council, inviting her to give a “disquisition . . . on her conception of the nature of philosophizing.”¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, Kaufmann started to receive offers from outside universities, and his colleagues had to launch a campaign to keep him at Princeton.¹¹⁵ Pitcher wrote that Kaufmann’s departure would be a “damaging blow to the department and to the university as a whole”; Sukale said that Kaufmann was “one of the foremost representatives of continental philosophy,” adding that “analytical philosophy has dominated the philosophical scene . . . for the last twenty years but [that] continental philosophy is right now coming back.”¹¹⁶ Suddenly, the tables had turned and Kaufmann was able to negotiate a “very substantial increase in salary” and “reduced teaching load.” His salary grew

110. Director’s Office, *Report to the Departmental Advisory Council 1971–73*, folder “Princeton–Advisory Council–Philosophy dept.,” Subjects, 1949–1976, Subject Files, 1963–1976, Carl Kaysen Records, Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton, NJ) (CKR-IAS).

111. Kaufmann to Goheen, February 23, 1970, OPRG.

112. Director’s Office, *Report to the Departmental Advisory Council 1971–73*, CKR-IAS; box 328, folder “Marcus, Herbert,” FPSE.

113. “Recommendation of the Appointment of Herbert Marcuse,” February 6, 1969; Robert F. Goheen to Richard A. Lester, February 11, 1969, box 328, folder “Marcus, Herbert,” FPSE. Marcuse did not accept but still gave the Spencer Trask Lectures at Princeton in March 1970 (*Town Topics* 1970).

114. Frederick Burkhardt to William G. Bowen, October 23, 1973, CKR-IAS.

115. David Malone to Walter A. Kaufmann, October 16, 1973, box 269, folder “Kaufmann, Walter Arnold,” FPSE.

116. George Pitcher to Aaron Lemonick, January 29, 1974; Michael Sukale to Aaron Lemonick, October 19, 1973, box 269, folder “Kaufmann, Walter Arnold,” FPSE.

from \$22,500 to \$29,000 in just two years' time and was described by the president as "the largest increase . . . for anyone at Princeton over the last few years."¹¹⁷

Considering Princeton's response to the student protests, it should be no surprise that continental philosophy became the analytic tradition's most significant 'other', replacing the old dichotomy between analytic and humanistic approaches to philosophy. Whereas the analytics had been able to ignore phenomenology and existentialism when they were still mostly foreign movements, they had become an internal threat by the late 1960s. A new rivalry was born, giving rise to a cultural divide that still shapes the discipline today. Although most analytic philosophers were willing to accept one or two new continental colleagues, like Sukale and Hoy at Princeton, they were not open to sharing the throne. As a result, the opposition between 'balance' and 'excellence' quickly began to be recast to accommodate the new division. Philosophers at Princeton were still pushing for excellence but now seemed to presuppose that continental philosophers could never meet the department's quality standards. In his 1970 report to the president, Stuart Hampshire wrote he was forced to find a compromise "between intellectual excellence . . . and the changing expectations of undergraduates" who wanted to be taught continental philosophy, thereby suggesting that continental philosophy was not 'excellent'.¹¹⁸ Philosophers at Yale, on the other hand, were still pushing for balance but now said that the department should be "composed in about equal measure of tenured members working in Continental philosophy" and "members dealing with issues in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy" (Robert Fogelin to Kingman Brewster, January 21, 1972, cited in Strassfeld 2022, 227). By then, the letter reveals, Anglo-American philosophy just meant *analytic* philosophy.

10. Conclusion

When Hendel, in his letter to Yale's executive committee, described the analytic turn he had witnessed during his 16-year tenure as head of department (see Verhaegh 2025a, sec. 1), he failed to offer his readers a diagnosis of how "the analytic method" had come to pervade "the philosophical literature." Hendel was a historian of philosophy who had published books on broad intellectual shifts such as the Enlightenment, but his 23-page letter does not include any historical analysis of the transition he had witnessed during his own

117. Gregory Vlastos to Aaron Lemonick, October 16, 1973; Gregory Vlastos to Walter A. Kaufmann, February 15, 1974; William G. Bowen to Walter A. Kaufmann, October 29, 1973, box 269, folder "Kaufmann, Walter Arnold," FPSE.

