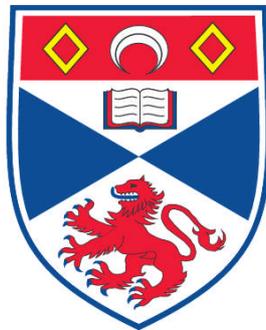


**TYPES OF CONCEPTUAL ENQUIRY
A CASE FOR THINKING THERE IS A TYPE THAT DOES NOT
DEPEND ON THE NOTION OF ANALYTICITY**

Ryan Dawes

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
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Types of Conceptual Enquiry

A Case for Thinking There is a Type that Does Not Depend on
the Notion of Analyticity

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Master of Philosophy in Philosophy

Monday 28th March 2011

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Declarations

Candidate's declarations

I, Ryan Dawes, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 27,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in June, 2008 and as a candidate for the degree of Mphil in June, 2008; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2008 and 2011.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Mphil in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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Abstract

Many if not all Analytic Philosophers in the first seventy years or so of Analytic Philosophy thought that enquiry into concepts had a significant place in philosophy. This is not a view shared by most contemporary Analytic Philosophers. One reason for this change in attitude is Quine's famous critique of analyticity. Enquiry into concepts had been thought to depend on a satisfactory notion of analyticity. Many thought that Quine had shown that no such notion is available. It is true that the traditional model of Conceptual Analysis operated with the notion of analyticity. The reductive project of Conceptual Analysis was supposed to issue in analytic truths that were necessarily true and knowable a priori. Furthermore the necessity of these truths, and the fact that they were knowable a priori were accounted for in terms of their analyticity. I argue that there is an alternative model of Conceptual Enquiry which does not require a notion of analyticity to do the work it does. I argue that the notion of analyticity is not central to the style of philosophising of the Ordinary Language Philosophers. Major 'Ordinary Language Philosophers' did not appeal to the notion of analyticity in describing or accounting for their work. Neither is such a notion required to account for their work. The upshot is that one ought not to conclude that enquiry into concepts is redundant for philosophical purposes on account of there being no satisfactory notion of analyticity.

1. Introduction

Within Analytic Philosophy it was once accepted that the task of the philosopher was to ask questions about concepts, to ‘analyse’ concepts or meanings, and to think about words and their use. Philosophy was ‘analysis’ conceived as ‘logical analysis’, ‘philosophical analysis’ or ‘conceptual analysis’. Such a view of the past is represented in today’s historical surveys of Analytic Philosophy. Timothy Williamson, for example, characterises the first seventy or so years of Analytic Philosophy in terms of the ‘linguistic turn’. Language during these years of Analytic Philosophy was a ‘central theme’.¹

Among those twentieth century philosophers who were explicit that philosophy should be concerned with language and the meanings of words were Moritz Schlick, A J Ayer, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle and J L Austin. Schlick said that philosophy should be concerned with the clarification of the meanings of words.² Relatedly Ayer said that philosophy ought to concern itself with ‘illustrating the way in which we use certain symbols [words]’,³ and that what a philosopher brings to this process is an understanding of how we use them.⁴ Austin spoke of the method of examining ‘what we should say when’.⁵ The Later Wittgenstein said that, for example, ‘One ought to ask, not what images are or what happens when one imagines anything, but how the word “imagination” is used’.⁶

In contrast to almost all Analytic Philosophers of the past, many contemporary Analytic Philosophers do not think the way to solving a philosophical problem is via an examination of concepts. Williamson, for example, writes that ‘...philosophers continued to pursue the programme [the ‘programme of analysis’] long after the original motivation had gone.’⁷ Even if not rejected as simply mistaken the idea that philosophy is a conceptual investigation is not one embraced by many of today’s Analytic

¹Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) Chapter 1.

²Moritz Schlick, ‘The Future of Philosophy’, *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method*, ed. Richard Rorty (London: University of Chicago Press, 1967) 43-53.

³A J Ayer, *Logic, Truth and Language*, 2nd edition (Middlesex: Penguin, 1971) 101.

⁴A J Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1956) 2.

⁵J L Austin, ‘A Plea for Excuses’, *Philosophy and Linguistics*, ed. Colin Lyas (London: Macmillan, 1971) 84.

⁶Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G E M Anscombe, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) Part 1, §370.

⁷Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 31-2.

Philosophers. Frank Jackson writes that ‘Conceptual analysis is currently out of favour, especially in North America.’⁸ Williamson says that philosophy as characterised by the linguistic turn is not adequate to characterise ‘...the liveliest, exactest, and most creative achievements of the final third of the [twentieth] century...’⁹ Furthermore, the Routledge Encyclopaedia entry on ‘Conceptual Analysis’ remarks that the project of the analysis of concepts was by the end of the 1970s ‘widely regarded as defunct’.¹⁰ The contemporary outlook within Analytic Philosophy seems to be that an enquiry into concepts is of negligible relevance to philosophical endeavour.

Whether most of today’s Analytic Philosophers who outwardly maintain such a view of the relevance of the nature of concepts to a philosophical investigation practice what they preach is, perhaps, another matter. Jackson is of the opinion that there is an inconsistency here, and that ‘...conceptual analysis is very widely practised – though not under the name of conceptual analysis.’¹¹ There is, Jackson says, ‘...a lot of ‘closet’ conceptual analysis going on’.¹² Nevertheless, a picture of contemporary Analytic Philosophy emerges with the majority of its practitioners having moved away from the business of enquiring into concepts, with a minority pursuing some version of the old methods. In Epistemology, for example, the work of Ernest Sosa might be characterised as a continuation of the traditional approach in Analytic Philosophy to investigating knowledge. Sosa advocates adding a condition of ‘safety’ to an analysis of the concept of knowledge already comprised of the conditions of belief and truth.¹³ Whereas Sosa might be characterised as reaching his conclusions about knowledge through an examination of the concept of knowledge this would not be an appropriate characterisation of Hilary Kornblith, for example, who comes to his conclusions about knowledge through a synthesis of the scientific literature in the field of animal ethology. Kornblith takes it that knowledge is a natural kind.¹⁴

⁸Frank Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics: A Defence of Conceptual Analysis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) vii.

⁹Williamson, *Philosophy* 19.

¹⁰Robert Hanna, ‘Conceptual Analysis: Introduction’, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E Craig, 1998, accessed: 5 August 2010, < <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/U033> >.

¹¹Jackson, vii.

¹²Jackson, vii.

¹³See, for instance, Ernest Sosa, ‘How To Defeat Opposition to Moore’, *Noûs* 33 (1999): 141-153.

¹⁴Hilary Kornblith, *Knowledge and Its Place in Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) Chapter 2.

Below I offer some preliminary remarks on the nature of Conceptual Enquiry. I start by addressing the concern that if a philosopher enquires into concepts then his subject is concepts and not the phenomena that philosophers have often been taken to be interested in. In the section that follows I outline the reasons for its fall from grace as a philosophical method.

2 Enquiry into Concepts

The view of Analytic Philosophers of the past that philosophical investigation is an investigation into concepts or meanings might be taken to imply that their interests lay in the nature of concepts, or the nature of concepts alone. Yet a general understanding of the interests of philosophers has it that they have been about, in the words of George Bealer, ‘...the nature of substance, mind, intelligence, perception, knowledge, wisdom, truth, explanation, causation, freedom, purpose, goodness, duty, the virtues, love, life, and happiness.’¹⁵ Rather than the nature of concepts that is, this general understanding has it that philosophers have usually been interested in the nature of phenomena such as, for example, the mind, knowledge, and happiness. The question of the reason for this apparent change in subject-matter of the Analytic Philosophers of the past therefore arises.

There is, in addition, an independent view espoused by Williamson that a philosophical question is only about a concept or meaning when it is ‘explicitly so’, that is when the question asks specifically about a given concept or the meaning of a specific word.¹⁶ Grice’s investigations into word-meaning, for example, and Fodor’s investigations into the psychological ontology of concepts, for instance, might be construed as answers to questions explicitly about meanings and concepts respectively. Williamson argues his case through consideration of the question ‘Was Mars always dry or not dry?’ – identified as a paradigmatic philosophical question that might appear to be about concepts or meanings implicitly but not explicitly. The question gains its character of appearing to be implicitly about meanings or concepts when we are made

¹⁵George Bealer, ‘The Philosophical Limits of Scientific Essentialism’, *Philosophical Perspectives* 1 (1987): 289.

¹⁶Williamson argues that philosophical questions should be taken at ‘face value’ and only regarded as questions about concepts and meanings when they are explicitly so. Williamson, *Philosophy* Chapter 2.

aware that although ‘clearly’ dry now Mars was once ‘clearly’ wet and experienced a gradual drying out process. Williamson examines a number of reasons for thinking this question is about meanings or concepts, and finds that none of them bear-up under scrutiny. In addition Williamson thinks that ‘Was Mars always dry or not dry?’ should be answered affirmatively, ‘as dictated by classical logic’. Williamson writes,

...[the] most straightforward reason for answering...positively is that “Mars was always either dry or not dry” is a logical truth, a generalisation over instances of the law of excluded middle...for various times. In my view, that reasoning is sound.¹⁷

These two factors lead Williamson to conclude that this question should be taken to be about ‘whatever its constituents refer to in...context’, and not as implicitly about meanings or concepts. Construing the question ‘...as implicitly about thought or language turns out to be a mistake’, he writes.¹⁸

The interests of Analytic Philosophers of the past, however, did indeed lie in the nature of the kind of phenomena philosophers have always been interested in (the mind, knowledge, happiness etc) but their distinctive thought was that an investigation into concepts or word-meanings was the *method* for revealing the nature of the phenomena they conceptually or linguistically represent. That an enquiry into concepts will tell us not only about the structure of the concepts themselves but also about the phenomena they represent is a thought expressed by Ayer, Wittgenstein, and Austin for example. Ayer writes that it is ‘indifferent’ whether ‘we represent ourselves as dealing with words or as dealing with facts’:

For our enquiry into the use of words [and the concepts they express] can equally be regarded as an enquiry into the nature of the facts which they describe.’¹⁹

¹⁷Williamson, *Philosophy* 31.

¹⁸Williamson, *Philosophy* 26.

¹⁹Ayer, *Knowledge* 26.

Austin is similarly explicit that ‘we are looking... not *merely* at words...but also at the realities we use the words to talk about: we are [that is] using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of...the phenomena.’²⁰ Enquiring into the use of a word ‘does not mean’, Wittgenstein writes, ‘that I want to talk only about words’.²¹ The view is that which is expressed clearly by Oswald Hanfling who says that ‘...the question ‘What is Courage?’, for example, is about the use of ‘courage’ but at the same time about courage itself.’²² That this was the view of Analytic Philosophers of the past is supported by Hacker who writes that ‘The idea that a linguistic investigation of the use of “X” and a conceptual investigation of X were not *also* investigations into the nature of Xs would have struck analytic philosophers of the day as perverse.’²³ It would seem strange to suppose that if, as Hacker puts it, a ‘...question is about a concept it is not *also*...about what falls under that concept...’.²⁴ That is, it would seem odd if what we might learn from examining or reflecting upon our concept were not also about what falls under that concept.

That an investigation into the meanings of words or the concepts they express will tell us something about the phenomena they represent is an idea for which Austin provided some explicit supporting reasons. Austin wrote that ‘if a distinction works well...in ordinary life...then there is sure to be something in it, it will not mark nothing...’,²⁵ and that ‘...our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connexions they have found worth marking, in the lifetimes of many generations...’.²⁶ A more general basis for thinking that the character of our concepts will tell us something about the phenomena they represent can be derived from the fact that we are competent language users possessing an explicit mastery of the concepts expressed by the words of our language. We are able to deploy those concepts of which we have a mastery with ease, implying an ability to recognise instances of phenomena these concepts are taken to represent. For example, one might remark, or have the thought, that so-and-so is very happy. Here there is an interpretation

²⁰J L Austin, ‘Excuses’ 84.

²¹Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §370.

²²Oswald Hanfling, *Philosophy and Ordinary Language* (London: Routledge, 2000) 7.

²³Peter Hacker, ‘A Philosopher’ 338.

²⁴Peter Hacker, ‘Philosophy: A Contribution not to Human Knowledge, but to Human Understanding’, *The Nature of Philosophy, Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures*, ed. Anthony O’Hear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 231.

²⁵Austin, ‘Excuses’ 11.

²⁶Austin, ‘Excuses’ 8.

of so-and-so as happy, and there is, implicit, an understanding of happiness as, commonly manifested by, for example, the kind of expression so-and-so has been wearing. On occasions we might be wrong in judging someone to be happy from her expression – perhaps so-and-so appears happy when in fact she is not. The point, however, is that we can readily identify the appearance – and because of this normally the reality - of happiness in ourselves and others in a range of contexts via a range of cues we have become sensitive to as we have come to master our own language.

To take another example, it might be thought plausible that there is a condition upon knowledge, that if one knows something to be the case that one falls under the concept of knowing that something to be the case. That is,

Necessarily, X knows that p if and only if X falls under the concept of knowing that p.

For we might expect that someone counts as knowing that p if and only if that person satisfies whatever requirements there are on falling under the concept of knowing that p.

2.2 Enquiry into Concepts and Enquiry into the Meanings of Words

Wishing to enquire into our concepts, it is natural to think that we might do so by enquiring into the meaning of the words, or the way we use the words, that express them. For, as Hacker remarks, concepts might be thought of as merely ‘...abstractions from the use of symbols...’, and the possession of a concept as ‘...mastery of the use of concept-expressing symbols.’²⁷ The use of a word, then, should tell us much about the character of the concept it expresses. The word ‘know’ and the expression ‘happy life’ respectively express the concepts *know* and *happy life*, and so an investigation into the word ‘know’ and the expression ‘happy life’, respectively, will tell us much about the concepts *know* and *happy life*. Although various philosophers have either preferred to think of what they are doing in terms of enquiring into the meaning of words or as enquiring into concepts I will use this terminology interchangeably.

²⁷Hacker, ‘Contribution’, 233.

By an enquiry or investigation into the use of a word or expression I mean an enquiry or investigation into the ordinary use of that word or expression by those who use those words or expressions. So, for example, an investigation into the use of the expression 'happy life' would focus upon common or standard or ordinary expressions in which the expression 'happy life' features, made by those who often or regularly or commonly use such an expression. Expressions such as 'a happy life is a life worth having' and 'a happy life does not come easily' are two examples of standard or common expressions featuring the expression 'happy life'. Expressions such as these would be the focus of a conceptual investigation rather than non-standard or non-common expressions, such as metaphorical or humorous expressions, in which the relevant word or expression features.

The word 'know' and the expression 'happy life' are examples of words or expressions that are arguably commonly or regularly used by any speaker of English (and their equivalents in other languages regularly used by any or every speaker of that language), but one might wish to investigate into a word or expression with a selective use – that is a word or expression used regularly or commonly by a select group of people. The word 'entailment' is an example of such a word as it is used by logicians and some philosophers. An investigation of the concept of *entailment* might be an investigation of the way 'entailment' is used by logicians and certain philosophers. An enquiry or investigation into the expression 'happy life' and the word 'entailment' are enquiries or investigations into, respectively, the ordinary use of the expression 'happy life' and the ordinary use of the word 'entailment' by those who use them (arguably all of us (or all English-speakers) in the case of 'happy life'; logicians and certain philosophers in the case of 'entailment').

3. Why the Examination of Concepts is Thought to Have Little if Any Place in Philosophical Enquiry

As already observed there is a contrast between Analytic Philosophers of the past and most Analytic Philosophers of today over the significance or place of an examination of concepts in philosophical enquiry. The view of the past is that an enquiry into concepts was central and accounted for the nature of a philosophical enquiry. It is widely held today that a philosophical enquiry is not an enquiry into concepts and that there is little

if any place for an examination of concepts in philosophical enquiry. Below I outline the three main reasons responsible for this change in attitude – three influential worries about the practice of reflection on concepts or meanings.

1. Quine is taken to have shown i) that the supposed distinction between so-called analytic or conceptual truths and so-called synthetic or empirical truths is untenable, and ii) that, for example, the statements of philosophers' reductive conceptual analyses should not be considered as statements exempt from one day being regarded as false. The net effect is to undermine enquiry seeking reductive analyses of concepts necessarily true and knowable a priori, constituting analytic or conceptual truths explicating the meanings of words or content of concepts. This is significant because such an enquiry is just what a Conceptual Enquiry is generally regarded as being.
2. Kripke and Putnam have, independently, made plausible the idea that the nature of some phenomena – natural-kinds such as gold and water – expressed in statements necessarily true, are revealed through science and scientific investigation of these phenomena. In addition, some philosophers have thought that at least some philosophically interesting concepts function as natural-kind concepts and therefore that what falls under them needs to be examined scientifically. In conjunction with 1 this suggests that the way to necessary truths about certain phenomena is not via a Conceptual Enquiry of such phenomena but through a consideration of what science has to say about the matter.
3. Conceiving of concepts as constituted by 'folk platitudes' or as contributing to 'folk theories' of phenomena envisioned as elementary or primitive accounts of the phenomena they are about, suggests that these theories are apt to be replaced by more sophisticated scientific theories of such phenomena. The implication is that some or all of the platitudes (and, thus, the concepts they constitute) contributing to the original 'folk theories' are mistaken or in error.

