

AN INTERVIEW WITH BÉATRICE LONGUENESSE

Winter 2006

New York University

Each year The Dualist includes an interview with a modern philosopher chosen by the staff. This year, Béatrice Longuenesse graciously agreed to answer questions posed by The Dualist and by the Stanford Philosophy Department. Her philosophical work, drawing on concepts from both “analytic” and “continental” traditions, has focused on Kant, Hegel, and the concepts of subject, self, and personal identity. She has most recently published Kant on the Human Standpoint (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), and her Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

Paul Padovano:

What makes Kant a great philosopher?

Béatrice Longuenesse:

I think it’s a combination of factors. The first is the scope and ambition of Kant’s philosophical project. It covers fundamental issues in an amazing diversity of philosophical domains, from metaphysics and epistemology to philosophy of science, from moral philosophy and ethics broadly construed (including social and political philosophy) to aesthetic theory, from anthropology to moral psychology, and so on. Another factor is Kant’s relentlessly argumentative philosophical style, whether he is building his own arguments or attempting to tease out what he takes to be the (mostly sophistical, according to him) argumentative structure of the philosophical doctrines he opposes. Finally and most of all, Kant redefined for centuries after him the field of philosophy by looking for the sources of norms of truth and values (moral and aesthetic) in the workings of the human mind, even while rejecting any form of relativism. In doing so, he displayed more imagination than any other individual philosopher in coining concepts that have become, for better or worse, core elements in the common toolbox of philosophy: the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, the notion of a “transcendental deduction” (which in turn gave rise to the broader concept of “transcendental argument”), the notion of a categorical imperative, freedom as autonomy, aesthetic judgment as “merely reflective judgments”... This list is far from exhaustive. Kant’s writing style is often discouragingly heavy and complex. It is all the more remarkable that the concepts he coined should speak so powerfully to our philosophical imagination and intellect.

Johanna Wolff :

What do you take to be the most relevant aspect of Kant's theoretical philosophy for contemporary debates?

Longuenesse:

Many aspects of Kant's theoretical philosophy are relevant to contemporary debates. One prominent example is Kant's discussion of the nature of space and time and its relevance to Newtonian science, which has not been sufficiently explored in relation to contemporary discussions of substantivalism versus relationalism about space and time. I have learnt a great deal about this issue from the work of my former student Anja Jauernig, now an assistant professor at Notre-Dame. As far as my own current interests are concerned, the most relevant aspect of Kant's theoretical philosophy for contemporary debates is the philosophy of mind he develops as the backbone of his transcendental philosophy (namely his investigation into the possibility of objective knowledge). By Kant's philosophy of mind I mean, for instance, Kant's analysis of the relation between self-consciousness and consciousness of objects, his analysis of intentionality (his account of the directedness or "aboutness" of conscious states), the role he assigns to imagination and to concepts in sensory perception, his analysis of concept formation and of the relation between conceptualizing and judging, and of course his account of the ways in which we come up with the logical and epistemic norms for our cognitive activities. One may wonder whether these questions are not now more properly the domain of empirical psychology and cognitive science than of philosophy. But I think *relating* questions about the workings of our minds (which certainly have and should have empirical answers) to questions about the scope and validity of our claims to knowledge of the world outside us, is still the proper domain of philosophy. Kant's style of investigation, in this regard, is more relevant than ever.

Katherine Dunlop:

Your work has shown that Kant tends to use important terms, e.g. reflection, matter and form, and determination, in very different ways in different contexts. In your own work, what principles do you use to determine how one of these terms is used in a particular context?

Longuenesse:

I have no fail-proof recipe to offer that would help decide which use of a concept is in place in any given instance. There is, however one general principle one should always keep in mind, the principle of charity: if an argument seems to make no sense at all under one

interpretation of a given term, try to see if there is not another plausible interpretation that would allow the argument to make sense.

