




# Grace de Laguna, Joel Katzav, and conservatism in analytic philosophy

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Received: 9 June 2023 / Accepted: 4 October 2023 / Published online: 24 October 2023  
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## Abstract

In this paper, we consider the implications of Grace Andrus de Laguna and Joel Katzav's work for the charge of conservatism against the analytic tradition. We differentiate that conservatism into three kinds: starting place; path dependency; and modesty. We also think again about gender in philosophy, consider the positive account of speculative philosophy presented by de Laguna and Katzav in comparison to some other naturalist trajectories, and conclude with a brief Australian addendum that reflects on a similar period in our own country which was also associated with the professional institutionalisation of analytic philosophy.

**Keywords** Epistemic conservatism · Analytic philosophy · Pragmatism · de Laguna · Katzav · Naturalism

We are grateful to Joel Katzav for his Lead Article on Grace Andrus de Laguna, an American philosopher whose academic career took in most of the twentieth century. Katzav's paper draws attention to de Laguna's important philosophical contributions, and usefully contextualises her work within and beyond the early period of the emergence of analytic philosophy, through to its more mature instantiation in the 1950s. This is something that we have previously written about (Chase, 2010; Chase & Reynolds, 2010, 2017), albeit neglecting de Laguna's work. In this article, we belatedly take up her work and Katzav's presentation of it, with a focus on

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Part of Article Symposium: Grace Andrus de Laguna's 1909 critique of analytic philosophy: presentation and defence (Joel Katzav).

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examining de Laguna and Katzav's shared charge of conservatism in analytic philosophy, which we differentiate into three kinds: starting place, path dependency, and modesty. We also think again about gender in philosophy, consider the positive account of speculative philosophy presented by de Laguna and Katzav in comparison to some other contemporary naturalistic trajectories, and conclude with a brief Australian addendum that reflects on a similar period in our own country, which was also associated with the professional institutionalisation of analytic philosophy.

## 1 Women in philosophy

It is appropriate to begin with some remarks about gender, since the marginalisation of women has been a blight on the history of philosophy and remains so today. Philosophy is still one of the most poorly represented disciplines in terms of the percentages of women in academic employment, especially at senior levels. Most of the top-ranked philosophy journals publish the work of very few women (or otherwise minority) philosophers. Many significant writings have been neglected by posterity and not received the attention they warranted. This is true across national and other borders, and in regard to both "analytic" and "continental" philosophy. Jacqui Broad (2003) gives an historical account of this in the seventeenth century, but to give an example in the period we are concerned with, in German philosophy the phenomenological aestheticist Edith Landmann-Kalischer has been neglected until recently (see Matherne, 2020). Beyond introducing us to de Laguna in this Lead Article, Katzav has co-edited a book on this very issue in American philosophy around the beginning of the twentieth century (Katzav et al., 2023).

There are two recently published books that are also worth drawing attention to, in the context of what Katzav maintains is at stake in returning to de Laguna's work today. Although they are comparatively well-known, four women challenged Oxbridge analytic philosophy from within, primarily during and after World War II: those philosophers were Philpa Foot, G. E. Anscombe, Mary Midgeley, and Iris Murdoch, who were afforded space and intellectual resources partly by virtue of the absence of the men during the war (see Lipscomb, 2021; MacCumhaill & Wiseman, 2021). This is also the period in question in de Laguna's 1951 paper on speculative philosophy that Katzav orients much of his analysis around. Although Foot, Anscombe, Midgeley, and Murdoch's criticisms of the analytic tradition were primarily about ethics, they also raised questions concerning the capacity of the dominant analytic methods to deal with major socio-political issues of the time.<sup>1</sup> They intended that criticism to apply to not only the primarily descriptive ambitions of ordinary language philosophy, but also to logical positivism and some versions of emotivism, where the world is envisaged as essentially empty of value, until human's impose value upon it. Admittedly, there is nothing explicitly epistemically

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<sup>1</sup> While some analytic philosophers like Russell and Schlick (and other members of the Vienna Circle) were highly politically active, of course, in such cases the connection between their activism and their philosophical methodologies was not especially apparent.

or politically conservative about this (and Murdoch also criticises Sartre's existentialism for related reasons). However, both positions have a tendency to remain distant from socio-political realities, ostensibly neutral on account of their strong fact-value distinction, perhaps thereby indirectly enabling a form of political or social conservatism. This sort of argument has been given regarding the post-war ascendancy of analytic philosophy in the USA (McCumber, 2016). At the very least, Foot, Anscombe, Midgley, and Murdoch saw the analytic tradition as insufficiently socio-politically *critical*, a point de Laguna also makes but primarily in regard to epistemology.