I believe there are plausible replies to each of these worries. Below I indicate the lines along which a reply to each of these worries might be constructed.

- 1R. It is i) not obvious that the distinction between so-called analytic truths and synthetic truths is indefensible (a long line of philosophers beginning with Quine's contemporaries of Grice and Strawson have argued to such an effect²⁸), and ii) neither is it clear that the investigation of phenomena philosophers have traditionally been interested in ought to operate on the basis Quine seems to think it should. Significantly even if Quine's worries over analyticity are conceded it is a mistake to think that the only feasible kind of conceptual enquiry is one which seeks out reductive analyses of concepts or the definitions of the meanings of words conceived of as analytic truths, necessarily true and knowable a priori.
- 2R. It is not clear whether some or all of the concepts and phenomena philosophers have traditionally been interested, such as happiness, freedom, knowledge and so on, should be conceived of and thus investigated as natural-kinds – that is investigated via science. It is arguable, furthermore, that the way to settle this very question is through a consideration of the character of these concepts.
- 3R. It is not clear that that which our concepts might reveal about the nature of certain phenomena is apt to be replaced or superseded by a scientific theory. If it is not then our scientific theory may only purport to be an account of this phenomenon when in reality it is not.

The worry I will be concerned with is 1, and I return to the other two worries later, exploring them in a little more detail. I argue that a philosophical enquiry as an enquiry into concepts might withstand Quine's worries regarding analyticity, along the lines outlined above in 1R. Principally I will argue there is a style of Conceptual Enquiry in which the idea of analytic truth is not important to understanding what is taking place in such an enquiry. This is the model of Conceptual Enquiry that was pursued by the so-called 'Ordinary Language Philosophers'.

The view of many contemporary Analytic Philosophers is that there is a single form of Conceptual Enquiry, and that Quine has done much to show that such an enquiry is not feasible. This is that a Conceptual Enquiry issues in an analytic truth which is necessarily true and knowable a priori, and ideally constitutes a reductive

²⁸See H P Grice and P F Strawson, 'In Defence of a Dogma' *The Philosophical Review* 65.2 (1956): 141-158.

analysis of that concept. The kind of Conceptual Enquiry that I say does not depend on a notion of analyticity is often conflated with this form of Conceptual Enquiry. Yet none of, for example, the Later Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, or Peter Strawson gave definitions or reductions of concepts proposed as analytically and necessarily true and knowable a priori. Along similar lines Hacker writes that

Ryle, Austin, Strawson and others... *All* insisted that philosophy is a conceptual investigation, but none held that its task is to disclose analytic truths.²⁹

I expand on this in the next section, which I also intend as a blueprint for the remainder of the argument I make.

4. Outline of Argument

Although most Analytic Philosophers today do not think philosophical enquiry should proceed through an examination of concepts, a certain view of the nature of what an enquiry into concepts is for philosophical purposes nevertheless persists. As an indication of this, it is noted by Williamson, for instance, that some ‘...philosophers present themselves as seeking far more general and less obvious analogues of “Vixens are female foxes” ...’³⁰

The popular view is that Conceptual Enquiry proceeds in the pursuit of reductive analyses of concepts expressed in analytic truths, which are knowable a priori and necessarily true. This is the model of examination or enquiry into concepts constructed by the Logical Positivists of the Vienna Circle and dominant within much of Analytic Philosophy until the 1970s. This model has been variously labelled ‘Philosophical Analysis’, ‘Conceptual Analysis’, ‘Logical Analysis’, and, just, ‘Analysis’. The term I will use for this model is ‘Conceptual Analysis’. A summary of the Logical Positivists vision for the business of philosophy is as follows:

It is the clarification of the meanings of the words or terms or various expressions of ‘the language of Science’, resulting in prescriptive rules for the

²⁹Peter Hacker, ‘A Philosopher of Philosophy’, *The Philosophical Quarterly* 59.235 (2009): 343.

³⁰Williamson, *Philosophy* 48.

use of these words, terms or expressions. For many terms or expressions such a rule states the definition of the meaning of that term, word or expression, the truth of which we would always want to maintain. It is true necessarily, true in virtue of what it means (analytically true), and therefore knowable in virtue of a grasp or understanding of these meanings (knowable a priori). Such a rule for the use of (or definition of the meaning of) a word, term or expression is reductive in that the explanation of the meaning it offers is in terms that are 'simpler' or 'more basic' than the original word or expression.

Such a conception of conceptual enquiry for philosophical purposes might be regarded as the 'traditional model' of enquiry into concepts given that it became the dominant shape of philosophical enquiry within Analytic Philosophy. It has been particularly dominant in certain philosophical disciplines, such as Epistemology, The Philosophy of Action, and Personal Identity. There is, for example, the mass of literature on the attempted reductive analysis of the concept of knowledge. There are, for example, the so-called defeasibility analyses to which, for instance, Keith Lehrer has been a significant contributor. The first of these Lehrer proposed in a jointly penned article with Thomas Paxson Jr in 1969.³¹ Lehrer's most recent proposal can be found in his 2000 book *Theory of Knowledge*.³² There are, also, the reliability analyses of knowledge, one of the first of which was proposed by Alvin Goldman in 1976,³³ and also the so-called counterfactual or subjunctive analyses, one of the early ones being Robert Nozick's 1981 'tracking' analysis.³⁴ In 1983 Robert Shope reviewed many of the reductive conceptual analyses of knowledge proposed between 1963 and 1981.³⁵ There is also the literature on the attempted reduction of the concept of intentional action. Arthur Mele, for example, has proposed a number of such analyses, the first of

³¹Keith Lehrer and Thomas Paxson Jr., 'Knowledge: Undefeated Justified True Belief', *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 225-237.

³²Keith Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (Colorado: Westview Press, 2000).

³³Alvin Goldman, 'What is Justified True Belief?', *Justification and Knowledge*, ed. G S Pappas (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1978) 1-23.

³⁴See Robert Nozick, 'Knowledge and Skepticism', *Epistemology: An Anthology*, ed. Ernest Sosa and Jaegwon Kim (Oxford:Blackwell, 2000) 82.

³⁵Robert Shope, *The Analysis of Knowing: A Decade of Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983)

which in 1989 and the most recent of which in 1994.³⁶ The concept of personal identity – of the persistence of personhood through time – has also been the subject of various reductive conceptual analyses.

The notion of analyticity was central to accounting for the nature of reductive conceptual analyses. Logical Positivists such as A J Ayer capitalised upon the notion of an analytic truth to explain how it is that certain truths – such as the reductive analyses of concepts envisaged by philosophers – were necessarily true and knowable a priori. As has been emphasised however, Quine cast doubt on the cogency of the notion of an analytic truth and questioned the wisdom of regarding certain statements, such as the reductive analyses of concepts proposed by philosophers, as immune from amendment or revision, or, in other words, as necessarily true. A reductive analysis of a concept was seen as necessarily true, and necessarily true in virtue of it being analytic – that is true in virtue of the content of the concepts expressed in the analysis. If there is no such thing as analyticity and if it is best not to work with the assumption that there are analytic truths, then any form of enquiry dependent upon these principles is seriously undermined.

The perception of most of today's Analytic Philosophers is that as a philosophical method an enquiry into concepts is redundant, a perception largely due to Quine's critique of analyticity. This is characterised by Hacker as follows:

In the USA it is widely held that with Quine's rejection of 'the' analytic/synthetic distinction, the possibility of philosophical or conceptual analysis collapses, the possibility of resolving philosophical questions by a priori argument and elucidation is foreclosed, and all *good* philosophers turn out to be closet scientists.³⁷

Boghossian notes that such a perception is alive amongst most of today's Analytic Philosophers, and characterises it as follows:

³⁶Alfred Mele, 'Intention, Belief, and Intentional Action', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 26:1 (1989) 19-30. Alfred Mele and Paul Moser. 'Intentional Action', *Nous* 28 (1994): 39-68.

³⁷Peter Hacker, 'Passing by the Naturalistic Turn: On Quine's *cul-de-sac*', *Philosophy* 81 (2006): 222.

‘In his classic early writings on analyticity...Quine showed that there can be no distinction between sentences that are true purely by virtue of their meaning and those that are not. In so doing, Quine devastated the philosophical programs that depend upon a notion of analyticity...’³⁸

William Lycan similarly indicates such a position to hold sway among many of today’s Analytic Philosophers when he writes that ‘...Quine’s rejection of analyticity...prevails – in that philosophers en masse have either joined Quine...or remained (however mutinously) silent and made no claims of analyticity.’³⁹ The Routledge Encyclopaedia entry on ‘Conceptual Analysis’ attributes Quine’s ‘attack on analyticity’ as one factor instrumental to Analytic Philosophers’ disenchantment of Conceptual Enquiry in the 1970s.⁴⁰ Scott Soames appears to support such a perception in writing that Quine rejected the ‘...conception of philosophy that sees its central task as providing analyses of meaning...’,⁴¹ as does Christopher Hookway when he writes that Quine’s conclusion that ‘...philosophers’ use of the notion of meaning was indefensible...challenged the whole idea of philosophical analysis.’⁴² Jerry Fodor also supports this general outlook. The business of Conceptual Enquiry Fodor understands as seeking out a concept’s ‘intrinsic conceptual connections’ with other concepts. A concept’s ‘intrinsic conceptual connections’ are what is ‘constitutive’ of that concept. Now Fodor says that ‘...intrinsic conceptual connectedness fell into disrepute...in the US in consequence of Quine’s strictures on analyticity...’,⁴³ and that the ‘collapse’ of the ‘project’ which he outlines as the seeking out of intrinsic or constitutive conceptual connections would be explained ‘if there were, in fact, no such distinction’ between so-called analytic and synthetic truths.⁴⁴

If this is right, the argument against the utility of Conceptual Enquiry in Philosophy might be constructed along the following lines:

³⁸Paul Artin Boghossian, ‘Analyticity Reconsidered’, *Noûs* 30:3 (1996) 360-391.

³⁹William Lycan, ‘Definition in a Quinean World’, *Definitions and Definability: Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. J Fetzer, D Shatz, and G Schlesinger (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991) 111-131.

⁴⁰Hanna, ‘Conceptual Analysis’.

⁴¹Scott Soames, *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century, Volume 2: The Age of Meaning* (Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2003) 224.

⁴²Christopher Hookway, *Quine*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988) 2-3.

⁴³Jerry Fodor, *Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 69.

⁴⁴Fodor 71.

1. If there are no analytic truths then Conceptual Enquiry is a redundant philosophical tool.

2. There are no analytic truths.

Therefore, 3. Conceptual Enquiry is a redundant philosophical tool.

However, it only follows that Conceptual Enquiry is redundant as a philosophical method if the only model of Conceptual Enquiry for philosophical endeavour is the model of 'Conceptual Analysis' – if the only model of Conceptual Enquiry for philosophical endeavour is one that appeals to analyticity to account for the nature of philosophical truths. This, however, is arguably not the case, yet among today's Analytic Philosophers there is a perception that this is the case. If this is right then the argument against the utility of Conceptual Enquiry in Philosophy might be more accurately made as follows:

1. If there are no analytic truths then Conceptual Enquiry *as it is widely understood in Analytic Philosophy today* is a redundant philosophical tool.

2. There are no analytic truths.

Therefore, 3. Conceptual Enquiry *as it is widely understood in Analytic Philosophy today* is a redundant philosophical tool.

A model of enquiry into concepts for philosophical purposes not appealing to the notion of an analytic truth in accounting for its philosophical activity, thus neither appealing to analyticity to account for the supposed necessity of philosophical statements, would sidestep Quine's concerns. A model of Conceptual Enquiry not seeking reductive analyses of concepts (which would be paradigm cases of analytic truths) might escape undermining from Quine's worries.

As I have said I will argue, an alternative to the traditional model of enquiry into concepts for philosophical purposes is that which was developed and practiced by the group of philosophers often referred to as the 'Ordinary language Philosophers'. This group includes such influential figures in the history of Analytic Philosophy as Ludwig

Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, J L Austin, and Peter Strawson. A summary of their model of Conceptual Enquiry is as follows:

A sentence or expression describing the ordinary or actual use of a word sheds light on the nature of the phenomenon that word signifies, and helps to free one from misunderstandings that might surround that phenomenon. In Wittgenstein's terminology such a sentence or expression is a 'perspicuous representation' of a part of our language that is apt to create misunderstandings. On Ryle's understanding this is the drawing out of 'connections' between the different concepts expressed by the words of that sentence. According to Strawson the point of pursuing such connections is '...to get a clear view of our concepts and their place in our lives.'⁴⁵

The kind of conclusions about concepts such a model has been used to generate have sometimes been referred to as 'linguistic analyses' and sometimes as 'conceptual analyses'. In his attempt to account of the 'nature of philosophy' as shared '...with many other philosophers...' of his period, Strawson coined the term 'Connective Analysis'.⁴⁶ This is the term I will use for the kind of conceptual conclusions the Ordinary Language Philosophers tended to propose.

The majority, if not all, of the so-called Ordinary Language Philosophers did not present themselves as seeking out or proposing analytic truths – that is they did not appeal to the notion of an analytic truth in accounting for their approach to philosophy. This is clear from a survey of their methodological remarks, as well as from some commentary in the literature. Hacker, for example, notes that the philosophical conclusions of the Later Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Strawson do '...not consist of analytic propositions...'.⁴⁷ Hacker also asserts that

⁴⁵This, actually, was what Strawson said was 'our' – ie philosophers' – 'essential, if not our only, business'. Peter Strawson, 'Intellectual Autobiography', *The Philosophy of P F Strawson*, ed. L E Hahn (Chicago: Open court, 1998) 20.

⁴⁶Peter Strawson, *Analysis and Metaphysics: An Introduction to Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) vii. See Chapters 1 and 2 also.

⁴⁷Hacker, 'Quine's *cul-de-sac*', 234.

None of the many philosophers who pursued conceptual analysis in this vein produced (or purported to produce) sets of analytic propositions that belong to philosophy.⁴⁸

While, in addition, Alan Millar observes that the work of these philosophers consists in ‘...attempts to avoid misleading models of, for instance, thinking, making intelligent moves, meaning, understanding, intending, and so forth.’⁴⁹

The majority, if not all, of the so-called Ordinary Language Philosophers did not propose, and nor did they seek, reductive analyses of concepts. This is clear from a survey of their work, and is also backed up by some commentary in the literature. Hacker, for example, writes that

‘Conceptual analysis’, as practiced in Britain after the war...[had the] ...term ‘analysis’...retained, but its implications of decomposition into simple constituents...jettisoned.⁵⁰

Millar, in addition, remarks that ‘...the seminal practitioners of self-consciously conceptual enquiry – proponents of so-called ordinary language or linguistic philosophy – showed little if any interest in conceptual reductions...’⁵¹ As I have noted there is, however, a modern interpretation of the activity of these philosophers as engaging in just this.

I will argue that the kind of connective analyses or elucidations of concepts provided by Ordinary Language Philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin, and Strawson a) do not constitute reductive analyses of concepts, b) were neither proposed as nor accounted for in terms of analytic truths. This I do in Chapter 4. In Chapter 2 I present the traditional model of enquiry into concepts – Conceptual Analysis – and in Chapter 3 I discuss the two principal worries of Quine over analyticity that undermine this model. I also suggest in Chapter 3 that these worries might be resisted. I suggest i) that a satisfactory understanding of the notion of analyticity might exist along the lines

⁴⁸Hacker, ‘Quine’s *cul-de-sac*’, 234.

⁴⁹Alan Millar, ‘The State of Knowing’, *Philosophical Issues* 17, The Metaphysics of Epistemology, (2007): 183.

⁵⁰Hacker, *Wittgenstein’s Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) 8.