118. *Confidential Report to the President for 1969–70*, ca. June 1970, box 14, folder 2, OPRG.

career. The soon-to-be-retired philosopher wrote that schools of thought are “ephemeral” and characterized analytic philosophy as nothing but the latest trend in a long series. He saw the analytic turn as an intellectual fad that will pass “into history like the others” and described his younger colleagues as “those affected by the prevalent vogue.”¹¹⁹

As we have seen, Hendel was not the only philosopher to dismiss the analytic movement as mere academic hype in the 1940s and 1950s. The Columbia naturalists described logic and philosophy of science as “the philosophical fashions of the day”; Ralph Barton Perry talked about the “trend which takes the students at this time to . . . [the] positivists”; and a report on Princeton’s Department of Philosophy characterized the decline of the humanities as a temporary regression, noting that the university should “not accept the trend, but actively . . . combat it.” Even Rorty’s suggestion that analytic philosophy came to dominate American philosophy because US philosophers were simply “bored with Dewey and . . . wanted something new” (1995, 69; see 89) seems to suggest that there is little more to say about the analytic turn than that philosophical schools come and go.¹²⁰

Meanwhile, Hendel’s analytic colleagues could not be counted on to produce insightful analyses of the development either. They were all aware that their movement was rapidly growing, but many of them believed there to be a natural explanation: they simply had a superior approach to philosophy. Many of them accepted a version of a story published in *Princeton Alumni Weekly* in the same year Hendel wrote his letter. The analytic movement, the article explained, had developed a new, revolutionary approach to philosophy that would put an end to the pointless discussions of the past. Whereas philosophers “from Parmenides to the pragmatists” had “devoted most of their energies to constructing metaphysical systems,” the analytics had developed a new “conception of philosophy” that enabled them “to do philosophy more fruitfully, more exactly, and more intensively than ever before” (Bedau 1959, 11). No wonder US departments were turning analytic!

The reflections of Hendel and other first-hand witnesses do not offer us much insight into nature of the analytic turn. Even if the Yale professor was right that the analytic tradition will eventually pass into history as a twentieth-century fad, his account does not help us understand how or why the movement could become so popular so quickly. Nor does analytic philosophy’s own account contribute to our understanding of the intellectual shift. Even if we accept its premise

119. Hendel, “Letter to the Executive Committee,” April 27, 1959, WSP-ASP.

120. *Report of the Committee on the Future Planning*, May 25, 1960, OPR-CUA; Perry to Robert Scoon, April 24, 1947, box 134, folder 20, OPRD; Philosophy Department Advisory Council, *Report on Princeton’s Department of Philosophy*, July 19, 1946. OPRD.

that the analytics developed a superior approach to philosophy, we still need to answer the question how a movement with roots in nineteenth-century German, Austrian, and British philosophy became so prevalent in the United States in this particular period. Because the analytic movement is not a dominant force in all philosophical communities, it is an open question how to account for its development in North America.

Although it may be true that philosophers such as Hendel were too immersed in the debates of their time to provide us with a detached analysis of the sources of the revolution, their letters, memos, and reports do offer us a window into the presuppositions and conflicts of the period. In this two-part examination, I analyzed the records of Hendel and other key figures in American philosophy and argued that these documents help us understand the contemporary dividing lines of US philosophy; the professors' conflicting assumptions about which views ought to be represented in a philosophy department; and the demographic, economic, and socio-political developments that constrained them in their attempts to build such departments. I reconstructed the views and decisions of three generations of philosophers, chairmen, and administrators in three schools of philosophy—Princeton, Yale, and Columbia—and showed how they responded to the institutional challenges of their time. Countering overly crude accounts that reduce the analytic turn to the eclipse of pragmatism, the arrival of the positivists, or the effects of McCarthyism, I have tried to show that it is a mistake to try and seek a single explanation for the transition. Although I focused on just three departments, I hope to have demonstrated that the analytic turn was a complex and multifaceted development. While the transition was at bottom a generational shift, it is possible to identify a large number of factors that contributed to or reinforced the transition:

- Philosophy's declining role in American higher education
- Dropping student numbers and departmental budgets in the late 1930s
- The lack of junior positions related to the effects of the Great Depression and World War II
- The widespread opposition to logical positivism among the older generation
- The invention of new labels such as 'analytic' and (later) 'continental' philosophy
- Philosophers' attempts to construct 'balanced' departments
- Suppression of 'anti-American' movements during the Cold War
- Explosive growth of philosophy departments in the 1950s and 1960s
- The organization of the American academic job market
- The concurrent tendency to conflate a philosopher's market value with the quality of their work

The reconstruction shows that philosophers at Princeton, Yale, and Columbia faced similar challenges but that there were also local differences reflecting the universities' religious affiliations and the department's financial resources and varying philosophical roots. The outcomes, therefore, were also quite different. Whereas Princeton invested in analytic philosophy and became the country's number one department, Yale and Columbia fell in the rankings because they could not or would not follow their lead.

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