Did any of these four “metaphysical animals”, to quote the title of Claire MacCumhaill and Rachel Wiseman's book (2021), engage in speculative philosophy of the kind that de Laguna endorsed? This is an open question for us, and one that we offer to Katzav for consideration. We can note, though, that MacCumhaill and Wiseman's book title is suggestive, and perhaps with Midgley there is a speculative and ethical naturalism that is connected to de Laguna's conception, being empirically informed (especially in regard to evolutionary theory) but not necessarily overly deferential (thus conservative) with regard to well-corroborated scientific results and methods. We will turn to de Laguna's views on this shortly.

Katzav's presentation of de Laguna's work shares something else in common with the recent books on Foot, Anscombe, Murdoch, and Midgley. He revisits de Laguna in order to interrogate some of the commitments and preferences of analytic philosophy, commitments that might be taken for granted and which comparative exercises like this can help to reveal. As we argued in our co-authored book: “dialogue has the useful effect of keeping the role played by basic methodological commitments in each tradition highly salient. Without regular re-examination of these commitments, philosophy of both kinds can become insular and overconfident, and although each tradition certainly examines its own methods from the inside, the disconcerting or provocative voices of those who are completely unconvinced has obvious gadfly potential” (Chase & Reynolds, 2010, 255). In that spirit, we consider in what follows de Laguna's (and Katzav's) partial defence of speculative philosophy against the emerging analytic tradition, which is rebuked for its epistemic conservatism about the philosophical project.

## 2 Early and middle analytic philosophy: conservatism and exemplarity

Along with others, we have argued that the analytic philosophical movement changed its nature after the Second World War (Chase & Reynolds, 2010, 2017), defining a canon in influential anthologies, rediscovering Frege,<sup>2</sup> establishing new journals like *Philosophical Studies*, and taking a more exclusively analytic line in

<sup>2</sup> Eric Schwitzgebel discussed this in 2012 in his blog, *The Splintered Mind*. His graph of the contrasting citations patterns of Nietzsche and Frege is revealing: <http://schwitzsplinters.blogspot.com/2012/08/the-ghettoization-of-nietzsche.html>.

journal publication choices. We note that in other work, Katzav and colleagues trace some of these trends to earlier periods in other journals, notably *Mind*, where pluralistic publication practices were replaced by largely or wholly analytic publication practices (see Katzav, 2018; Katzav and Vaesen, 2017).

Although the title of Katzav's Lead Article directly references de Laguna's, 1909 paper, focussing in particular on a reconstruction of her meta-philosophical argument, the concern is to show the applicability of that argument to analytic philosophy as a form of criticism, and so to bring it into relation with de Laguna's own meta-philosophical paper of 1951, which was published alongside Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" and an overview of moral philosophy by William Frankena. At the time of de Laguna's first influential paper the term or designation "analytic" or "analytical" was not widely deployed.<sup>3</sup> However, Katzav suggests that the early critique of epistemic conservatism that she developed in that period and in dialogue with pragmatists and idealists holds not only for that period of the nascent self-consciously analytic movement (Russell and Moore, before Wittgenstein), but also for much of what follows afterwards as well, and for some specific philosophers thought to be paradigmatic for the emerging tradition, such as W.V. Quine and David Lewis. As such, there is quite a lot to consider: de Laguna's critique of modern philosophy (including early/emerging analytic philosophy) is developed into a critique of prominent figures across much of the history of the tradition, and Katzav's discussion of the subsequent literature on de Laguna's argument implies that this is a critique that holds for analytic philosophy today.

We will focus here on the way Katzav's reconstructed argument bears on the three figures he highlights within the analytic tradition. Katzav uses the term "exemplar" regarding Russell (as of *Our Knowledge of the External World*), Quine (as of "On What There Is"), and Lewis, the three analytic philosophers under consideration in his paper. One could argue for the exemplarity of these figures simply on the basis of "outside view" factors, such as their eminence and significance within analytic philosophy (i.e. an appeal to something like Glock's (2008) conception of the analytic tradition as constituted by ties of influence). Katzav points as well to an "inside" factor relevant to de Laguna's critique, the characteristic role played in the philosophy of each by common sense and conservatism with respect to established common or scientific opinion. Whether or not these three philosophers are sufficiently representative of the whole analytic tradition to allow conclusions to be generalised here, we do agree with Katzav that it is worth bringing de Laguna's critiques into relation to bear on their work, given their role as significant and influential figures in that tradition.