⁵¹Millar, ‘State’, 182-3.

provided by Grice and Strawson, and ii) that we might doubt whether the content of ordinary concepts such as knowledge, freedom, and happiness ought to be modified in the way that Quine might be taken to suggest they may. If the Ordinary Language Philosophers' model of Conceptual Enquiry does not appeal to the notion of an analytic truth to explain the nature of the statements of philosophy, and does not seek nor propose reductive analyses of concepts, then there arise the questions of what is sought and of what the nature of a Connective Analysis of a concept is. Both of these questions I also attempt to answer in Chapter 4 where I present the Ordinary Language philosophers' model of Conceptual Enquiry. As a preliminary the following points about what proceeds in the Connective Analysis of a concept: i) given that the enquiry is into concepts or the meanings of words, reflection on examples of the application of the concept or the use of the word will figure prominently; ii) such reflection, when concerning, for example, the concept of knowledge, elicits judgements about knowledge that on further reflection will tell us something about that concept, given that it elicits factors influencing us in our judgements as to what is or is not knowledge and thus to our use of the word or application of that concept.

2. ‘Conceptual Analysis’: The Reductive Analysis of a Concept Expressed in an Analytic Truth, Knowable A priori and Necessarily True

Conceptual Enquiry is generally understood to be Conceptual Analysis, an enquiry issuing in what are intended to be **reductive analyses of concepts that are analytic or conceptual truths, necessarily true and knowable a priori**. As has been remarked, the roots of such a conception of Philosophy might be traced to the ideas of the Logical Positivists. The method of Conceptual Analysis should not be understood as tied to all core Logical Positivist principles however.

1 The Logical Positivists

The Logical Positivists were a group of philosophically-minded scientists and mathematicians who met regularly at the University of Vienna from the early 1920s through to the 1940s. With the outbreak of the Second World War, many of the Logical Positivists emigrated to the United States where they continued to exert a significant influence. The group was also known as the ‘Vienna Circle’, and prominent members included its leader Moritz Schlick, Friedrich Waismann, Rudolph Carnap, Otto Neurath, and Hans Hahn. A J Ayer also attended some of the group’s meetings in 1933. He later wrote *Logic, Truth, and Language* which outlines the key ideas of Logical Positivism as he understood them to be.

2 Logical Positivists’ Motivation for their Picture of Philosophy as the Reductive Analysis of Concepts

Bealer remarks that in being interested ‘...in such things as the nature of mind, intelligence, the virtues, and life, philosophers do not want to know what those things just happen to be, but rather what those things *must* be.’ That is, a condition upon a philosophical theory is that it ‘...hold necessarily...’.⁵² The necessity of philosophical

⁵²Bealer, 289.

truths was something that the Logical Positivists were sensitive to, and which they attempted to explain and account for. They did so in terms of those truths being analytic. This contributed to a conception of philosophy having it that philosophy issues in truths that are analytic, necessary, and knowable a priori, and which mainly consist in reductive analyses of concepts or word-meanings.

Together with the truths of Maths and Logic, the perceived truths of philosophy were acknowledged by Logical Positivists such as Ayer to be true necessarily. Acknowledging the existence of some truths that were true necessarily was also problematic for the Logical Positivists because it appeared to allow for instances of a priori knowledge, a kind of knowledge taken to be in tension with their principles as empiricists. This perceived tension motivated an account of the necessity of the truths of Maths, Logic, and Philosophy which would square with their empiricism. Such an account had it that the necessity of the truths of Maths, Logic, and Philosophy were in virtue of the analyticity of those truths.

As scientists and empiricists the Logical Positivists were drawn to the idea that all knowledge is afforded through observation and reliably controlled experimentation. The Logical Positivists therefore faced a problem in accounting for, in Ayer's words, '...our knowledge of necessary truths...', knowledge of which appears to be '...impossible on empiricist principles...'.⁵³ A proposition necessarily true is one that appears could not possibly be false but must or has to be true, and thus appears to lack the need to be shown by sensory observation or scientific investigation to be true. Accounting for our supposed knowledge of necessary truths empirically appears impossible because necessary truths appear to be knowable a priori, that is knowledge of such a truth appears possible despite lacking a basis in sensory observation or scientific investigation. Like empiricists before them the Logical Positivists were suspicious of special faculties proposed to account for a priori knowledge.

The propositions of mathematics, such as $2+2=4$, and those of logic, such as either p or not- p (the law of excluded middle) are two cases in point. The truth of a sum for example, such as $2+2=4$, we seem to know without recourse to observation or experimentation (for instance, observing an individual instance of two chairs and two chairs making four chairs) – this is something we seem to know independently of any

⁵³Ayer, *Logic* 96.

observational evidence to support it. So it seems, as Ayer remarks, ‘...that there are some truths about the world which we can know independently of experience...’, and therefore that there is this ‘...mysterious inexplicable fact that our thought has this power to reveal to us...’ such truths about the world.⁵⁴

The Logical Positivists’ answer consisted in their assertion that those propositions that appear necessarily true and, in virtue of this, knowable a priori, are so because we would just not accept them to be false – that is they are propositions whose denial ‘...would in no circumstances be adopted...’.⁵⁵ One who does not assent to such a proposition, says the Logical Positivists, we would want to say has a different understanding of the terms or words comprising such a statement. Ayer defends this claim through inviting us to consider what the response should be to having counted ‘...what I had taken to be five pairs of objects, I found that they amounted only to nine.’⁵⁶ That is we are to consider how we would respond to having, for example, purchased five sets of two earplugs one subsequently finds, for example after taking them out of their packaging, that one has only nine earplugs. Ayer suggests that it is open to one to respond in either of two ways. One might respond in this instance that five sets of two earplugs is nine earplugs, or one might think that one has either miscounted, or lost an earplug while unpacking, or was sold one earplug less, and so on. That we might respond in the first way described seems quite unlikely. Such an interpretation of events we would just not find plausible, whereas any of the later explanations would strike us as likely and a plausible explanation of events. As Ayer puts it, the ‘...one explanation which would in no circumstances be adopted is that ten is not always the product of two and five.’⁵⁷ What one would think of one who did respond to this scenario thinking that in this instance five sets of two earplugs is nine earplugs, would either be that he misunderstands the situation or otherwise that he understands something different to ‘ 5×2 ’ than the rest of us. As Ayer puts it ‘...I might say that on this occasion twice five was not ten. But...[then] I should not be using... ‘ $2 \times 5 = 10$ ’ in the way in which it is ordinarily used.’⁵⁸ The same point might be made with other propositions that appear necessarily true, such as that a bachelor is an

⁵⁴Ayer, 98.

⁵⁵Ayer, 20.

⁵⁶Ayer, *Logic* 101.

⁵⁷Ayer, *Logic* 101.

⁵⁸Ayer, *Logic* 101.

unmarried man. Having said of someone that he is a bachelor one subsequently found him to be married for example, it might seem that it is open to one to either conclude that on this occasion this person is a bachelor, or otherwise to conclude that one made this judgement in error. If one concluded in the former way it seems right to maintain that one is either confused or otherwise has a different understanding of what a bachelor is to the rest of us.

Propositions or statements whose denial 'would in no circumstances be adopted' effectively state a rule for the use of the terms involved, or a definition of the meaning of the terms or words there within, seeing that such propositions will always apply (as they seem to always be true). For example, we might say that the proposition '2+2=4' states a rule for the use of '2+2', or states the meaning of this expression. Whenever the expression '2+2' applies, '4' also applies, and the meaning of '2+2' might be said to be '4'. A proposition that gives the rule for the use of a term or word is what Ayer characterises as an analytic truth. Ayer writes that analytic propositions '...prescribe how words are to be used. ... They...lay down a rule...' ⁵⁹ The necessity of analytic truths, Ayer says, '...consists in the fact that it does not make sense to deny them. If we [do]...we are merely adopting another usage from that which they prescribe.'⁶⁰ In such a way the Logical Positivists linked the necessary and the a priori to the analytic. The Logical Positivists held that the truths of philosophy were rules for the use of a word or term, or definitions of the meanings of words or terms, that were reductive. A further interpretation is that the Logical Positivists construed philosophy as issuing in reductive analyses of concepts or word-meanings, intended as the end product of an effort to clarify meanings or the content of concepts. Philosophy, on this view, should be 'the pursuit of meaning', and the route to this was to be via a reductive account or analysis of that term's or word's meaning or the concept expressed.

It is worthwhile to explore what might have influenced the Logical Positivists' thinking that a reductive account or analysis of a concept is what is going to bring clarity or constitute the most satisfactory account of that concept. Here, the sciences and the structure of scientific explanation or accounts of phenomena in particular is salient. A scientific account of a phenomenon is of-course reductive. The scientific account of water is that it is H₂O – two atoms of hydrogen for every atom of oxygen. Impressed

⁵⁹Ayer, 20.

⁶⁰Ayer, 20.

with the progress and success of the sciences to an increased understanding of the world, it is easy to see why a scientific style of explanation of a concept – a reductive account – might appear as the optimal style of explanation. Their adopted style of explanation – reductive explanation – for the philosophical enterprise was characterised by Rudolph Carnap as the ‘new, scientific method of philosophising’. It is the ‘...step-by-step reduction of concepts to more fundamental concepts...’.⁶¹

Motivation for the Logical Positivists’ conception of philosophy as, in Schlick’s words, ‘the pursuit of meaning’⁶² can also be pinned to the sciences and to the methodology of the sciences in particular. The aspect of the methodology of scientists most striking for the Logical Positivists was the mechanism by which disputes over the truth of a hypothesis or theory could be resolved. Although controversy over the truth of a hypothesis or theory would be settled by reliably conducted experimentation and observation, what the Logical Positivists saw as fundamental was scientists’ agreement over the meaning of the various terms in the hypothesis dictating what empirical or observational circumstances would disconfirm or confirm the hypothesis. That agreement among scientists over the meaning of scientific terms had much bearing upon Logical Positivist thinking is noted by Hookway.⁶³ It was striking given that, in contrast to scientists, philosophers were perceived as having been talking past each other with regard to certain philosophical problems and the various solutions to them posed. Schlick was ‘...almost tempted to say...’ that it had ‘...nearly always been the case...’ that philosophers had ‘...tried to find out whether a certain proposition was true or false before being clear about the meaning of it...’.⁶⁴ To elucidate the conception of philosophy as ‘the pursuit of meaning’, or the clarification of concepts or word-meanings, Schlick utilizes the characterisation of the Socratic style of philosophy as for ‘...the primary purpose of making clear what was meant when certain questions were asked or when certain words were used.’⁶⁵ Such a conception is also explicitly stated in the Vienna Circle’s ‘Manifesto’ penned by Carnap, Hahn, and Neurath:

⁶¹Rudolph Carnap, ‘The Old and the New Logic’, in A J Ayer (ed.), *Logical Positivism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959) 133.

⁶²Schlick, ‘Future’ 14.

⁶³Hookway, 27.

⁶⁴Schlick, ‘Future’ 49.

⁶⁵Schlick, ‘Future’ 48.

The task of philosophical work lies in this clarification of problems and assertions, not in the propounding of special ‘philosophical’ pronouncements.⁶⁶

That the clarification of meanings or concepts should proceed via a reductive analysis of that concept or word-meaning is also made plain:

...the meaning of any concept, whatever branch of science it may belong to, must be statable by step-wise reduction to other concepts, down to the concepts of the lowest level which refer directly to the given.⁶⁷

3 Key Notions of Conceptual Analysis

The key notions of the traditional reductive project of Conceptual Analysis are those of analytic truth, a priori knowledge, necessary truth, and reductive explanation. To illuminate these key notions and, with them, the nature of a reductive conceptual analysis, I will draw upon the examples of Ayer’s reductive analysis of knowledge and Wayne Davis’s reductive analysis of intentional action.

A well-known reductive conceptual analysis is the so-called ‘tripartite’ analysis of knowledge, a variant of which can be traced to Plato. This reductive conceptual analysis of knowledge says that knowledge is the conjunction of truth, belief, and justification. The insight into knowledge that this is seen to provide is knowledge consists in the phenomena of justification, truth and belief. A more recent variation upon this analysis of knowledge is that proposed by Ayer. Ayer asserted that ‘...the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing that something is the case are first that what one is said to know be true, secondly that one be sure of it, and thirdly that one should have the right to be sure.’⁶⁸

Reductive conceptual analyses are usually presented in the format of that concept’s ‘necessary and sufficient conditions’ or ‘application conditions’, as Kristoffer Ahlstrom and Edward Craig, for example, separately note. In a recent article Ahlstrom

⁶⁶Hans Hahn, Otto Neurath, and Rudolph Carnap, *The Scientific Conception of the World* (Vienna: 1929) 5.

⁶⁷Hahn, Neurath, and Carnap, 5.

⁶⁸Ayer, *Knowledge* 34.

remarks that ‘...the favoured format for capturing meanings is that of *necessary and sufficient application conditions*.’⁶⁹ Craig has commented that attempts ‘...to analyse the everyday meaning of the word ‘know’...have usually taken the form of a search for necessary and sufficient conditions.’⁷⁰ A concept’s necessary and sufficient conditions are the conditions that it is deemed must hold if the application of the concept is to be correct. Ayer’s conceptual analysis of knowledge might thus be presented in the following way:

A knows that p if and only if:

- i) it is true that p,
- ii) A is sure that p, and
- iii) A has the right to be sure that p.

3.1 Analytic Truth

Ayer’s conceptual analysis of knowledge in terms of truth, being sure, and having the right to be sure, was seen as analytically or conceptually true given that it was seen to be true just in virtue of what the analysis means, that is true in virtue of the meanings of the words comprising the analysis, or the content of the concepts comprising it. Knowledge is truth plus being sure plus having the right to be sure is true, that is, just because knowledge means truth plus being sure plus having the right to be sure. The standard understanding of an analytic truth is that of a statement which is true just in virtue of the meanings of the words comprising it or the content of the concepts expressed in it. The abbreviated characterisation is that of truth in virtue of meaning (or meanings) alone. Quine, for instance, writes that a statement is supposed as analytic ‘...when it is true by virtue of meanings and independently of fact...’⁷¹

⁶⁹Kristoffer Ahlstrom, ‘Intuitions in Epistemology: Towards a Naturalistic Alternative’, *Studia Philosophica Estonica* 2:2 (2009): 16.

⁷⁰Edward Craig, *Knowledge and the State of Nature: An Essay in Conceptual Synthesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 1.

⁷¹W V O Quine, ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism’, *The Philosophical Review* 60:1 (1951): 21.

3.2 A Priori Knowledge

Knowledge as truth plus being sure plus having the right to be sure was seen as knowable a priori given that an understanding of the meanings of the words comprising the analysis, and thus a mastery of the concepts involved, appeared sufficient for coming to know the truth of such an analysis, at least given reflection on the concepts involved. What at least used to be the standard account of knowing the truth of a statement a priori is in terms of the idea that an understanding of the meanings of the words involved, or of a mastery of the concepts expressed, provides the resources for coming to know the truth of the statement. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, for example, says that a priori knowledge ‘...seems to be based on reason alone, or...based solely on understanding the proposition considered.’⁷² Complimentary to this the Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy says that the a priori ‘...typically connotes a kind of knowledge or justification that does not depend on evidence or justification from sensory experience.’⁷³

3.3 Necessary Truth

That knowledge is truth plus being sure plus having the right to be sure is necessarily true was thought to be so in virtue of the meanings of the words involved, or the content of the concepts expressed, leaving no possibility for deviation. If a concept’s reductive analysis is necessarily true then it is true for every possible application of that concept, every application in the actual world as well as every application in all possible worlds. If the reductive analysis of knowledge, for example, is truth plus ‘being sure’ plus ‘having the right to be sure’ then in every possible world one has knowledge that p if and only if it is true that p, one is sure that p, and one has the right to be sure that p. Thus, in each possible world, all cases to which the concept of knowledge correctly applies are also cases to which the concepts of truth, ‘being sure’, and ‘having the right to be sure’ would correctly apply. That is, it is not possible that there be an application

⁷²Bruce Russell, ‘A Priori Justification and Knowledge’, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N Zalta, Spring 2010 ed., accessed: 10 February 2011, < <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/apriori> >.

⁷³Paul K Moser, ‘A Priori’, *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. E Craig, 2010, accessed: 10 February 2011, < <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/P001> >.

of the concept of knowledge which is not also an application of the concepts of truth, 'being sure', and 'having the right to be sure'. Similarly, it is not possible that there be an instance of the conjunction of the concepts of truth, 'being sure' and 'having the right to be sure', which is not also an instance of the concept of knowledge.

The search for a reductive conceptual analysis might be via reflection on what is common to every possible correct application of that concept. We may, as Ayer wrote, '...enquire whether the different cases in which we speak of knowing [for example] have any one thing in common...' ⁷⁴ Ayer was explicit that it is '...natural for us to assume that the different situations, or types of situations, to which [a concept]...applies have a distinctive common feature.' ⁷⁵

Here is another example of a reductive conceptual analysis, this time of intentional action. Davis proposes that *S intends* that *p* if and only if '...*S* believes that *p* because he desires that *p* and believes his desire will motivate him to act in such a way that *p*.' ⁷⁶ Davis's conceptual analysis of intentional action might be presented in the following way:

S intends that *p* if and only if:

- i) *S* believes that *p* because he desires that *p*,
- ii) *S* believes his desire will motivate him to act in such a way that *p*.