You cite two examples ("reflection," "matter/form") that raise different problems. "Reflection" is a term Kant inherits from the empiricist tradition (Locke and Hume on the distinction between sensation and reflection), where it means the perception by the mind of its own operations. But in the context of his *Logic*, and then again in the third *Critique*, Kant uses the term in a different sense (which he explicitly defines): reflecting is looking for a universal rule, or a universal concept, under which a particular instance might fall. Finally, in the first *Critique* he coins the term "transcendental reflection" to describe the investigation into the nature and origin of a representation (whether intuition or concept, sensible or intellectual). Which of these senses is relevant will in each case have to be determined by the context.

The case of "matter/form" is different. There I think there is just one meaning for the pair, which Kant explicitly gives (and which is classic since Aristotle): matter means "determinable," form means "determination." However, these are relational terms: the determinable is always the determinable *for a specific determination*, and conversely the determination determines *a specific determinable*. The difficulty here is to establish *which* determinable we are talking about, *which* determination we are talking about, and this again will depend on the context and on the particular argument under consideration.

Allen Wood:

Your work on Kant's table of categories is distinguished by the way in which it treats sympathetically the Wolffian tradition in logic and Kant's interpretation of it. For a long time, philosophers reading Kant, and even scholars of Kant's theoretical philosophy, have refused to take this path because they regard that entire way of thinking about logic as hopelessly outdated and just plain wrong. What would you say in response to someone who objected to Kant, and to your sympathetic interpretation of his theoretical philosophy, on those grounds?

Longuenesse:

This is a very important question. All too often, trying to free a philosopher from the past of what seems to us most obviously outdated in his way of setting up his problems ends up loading him with even worse presuppositions or arguments. The reading of Kant's metaphysical deduction of the categories that prevailed for a good part of the twentieth century is a case in point. In trying to understand Kant's table of judgments in the terms of contemporary logic, one not only found it hopelessly flawed, but also found Kant's whole argument

concerning the relation between functions of judgment and syntheses of intuitions utterly incomprehensible. In contrast, by taking up Kant's table in its own terms, I was able (I hope) to make sense of it *and* also to bring decisively new light on core arguments of the first *Critique* as a whole: not only the transcendental deduction of the categories, but also Kant's arguments for his Principles of the possibility of experience, as well as core arguments in the *Transcendental Dialectic*.

Now this would be a poor gain if it meant that the *Critique* itself is just as outdated as the outdated logic on which it depends. But I don't think that's true. Unfortunately I have to be too quick here. I'll just mention two points. 1) In accepting to take Kant's Logic as Kant understood it, I was led to consider seriously the relation between logical forms (as he understood them) and the ordering of the contents of our perceptions. In doing this I came very close to contemporary discussions of the conceptual or non-conceptual contents of our perceptual states, without sacrificing anything of Kant's original inspiration. Being historically accurate, far from leading me away from what is most relevant and interesting from a contemporary standpoint, on the contrary drove me closest to contemporary issues. 2) This, I think, raises a very important question: what if Kant was right to think that traditional Aristotelian logical forms were basically tools for ordering the contents of our perceptions? What would that tell us about the relation between contemporary, post-Fregean and post-Russellian mathematical logic, and Kant's very elementary logic as a mere exposition of rules for combining concepts as "general and reflected representations"? I try to address these questions in my more recent writings on Kant, and I have high hopes that younger Kant scholars such as Houston Smit, Lanier Anderson, Lisa Shabel, Daniel Sutherland, Timothy Rosenkoetter, and others, will be able to go much further than I have on these issues.

Alexei Angelides:

In your book, Kant and the Capacity to Judge, you give pride of place to Kant's writings on logic and, in particular, you give pride of place to his understanding of the notion of judgment and emphasize its role in the first Critique. The result is an interpretation that stresses the close relationship between the logical form of judgment and empirical cognition. How are we to understand the relationship between logical form and empirical cognition in this sense in light of Kant's seemingly strict distinction between analytic/synthetic, non-ampliative and ampliative cognition in the opening to the Critique?