We can draw several threads out in the epistemic conservatism on show in the works of Russell, Quine, and Lewis that Katzav focuses on.

1. A major commonality across the three, as Katzav himself notes, is in the *starting place* of philosophical enquiry—philosophy beginning with Russellian "data",

<sup>3</sup> See the Google Ngram from Christoph Schuringa: <https://christophschuringa.medium.com/the-never-ending-death-of-analytic-philosophy-1507c4207f93>.

- vague matters of common knowledge, or with the Quinean “overall conceptual scheme which is to accommodate science in the broadest sense”, itself the simplest such scheme “into which the disordered fragments of raw experience can be fitted and arranged” (Quine, 1951a, pp. 16–17), or with Lewis’s “stock of opinions”. Russell defends his preferred starting place in 1914 on the basis that any errors of detail in the data have to be discovered and corrected by non-philosophical methods (Russell, 1914, p. 73). In 1918, he stresses instead the epistemic predicament, the need to start with what appears to one to be true (Russell, 1919, p. 497), a theme rather closer to the coherentism at work in Quine and perhaps Lewis (see Quine, 1951b, Quine & Ullian, 1978, pp. 64–82, Lewis, 1983, pp. x–xi, Lewis, 1986, pp. 3–5).
2. This involves philosophy, according to each, in a *path dependency*, which is itself distinctively conservative in nature because of the philosophical tools involved. This is the kind of critical philosophy that Katzav highlights—the philosophical projects we are to take seriously are to be arrived at from the chosen starting place by a kind of unpacking or criticism, using techniques of analysis. Russell and Quine conceive of their analytic projects as clarifying and making more precise the commitments we take on along with the data or conceptual scheme of science, and there are limits on where analysis of this kind will or can take us (though as Katzav notes, the result can be moderately unusual metaphysical or epistemological commitments hiding under the coverlet of ordinary commitments). Lewis is alive to the internal inconsistencies within our stock of opinions, but revision of these is also bounded by the need to stay on topic: “I am trying to *improve* that theory, that is to change it. But I am trying to improve *that* theory, that is to leave it recognisably the same theory we had before.” (Lewis, 1986, p. 134). The paths branch here, though, for different investigators, as Lewis also accepts a form of methodological relativism: how attached I am to the various items of opinion plays a role in which I am inclined to give up, and which to hang onto (Lewis, 1973, p. 88; see also the conception of philosophy in the limit in Lewis, 1983, p. x).
  3. Finally, there is a *modesty* claim at work, arguably a separate methodological commitment from the conservatism of starting place: for each of these figures, there are things we just cannot expect philosophy to do. For the Russell of 1914, as noted above, it arises from the conception of philosophy as a kind of generalised science rather than first philosophy—it is not suited to the correction of detail within the data, and does not provide a distinct “standpoint from which to criticize the whole of the knowledge of daily life” (Russell, 1914, p. 73). Quine clearly accepts the modesty claim (cf., e.g. Quine, 1951b), but his version of naturalism is rather different. As one of us has suggested elsewhere (Chase, 2010, 100), Quine’s commitment to the continuity of philosophy with science does not imply that each is constrained by the other. Rather, philosophical work is to be constrained by the sciences, and generally not vice versa. As it were, conditional relationships between empirical antecedents and philosophical consequents are vehicles for *modus ponens*, but not *modus tollens*. For Lewis, modesty is the *only* reasonable attitude for theorists who are aware of their limited powers (Lewis, 1986, pp. 134–135). That this modesty particularly attaches to philosophy, again

as a kind of deference, comes out clearly in Lewis's investigations into the mysteries of set theory, and the apparent attractiveness of simply doing without a commitment to classes:

Renouncing classes means rejecting mathematics. That will not do. Mathematics is an established, going concern. Philosophy is as shaky as can be. To reject mathematics for philosophical reasons would be absurd....That's not an argument, I know. Rather, I'm moved to laughter at the thought of how *presumptuous* it would be to reject mathematics for philosophical reasons. How would *you* like the job of telling the mathematicians that they must change their ways, and abjure countless errors, now *philosophy* has discovered that there are no classes? Can you tell them, with a straight face, to follow philosophical argument wherever it may lead? If they challenge your credentials, will you boast of philosophy's other great discoveries...? Not me! (Lewis, 1991, pp. 58–59).