3.4 Reductive Explanation

Ayer's conceptual analysis of knowledge and Davis's conceptual analysis of intentional action both count as reductive explanations given that none of the concepts comprising either of these explanations require for their own explanation an invocation of the concept which they are being utilised to explain. For example, in the case of the analysis of knowledge the idea is that in neither the explanation of truth, nor in an explanation of 'being sure', and nor in an explanation of 'having the right to be sure' is it necessary to

⁷⁴Ayer, *Knowledge*, 3-4.

⁷⁵Ayer, *Knowledge*, 5.

⁷⁶Wayne A Davis, 'A Causal Theory of Intending', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21.1 (1984): 51.

invoke the concept of knowledge. The reason for this, it is supposed, is that the concepts of truth, 'being sure', and 'having the right to be sure' are 'simpler', 'less complex', or 'more basic' than the concept of knowledge. For the same reason neither in an explanation of 'S believing that p because he desires that p', nor in explaining that 'S believing that his desire will motivate him to act in such a way that p' is it envisioned that an invocation of the concept of intentional action would be needed.

A reductive analysis of a concept is an explanation of that concept in terms of other concepts whose own explanation does not require invoking the original concept. Underpinning the model of an enquiry into concepts issuing in reductive conceptual analyses is the idea that a concept is constituted by more basic or simpler concepts, and that an understanding of these is a prerequisite for an understanding of the original concept. Such a characterisation of the 'reductive model' of analysis is made by Strawson who remarks that this consists in the '...the resolution of something complex into elements...[showing] the ways in which the elements are related in the complex.'⁷⁷ Schlick illustrates the process of gaining an understanding of a concept on the reductive model by analogy with a search for the meaning of a word in a dictionary. He writes that '...come[ing] across a difficult word for which you desire to find the meaning you look it up... The definition of the word is given in various terms. If you don't happen to know them you look up these terms.'⁷⁸ The idea is that our concepts are arranged in a hierarchical structure with the most complex at the top to the most basic at the bottom, and that we might come to understand a concept on one level by understanding those concepts lying directly beneath it – that is, what is necessary for an understanding of a concept is an understanding of the simpler concepts that comprise it, and if any of these are not already understood then what is required for an understanding of each of these is just the concepts lying directly below that concept in the structure. (For an understanding of a concept it is never the case that one has to work upwards in the system – that is, it is not thought that an understanding of a more complex concept will help one to understand a simpler concept).

Some contemporary reductionists might only require of a reductive analysis that the concepts in the analysis be understood without implicating the original concept. They might not require that are more 'simple' or less 'complex' than the original

⁷⁷Strawson, *Analysis* 17.

⁷⁸Schlick, 'Future', 50.

concept. As we have seen though the original idea at least was that reduction was to be to concepts 'simpler' or less 'complex' than the concept to be reduced.

The notion of the reductive analysis of a concept or of the meaning of a word is, in addition, sometimes explicated in terms of that word's or concept's definition. Ayer, for example, writes that '...the propositions of philosophy...express definitions, or the formal consequences of definitions.'⁷⁹ Ahlstrom, similarly, perceives that Conceptual Analysis '...inquires into concepts by defining the meaning of linguistic terms...'⁸⁰

3.5 A Non-Circular Explanation

Some conceptual analyses maintain an illusion of reductive explanation yet they fail to be reductive given that one or more of the concepts comprising the explanation fail to admit of explanation without invoking the concept they have been called upon to explain. Such conceptual analyses might provide necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of a concept but they are not reductive. One example is the well-known analysis of knowledge as 'cognitive contact with reality' – the analysis of having a relation of cognition (that is, knowledge) with the world or the truth known.⁸¹ Another example is Boghossian's analysis of true belief with a justification sufficient for knowledge (which he utilises for a subsequent explanation of a priori knowledge).⁸² Although both analyses are intended to provide a sense or an idea of the nature of knowledge both analyses are circular. The former because the notion of cognition implicates the notion of knowledge – cognition cannot be fully explained without referring to knowledge -, the latter because the notion of knowledge is used to qualify the sense in which we are to understand justification. These analyses fail to be reductive because they both appeal to the concept to be explained in that concept's explanation – one or more of the supposed simpler or more basic meanings or concepts is in fact the very concept we are wishing to reductively explain. The concern that has been raised with explanation that is circular is that the circle plotted in the explanation renders the explanation void – that is that there is no explanatory value to a circular analysis.

⁷⁹Ayer, *Logic* 76.

⁸⁰Ahlstrom, 16.

⁸¹See, for instance, Linda Zagzebski, 'What is Knowledge', *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*, ed. John Greco and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) 92.

⁸²Boghossian.

4 Complexity

The content of both Ayer's conceptual analysis of knowledge and Davis's conceptual analysis of intentional action is relatively straightforward to grasp. The content of some reductive analyses of concepts are notorious for their complexity however, as I seek to demonstrate below with the aid of Mele and Moser's reductive analysis of the concept of intentional action and Lehrer's reductive analysis of the concept of knowledge. It is interesting to note that the complexity analyses such as these has led some to question the plausibility of their representing our actual understanding of the concepts they analyse.

Mele and Moser's reductive conceptual analysis of intentional action:

Necessarily, an agent, *S* *intentionally* performs an action, *A*, at a time, *t*, if and only if:

- i) at *t*, *S* *A*-s and her *A*-ing is an action;
- ii) at *t*, *S* suitably follows – hence, is suitably guided by – an intention-embedded plan, *P*, of hers in *A*-ing;
- iii) (a) at the time of *S*'s actual involvement in *A*-ing at *t*, the process indicated with significantly preponderant probability by *S*'s on balance evidence at *t* as being at least partly constitutive of her *A*-ing at *t* does not diverge significantly from the process that is in fact constitutive of her *A*-ing at *t*; or (b) *S*'s *A*-ing at *t* manifests a suitably reliable skill of *S*'s in *A*-ing in the way *S* *A*-s at *t*; and
- (iv) the route to *A*-ing that *S* follows in executing her action plan, *P*, at *t* is, under *S*'s current circumstances, a suitably predictively reliable means of *S*'s *A*-ing at *t*, and the predictive reliability of that means

depends appropriately on S's having suitably reliable control over whether, given that she acts with A-ing as a goal, she succeeds in A-ing at *t*.⁸³

Lehrer's (latter) reductive conceptual analysis of knowledge:

S knows that *p* if and only if:

- i) *it is true that p*,
- ii) *S accepts that p*,
- iii) S is justified in accepting *p* in a way that is undefeated at *t* ... if and only if S is justified in accepting *p* at *t* on the 'ultrasystem' of S at *t*.⁸⁴ S's 'ultrasystem' is S's system of beliefs in which S's true beliefs are differentiated from those which are not in virtue of a subsystem - S's 't-system'. That is, S is justified in accepting *p* if and only if S is justified in accepting *p* in a way '...that is not based on error.'⁸⁵

5 Determining a Concept's Necessary and Sufficient Conditions

The procedure for identifying a concept's reductive analysis might be outlined through an observation of Ayer's reductive conceptual analysis of knowledge. On his way to his conclusion about the concept of knowledge Ayer writes that although that 'what is known should be true' is necessary for knowing something to be so it is not sufficient. In addition the conjunction of this (of what is known being true) with one being 'completely sure of what one knows' is similarly not sufficient for knowing something to be the case.⁸⁶ Ayer considers a case in which each of the conditions of truth and being sure apply but which would not be a case of knowledge.⁸⁷ It is, writes Ayer, '...possible to be completely sure of something which is in fact true, but yet not to know

⁸³Mele and Moser, 63.

⁸⁴Lehrer, 21 & 169-171.

⁸⁵Lehrer, 153.

⁸⁶Ayer, *Knowledge*, 29.

⁸⁷Ayer, *Knowledge*, 29.

it.' That is Ayer presents a counterexample to the conditions of truth and being sure being necessary and jointly sufficient for knowledge. The counterexample Ayer considers is a 'superstitious person' who has 'inadvertently walked under a ladder' and who is 'convinced as a result that he was about to suffer some misfortune'. Ayer writes that '...he might in fact be right. But it would not be correct to say that he knew that this was going to be so.'⁸⁸

So on his way to his conclusion about the concept of knowledge Ayer considers whether what is proposed as necessary for knowledge is also sufficient by attempting to find or identify a case meeting the conditions for what is proposed as necessary for knowledge but which is not a case of knowledge. If the proposed analysis is found not to be sufficient for knowledge then further features necessary for knowledge are sought out in the hope that the totality of conditions are sufficient.

The procedure for arriving at such a Conceptual Analysis of a concept might be outlined as follows:

- 1) identifying what is necessary for the application of the concept through a consideration of a case or cases of the application of that concept.⁸⁹

- 2) attempting to identify a counterexample to the proposed analysis to test the analysis's claim to sufficiency.⁹⁰

If a counterexample is found then 1) and 2) are repeated until there are no counterexamples to the conditions identified for the application of the concept of interest. If there are no counterexamples to these conditions (cases where these conditions are satisfied but to which the concept of interest doesn't apply) then in addition to their being necessary for the application of the concept of interest they are also sufficient for the application of the concept of interest. Although not represented in

⁸⁸Ayer, *Knowledge*, 29.

⁸⁹In Ayer's presentation of his conclusion regarding knowledge he does not indicate whether the consideration of a case of knowledge assisted him in identifying the conditions of truth and being sure as necessary for knowledge. Some conditions necessary for the application of a concept might be evident without the need for considering a case or cases of the application of that concept. Since it might seem only possible to know some proposition that is also true, this condition of knowledge was perhaps evident to Ayer without him needing to consider a case or cases of knowledge.

⁹⁰An alternative formulation is: attempting to identify a case satisfying the conditions identified as necessary but where the original concept does not apply.

Ayer's presentation of how he analysed knowledge, a further stage should also be noted in which the necessity of a condition is tested for counterexamples. Some, for example, have questioned whether belief, or 'being sure' in Ayer's terminology, is necessary for knowledge.

3. Quine's Worries over Analyticity from 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism'

As we have seen, the Logical Positivists conceived of Philosophy in the form of what I have outlined as Conceptual Analysis – a vehicle for the 'pursuit' or 'clarification' of word-meanings or concepts realised in reductive analyses of those word-meanings or concepts. The notion of analytic truth served Ayer and the Logical Positivists as a way to account for the apparent necessity and a priori knowableness of these analyses (as well as the truths of Logic and Mathematics). Analyses of concepts or word-meanings were conceived of as analytic truths, and an analysis's being analytic was the guarantor of its necessity and of its being knowable a priori. Examples of these analyses include the so-called tripartite analysis of knowledge (that says that knowledge is justified true belief), and the consequence of this analysis that if one knows that p then p is true. More common examples, perhaps, are the definition of bachelors as unmarried males and the logical consequence of this definition that all bachelors are male. Quine however heavily criticised the notion of analytic truth, the notion central to understanding the nature of a conceptual analysis, and in so doing generated much scepticism over the practice of Conceptual Enquiry in Philosophy. I will focus on the two criticisms of analyticity found in Quine's famous article 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism'.

Quine's first criticism of analyticity in 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' is that there is no satisfactory account of what it is. Quine writes that

...a boundary between analytic and synthetic statements simply has not been drawn. That there is such a distinction to be drawn at all is an unempirical dogma of empiricists, a metaphysical article of faith.⁹¹

In virtue of the lack of a satisfactory account of analytic truth Quine has sometimes been interpreted as claiming that there are no analytic truths. Whether or not this interpretation is correct, that there is no satisfactory account of analytic truth suggests it would be unwise to appeal to such a notion in accounting for the nature of the

⁹¹Quine, 34.

statements of Philosophy. Yet, of-course, the notion is central to accounting for the traditional project of reductive conceptual analysis.

Quine's second criticism concerns the appeal to the notion of analytic truth to explain the apparent necessity of the conceptual analyses of Philosophy. According to Logical Positivists such as Ayer this consists in how it is that their denial '...would in no circumstances be adopted...'.⁹² Quine however argues that the meaning of any word, or the content of any concept, might be changed if, as a result, that concept of word becomes a more efficient tool in accounting for our experience of the world. If this is right then there are no statements whose denial 'would in no circumstances be adopted', and so the apparent necessity of Philosophy's conceptual analyses might not be explained in such a way. Quine writes that

...it becomes folly to seek a boundary between synthetic statements, which hold contingently on experience, and analytic statements which hold come what may. ...no statement is immune to revision. Revision even of the logical law of the excluded middle has been proposed as a means of simplifying quantum mechanics...⁹³

I examine both of these criticisms below. First the worry that there is no satisfactory account of analytic truth and then the worry over the Logical Positivists' account of how the conceptual analyses of Philosophy are necessarily true.

1 Lack of a Satisfactory Account of Analytic Truth

Quine's case for there being no satisfactory account of analytic truth is made in virtue of his quest for such an account falling short. Quine examines a number of concepts that had traditionally been used to help understand the nature of analytic truth, such as the concept of meaning, the concept of definition, and the concept of synonymy. Quine settles on attempting to offer an account of analyticity in terms of the concept of definition. 'Definition', however, Quine finds '...hinges on prior relationships of

⁹²Ayer, *Logic* 20.

⁹³Quine, 40.

synonymy...’,⁹⁴ and therefore if analyticity is to be explained in terms of this concept then an understanding of ‘definition’ is needed in terms of ‘synonymy’. ‘Synonymy’, however, says Quine, is ‘...no less in need of clarification than analyticity...’.⁹⁵ Therefore an understanding of ‘synonymy’ is also required. Quine attempts to account for the concept of ‘cognitive synonymy’ in terms of the notion of ‘necessarily interchangeable *salva veritate*’. However, attempting to explain ‘necessity’ in such a way that sheds light upon the notion of ‘necessarily interchangeable *salva veritate*’ such that this illuminates the notion of ‘cognitive synonymy’ demands an invocation of the notion of analyticity – the very notion that a satisfactory account of is being sought. So, for an explanation of analyticity what is necessary is that ‘...the notion of analyticity is already clearly understood...’,⁹⁶ so the attempted explanation of analyticity is, in Quine’s words, ‘not flatly circular, but...something like it’.⁹⁷

The thought that there is no satisfactory explanation of analyticity takes it that a satisfactory account of a concept is one that is reductive. That a reductive style of explanation might have appeared to Quine as the optimal style of explanation is perhaps not surprising given his scientific sympathies. This is an assumption which might be challenged however. Williamson makes the point that even the definition of the terms of a scientific discipline may actually lead into a circle (‘...be driven round in a circle’), but that this fact ‘...hardly demonstrates the illegitimacy of the science.’⁹⁸ Furthermore David Lewis suggests we should only have a concern with circular explanation if we have no ‘initial understanding’ of the concepts in the circle. If we do then when ‘...we run around...[the circle] our initial understandings of the several notions we meet reinforce one another.’⁹⁹ Strawson suggests the size of the ‘circle’ determines whether or not it has explanatory value. A large enough circle, according to Strawson, is informative for we ‘...have moved in a wide, revealing, and illuminating circle’, whereas some ‘...circles are too small...’. It is, Strawson says, ‘...a matter for judgement to say when the charge [of circularity] was damaging and when it was not.’¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴Quine, 27.

⁹⁵Quine, 23.

⁹⁶Quine, 30.

⁹⁷Quine, 29.

⁹⁸Williamson, *Philosophy* 50.

⁹⁹David Lewis, ‘Ramseyan Humility’, *Conceptual Analysis and Philosophical Naturalism*, ed. David Braddon-Mitchell and Robert Nola (London, MIT Press: 2009) 204.

¹⁰⁰Strawson, *Analysis* 19-20.

It might be noted that few concepts in the history of philosophy have received successful, counterexample-free, reductive analyses. Nowhere, perhaps, is this more obvious than with the attempted reductive conceptual analysis of knowledge where, over a period of twenty years or so, successive candidate-analyses have continued to have been met with further counterexamples to which further candidate-analyses have been proposed to remedy, and so on. So it might have been surprising to have found the notion of analyticity to fair any differently. Millar makes the point that it would be ‘...a mistake to suppose that all concepts of which we have a mastery admit of reductive conceptual analyses...’.¹⁰¹ Grice and Strawson were perhaps the first to argue that that there are ways of explaining or elucidating a concept other than reductively. Grice and Strawson remarked that if ‘...the expressions cannot be explained in precisely the way which Quine seems to require, [it] does not mean that they cannot be explained at all. ... They can be...explained...in other and less formal ways than that which Quine considers.’¹⁰² Grice and Strawson demonstrated how this might proceed with the notion of ‘logical impossibility’, a notion ‘part of the analyticity family of notions’. I examine their attempt to do so below.