Longuenesse:

This is one of the issues about which it is important to keep in mind the difference between Kant's logic and Fregean logic. Kant does not equate the domain of logic and that of analytic judgments. Kant's

logical forms of judgment are forms *both* of analytic and of synthetic judgments. In other words, they are common to judgments in which the predicate-concept merely explicates what is already contained in the subject-concept (analytic, “non-ampliative judgments”), and judgments in which the predicate-concept is related to a subject-concept in which it was not already contained (synthetic, “ampliative judgments”). When I stress the importance of logic for Kant’s argument in the *Critique*, what I mean to show is that for Kant, in understanding the nature of the logical forms of judgment we will also understand the nature of the syntheses of sensible intuitions necessary so that intuitions can be subsumed under concepts combined according to those forms. This of course does not make empirical judgments analytic, or non-ampliative. On the contrary, it shows how logical forms of judgment (in Kant’s sense), or rather the functions of the understanding whose discursive forms are the logical forms of judgment, are at work in guiding the syntheses necessary to the formation of (empirically) ampliative judgments.

Ludmila Guenova:

In Kant and the Capacity to Judge, you write of Kant’s internalized relation between empirical objects and their representations (17-21). On your account, when Kant internalizes the relation between a representation and its object such that he conceives it as a relation wholly within the sphere of representations, he thereby makes the first step toward solving the problem of how we could legitimately apply our a priori concepts to given objects. Later in the book, however, you mention another type of relation, i.e., the relation between things in themselves and empirical objects; or, more precisely, a correspondence of what is “outside me (i.e. distinct from myself and my representations) to what appears to me as a body in the form of space” (239). Although you do not directly address the debates over Kant’s distinction between phenomena and noumena, your discussion of these two types of relation seems to bear on the issue: First, it seems that, if Kant can internalize the relation between a representation and its empirical object, he can do so only at the cost of conceiving of empirical objects as mere representations. Second, you suggest that there are independently existing things, i.e. noumena, that in some sense correspond to these empirical objects, but which remain unknowable to us. But, if so, then such a reading of Kant comes close to attributing to him a certain metaphysical picture according to which there is a sharp division between the realm of our representations and the realm of things as they exist in themselves, and, according to which, moreover, our objective experience remains enclosed within the former, representational realm. Would this be fair characterization of your view?

Longuenesse:

Yes, I think it is a fair characterization of what I say in the book, although I am not sure I would call this a “metaphysical picture.” I would perhaps call it an epistemological account, or better, in Kant’s terms, a transcendental account: an elucidation of the conditions that make possible any knowledge at all. On this account, the distinction between things as they are in themselves and things as objects of experience (and as such, representations in us) is a distinction concerning *the way* we know things and *what* we know about them, not a distinction between two distinct worlds, or two distinct realms of entities. There is one realm of entities, “things.” These things are considered either “as they are in themselves” (and as such, unknowable), or “as they appear to us” (and as such, mere representations in us).

This being said, I must add that I am not satisfied with the way I presented the issue in the book. I think I presented my own notion of “internalization” too much as if it meant internalization *within the mind* (although I do not use the expression: I am at least cautious enough to talk of internalization *within the realm of representation*). Strictly speaking, for Kant the very notion of a *mind* as a particular kind of entity distinct from what is external to it, is itself an empirical notion depending on those very forms (forms of intuition, categories) that make possible the representation of any object at all. I think it would have been more helpful to define the notion of “internalization within the realm of representation” strictly in terms of “internalization to the *forms* of representation,” i.e. the modes of ordering of our representations: forms of intuition (space and time), forms of conceptualization (forms of judgment, categories). This would, after all, be in keeping with Kant’s description of his own idealism as a *formal* idealism. If I had stuck to this formulation, then I would have remained closer to the first option I offer as a possible interpretation of “internalization,” in the note you refer to in your question (fn.9 on p.20 of *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*). “Internalization within representation” means internalization within those forms (forms of intuition and logical functions of judgment), whatever the ultimate ground of the latter in the nature of things “as they are in themselves.” This clearly takes me closer to Allison’s “one-world” view. I still think, however, that Kant’s own formulations are woefully ambiguous on this point.