In our view, de Laguna's position most directly challenges the second and third of these aspects of the epistemically conservative position of each of these figures. It does so primarily because of her conception of the role and nature of speculative philosophy, as a naturalistic project of enquiry with distinctive goals—not at all tethered by Quine's (or Lewis's) deference to the sciences, aiming at the development of substantive truths, and allowing for methods beyond those of analysis (de Laguna, 1951, pp. 16–17).

de Laguna's argument, as reconstructed by Katzav, is to the conclusion that philosophy “should not assume the unqualified truth of any body of established opinion but should include the critique of all such opinion” (Katzav 2023, p. 7). The argument sets out from two named premises: the claim that everyday and scientific knowledge is partially true in many ways (Partiality) and the claim that our acceptance of partial truths is conditioned by our purposes (Purpose Relativity). As Katzav notes in Sect. 4.1 (and an elaboration in Sect. 4.3), the argument also requires at least one further premise about the purposes of philosophy itself, characterised by Katzav as “the observation that philosophy has its own distinctive purposes” (Katzav 2023, p. 7). These include a synoptic goal of articulation of the partial facts of each special science, and the goal of providing frameworks for the sciences, developed from an epistemology that must be methodologically distinct from the sciences it takes as objects (Katzav 2023, Sect. 4.3). As Katzav notes, both goals can be found here and there within the analytic tradition. The distinctive feature he takes to be missing is the presentation of criticism from within “the independent perspective of philosophy” (Katzav 2023, p. 15). Offering this sort of criticism requires taking a perspective that goes beyond the special sciences, the perspective of de Laguna's speculative philosophy rather than the analytic critical project.

We are not sure that the considerations Katzav marshals in support of Partiality and Purpose Relativity constitute major points of difference with the three highlighted figures, although there are clear differences of detail. As Katzav

notes elsewhere, de Laguna anticipates Quinean confirmational holism, in the more nuanced “local cluster” kind that he moved to over time (Katzav 2022). Her account of the shifting development of categories in the sciences also recalls Quine’s account of the pragmatic development of natural kind terms, itself characterised in relativistic terms that are generally conformable to de Laguna’s (Quine, 1969). In similar fashion, it is not clear that Lewis would disagree with the claim that context dependency can lead to differing tolerances of inaccuracy (see Lewis, 1979).

We do agree, however, that the accounts of the three philosophers diverge at the point of the third premise, and we see this as the crux of de Laguna’s challenge to the points above. Indeed, since one could hold to a conservatism of starting place and path dependency without rejecting the conclusion of de Laguna’s reconstructed argument (for instance, through an immanent critique that arrives at a form of wholesale skepticism rather than at the more epistemically ambitious constructive projects of Russell, Quine, and Lewis), it seems to us that the issue is really with the epistemic modesty endorsed by each of Russell, Quine, and Lewis, and the associated deference to established opinion. Each could and plausibly does hold that the truths of the sciences or common opinion may well be highly fallible and provisional—and indeed qualified in various ways—without holding that philosophy is in a position to demonstrate this. This is exactly the denial of the speculative project that de Laguna sets out. If so, the disagreement Katzav is tracing can be traced to the deference on show in the official positions of the three as much as, or more, than any commitment to an identifiable body of unqualified truths.

Thinking further about this deferential claim, however, is it fair to say that scientific naturalists just accept a body of established knowledge about physics or mathematics? Perhaps it is, if we recall Lewis’ remarks about mathematics above. Still, there is plenty of work left for the philosopher to do on this conception, indeed a series of acute philosophical challenges remain: i.e. to explain (or explain away) ostensibly recalcitrant phenomena, as with what Frank Jackson and Huw Price called the “4Ms”—Mind, Meaning, Morality, Modality/Mathematics—or the experience of temporal passage, given considerations deriving from our best “four-dimensionalist” theories of physics, and special and general relativity (or quantum field theory in more recent times). This is not work done by the scientists themselves, by the mathematicians or physicists say.<sup>4</sup>