Grice and Strawson elucidate the notion of logical impossibility by relaying two hypothetical conversations, one in which we attempt to understand an example of such a claim made by ‘Y’, which of-course we cannot, and a similar scenario where the claim made is one of ‘natural or causal’ impossibility. The conclusion is that we just cannot understand what Y means – or that Y understands some words differently to the rest of us. Y’s claim is that “My neighbour’s three-year-old child is an adult.”¹⁰³ The following set of replies and counter-responses are then imagined to have ensued in a conversation between Y and ourselves:

“You mean he’s uncommonly sensible or very advanced for his age.”

Y: “No, I mean what I say.”

“Perhaps you mean that he won’t grow any more, or that he’s a sort of freak, that he’s already fully developed.”

¹⁰¹ Alan Millar, ‘Knowledge in Recent Epistemology: Some Problems’, in Adrian Haddock, Duncan Pritchard, and Alan Millar, *The Nature and Value of Knowledge: Three Investigations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 131.

¹⁰² Grice and Strawson, 149.

¹⁰³ Grice and Strawson, 150.

Y: “No, he’s not a freak, he’s just an adult.”¹⁰⁴

Grice and Strawson’s conclusion about Y is that ‘he just does not know the meaning of some of the words he is using’, and the conclusion they draw concerning our response to Y’s initial claim and his two counter-responses is that ‘we just don’t understand what Y is saying’.¹⁰⁵

If we accept Grice and Strawson’s elucidation of logical impossibility (one of the family of notions of analyticity) as shedding light upon what it is for a claim to be logically impossible, then we might accept there to be alternative ways to a satisfactory account or explanation of a concept other than via its reductive analysis. On these grounds Quine’s conclusion that there is no satisfactory account of analyticity might be resisted. If on the other hand it were maintained that Quine’s conclusion stands then still this would be no bar to embracing the Ordinary Language Philosopher’s take on what a conceptual enquiry in philosophy is, because the acceptability or otherwise of such a model does not hinge on there being analytic truths.

2 The Truth of a Statement’s Susceptibility to Change

Conceptual analyses have been outlined as defining the meaning of words (or content of concepts), and the necessity of the truth of these analyses was accounted for by the Logical Positivists in these terms (in virtue of their expressing the meanings of words) given that our deviating from a word’s meaning does not appear as something we would ever gravitate towards doing. That is, the necessity of a proposition’s truth was said to stand in virtue of its denial being something that would ‘in no circumstances adopted’, which itself stands in virtue of that proposition asserting the meaning of a word (or a logical consequence of such a definition). In direct opposition to this Quine has intimated that it is open for it to be rational for the meaning of a word, or content of a concept, to change if, as a result of such a change, we are in a better position to make sense of our experience of the world.

The Logical Positivists’ account of the conceptual analyses of Philosophy in terms of their being true in virtue of meaning and thereby necessarily true and knowable

¹⁰⁴Grice and Strawson, 150.

¹⁰⁵Grice and Strawson, 151.

a priori clashes with Quine's model of how our so-called knowledge of the world is added to and improved, a model informed by how our scientific knowledge and understanding of the world accumulates and is refined. Underpinning Quine's model is a certain view of the structure of our accumulated knowledge of the world. Quine writes that the

...totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs, from the most casual matters of geography and history to the profoundest laws of atomic physics or even of pure mathematics and logic, is a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges.¹⁰⁶

Quine's model of our accumulated knowledge of the world is known as the 'web of belief'. The 'web of belief' is an arrangement of all our so-called knowledge, from our ordinary beliefs such as, for example, that the sun rises in the morning, to the most advanced scientific knowledge, such as the sophisticated theoretical models of Physics.

In light of new experiences and new scientific discoveries or insight it might become necessary to reevaluate our current understanding or theories or models of how things are. In other words Quine sees it as our goal to continue to build and expand upon our knowledge of the world such as to pursue a better understanding of it. The crux is that in the effort to best understand the world in light of the information available or experiences known to us, new experiences or discoveries might make it expedient for a statement previously regarded as true to now be regarded as false.

The goal of building and expanding our knowledge might be thought of in terms of becoming better able at predicting future experience in the light of our current experience. The role of our concepts, or our 'conceptual scheme', or, as Quine puts it, '...the conceptual scheme of science...', is as '...a tool...for predicting future experience in the light of past experience.'¹⁰⁷ Items of the 'conceptual scheme of science' '...serve merely to simplify our treatment of experience. ...to get more easily from one statement about experience to another.'¹⁰⁸ Thus the content of these conceptual 'posits' might be changed or altered if this change or altering allows for

¹⁰⁶Quine, 39.

¹⁰⁷Quine, 41.

¹⁰⁸Quine, 42.

greater simplicity in ‘our treatment of experience’. That is there are, in the words of Philip Kitcher, ‘...experiences which would lead us to discard particular concepts by showing us that those concepts were useless for the normal purposes of explanation and description.’¹⁰⁹

An example of such a change is the shift in the conception of acids that followed the discovery of what came to be known as hydrochloric acid.¹¹⁰ Prior to the discovery of the substance now known as hydrochloric acid, a defining characteristic of acidic substances was that they contain oxygen. With the discovery of a substance sharing all known properties of acids with the exception of the defining property of oxygen, acidic substances came to be thought of differently with the account of an acid’s defining characteristics reconfigured. Rearranging the account of an acid’s defining characteristics allowed for a better account of our experience in general. A better account of what is and what isn’t an acidic substance manifested because given that the new substance was alike in all respects with all other known acids a simpler account of an acidic substance is provided with the new substance included rather than it being excluded. Excluding the newly identified substance would have introduced an element of unnecessary complexity into our general account of experience.¹¹¹

Prior to the discovery of the new substance, the statement that ‘an acid contains oxygen’ would have been regarded as true, subsequent to the discovery such a statement would have counted as false. To have continued to regard acidic substances as those containing oxygen in the light of the discovery of hydrochloric acid would have been at the expense of incorporating an unnecessary complexity into one’s general account of experience and understanding of the world, the consequence being that it might be more difficult to understand one’s experience of the world and to expand one’s knowledge. At the very least, there would have been one substance which although not recognised as acidic would have been sufficiently similar to all substances one would have recognised as acidic, indicating the expediency of thinking of it as acidic. To have continued to think of an acid as a substance containing oxygen, that is, would have

¹⁰⁹Philip Kitcher, *The Nature of Mathematical Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 82.

¹¹⁰This is discussed by Kitcher. See Kitcher, 82-3.

¹¹¹If the new substance had not been alike in all (or a sufficiently large number of) other respects with all other known acids then incorporating the substance into our account of acids would introduce an unnecessary complexity into it.

committed one ‘...to linguistic and conceptual practices...[one] should not rationally adopt.’¹¹²

In the light of new experience, the considerations of ‘simplicity’ and ‘expediency’ are to be applied to the relevant experiences or knowledge such that we might expand or improve our existing knowledge and understanding of the world. If a certain explanation or theory better accounts for a segment of the totality of our experience or knowledge then it is adopted in place of the old explanation or theory. The content of a concept is modified accordingly. If a new experience motivates an explanation better adjusted to account for our combined experience then we accept this explanation and reject that it replaces, and this makes our current stock of knowledge or conceptual scheme better placed to be added to or manipulated in the light of further experience. Alternatively if a new experience does not motivate a simpler explanation of a segment of the totality of our experience but would rather add unwarranted complexity to an explanation of it, then we will not recognise the experience as significant.

The upshot of this part of Quine’s thinking is that regarding the analyses of concepts identified in Philosophy as statements we would always want to regard as true might stand in the way of best organising and accounting for our experience of the world. If we accept this objection then it seems we must reject the Logical Positivists account of how the conceptual analyses of Philosophy are also necessary truths in terms of their being statements whose denial ‘would in no circumstances be adopted’. Much doubt is then cast over the business of the traditional project of Conceptual Analysis.

We might concede the working assumptions to be:

- (1) that we lack a satisfactory account of analyticity, and
- (2) that analyticity cannot, anyhow, do the work thought of it, which is to account for the apparent necessity of the truth of some statements including the conceptual analyses of Philosophy.

¹¹²Kitcher, 82.

In respect of (1) we might conclude that it would be unwise to account for the statements of philosophy on a basis of analyticity. In respect of (2) we might say that a model of philosophy that depends on a notion of analyticity is further undermined. Furthermore it might be argued in respect of (2) that it is unwise to think of any statement as necessarily true, and if we accept this then doubt is cast over the whole philosophical enterprise if it is thought to consist in the pursuit of necessary truths. A model of enquiry into concepts for philosophical purposes that does i) not appeal to the notion of analyticity to account for the nature of philosophical statements, and ii) does not appeal to analyticity to account for the apparent necessity of the truth of philosophical statements would escape Quine's worries regarding analyticity. In the following chapter I present the Ordinary Language Philosophers' conception of Conceptual Enquiry which I hope to show meets both of these conditions.

4. The Ordinary Language Philosophers' Model of Conceptual Enquiry

In the previous chapter we saw how Grice and Strawson elucidated the notion of logical impossibility as part of their reply to Quine's criticisms of the analytic-synthetic distinction. They did so by showing when we might employ the concept of logical impossibility, that is in demonstrating the accurate use of the word expressing that concept, and by showing the steps we might take and the questions we might ask before we are confident that it is right that we might employ this concept. In doing this Grice and Strawson illustrate the kind of process that proceeds in seeking a Connective Analysis of a concept. This is the process of asking questions to ascertain whether it is right to apply a certain concept or to ascertain what concept it is right to apply or which fits the scenario. In addition a 'summary' of the notion of logical impossibility is provided in terms of the notions of 'just not understanding' and 'Y having different meanings for some of the terms' (to the normal or ordinary meanings). This is an explanation which ultimately is circular (it might not be possible to explain meaning or understanding without invoking 'logical impossibility', or some other notion invoking 'logical impossibility', and so on).

In doing all of this Grice and Strawson highlight what it is they wish to save from the notion of analyticity (or the analyticity family of notions) – a notion that sheds light on the Ordinary Language Philosophers' style of enquiry into concepts. This is the notion of 'what makes sense' or 'what it makes sense to say'. That is, although the Ordinary Language Philosophers did not generally invoke the notion of analyticity to explain their style of philosophising, in their defence of the analytic-synthetic distinction Grice and Strawson present what is significant for Ordinary Language Philosophers such as themselves to their understanding of what an enquiry into concepts for philosophical purposes is.

In what follows I re-produce some of the conceptual enquiries of three well-known Ordinary Language Philosophers (Wittgenstein, Austin, and Ryle). In so doing my intention is to demonstrate a technique rather than indicate my acceptance of each of the conceptual conclusions proposed. I start with a very brief biography of the Ordinary Language Philosophers.

1 The Ordinary Language Philosophers

The so-called 'Ordinary Language Philosophers' were a group of philosophers largely based at Oxford University who dominated philosophy in Britain from the end of the Second World War until the end of the 1970s. Early influential figures based at Oxford include Gilbert Ryle, who was Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy from 1945, and J L Austin, Whites Professor of Moral Philosophy from 1952. Wittgenstein, based at Cambridge from 1929 to 1941 was also a significant influence upon some of these philosophers, notably Ryle. Latterly influential figures include Peter Strawson and H P Grice. Unlike the Logical Positivist group of philosophers, the 'Ordinary Language Philosophers' did not comprise a 'school of philosophy', nor did they collectively put forward a commonly agreed set of philosophical principles.

2 Motivation for the 'Connective Analysis' of Concepts

The idea that various models of certain phenomena that have been of interest to philosophers are mistaken was central to the thinking of most Ordinary Language Philosophers. A case in point is the model of the mind as an immaterial, non-physical thing, which Ryle, for example, was concerned to unseat in *The Concept of Mind*. Another example of a misleading model is that sense-data are all we ever *directly* perceive. Austin was concerned to show that this is a mistake in *Sense and Sensibilia*. It was part of the thinking of most Ordinary Language Philosophers that models such as these were responsible for the appearance of philosophical problems concerning the phenomena they were about. The question of how it is that the mind – a mental, non-material thing - interacts with the body - a physical thing - for example, is one philosophical problem thrown up by the model of the mind having it that the mind is an immaterial, non-physical thing. Ryle thought it wrong to think of the mind as a thing at all (in effect an Aristotelian substance), and so it is as mistaken to think of the mind as a material thing as to think of it as an immaterial thing. The view is that such models

constitute ‘subtle forms of nonsense’,¹¹³ and that the way to a more accurate model of such phenomena – and thus the dissolution of the apparent problems they give rise to – is to pay attention to the way we actually use the words in our language (or, to the concepts expressed by these words) signifying such phenomena. Such an idea was expressed by Austin, for example, in *Sense and Sensibilia* when he wrote ‘...we may hope to learn something positive in the way of a technique for dissolving philosophical worries...and also something about the meanings of some English words...’.¹¹⁴ This contributed to a conception of philosophy having it **that philosophy issues in statements detailing what makes sense, or what it makes sense to say, about certain phenomena as dictated by the ordinary way we use words (by our ordinary concepts)**. Such an understanding of philosophy has it that the task is one of ‘...*concept-elucidation* for the purpose of resolving philosophical problems’,¹¹⁵ or that it will issue in an ‘...*overview* of a conceptual network that one can bring to bear upon philosophical problems...’¹¹⁶ A ‘Connective Analysis’ or ‘elucidation’ is, Hacker writes,

‘...a non-reductive description of conceptual connections, compatibilities and incompatibilities, arrayed for the purposes of philosophical clarification.’¹¹⁷

3.1 The Notion of a Connective Analysis of a Concept in terms of Wittgenstein’s Notion of a ‘Perspicuous Representation’

We are interested in Connective Analysis as an alternative to the traditional kind of Conceptual Analysis – an alternative kind of enquiry into concepts for philosophical purposes that does not appeal to analyticity to account for the nature of philosophical truths, and Hacker writes that the idea of a ‘...perspicuous representation is crucial to the replacement of [the traditional kind of] logical [analysis] by connective analysis.’¹¹⁸

¹¹³This phrase is used by Hacker. See, for example, Peter Hacker, ‘Analytic Philosophy: Beyond the Linguistic Turn and Back Again’, *The Analytic Turn: Analysis in Early Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology*, ed. Michael Beaney (London: Routledge, 2007) 130.

¹¹⁴J L Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, 5.

¹¹⁵Hacker, ‘Contribution’ 232.

¹¹⁶Hacker, ‘Contribution’ 237.

¹¹⁷Hacker, ‘Analytic Philosophy’, 128-9.

¹¹⁸Hacker, *Wittgenstein’s Place*, 110.

A ‘perspicuous representation’ is Wittgenstein’s notion. That the view outlined here as motivating a Connective Analysis of a concept is also the view and method of the Later Wittgenstein receives support from Hacker’s commentary on him. Hacker writes that Wittgenstein’s focus was upon ‘...failures to accord with the conditions of sense and upon illicit extensions of the uses of expressions beyond their legitimate domains.’¹¹⁹ What Wittgenstein did, says Hacker, was to give us ‘...numerous overviews of the logical grammar of problematic concepts...tracing conceptual connections which we are all too prone to overlook.’¹²⁰ Hacker’s elucidation of Wittgenstein’s notion of a ‘perspicuous representation’ might be thought to shed light upon the nature of Connective Analysis in general as the style of philosophy pursued by many Ordinary Language Philosophers given that Wittgenstein was a leading exponent of the methodology based around an examination of the ordinary use of words, and also given that Wittgenstein and his methods were very much influential upon many other of the Ordinary Language Philosophers.

Wittgenstein writes that the task of philosophy consists ‘...in assembling reminders for a particular purpose.’¹²¹ The particular purpose seems to be that of gaining a ‘perspicuous representation’ of the way we actually or ordinarily use our words or deploy our ordinary concepts expressed by such a use of them (of gaining a ‘clear view of the use of our words’).¹²² A perspicuous representation, Wittgenstein writes, ‘...produces just that understanding which consists in ‘seeing connexions’.’¹²³ Strawson interprets that what we are to be reminded of is ‘...the reality, that is of the actual employment of the words and concepts concerned.’¹²⁴ Wittgenstein’s idea was that a ‘perspicuous representation’ of the ‘grammar’ of words or expressions whose misuse or nonsensical use has given way to philosophical problems regarding phenomena those words or expressions represent would dissolve those problems.

¹¹⁹Peter Hacker, ‘Wittgenstein and the Autonomy of Humanistic Understanding’, *Wittgenstein: Theory and the Arts*, ed. R Allen and M Turvey (London: Routledge, 2001) 39.

¹²⁰Hacker, ‘Wittgenstein and Autonomy’, 40-41.