Guenova:

In Chapter 7 of Kant and the Capacity to Judge, you draw a distinction between judgments of perception and judgments of experience. If I am understanding that distinction correctly, judgments of perception occur when empirical representations are not yet subsumed under the categories,

although they are grounded on the transcendental unity of apperception and on the logical functions of judgment. Given this status, judgments of perception are merely subjectively valid. By contrast, judgments of experience occur when an empirical representation is brought under a determinate category; such judgments are objective in the sense that they are valid not only for me but for every possible epistemic agent. Such a distinction between judgments of perception and experience helps not only to resolve some apparent inconsistencies between the Prolegomena and the first Critique, it also seems to resolve a problem internal to the first Critique: namely, how could Kant allow for merely subjective representations if all representations must be grounded on the transcendental unity of apperception. I find this argument not only highly original, but also quite compelling. Yet I wonder whether you might elucidate the following points: (a) In what sense is there a “conatus” from judgments of perception to judgments of experience? (b) There seems to be a *prima facie* objection here, that, in the B-edition of the Transcendental Deduction, Kant does not seem to distinguish between empirical representations subsumed under the categories and those that are brought only under the unity of apperception. In fact, Kant’s strategy for deducing the categories relies precisely on the lack of such a distinction. Thus, in section 20, Kant appears to argue that if a manifold of sensible intuition is brought under the unity of apperception, then it must be brought under not only a logical functions of judgment, but also thereby determined under a corresponding category.¹ And it is by equating all of these together – i.e., the unity of apperception, the logical functions of judgments, and the categories – that Kant can then drive the point home that the categories must be objectively valid for any manifold of a sensible intuition. But this *prima facie* reading of Kant seems to run against your own. Could you briefly sketch an answer to such an objection?

Longuenesse:

a) I may be wrong, but I do not remember saying there is a *conatus* from judgments of perception to judgments of experience. What I do say is that before they are used as universal concepts under which objects are subsumed, categories are at work as forms of synthesis of what is given in sensibility, and as such forms of the *conatus*, or the effort, to form judgments (KCJ, p.196). This is what you describe at the beginning of your question: as I understand him, Kant claims that knowledge of objects depends on an ongoing effort to synthesize what is given in sensibility so that it can be reflected under (empirical) concepts

¹ Kant writes, “That action of the understanding, however through which the manifold of given representations (whether they be intuitions or concepts) is brought under an apperception in general, is the logical function of judgments/ Therefore all manifold, insofar as it is given in one empirical intuition, is determined in regard to one of the logical functions for judgment, by means of which, namely, it is brought to a consciousness in general. But now the categories are nothing other than these very functions for judging, insofar as the manifold of a given intuition is determined with regard to them. Thus the manifold in a given intuition also necessarily stands under categories.” (B143)

related according to logical forms of judgments. Now, is there a similar *conatus* from judgments of perception to judgments of experience? I suppose one could say that there is a cognitive drive, as it were, to relate any of our empirical judgments to other empirical judgments, according to universal laws. In other words, the very same effort at work in synthesizing and reflecting objects of intuition under concepts related in empirical judgments also strives to unify those objects of intuition in one space and one time, and to unify those empirical judgments under universal laws. It is when such unity is found (at least to some degree) that judgments of experience, subsuming objects under categories, are acquired. For instance, one progresses from the mere judgment of perception: "if the sun shines on the stone, then the stone becomes warm," to the judgment of experience: "the sun is by its light the cause of the heating of the stone."