Is this speculative work? This is a difficult judgement call, and we are inclined to think it more a matter of a difference in degree rather than in kind. When Lewis was moved to accept the reality of myriad possible worlds, we might think it speculative, for example, his declarations about his own philosophical modesty notwithstanding. It was on the basis of considerations about the knowledge claims and commitments of the different sciences that metaphysical and epistemological views concerning emergentism were promulgated by the British (but actually Australian born and educated) emergentist, Samuel Alexander, amongst others. Bergson also famously

<sup>4</sup> There is, however, what Ryle calls the “philo-physicist”, who proffers philosophical views in an edifying tone of voice on their Sundays. In more recent times, it might be on their twitter feeds, day and night.

engaged with the sciences, doing influential work on evolution and natural selection in *Creative Evolution*, and even taking on Einstein in a series of debates about the nature of time, and what significance—if any—should be accorded to the lived-experience of *durée*. While many argue Bergson misunderstood the physics (special and general relativity), he influenced a lot of biological scientists in the first half of the twentieth century, Julian Huxley amongst them.

There is a difference (in degree) here: these more speculative naturalisms are not exclusivist in their commitments in the manner of the scientific naturalist who holds that *only* the methods of the natural sciences garner knowledge, or that *only* the entities/theories posited by our best sciences are real/exist, etc. It is, we contend, that sort of conservatism that is at stake for de Laguna and Katzav, and although it is an important trend in analytic philosophy, it does not seem to us to fully capture the tradition per se, even juxtaposed with another kind of deference to more common-sense/folkish views (we consider some possible counter-examples in what follows).

### 3 Speculative philosophy, pragmatism, and naturalism for de Laguna (and Katzav)

Although we appreciate the conservatism challenge that Katzav and de Laguna present, as well as the pluralist ideal of philosophy motivating it, there is not a lot of detail on the speculative philosophy that is framed as a desirable alternative. It is mainly defined by what it is not, i.e. not analytic philosophy, which on Katzav's view primarily means not theoretically conservative in the triple sense enumerated above. There are, however, some tantalising remarks that both make about speculative philosophy, and de Laguna lists her own exemplars of the approach that help to clarify it. She identifies (in her 1951 paper) figures from continental philosophy, like Bergson and Heidegger, and also pragmatists like Dewey and Peirce, as her exemplar speculative philosophers. Whether well-known analytic philosophers might also be so included is worth considering. Sellars strikes us as one possibility, and Olen (2017) and Katzav (2023) concede that Sellars shares some views with de Laguna, but there might be others.

Consider pragmatism, for example. de Laguna's own view on pragmatism, no doubt evolving over her career, is interesting. James and Dewey are criticised for their allegiance to what she calls the doctrine of immediatism (de Laguna, 1909). Her criticisms of this position appear to presage Wilfrid Sellars' much more well-known critique of the myth of the given,<sup>5</sup> which targets theories that posit sense-data that are meant to be both justificatory and non-inferentially given. The place of pragmatism within and beyond the putative “analytic-continental divide” is important (see e.g. Vrahimis, 2020). We only note here that perhaps some pragmatists

<sup>5</sup> Peter Olen (2017) notes that other aspects of her work are also closely related to Sellars, including a behavioristic account of language with social and collective coordination playing a crucial role. We have not engaged with de Laguna's work, *Speech and Development*, and note that Katzav does elsewhere (forthcoming).



(classical and contemporary) are further exemplars of the kind of approach de Laguna is endorsing, recognising that her “instrumentalism” and her use of evolutionary theory directly derive from some pragmatists. In this respect, we also wonder about the work in what could be called “empirically-minded” phenomenology—e.g. “enactivism”, in particular. This body of work, with authors like Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, Shaun Gallagher, and others, involves a serious engagement with a range of sciences (with Darwin, cell biology, cognitive science, etc.), but not strict deference. This work involves philosophically motivated reinterpretations of some central scientific findings in those sciences, albeit usually biology, psychology, and cognitive science, rather than physics and mathematics which were the focus of Lewis and Quine.