¹²¹Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §127.

¹²²Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §122.

¹²³Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §122.

¹²⁴Peter Strawson, *Analysis* 4 & 9.

3.2 Other Conceptions of a Connective Analysis of a Concept

Hacker writes that Wittgenstein's 'methods' or understanding of a Connective analysis '...evolved...into Ryle's 'logical geography'. It is [also] patent, perfectly autonomously, in Austin's style of argument in *Sense and Sensibilia...*'¹²⁵ 'It was [too] perspicuously articulated in Strawson's methodological discussion of 'connective analysis' ...'¹²⁶ Thus alternatively we might understand the nature of a Connective Analysis in terms of Ryle's stated aim of the 'rectification of the geography of our concepts', or in Strawson's terms of coming to a picture of our 'conceptual scheme'. Ryle writes, in *The Concept of Mind*, that it is his intention to '...rectify the logical geography of the knowledge we already possess.'¹²⁷ That is '...to determine the logical cross-bearings of the concepts which we know quite well how to apply.'¹²⁸ Strawson writes that the task of philosophy is to '...produce a systematic account of the general *conceptual structure* of which our daily practice shows us to have a tacit and unconscious mastery.'¹²⁹ There is, Strawson writes, in our mastery of our concepts, a '...suggestion of a system; of a general underlying structure to be laid bare...'. It is, then, philosophy's task to disclose the 'structure' or 'system' of our concepts,¹³⁰ or the 'theory of our practice' of employing them.¹³¹ The goal of a Connective Analysis in Wittgensteinian terms is to become aware of the 'grammar' of our words or expressions, in Strawsonian terms it is of the idea of gaining an understanding of our conceptual scheme, and in Rylean terms of the notion of drawing a map of our conceptual terrain. These different conceptions of the goal of a Connective Analysis of a concept are brought together by Hacker when he intimates that a Connective analysis of a concept allows us to manoeuvre successfully through the '...bewildering network of our grammar or...our conceptual scheme... We have a 'map', which will help us find our way...'¹³²

¹²⁵Hacker, 'Analytic Philosophy' 130.

¹²⁶Hacker, 'Analytic Philosophy' 128.

¹²⁷Ryle, *Mind* 9.

¹²⁸Ryle, *Mind* 10. Ryle says, also, that we are 'in describing the minds of others...wielding...concepts of mental powers and operations'. (page 9)

¹²⁹Strawson, *Analysis* 7.

¹³⁰Strawson, *Analysis* 9.

¹³¹Strawson, *Analysis* 9.

¹³²Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place* 112.

4.1 Why Misleading Models of a Phenomenon might Arise: the Misleading ‘Surface-Grammar’ of our Language

With differing degrees of emphasis the idea subscribed to by most Ordinary Language Philosophers is that philosophers have often fallen prey to the allure of various illusions regarding the nature of certain phenomena. Wittgenstein placed much emphasis on this idea, juxtaposing the notion of a philosophical problem with that of mental disorder or disease and its solution with that of psychological therapy. Philosophers might be susceptible to illusion regarding the nature of a certain phenomenon for a number of reasons. Sometimes this might be because of what Wittgenstein characterised as the misleading ‘surface-grammar’ of our language – problems arise, he writes, ‘...through a misinterpretation of our forms of language...’¹³³ An example Hacker uses to demonstrate this idea is that of how the expression ‘I have a pain’ has the same ‘surface-grammar’ as that of, ‘I have a pin’. And thus the rule for the use of these expressions appears to be the same – that is that they both refer to something I possess – which encourages the idea that as a pin is something physical I possess, a pain is likewise something I possess but while not a physical thing it must instead be a thing of a different kind - a mental thing.¹³⁴ This feeds the misleading model of the mind as an immaterial, non-physical substance. Wittgenstein placed much emphasis on the idea that language, the way we sometimes speak of a certain phenomenon, can ‘lead us astray’. Thus his assertion that

Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language.¹³⁵

Because ‘we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words’¹³⁶ we have ‘an urge to misunderstand’¹³⁷ how our language works - ‘Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity.’¹³⁸

¹³³Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §111.

¹³⁴Hacker, *Wittgenstein’s Place* 107.

¹³⁵Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §109.

¹³⁶Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §122.

¹³⁷Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §109.

¹³⁸Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §122.

Another example is the resemblance between the first person pronoun ‘I’ and other personal pronouns such as ‘he’ and ‘she’, which Hacker also draws attention to. Because there seems to be little doubt to whom ‘he’ and ‘she’ refers to when we use them, we are encouraged to think that ‘I’ refers conclusively in the same way, but given that ‘I’, when we use it, also does not seem to refer to a body we are led to think that it refers to something immaterial instead.¹³⁹ This too encourages the acceptance of the model of the mind as an immaterial substance as Wittgenstein remarks when he says that ‘...the idea that the real I lives in my body is connected with the peculiar grammar of the word “I”, and the misunderstandings this grammar is liable to give rise to.’¹⁴⁰

Wittgenstein says ‘Try not to think of understanding as a ‘mental process’ at all.’¹⁴¹ He also writes of someone learning the series of natural numbers, for example, and who first has assistance in writing out the series from 0 to 9 that ‘...the *possibility of getting him to understand* will depend on his going on to write it down independently.’¹⁴² Hacker writes that ‘Understanding is an ability, not a mental state or process’ tells us that the rule for deploying our concept of understanding.¹⁴³ In relation to the person who understands that two plus two is four, for example, we would attribute him with such an understanding when we can see that he can demonstrate an ability to add two and two such that his answer is four. That is that he has the relevant ability rather than experiences a certain mental state or process. ‘Understanding is an ability’ describes the rule for the use – or reflecting the use - of the word ‘understanding’, or in other words describes the ordinary use of this word. It is a Connective Analysis of the concept of understanding.

A Connective Analysis of a concept might be interpreted as stating **the prescriptive ‘rule’ for the use of the word or expression that expresses that concept (the ‘rule’, that is, that governs our ordinary or the actual use of it) the ‘rule’ that determines whether the use of a word makes sense. In other words it is an account of the way the concepts expressed by those words or expressions are actually employed, or an account of the actual way we ordinarily use those words or expressions.** Thus, for example, ‘understanding is an ability’ states the rule for the use

¹³⁹Hacker, ‘Autonomy’ 39.

¹⁴⁰Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969) 66.

¹⁴¹Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §154.

¹⁴²Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §143.

¹⁴³Hacker, ‘Contribution’ 235.

of ‘understanding’. Hacker writes that the ‘grammar’ of words or expressions are ‘...the sense-determining rules for its use...’, and that a ‘perspicuous representation’ of the grammar of words or expressions is ‘...a description (or, perhaps more happily, a statement) *and arrangement* of familiar rules for the use of expressions...’¹⁴⁴

4.2 Taking Words Out of their ‘Ordinary Homes’

Another source of confusion is that created when we do not use a certain word or expression as we would ordinarily, but when we abstract away from our use and hypothesise about the concept or the phenomenon we take it to represent – when we ‘take words out’ of their ‘ordinary homes’. Wittgenstein writes that ‘The confusions which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work.’¹⁴⁵

An example is the temptation which has often befallen philosophers to think that whenever a word or expression is used (or a concept deployed) that there is a single, unique, phenomenon present – the phenomenon that we think is named by that word or expression. The temptation to hold such is characterised by Wittgenstein as the picture of language where all ‘individual words...name objects’¹⁴⁶. The mistake is to think ‘that language always functions in one way’,¹⁴⁷ and to think that every time a word or expression is used it picks out the same thing - whether or not the word is used the same way each time. This is also characterised by Wittgenstein as the ‘illusion’ that ‘...what is peculiar, profound, essential, in our investigation, resides in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language.’¹⁴⁸ Alternatively it might be that there is not a single phenomenon that the word picks out, but a number of such related phenomena, and that ‘...these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, - but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways.’¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴Hacker, *Wittgenstein’s Place* 112.

¹⁴⁵Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §132.

¹⁴⁶Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §1.

¹⁴⁷Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §304.

¹⁴⁸Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §97.

¹⁴⁹Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §65.

If this source of confusion arises when our language is not doing its ordinary work then the solution to quell such confusion that suggests itself is to ‘...bring words back...to their everyday use.’¹⁵⁰ Thus:

When Philosophers use a word – “knowledge”, “being”, “object”, “I”, “proposition”, “name” – and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language which is its original home?¹⁵¹

Given that we are liable to be ‘bewitched’ by our language, if philosophy consists in ‘assembling reminders for a particular purpose’, then the ‘particular purpose’ might also be interpreted as the avoidance of such bewitchment. Strawson interprets that the ‘particular purpose’ is of ‘...liberating ourselves from the confusions and perplexities we get into when our concepts are idling in the mind.’¹⁵²

Sense-data were phenomena whose existence as the intermediary between the perceiver and what is perceived was accepted by, for example, Russell and Ayer given certain arguments that seemed to show that we never directly perceive the objects of our sensory experience. The idea was that we never, for example, directly see the page we are reading, but instead a representation of that page (that is, an item of ‘sense-data’). Austin takes the ‘general doctrine’ to be that ‘...we never *directly* perceive or sense, material objects (or material things), but only sense-data (or our own ideas, impressions, sense, sense-perceptions...’¹⁵³

The so-called ‘Argument from Illusion’ is one argument for such a conclusion. It moves from the premise that sometimes how we see or otherwise perceive a certain object is not representative of the actual character of that object to the conclusion that what we perceive is never the object itself. Arguments such as this one arise, says Austin, because of ‘...obsession with a few particular words, the uses of which are over-simplified, not really understood or carefully studied or correctly described...’¹⁵⁴ Part of the solution according to Austin is to realise that ‘...our ordinary words are

¹⁵⁰Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §116.

¹⁵¹Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §116.

¹⁵²Strawson, *Analysis* 9.

¹⁵³J L Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962) 2.

¹⁵⁴Austin, *Sensibilia* 3.

much subtler in their uses, and mark many more distinctions, than philosophers have realized...'¹⁵⁵ One way in which Austin resists the Argument from Illusion is in appeal to the ordinary use of the words 'illusion' and 'delusion'.

One example of the kind of case from which the Argument from Illusion takes its support is the case of 'refraction'. This is where an item, such as a stick, partially submerged in, and then viewed through, water looks like it is bent. The stick however is not bent. Therefore we supposedly have a case in which our perception of something is not representative of its actual character. If this is a case of illusion however then, as Austin points out, on the ordinary use or understanding of this word this should not be a case for concern. The ordinary use of 'illusion', Austin reminds us, is of, for example, the kinds of tricks or stunts professional illusionists perform, such as the ventriloquist who makes it look as if his dummy is talking when we know it is really the ventriloquist who is producing the sounds. Another example is the case of 'optical illusion' arising from the direction of arrows drawn at the ends of two parallel lines of equal length – although we are aware the lines are of equal length, the line whose arrows point outwards, away from the lines, looks longer than the line whose arrows point inwards.

The confusion arises because of a confusion between 'illusion' and 'delusion', or between the use of 'illusion' and the use of 'delusion', seeing that the ordinary use of 'delusion', as Austin reminds us, is 'primarily' to do with '...grossly disordered beliefs...'.¹⁵⁶ That is where we take something to be the case where really it is not so at all – we think something is going on when really it is not. For example when we think that we are a lot more important than we really are or that what we do has a lot more significance than it really does – in such cases we are said to be suffering from 'delusions of grandeur'. Or when we begin to think that someone is out to get us or make our lives difficult when really nothing of the sort is going on – in such cases we might be said to be suffering from 'delusions of persecution'.

The cases taken to giving the Argument from Illusion credence are supposed to be cases of illusion, yet the argument goes through only on the basis that 'illusion' is used in the sense of 'delusion' as indicative of something unreal having been perceived. This creates the vacuum of that which we immediately experience, which the phenomena of sense-data are proposed as filling. As Austin writes, the 'most important

¹⁵⁵Austin, *Sensibilia* 3.

¹⁵⁶Austin, *Sensibilia* 23.

differences' are that 'illusion' '(in a perceptual context) does not suggest that something totally unreal is *conjured up* ...whereas the term 'delusion' *does* suggest something totally unreal....'¹⁵⁷ Attention to the ordinary use of 'illusion' (and 'delusion') therefore dissolves the misleading model of sense-data as what is immediately present to our awareness.

4.3 Alleviating Certain Worries

Another reason for philosophers' susceptibility to illusion over the nature of some phenomena is in virtue of certain worries regarding those phenomena that certain models of them are seen to alleviate. Such a reason is suggested by Ryle for the motivation of the model of the mind as an immaterial substance. The success of the emerging sciences of the Seventeenth Century in giving causal explanations of the way the physical world functions generated a worry regarding, for example, how one might rationally continue to believe that human beings possess certain cherished qualities. Ryle outlines this as the worry motivating Descartes:

When Galileo...provide[d] a mechanical theory which...cover[ed] every occupant of space, Descartes found in himself two conflicting motives. As a man of scientific genius he could not but endorse the claims of mechanics, yet as a religious and moral man he could not accept...the discouraging rider...that human nature differs only in...complexity from clockwork.¹⁵⁸

The attitude was, as Ryle puts it, that the '...mental could not be just a variety of the mechanical.'¹⁵⁹ For if it were then the implications for, for example, autonomy or free choice to decide and act appeared disastrous. If the physical world was governed by causal laws then the actions and decisions of human beings seem to be only a part of this larger picture – a cog in the machinery of the world.

The solution was to build a model of the mind such that they are things '...not in space...'. They are, however, things like physical things except that they are not

¹⁵⁷Austin, *Sensibilia* 23.

¹⁵⁸Ryle, *Mind* 20.

¹⁵⁹Ryle, *Mind* 20.

physical – they are ‘immaterial’ or ‘mental’. That is minds are immaterial substances, like physical substances in that they are the bearer of properties and not themselves properties, but they do not exist in space nor are they subject to mechanical or causal laws. Some kind of cause and effect process operates within them but of a different sort to that of the physical world. Ryle summarises the solution as follows:

The differences between the physical and the mental were thus represented as differences inside the common framework of the categories of ‘thing’, ‘stuff’ ... ‘process’ ... ‘cause’, and ‘effect’. Minds are things, but different sorts of things from bodies; mental processes are causes and effects, but different sorts of causes and effects from bodily movements.¹⁶⁰

Such a framework for the structure of the mind Ryle variously calls ‘The Intellectualist Legend’, ‘The Mechanistic Model’, ‘The Myth of Dogma of the Ghost in the Machine’, and ‘Descartes Myth’. Such a model gave way to parallel accounts of various mental qualities, invariably running with the theme that the mind houses an executive function responsible for generating a chain of mental processes that are ultimately responsible for all of our various mental powers, such as knowing how to do something, believing that something is so, and voluntarily or freely choosing to do something. ‘Silent soliloquy’ is the expression Ryle uses for what occupies a central place in this model of the mind.

For example the myth or misleading understanding of what it is to know how to something is that the minutiae of what one is doing is continually directed through a mental flow of instructions. That in riding a bicycle, for example, that one’s arms and legs are continually fed instructions issuing from the mind concerning what is to be done – when to press down on the right foot, when to press down on the left, when to steer to the right and when to adjust to the left and so on. This is the account of ‘knowing how’ according to which being able to do something consists in each of the actions one performs proceeding in virtue of the following of a set of mental instructions. As Ryle puts it, ‘...the agent must first go through the internal process of

¹⁶⁰Ryle, *Mind* 20.

avowing to himself certain propositions about what is to be done...only then can he execute his performance in accordance with those dictates.’¹⁶¹

Another example is the misleading understanding of belief according to which one’s believing that clouds often bring rain, for example, is constituted by the mind’s act of continually affirming to itself in a mental stream that clouds often bring rain. This is the account of belief asserting that believing some proposition to be the case consists in consciously mentally appraising that proposition. As Ryle puts it, ‘...from time to time be going through some unique proceeding of cognizing, ‘judging’, or internally re-asserting, with a feeling of confidence...’ that such-and-such is the case.’¹⁶²

A further example is the misleading understanding of what it is to freely or voluntarily do something according to which movements such as getting up from a chair, pressing a key, turning the page of a book, are voluntarily enacted only if they are the termination of an instruction issuing from one’s mental stream – that is if such actions have their origin in an executive order of one’s mind. This is the account of voluntary action that asserts that an action is voluntary only if preceding that action there is a mental instruction to perform it, and involuntary if there is no such instruction. Ryle describes this in the following way:

‘I think of some state of affairs which I wish to come into existence in the physical world, but, as my thinking and wishing are unexecutive, they require the mediation of a further executive mental process. So I perform a volition which somehow puts my muscles into action.’¹⁶³

However, if we look at the ordinary uses of the expressions ‘knowing how to do [such-and-such]’, ‘being able to perform [some task]’, ‘belief’, and ‘voluntary action’ along with ‘voluntary’ we can see this is not how these expressions and words are ordinarily used. The expression ‘knows how’ is not ordinarily used to signify a mental stream of instructions responsible for one’s actions or competences. The ordinary use of ‘knows how’, according to Ryle, concerns when one is able to do something well, when one has a mastery of what one is doing. The ‘professional clown’, for example, is one

¹⁶¹Ryle, *Mind* 30.