b) Is the distinction I propose between two uses of the categories (one as mere guides for synthesis giving rise to judgments that are initially mere judgments of perception, the other as universal concepts under which empirical objects are subsumed, in judgments of experience) contradicted by §20 of the *Transcendental Deduction*? I don't think so. I do agree that the argument of §20 rests on the fact that such a distinction is *not* made. There it is enough, in order to justify saying that appearances necessarily fall under the categories, to argue that they appear as objects only if they are synthesized according to logical functions of judgment (see the text you cite in the footnote to your question: "the categories are nothing other than these very functions for judging, insofar as the manifold of a given intuition is determined with regard to them. Thus the manifold in a given intuition also necessarily stands under categories"). In the section that immediately precedes (§19), Kant was satisfied to give as an example of determination under the categories the judgment "It, the body, is heavy," as distinct from the mere customary association of the feeling of carrying a body (having a stone in one's hand, say) with the feeling of heaviness. In the *Prolegomena*, the judgment "it, the body, is heavy" could have been described as a mere judgment of perception that eventually becomes a judgment of experience only after I have determined to my satisfaction that it is valid not only "for me, in the present state of my perception, but for all, always," namely after I have subsumed the connection of objective determinations as experienced by me under a universal law. In §19 of the *Transcendental Deduction*, what Kant is telling us, then, is the following: *this judgment, even at its most particular, even when depending on my own individual experience of my own individual state, is already a determination under the unity of apperception precisely insofar as it is a judgment*, as opposed to a mere association of subjective representations in imagination. *Any judgment, even the most empirically subjective, is*

already a determination of the object of intuition in accordance with the categories. This is precisely the argument that is recapitulated in §20.

In short, I agree with you: §§19 and 20 do not need the distinction made in the *Prolegomena*. But I take this fact to speak *in favor* of my interpretation, not against it. The argument of the *Prolegomena* elucidates “from the ground up” how we move from empirically given perceptions to judgments of perception, to judgments making explicit use of the categories (judgments of experience). The argument of the *Critique* answers the *quaestio juris*: why is the move from mere judgment of perception to judgments of experience (subsuming logically connected perceptions under the categories) a legitimate move? Answer: because objects of intuition have to have been synthesized according to the categories (the universal concepts of synthesis originating in logical functions of judgment) to be objects at all (rather than mere associations in our imagination), even in what the *Prolegomena* called mere judgments of perception.

Johanna Wolff:

What is your next major project going to be about?

Longuenesse:

My next major project is about issues surrounding concepts of self-consciousness, self-reference, and personal identity. I was first led to these questions not only by my work on Kant, but also by my work on Hegel and by my interest in some areas of recent continental philosophy, e.g. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological investigation of the relation between perceptual awareness and consciousness of one’s own body. I then discovered some striking meeting points, on these issues, between the so-called “continental” tradition and some recent analytic approaches influenced by Wittgenstein, such as those of Strawson, Evans, and Shoemaker, to name only a few. My new project is thus not limited to Kant, although the starting point of my interest in the nature and role of self-consciousness was my work on Kant.

Graciela De Pierris:

In what sense is the Transcendental Self in Kant’s first Critique both transcendental and a self? The notion of a self seems to require the reference to a perspective of some sort or another. An empirical self has a specific spatio-temporal perspective, but the Transcendental Self is of course not identical with any particular empirical self. Further, the Transcendental Self cannot involve merely the condition of having some spatio-temporal perspective in general, since it does not involve any reference to space or time at all. Nor can

the Transcendental Self be a singular substance or any substance whatsoever. Moreover, since it is not merely transcendental but also a self, it cannot consist merely in the general logical conditions of the possibility of judgment -- it cannot have the utmost generality of Fregean logical conditions of judgment.

Longuenesse:

These are very important questions, which are at the core of the new project I just mentioned. Kant talks of “transcendental unity of self-consciousness” (e.g. B132), of the “identity of self-consciousness” and the “identity of the apperception of a manifold.” Each of these expressions captures an aspect of what you call, in your question, the “transcendental self.” Very roughly, I suggest that Kant’s idea is this: there is a peculiar kind of self-consciousness at work in any cognitive process. This is the consciousness of our own activity of binding together the intentional correlates of our mental states so that we can form concepts of them and thus come up with a unified image of the world. The unity of the binding process, governed by normative rules (rules of synthesis and rules of analysis giving rise to judgments, as I explained above in my answers to Ludmila’s questions) depends on, but also makes possible, the consciousness of the *identity* of the binding agent. Only if I am conscious myself as *one* agent binding all of my representations so that they belong (as intuitions) to one space and one time, and (as thought under concepts), in one conceptual space, can I come up with a unified and consistent image of the world of objects surrounding me. This identity of the binding (combining and reflecting) agent is expressed by the self-referential thought (concept) ‘I’ that is the subject of the thought (judgment) “I think.” In this context, ‘I’ does not refer to a particular empirical entity but only serves to express the dependence of the unity of the thinking process on the numerical identity of the thinker. This is what Kant means when he says that “I think” expresses a mere form of thought. “I think” expresses the unity of the thinking process, which is premised on the thought of the numerical identity of the thinker, while at the same time making possible the consciousness of the identity of that thinker.

I don’t think appealing to logical conditions of judgment in Frege’s sense is helpful here. For Frege would of course refuse any intimation that what he calls “judgment” has anything to do with mental processes, let alone mental processes organizing perception. Kant defines logic as the science of the rules of the understanding. As such it has everything to do with laying out the norms at work in our binding concepts so that we come up with combinations of them such that they can make a claim to truth.

You’re right, the term ‘I’ that appears in that context does not refer to anything located in space and time. When I say “I think this is not the same rose, but a different one,” I am not thereby saying that

the proposition “this is not the same rose, but a different one” is true only for a particular thinker located at a particular point in space and in time. I am expressing the fact that a process of thought has led to this conclusion, a process led by one and the same thinking agent, myself, accountable for the consistency of my thoughts. Nevertheless, there are contexts in which the fact that this agent *can itself be empirically identified as an object located in space and time* is made explicit, and relevant to the statement under consideration. If I said, for instance: “I think this is not the same rose I saw a minute ago under the veranda, but a different one,” the referent of ‘I’ in its second occurrence is identified as a particular person (a sentient body) that was itself located in the veranda a minute ago.

Kant has extraordinarily interesting things to say about the relation between the use of ‘I’ in “I think” and the use of ‘I’ as a term that refers to an empirically given entity. Take for instance the *Third Analogy of Experience*, when Kant writes that my own location in space is what makes me able to perceive things as simultaneously existing and located with respect to one another (A213/B260). Or, consider *Third Paralogism of Pure Reason*, when he discusses personal identity (A362-66). I cannot develop these points here, I have already gone on too long I am afraid. I have discussed them in some of my more recent papers and they belong to areas I intend to explore in future work.

Allen Wood:

You are a philosopher trained in the “continental” tradition, but you seek to engage with philosophers in the Anglophone “analytic” tradition on a broad range of issues in philosophy of mind and philosophy of language. Where would you locate the most fruitful points of engagement between the two traditions? What do you think each has to teach the other about those points?

Longuenesse:

I have never been all that convinced by the so-called division between “two” traditions. As a student, one of my first ground-breaking experiences was reading Kant and becoming interested in Kant’s philosophy of science and transcendental philosophy. This experience was probably a major factor in my skepticism about the relevance of such a division: Kant is obviously a common ancestor to both “traditions.” But of course your question does not concern the Kantian legacy, but more broadly the different styles of philosophy and what they might have to bring to one another. I think the strong point of the “continental” tradition is a greater attention to history: both to the ways in which philosophy itself has a tradition, and to the ways in which philosophical arguments can be influenced by factors beyond the philosopher’s

rational control or even awareness. The strong point of the “analytic” tradition is its attention to logic, conceptual clarity, and argument. I suppose one could name many philosophical issues about which the two approaches could learn from one another. The area in which they most strikingly converge today, I think, is precisely the one I am currently interested in (so maybe I am being partial here!): problems concerning consciousness and self-consciousness, self-reference, personal identity.