Returning to de Laguna, her conception of speculative philosophy is opposed to critical philosophy, even if it also incorporates it in some way. As Katzav frames it: “twentieth-century speculative thought characteristically claims an epistemic independence from established opinion, albeit one that is not based on a priori considerations and that recognises its own limited ability, along with that of all conceptual thought, to reveal the ultimate nature of reality” (de Laguna, 1951, pp. 9–11). What then is the nature of that independence? It seems that it is not meant to depend on philosopher’s intuitions or a priori judgements. It is also not meant to be Husserlian; de Laguna is quite clear about that in “Main Trends”.<sup>6</sup> Like some other philosophers today, she seems to hold that Husserl is vulnerable to what Sellars came to call the myth of the given, as sketched above. She also criticised Heidegger in other work, largely for his non-naturalism and the dualism his work maintains between the being of *Dasein* (roughly, human beings) and other animals. Again, though, this does not directly clarify the speculative aspect of her own thought, nor give details on the precise nature of her own allegiance to a version of naturalism (or not).

There is a risk with this kind of “neither-nor” approach, which pertains to Katzav’s paper and to de Laguna’s “Main Trends” (1951). We might perceive the problems with some of these exemplars of analytic philosophy on the one hand, and with a foundationalism/intuitionism on the other, but the antinomial structure of the argument makes it difficult to determine precisely what the resolution or synthesis looks like. In particular, we are not entirely clear on the nature of the speculative independence from doxa and expert opinion, given the relatively minimal epistemological framings of the position. Noting this as a desideratum for a theory, given certain other commitments, is not yet to justify it. In the reverse direction, we are also not clear on what constraints speculative philosophers are subject to (they are said to be critical *and* dogmatic, but the nature of the critical constraints is not outlined). If they are independent of common sense, and the expert knowledge of the special sciences, what is the nature of this epistemological access, the grounds from which their independence derives? It appears not to be foundationalism or rationalism, for de Laguna, which are the obvious

<sup>6</sup> de Laguna even asks: “Is it a travesty on Husserl’s philosophy to compare it to the judgment of Solomon which would settle the dispute by cutting asunder the living whole and awarding existence to natural science and essence to philosophy?” (1951, p. 12).

alternative trajectories. Noting the partiality of science does not address that, because what remains unclarified—as far as we can discern—is the scope and powers of philosophical reasoning that is presumably not, as Dennett notes and de Laguna would agree, papal infallibility (Dennett, 1991).

For de Laguna and Katzav, “speculative philosophy should go beyond established opinion in order to offer a vision of the ultimate nature of reality, one that includes an account of how the different aspects of reality uncovered by the special sciences fit together and of *how humans are part of nature and yet, at the same time, in a sense, transcend nature*” (Katzav Lead Article, c.f. de Laguna 1951) (our italics). Being part of nature and yet transcending nature seems to describe the “empirico-transcendental” doublet that Heidegger (and Foucault) describes. How does the speculation go beyond this dualism, which de Laguna herself had criticised? There is a recent tradition of speculative realism/materialism in continental philosophy that seeks to go beyond this, but de Laguna does not appear to be a rationalist in the manner of some of those thinkers, with their own aggrandising of mathematics (albeit idiosyncratically interpreted). She notes that “since speculative thought involves both criticism and dogmatism, it is uniquely committed to its own justification” (de Laguna, 1951, p. 18). Yet, the justification appears to remain primarily negative: that is, it is a form of philosophy without the ostensible weaknesses associated with analytic philosophy (conservatism of common sense or expert opinion) and foundationalism.

In this respect, we wonder if it might be helpful to consider the kind of methodological constraints science imposes on philosophy, for de Laguna and Katzav’s speculative view. Brian Leiter suggests that all versions of methodological naturalism are committed to emphasising some relationship of continuity between philosophy and science, and that they all repudiate first philosophy (Leiter, 2002, p. 3). de Laguna seems to agree with the latter claim, and does not consider her favoured speculative philosophers to be first philosophers.

Leiter adds that another requirement for being a methodological naturalist is to accept that philosophical *results* ought to be continuous with those of the sciences, that they are meaningfully constrained by them (cf. Leiter, 2002, p. 3). A lot hinges upon precisely how to understand this continuity, but Leiter has proposed that a speculative dimension might be retained within such a form of naturalism, insofar as philosophy might help to prompt innovation in science, with its efficacy being indexed to the future results of such sciences (not just present well-corroborated science). As he later clarifies, the “Speculative M Naturalist” essentially proffers proto-scientific hypotheses in advance of the relevant sciences being in a position to attempt to test them (cf. Leiter, 2013), though when relevant results do come in, they must have the capacity to force the revision or abandonment of the hypothesis. Leiter takes Hume and Nietzsche to be such Speculative M Naturalists. Perhaps this is also something like the position we might ascribe to de Laguna, or at least a potentially useful point of differentiation. Speculative M naturalism is perhaps becoming more common today. It may be akin to the “relaxed naturalism” of Dan Hutto and Glenda Satne, or the liberal position (but with a version of scientific realism) proposed by one of the co-authors of this paper (cf. Reynolds, 2018).