¹⁶²Ryle, *Mind* 44.

¹⁶³Ryle, *Mind* 62.

who ‘...trips and tumbles on purpose and after much rehearsal and at the golden moment and where the children can see him and so as not to hurt himself’; he is one who deliberately performs and acts in the manner of a clown.¹⁶⁴ Such a person ‘knows’ what he is doing, he ‘knows how’ to be a clown that is. Thus ‘knows how’ is used when we can detect, when we are confident that what that person is doing is deliberate, and controlled. In Ryle’s words what he is doing ‘...come[s] up to certain standards, or satisfy certain criteriahe is ready to detect and correct lapses, to repeat and improve upon successes, to profit from the examples of others and so forth.’¹⁶⁵ If, for example, the professional clown drops his juggling balls or tells a joke which is not met with laughter, he will use his experiences to improve his performance next time (for example by practicing juggling more or analysing the joke). If the cyclist rides through mud, skids and falls from his bike, he will use his experience to steer more steadily through the mud next time. To summarise, the ordinary application of the term ‘knows how’ is in relation to some action or behaviour, which we see is done well, done deliberately, and is self-monitored.

‘Belief’ is not ordinarily used to express a mental act of affirmation of some proposition. We would not, Ryle says, be convinced that people believe in the earth’s being round, for example, ‘...unless we also found them inferring, imagining, saying and doing a great number of other things as well.’¹⁶⁶ The ordinary application of ‘belief’ is to someone who is prone to act in such a way such as to manifest acceptance that things are a certain way. The ordinary application of the term ‘voluntary action’, Ryle thinks, is not to signify an executive order from the mind initiating bodily movement or action, but to actions about which we are wondering whether the perpetrator is to blame, and whether he or she was able to perform but failed to do so. There is a further consideration over failing to do what one is able to do in whether the reason for this was one’s being forced or coerced into doing something else instead. So, for example, the boy who ties a granny-knot instead of a reef-knot is to be blamed for doing so (it is his fault) if he had the ability to tie such a knot and was not forced not to tie it. That is if ‘...he knew how to tie a reef-knot, and...his hand was not forced by

¹⁶⁴Ryle, *Mind* 33.

¹⁶⁵Ryle, *Mind* 29.

¹⁶⁶Ryle, *Mind* 44.

external coercion and that there were no other agencies at work preventing him from tying the correct knot.’¹⁶⁷

These accounts of knowing how, belief, and voluntary action are indicative of a general account of minds that has it that our various mentalistic phenomena are not items in an immaterial mental substance similar in ontological category to physical substances, but rather relate to dispositions and tendencies to act in certain ways. As such, Ryle thinks that the model of the mind as an immaterial mental thing rests on a mistake concerning categories to which the mind and mental phenomena are placed. As Ryle says, it ‘...represents the facts of mental life as if they belonged to one logical type or category [namely one of substances]...when they actually belong to another [namely that of dispositions and tendencies to act].’¹⁶⁸

5 The Nature of a Connective Analysis of a Concept

The reason for giving a Connective Analysis is to alleviate conceptual confusion. Conceptual confusion is alleviated by giving an account of the ordinary or actual employment of that or those concepts that are found confusing (the ordinary or actual use of those words or expressions expressing the concepts). Conceptual confusion arises when we stray away from our ordinary conceptual employment, for whatever reason.

I have not invoked the notion of an analytic truth to explain the nature of a Connective Analysis of a concept, and it might seem that the Ordinary Language Philosophers’ model of Conceptual Enquiry does not depend on such a notion. There is, however, a modern interpretation that Connective Analyses are, in fact, Conceptual Analyses – that Connective Analyses are, in fact, analytic truths, thus knowable a priori and necessarily true, and that, ideally, they constitute reductive analyses of concepts. In other words the modern interpretation is that the work of Ordinary Language Philosophers is of the ilk of the traditional model of Conceptual Analysis, and that these philosophers either implicitly or explicitly subscribed to the tenets of this model. In particular there is the idea that these philosophers implicitly if not explicitly subscribed to the notion of an analytic truth as the basis for a conceptual enquiry, in that this – an analytic truth – is what a conceptual enquiry issues in. On the contrary I wish to suggest

¹⁶⁷Ryle, *Mind* 67.

¹⁶⁸Ryle, *Mind* 17.

that Connective Analyses or elucidations of concepts, of the kind offered by, for example, Ryle and Wittgenstein, a) do not constitute conceptual reductions, b) were certainly not proposed as analytic truths, and whereas it appears these philosophers thought of philosophy and their kind of conceptual enquiry as an a priori process they, again, and unlike the Logical Positivists, did not invoke the notion of analytic truth to explain i) how such knowledge might be possible generally, nor ii) the nature of philosophical truths.

6 The Modern Interpretation of Ordinary Language Philosophers' Work

The modern interpretation that what philosophers such as Ryle and Wittgenstein did issued in analytic truths is found in Soames and Williamson. Soames asserts that the 'overall framework' within which Ryle works '...tacitly identifies necessary truths with conceptual truths, which in turn are true in virtue of meaning...'.¹⁶⁹ In addition he writes that Wittgenstein took it for '...granted that if there are any philosophical truths, they must be analytic'.¹⁷⁰ Williamson, along the same lines, affirms that the notion of the 'analytic' was 'notably central' to the '...postwar linguistic philosophers, such as Strawson...'.¹⁷¹ Strawson, with Grice, did argue in reply to Quine that there are alternative ways of explaining analyticity, but other than in the article in which they do so it is difficult to find Strawson anywhere speaking of analyticity or claiming that any of his conclusions are analytically true. In addition, Hacker criticises Williamson, for example, for thinking that if '...philosophy is a conceptual investigation...' then those who philosophise in such a way are committed to thinking that '...philosophical conclusions are analytic truths...'.¹⁷²

The modern interpretation that philosophers such as Ryle sought after reductive analyses of concepts can be found in, for example, Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson, and Soames. Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson, and also Soames, assert that Ryle provided reductive analyses of mental concepts in terms of simpler behavioural concepts. According to these commentators what Ryle did in *The Concept of Mind* was expound a

¹⁶⁹Soames, 82.

¹⁷⁰Soames, 29.

¹⁷¹Williamson, *Philosophy* 51.

¹⁷²Hacker, 'A Philosopher' 343.

form of what Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson call ‘Analytical Behaviourism’.¹⁷³ This is the view that ‘...the concept of any particular mental state is the concept of a behavioural disposition of the appropriate kind.’¹⁷⁴ Soames asserts that in *The Concept of Mind* Ryle sought to ‘...provide an alternative analysis of our talk about the mental that takes it to be to talk about people’s behaviour and the circumstances in which they find themselves.’¹⁷⁵ The notion that a conceptual enquiry is a reductive enquiry (Conceptual Analysis that is) appears to be alive in Williamson when he argues for the claim that knowledge is unanalysable.¹⁷⁶ This appears evident from his lack of consideration of any form of analysis or Conceptual Enquiry other than the traditional reductive kind. Such a concern with Williamson’s argument is made by Quassim Cassam who highlights that alternative non-reductive forms of conceptual enquiry are available.¹⁷⁷ It is very difficult, furthermore, to find a reductive analysis of any concept proposed by either Ryle, Wittgenstein, Strawson, or Austin for example, yet, of-course, these philosophers were engaged in the analysis, or elucidation, of concepts.

7 Ordinary Language Philosophers and Reductive Conceptual Analyses

In *The Concept of Mind* Ryle seeks to draw attention to the ordinary uses of words expressing various mentalistic concepts such as belief and ‘knowing how’ – concepts which were associated with misleading models of the phenomena they were supposed to be about. Reflection on the ordinary uses of these words (the ordinary concepts) was intended to dispel those misleading models. Were the resulting elucidations reductive? It is difficult in Ryle to pin down concise statements encapsulating his conceptual elucidations, but his elucidations or Connective Analyses of the ordinary concepts of ‘knowing how’ and belief, however, might be interpreted in the following way.

Knowing how to do something is an ability to do that thing. To know how to do something one must perform the steps constitutive of the ability to do that thing

¹⁷³David Braddon-Mitchell and Frank Jackson, *Philosophy of Mind and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 47.

¹⁷⁴Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson, 37.

¹⁷⁵Soames, 92-3.

¹⁷⁶Williamson, *Knowledge*.

¹⁷⁷Quassim Cassam, ‘Can the Concept of Knowledge be Analysed?’, *Williamson on Knowledge*, ed. Duncan Pritchard and Patrick Greenough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

competently (it ‘...come[s] up to certain standards...’¹⁷⁸), deliberately (the clown ‘...trips and tumbles on purpose and after much rehearsal...’¹⁷⁹), and in such a way that one monitors the steps one takes (‘...he is ready to detect and correct lapses, to repeat and improve upon successes...’¹⁸⁰). To believe a proposition is such that one acts in a way manifesting one’s acceptance of that proposition. This might stand as an interpretation of Ryle’s elucidation of the ordinary concept of belief. We would not accept one’s believing some proposition, that is, ‘...unless we...found them inferring, imagining, saying and doing a great number of ... things...’¹⁸¹ indicative of their belief. Are these accounts reductive? At first sight it does not appear that they are because at first glance it does not seem that the concepts utilized to do the explaining are any simpler or easier to grasp than the concept’s they are to elucidate. ‘Inferring’ and ‘imagining’, at first glance do not appear any easier to understand than ‘belief’. The ideas of one’s performance coming ‘up to certain standards’, proceeding ‘on purpose and after much rehearsal’, and one being ‘ready to defect and correct lapses’ do not appear markedly easier to grasp or understand than the concept of being able or knowing how to do something. Furthermore, Ryle did not intend that mentalistic phenomena, such as knowing how and belief, should, or even could, be explained in a way that ultimately was non-circular. The ordinary concept of knowing how might be elucidated in terms of the ideas of performing competently, performing deliberately, and in monitoring one’s performance. In addition, the ordinary concepts of performing competently, performing deliberately, and monitoring one’s performance might be elucidated by appealing to the concept of knowing how or being able to do something.

If the method of discovering a reductive analysis of a concept is to find that concept’s necessary and sufficient conditions then there is further support for the claim that Ryle’s accounts of various mentalistic phenomena are not reductive accounts and that neither were they intended to be. This is because it does not appear that Ryle utilized or intended to utilize the method of identifying candidate analyses of concepts and then testing them against counter-examples as, for example, Ayer did in producing his analysis of knowledge. In ‘analysing’ the ordinary concept of knowing how, for

¹⁷⁸Ryle, *Mind* 29.

¹⁷⁹Ryle, *Mind* 33.

¹⁸⁰Ryle, *Mind* 29.

¹⁸¹Ryle, *Mind* 44.

example, Ryle does not test out his understanding of how we usually use the expression 'knowing how' against possible counter-examples. Ryle is not searching for an analysis of 'knowing how' that is sufficient for all possible applications of this expression or concept, but is concerned to elucidate his understanding of our ordinary use of it.

Furthermore, other Ordinary Language Philosophers were explicit that they were not pursuing the project of the reductive analysis of concepts. Strawson asserts that such a project is unrealistic: '...to get a clear grasp of complex meanings by reducing them, without remainder, to simple meanings...[is] a rather implausible project.' He suggests that philosophers 'abandon' the idea that '...analysis must always be in the direction of greater simplicity.'¹⁸² The project of reductively analysing concepts whose results might be expressed in statements of these concepts' necessary and sufficient application conditions is concerned with identifying what is common to every possible application of these concepts and therefore what is common to every possible instance of the phenomena they are taken to represent. Ayer, for example, writes that '...it is natural for us to assume that the different situations, or types of situations, to which [a concept]...applies have a distinctive common feature.'¹⁸³ In opposition to this underlying motivation to attempt to find what is common to each case, Wittgenstein asserts that the phenomena of interest to philosophers often '...have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, - but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways.'¹⁸⁴ This is Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance which asserts that various instances of the kind of phenomena philosophers have been interested in share some qualities with other instances of the same phenomenon, but not all. This would be in a way similar to how members of a family share some characteristics with other members, such as height and eye colour, but not all. This outlook stands in stark contrast to the project of conceptual reductions. Whereas many have thought and many continue to think that the paradigm form of philosophical explanation is one that is reductive, Ordinary Language Philosophers such as Strawson did not think that the account of a concept's being circular or non-reductive was a bar to that account being satisfactory and having explanatory value. Strawson says that 'as long as we move in big enough circles we learn something'.

¹⁸²Strawson, *Analysis* 19.

¹⁸³Ayer, *Knowledge* 5.

¹⁸⁴Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §65.

There is also support for the conjecture that Ordinary Language Philosophers did not pursue reductive analyses of concepts in the literature. Hacker remarks as such when he says that ‘Reductive and constructive analysis were generally rejected...’ by those philosophers practicing in Britain after the Second World War.¹⁸⁵ He specifically remarks that the ‘...later Wittgenstein was adamantly opposed to reductive analysis.’¹⁸⁶ This is also clear from Wittgenstein’s own remarks. In *The Blue and Brown Books* he writes that ‘...it can never be our [a philosopher’s] job to reduce anything to anything...Philosophy really *is* ‘purely descriptive’.’¹⁸⁷

If it is granted that a typical Connective Analysis is not reductive it does not of-course follow that these analyses or elucidations are not analytic. The question whether Connective Analyses or elucidations of concepts are analytic truths remains.

8 The Ordinary Language Philosophers’ Approach to Conceptual Enquiry and the Appeal to Analyticity

Are, for example, Ryle’s claims about the nature of the various mentalistic phenomena he explains analytically true? Is, for example, his elucidation of knowing how to do something or perform some activity (such as the activity of riding a bicycle) in terms of doing the activity deliberately, competently, and monitoring one’s activity or performance true analytically? It appears to be so given that the statement that performing some activity deliberately and competently while also monitoring what one is doing is constitutive of knowing how to do something, is surely one that is true just in virtue of the meanings expressed. This elucidation of knowing how certainly seems true given the way we use these words or expressions – because of the ordinary use of ‘knowing how’, ‘doing something deliberately’, ‘doing something competently’, and ‘monitoring what one does’. Similarly, it seems analytically true that to believe some proposition implicates acting in such a way as to manifest one’s acceptance of this proposition. The insights we might take from Austin about illusion and delusion also seem to be true in virtue of meaning. Namely that something that appears to be the case when we know really that it is not is constitutive of illusion, while something that we do

¹⁸⁵Hacker, *Wittgenstein’s Place* 159.

¹⁸⁶Hacker, ‘Analytic Philosophy’ 128.

¹⁸⁷Wittgenstein, *Books* 18.

take to be so but in fact is not the case is constitutive of delusion. By its very name a Conceptual Enquiry is an enquiry into concepts or meanings, and if an analytic or conceptual truth is just the truth of a given word's meaning or of certain links or connections between concepts then it is quite natural to tie the business of a Conceptual Enquiry together with the notion of an analytic truth as what such an enquiry issues in. These considerations would appear to suggest that the Ordinary Language Philosophers' model of enquiry into concepts has an appeal to analytic truth as its basis.

However it is noteworthy that Wittgenstein, Ryle, Strawson, Austin rarely, if at all, invoke the notion of analytic truth anywhere in their writings. That this is so is clear from a survey of their work. Furthermore, nowhere in their principal methodological remarks do they speak of analyticity. This is true of Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Ryle in the introduction and Chapter 1 of *The Concept of Mind* and in his paper 'Ordinary Language', Strawson in Chapters 1 and 2 of *Analysis and Metaphysics*, and Austin in 'A Plea for Excuses' and the introduction to *Sense and Sensibilia*. Such a conjecture in regard to Wittgenstein is supported by Hacker who writes that '...there is virtually no invocation of the concept of analyticity in his later writings.'¹⁸⁸ Neither, usually, do these philosophers even invoke the notion of meaning, preferring instead the notion of use. Ryle writes that '...in fairly recent years...philosophers have picked up the trick of talking about the use of expressions...' rather than '...talking about the *meanings* of expressions...'¹⁸⁹ Similarly Wittgenstein avows 'Don't ask the meaning, ask the use.'