Wood:

For a long time, in English speaking countries Jacques Derrida has had great influence on many fields in the humanities, especially in literary studies, but he is widely regarded with disdain by English-speaking philosophers, especially those working in the analytical tradition. Do you think they have misunderstood him or missed something valuable in his work to which they should pay more attention? If you think their opinion of him is unjustly low, what can you say to them to convince them to rethink that opinion?

Longuenesse:

I should first warn that the part of Derrida’s work I am reasonably familiar with is his early work: his translation and commentary of Husserl’s *The Origin of Geometry* and the two books that first made him famous, *Writing and Difference* and *Grammatology*. To answer your question properly, one would need to take into account the enormous body of Derrida’s later work. But even just looking at those earlier works, I think one can detect the source of some of the conflicts between Derrida and Anglo-American analytic philosophy. The conflict is perhaps best captured by the contrast between two words: deconstruction, reconstruction. Derrida *deconstructs* texts, traces, cultural legacies of various kinds. Analytic philosophers *construct* and *reconstruct* arguments. Derrida has persistently refused to provide a fixed and fast definition of what is meant by “deconstruction.” But I think I can safely mention at least three points that seem important to Derrida’s notion and method of “deconstruction.” First, for Derrida, thoughts have no other existence or presence than that of the written texts or other material traces or signs by which they are expressed or signified. Second, those material traces – words, sentences, texts, institutions, etc. – owe their meaning, or what they signify, to the systems of relations in which they stand to other traces. Third, those systems of relations are not themselves fixed. They are constantly shifting, not by virtue of their own internal “logic,” but by virtue of the forces of life and strife that are at work in generating them. “Deconstruction” is thus both a process at work in the texts or traces themselves and the method of the thinker in her effort to discern, lay out, enrich, and contribute to the systems of mutual

associations and oppositions of traces and signs that constitute the very being of thinking.

This is where the opposition between Derrida's "deconstruction" and the analytic method of "reconstruction" comes into play. An analytic philosopher's *métier* is to construct arguments in the forms of the language of pure thought: logic. And when it comes to addressing the thought of philosophers of the past, an analytic philosopher's *métier* is to *reconstruct* them: to free them up from precisely those impure traces left on them by particular traditions and interests, and to grant them the form of rigorous, logically consistent arguments.

I think misunderstandings between analytic philosophers and Derrida stem for a great part from ignoring this fundamental difference between their respective projects and methods. But again, what I say here rests on my familiarity with Derrida's early work. More – and perhaps quite different – things could be said of his more recent work, which is opaque to me.

Alexei Angelides:

Recent work in philosophy suggests that contemporary (analytic) philosophers are grappling with problems raised in the work of and questions addressed by their historical forebears more seriously than in the past. In your opinion, what is the cause for this upsurge in interest in the history of philosophy; relatedly, what positive or negative effects do you think this might or could have on the field in general?

Longuenesse:

The phenomenon you are talking about mostly concerns the relation some contemporary analytic philosophers acknowledge between their own concerns and some of the concerns and positions of Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy, including the phenomenological movement initiated by Husserl and culminating in France with Merleau-Ponty. One reason for this newly found interest, I think, is the rise of philosophy of mind and cognitive psychology, replacing philosophy of language as the queen disciplines of philosophy. Consciousness, self-consciousness, perception in its relation to concepts, were central issues for the German tradition just mentioned, and are central issues in the recent developments of philosophy of mind and the empirical investigations relevant to it. Moreover, a central philosophical issue in contemporary debates in those areas is that of the relation between the natural and the normative, an issue that was first systematically explored by Kant.

Now one could ask whether it would not be better to explore contemporary issues for their own sake *or* do serious history of

philosophy, rather than doing what might turn out to be a combination of half-baked contemporary philosophy and half-baked history of philosophy. I have no knock down answer to this worry. I am convinced that we have nothing to gain from trying to sanitize philosophers of the past or trying to water down what makes their ways of thinking radically different from ours. But on the other hand, recognizing common concerns *and* being aware of the radical differences as well as the points of convergence is part of what allows us to keep the necessary distance and critical stance on what we are doing today.