## 4 An Australian addendum

Finally, de Laguna and Katzav's work has prompted some reflections about the philosophical history of our own country, Australia, around the time of de Laguna's, 1951 paper. It is also around that time that a kind of speculative metaphysics, with meta-philosophical pluralism, was beginning to be overtaken by the mature analytic tradition in Australia. This is clear in the nature of the contributions in the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, and in reflections from that period by philosophers who would presumably be sympathetic to de Laguna's approach. We might think here of Max Charlesworth and the three Boyce Gibson's—the father, Boyce W., who was a translator of Husserl, and more particularly the sons, Alex (Sandy) and Quentin. They were in a rear-guard action against David Armstrong, Jack Smart, and others, the kinds of figures (like Quine) that Katzav and de Laguna would have criticised for conservatism. These important pluralist philosophers were expressing reservations about the emerging analytic tool-kit and methodologies.

But the pluralists in Australian philosophy did not carry the day. Armstrong and Smart rewrote curricula at the universities of Adelaide and Sydney in accord with the Feigl/Sellars collection *Readings in Philosophical Analysis* that became so influential in cultivating a canon for the emerging analytic tradition.<sup>7</sup> These Australian materialists were themselves disproportionately influential on analytic philosophy (and notably on David Lewis, who was a regular visitor to Australia). They were anti-idealism, with Armstrong semi-seriously arguing that: “the strong sunlight and harsh brown landscape of Australia force reality upon us”. By contrast, in 1962 Alex Boyce Gibson bemoans the “lack of seriousness in British philosophy”, which he argued deals with “trivialities... handled with immense skill. It is completely cut off from the literary and ideological currents of its time” (1962, p. 2, unpublished ms). His brother, Quentin, made a series of related remarks and interventions, seeking to promote a trans-continental conception of the philosophical task, extending to India and Japan.

## 5 Conclusion: pluralism and speculative philosophy today?

Today, there is increasing pluralism on the philosophical scene, at least notionally. This is partly because of cultural factors compelling analytic philosophers—like other researchers in the humanities and social sciences—to consider issues such as gender, race, and intersectionality, which were not on the analytic agenda through to at least the 1970s. The increased pluralism has also been fuelled by factors internal to analytic philosophy. In its early period, and in the late 1940s/1950s period of its institutionalisation, it presented as much more of a royal road for philosophical

<sup>7</sup> Sellars himself is thus institutionally important to analytic philosophy (also in other ways, of course, such as editing and inaugurating *Philosophical Studies*, and setting agendas for analytic work in philosophy of mind, epistemology, and other fields) even if the terms of de Laguna's critique may not neatly fit him as we have argued above.

progress. Even in the 1980s, it was described as *The Dialogue of Reason* (Cohen, 1986). Today, it is less radical in its claims because it has had many generations of disputation and complexity concerning the proper method of analysis, generations of accounts of its death since at least Rorty, and increased historical depth. In contemporary work today, Sally Haslanger (2020) can revisit the Frankfurt school (noting also that there was “analytic Marxism” in the 1970s). Jason Stanley’s epistemology now considers more applied issues like propaganda (2015) and others consider contemporary conspiracy theories.

That said, how many analytic philosophers today read speculative philosophers, say Deleuze or Badiou, in the way that de Laguna read science, analytic philosophy, continental philosophy, or pragmatism? Very few. We could also ask a similar question of continental philosophy, at least as it is practiced today in Anglo-American countries. How many continental philosophers read Lewis, say? Again, very few. The “divide” hence remains acute in an institutional, pragmatic, and sociological sense. By contrast, de Laguna read widely, showing knowledge of many diverse trajectories and with insightful criticisms of many. As such, we agree with Katzav that de Laguna presents an important model to consider for us today, perhaps especially in the light of the resurgence in liberal naturalisms that retain a more speculative ambition in at least some of their forms.

**Funding** Open Access funding enabled and organized by CAUL and its Member Institutions

## Declarations

**Competing interests** The authors have no relevant competing interests.

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