But is this mere window-dressing – a mere difference in choice of words or choice of presentation? That is are philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin, and Strawson merely choosing to describe their model of Conceptual Enquiry in a way that avoids invoking the notion of analyticity when the nature of their work and their conclusions demands a coherent notion of analytic truth to account for what they are doing? This does not appear to be the case. Whereas Logical Positivists such as Ayer appealed to the notion of an analytic truth to account for how it was that some statements, such as philosophical statements (as they envisioned them) appeared to be necessarily true and knowable a priori, the Ordinary Language Philosophers were not concerned with accounting for the nature of the necessity (and a priori knowableness) in

¹⁸⁸Hacker, 'On Quine's *cul-de-sac*' 234 Note 5.

¹⁸⁹Gilbert Ryle, 'Ordinary Language', *The Philosophical Review* 62.2 (1953): 172.

terms of analyticity. Nowhere do Wittgenstein, Ryle, Strawson, and Austin etc attempt to account for the nature of philosophical truths by appeal to analyticity, and nowhere do they attempt to explain their apparent necessity by appeal to analyticity. It is noteworthy that the issue of whether the statements of philosophy are necessarily true was not one explicitly broached by Ordinary Language Philosophers. It is not clear whether these philosophers saw their conclusions about concepts as necessary truths or not, but it is clear that a criterion for the assertions they made was that they make sense in accordance with the ordinary uses of the words in which they expressed their claims (the ordinary concepts those words might be taken to stand for). The concern of many Ordinary Language Philosophers, and the point of a philosophical investigation as they saw it, was to unseat misleading theories of various phenomena – the phenomena to which philosophers have often sought to understand and explain, such as the nature of the mind, knowledge, and freedom. The Ordinary Language Philosopher’s appeal was to our ordinary concepts in order to better understand these phenomena. The emphasis on use or ordinary use of a word shows that the interest of these philosophers was in the ordinary ‘work’ this word, or words in general are put to – that is, of ordinary concepts and for the purposes of dispelling confusion regarding concepts in general.

When explaining their own view of the philosophical enterprise or their own approach to it, Wittgenstein, Ryle, Strawson, and Grice appeal to the idea of making clear or explicit a kind of knowledge we already possess. Wittgenstein expresses that he does not wish to ‘learn anything new’, while Ryle expresses that he does not seek ‘new information’. It is of the ‘essence of our investigation’, Wittgenstein writes, that we ‘...do not seek to learn anything *new* by it. We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view.’¹⁹⁰ The concern is with ‘arranging what we have always known’.¹⁹¹ This idea might also be understood in terms of Wittgenstein’s dictum that philosophy ‘...simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything.’¹⁹² Ryle writes that what he produces in *The Concept of Mind* ‘...does not give new information about minds’ but, rather, that we ‘...possess already a wealth of information about minds...’¹⁹³ Grice, furthermore, remarks of the ‘very old idea’ that

¹⁹⁰Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §89.

¹⁹¹Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §109.

¹⁹²Wittgenstein, *Investigations* §126.

¹⁹³Ryle, *Mind* 9.

you ‘cannot ask, in a philosophical way, what something is unless (in a sense) you already know what it is’.¹⁹⁴

An interpretation of this appeal by these philosophers is that they aim to be clear or explicit about what we already know about certain phenomena - knowledge that is bound up in our ability to use the words we do that signify our talk about these phenomena, or in our ability to deploy our ordinary concepts about them. Part of the problem which these philosophers see themselves as addressing is, in Strawson’s words, that of having ‘...mastered a practice...[but being unable to] state the theory of our practice.’¹⁹⁵ This is the practice of using language or applying our ordinary concepts as we do. Here, the idea is that ‘...being able to do something...is very different from being able to say how it’s done; and that it by no means implies the later.’¹⁹⁶

Ryle, Strawson, and Grice each make a point of emphasising that we have an ability to use language but are unable to articulate much about how we employ our concepts. Ryle writes that:

It is...one thing to know how to apply such concepts, quite another to know how to correlate them with one another and with concepts of other sorts. Many people...know by practice how to operate with concepts...but they cannot state the logical regulations governing their use.¹⁹⁷

Similarly Strawson writes that ‘...the practical mastery of our conceptual equipment in no way entails the possession of a clear, explicit understanding of the principles which govern our handling of it, of the theory of our practice.’¹⁹⁸ Similarly Grice writes that if one is ‘able to *apply* the word...in particular cases’ one might still be ‘...at a loss...to give a *general* account of the distinction between the sorts of...’ cases in which one would and sorts of cases in which one would not apply that word, and that it is the philosopher’s job to make this kind of knowledge clear.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴Paul Grice, ‘Postwar Oxford Philosophy’, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press: 1989), 173.

¹⁹⁵Strawson, *Analysis* 7.

¹⁹⁶Strawson, *Analysis* 6.

¹⁹⁷Ryle, *Mind* 9.

¹⁹⁸Strawson, *Analysis* 7.

¹⁹⁹Grice 174.

Ryle's metaphor of our skill at navigation, and Strawson's metaphor of our grammatical skills are employed by these two thinkers to further articulate the idea of our being unable to articulate much about the abilities we have. Ryle emphasises that we are often able to successfully navigate ourselves around the area in which we live, yet we are unable, without a certain amount of thought, to describe how to get from one location to another. It is often the case, that is, that one knows '...their way about their own parish, but cannot construct or read a map of it, much less a map of the region or continent in which their parish lies.'²⁰⁰ Similarly one can often tell immediately whether a sentence is grammatical or ungrammatical, yet nevertheless be unable to say exactly what is wrong or right about it. We have an implicit mastery of the grammar of our language but not an explicit knowledge. We learn how to read and write at school despite a lack of formal lessons in the grammar of the English language.²⁰¹

A focus on the ordinary or everyday use of a word such as 'belief' will tell us about our ordinary concept of belief. The ordinary use of the word 'belief' is that or those ways we normally, commonly use it in our everyday lives. That we usually only predicate of one that he believes such-and-such, such as that the sun is bright for example, if he acts in such a way that manifests his believing such, is an insight into the nature of the phenomenon of belief as we encounter it, as based on the place of our ordinary concept of this phenomenon in our lives. To reveal this knowledge about our ordinary concepts or our ordinary use of words, we need only reflect on our practice of such a use or conceptual deployment. This is just reflection on our ability to speak a language in normal everyday circumstances. The appeal is to our ordinary concepts because the view is that we are seeking to understand what these phenomena are and the place they 'occupy' in our lives. Strawson says that as philosophers our 'essential, if not our only, business is to get a clear view of our concepts and their place in our lives.'²⁰² Furthermore, although reflection on the ordinary use of a word will tell us something about our ordinary concept it expresses there is no guarantee we will capture accurately the full extent of our ordinary use of a word or conceptual deployment. To improve the likelihood of doing so we need to scrutinize our account, which might involve others bringing to bear their own mastery of our shared conceptual equipment.

²⁰⁰Ryle, *Mind* 9-10.

²⁰¹Strawson, *Analysis* 5.

²⁰²Strawson, 'Autobiography' 20.

That the procedure is to reflect on our practice of conceptual deployment is suggestive of the idea that the process of Connective Analysis is a priori and its results constitute a priori knowledge. Some commentators however have been cautious in their characterisation of the kind of knowledge the method of Connective Analysis delivers, and reluctant to label it as a priori. Millar writes that what philosophers such as Ryle, Wittgenstein, and Austin did was to pay ‘...close attention to distinctions we make in practice, and to facts – contingent facts – about what we count as cases of meaning, intending, and the like’,²⁰³ and thus that ‘...we should not identify conceptual enquiry with...purely *a priori* methods.’²⁰⁴ Millar highlights the significance of a common, individual case to this style of conceptual elucidation. Ryle, for example, considers a normal, common case of the performance of a clown, of a boy tying knots, of one believing the earth is round. This is something Hanfling emphasises. In the Connective Analysis or elucidation of a concept Hanfling remarks that one ‘...considers relevant examples and concludes that he would apply a given word to such and such cases and refuse to apply it to others. Discussion with others may lead him to change his mind: they may draw his attention to other examples, or to features of examples, that he had overlooked.’²⁰⁵ The appeal begins with one’s own understanding of or ‘personal reflection’ upon the ordinary use of a term but further consideration and discussion with others may change one’s mind about this. Hanfling prefers to characterise knowledge of a Connective Analysis of a concept – knowledge of how we use a word - as ‘participatory’. The ‘activity’ of using the words we do ‘...is one in which each participant is constantly kept on the rails by sanctions coming from the others.’²⁰⁶

If philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin, and Strawson envisioned their philosophical activity as not a purely a priori process then it could not have been that such philosophers would have wished to invoke the notion of analytic truth to explain the nature of philosophy in the way the Logical Positivists did. The reductive conceptual analyses sought by Logical Positivists were taken to be knowable a priori given that, as the Logical Positivists suggested, a knowledge or understanding of the meanings of the words comprising the analysis, or mastery of the concepts involved,

²⁰³Millar, ‘State’ 183.

²⁰⁴Millar, ‘State’ 182.

²⁰⁵Hanfling, 53.

²⁰⁶Hanfling, 54.

appeared to provide the means for coming to know the truth of it. That is knowledge of the meanings of words comprising the analyses was seen ‘...not [to] depend on evidence or justification from sensory experience’,²⁰⁷ but to be ‘...based solely on understanding the proposition considered’.²⁰⁸ This appears to be in contrast with the knowledge of a Connective Analysis of a concept, knowledge of which might have an element of input from others, as well as being sensitive to the peculiarities of specific common cases of the ordinary use of a word.

²⁰⁷Moser, ‘A Priori’.

²⁰⁸Russell, ‘A Priori Justification and Knowledge’.

5. Two other Concerns over Conceptual Enquiry

With the understanding of what the nature of an enquiry into concepts might be, gleaned from the examination of Conceptual Analysis and Connective Analysis, it is now appropriate to explore in greater detail two further worries over the practice of enquiring into concepts.

1 Scientific Investigation Reveals how Natural-Kind Terms Refer

Prior to the advent of Kripke and Putnam, the meaning of a word had been theorised to consist in an 'intension' and an 'extension'. A word's 'extension' is the set of things that word applies to. For example, the extension of the word 'water' is all of the water in the world. A word's 'intension' was the psychological aspect of word-meaning, seen as revealing the 'extension'. Putnam, however, cast doubt over the idea that the intension of a word always reveals its extension.

Whereas most if not all Analytic Philosophers pre-1970s viewed an investigation into word-meanings (or concepts) as revealing the nature of that to which words refer (that which falls under the corresponding concept), Putnam made it clear that to determine the nature of that to which a natural-kind term refers (that which falls under the corresponding natural-kind concept) we have to engage in the scientific investigation of the relevant natural kind. For example, to know what the nature of water is, water needs to be investigated scientifically. Science has, of-course, revealed that water is H₂O. Water then, is just H₂O.

Putnam makes his case by inviting us to consider, for example, the case of 'Twin Earth'. 'Twin Earth' is a planet like Earth in all respects with the one exception that what looks like water is not H₂O but a chemical composition '...very long and complicated. ...abbreviate[d]...simply as XYZ.'²⁰⁹ Putnam asks what a visitor from Earth would make of this, and concludes he would say that "On Twin Earth the word 'water' means XYZ".²¹⁰

²⁰⁹Hilary Putnam, 'Meaning and Reference', *Naming, Necessity, and Natural Kinds*, ed. Stephen Schwartz (London: Cornell University Press, 1977) 122.

²¹⁰Putnam, 122.

Water is an example of a ‘natural kind’, as is gold, sand, and also things such as fruit vegetables, trees, and so on. A ‘natural kind’ is a phenomenon existing independently of us in the natural or physical world. As the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy outlines, that which is a natural kind belongs to ‘...a grouping or ordering that does not depend on humans.’²¹¹ Natural kinds such as water and gold are studied via scientific investigation. Some philosophers have thought that the kind of phenomena philosophers have often been interested in (knowledge, freedom, happiness, etc) ought to be studied through the medium of scientific investigation rather than via our concepts of them or via what we take the meanings of the relevant words to be. Kornblith in connection with knowledge is a notable example. Kornblith writes that by ‘...bringing in talk of concepts...we only succeed in changing the subject...’ and that instead of ‘talking about’ the phenomenon ‘...we end up talking about our concept...’ of the phenomenon.²¹²

Kornblith considers the literature of the field of animal ethology to understand the causal-explanatory role of knowledge to the scientifically understood world. He considers that the knowledge certain organisms appear to have is useful in explaining how they continue to successfully locate food in meeting their biological need of hunger. This is the best explanation of how biological needs such as hunger are met Kornblith suggests. Thus, what is important for understanding knowledge is how useful this phenomenon is to the explanation of some organisms’ satisfaction of basic needs such as hunger. Knowledge, Kornblith proposes, is the set of reliably produced true beliefs ‘instrumental’ in allowing organisms of a certain intelligence to satisfy their basic biological needs. As Kornblith himself puts it, knowledge is ‘...the locus of a homeostatic [stable] cluster of properties: true beliefs...reliably produced, that are instrumental in the production of behaviour successful in meeting biological needs...’²¹³

However it is not clear that the kind of phenomena in which philosophers are interested, such as knowledge and happiness for example, ought to be regarded as natural kinds. Thus it remains unclear that the kind of phenomena philosophers are

²¹¹Alexander Bird and Emma Tobin, ‘Natural Kinds’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N Zalta, Summer 2010 ed., accessed: 24 February 2011, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/natural-kinds> >.

²¹²Kornblith, 10.

²¹³Kornblith, 62.

interested in ought to be studied through scientific investigation as opposed to a conceptual one. It appears that at least some phenomena are understood perfectly well via an understanding of the concepts of them. Millar makes this point with regard to ‘family resemblance’ concepts such as the concept of furniture, and ‘role-concepts’ such as the concept of a teacher. It appears that all there is to furniture is encapsulated in the concept of furniture, for example. As Millar puts it, it seems ‘...there is no more to being furniture than is captured by the concept – to be an item of furniture is just to be suitably similar to things that include tables, chairs,..., and so on.’²¹⁴ Furthermore it does not appear obvious that knowledge is a natural kind as it is not wholly clear why knowledge should be considered to be more like gold and water, for example, than family resemblance concepts such as furniture.²¹⁵

2 Concepts Might Contain Errors

A concern for enquiring into concepts shared by Kornblith and Jesse Prinz is that these concepts might ‘contain’ errors. Prinz writes that ‘...concepts may contain information that is false or misleading’.²¹⁶ Similarly, Kornblith writes that it is a ‘mistake’ to investigate the concept of knowledge because it might be ‘...importantly incomplete or importantly mistaken or both’.²¹⁷

Such a worry is best understood in the light of a certain theory of what constitutes a concept. This is the view that concepts are constituted by ‘folk platitudes’. The notion of a ‘platitude’ or ‘folk platitude’ is not entirely clear.²¹⁸ A platitude is sometimes regarded as a view about a phenomenon appealing to our common sense, sometimes as ‘an ordinary belief’ about a phenomenon, and sometimes as reflective of our use of a word or of the meaning of a word. Hanfling writes that a platitude has the

²¹⁴Millar, ‘State’ 181.

²¹⁵See Millar, ‘State’, 182.

²¹⁶Jesse Prinz, *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 29.

²¹⁷Kornblith, 163.

²¹⁸David Nolan, for example, remarks that he is ‘...not sure everyone means exactly the same thing by this technical term...’ of a ‘platitude’. Daniel Nolan, ‘Platitudes and Metaphysics’, *Conceptual Analysis and Philosophical Naturalism*, ed. David Braddon-Mitchell and Robert Nola (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2009) 267. Braddon-Mitchell and Nola note similarly that ‘Exactly what counts as a “platitude” about X is one of the tasks that...needs to [be] address[ed].’ David Braddon-Mitchell and Robert Nola, ‘Introducing the Canberra Plan’, *Conceptual Analysis and Philosophical Naturalism*, ed. David Braddon-Mitchell and Robert Nola (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2009) 7.

quality of ‘banality’.²¹⁹ Typical examples of platitudes include the following pairs about pain and hunger.

A person who suffers severe bodily damage will feel pain.

A person who suffers a sudden sharp pain will be apt to wince.

A person denied food for any length will feel hunger.

Barring a stronger contrary purpose, hunger causes eating.²²⁰

Folk platitudes are conceived as combining to form causal-explanatory ‘folk theories’ about phenomena, which are envisioned as basic or elementary or primitive theories of these phenomena. So the first pair of platitudes above might combine to form part of an elementary causal-explanatory understanding of pain. Pain is caused by severe bodily damage, and might be expressed by one’s wincing. It is taken that such an understanding is ripe for improvement or replacement, and, in some cases, by a more sophisticated scientific theory of the phenomenon. The view is that, as William Lycan expresses, that we should be ‘...entirely willing to give up fairly large chunks of our commonsensical or platitudinous theory...’²²¹ On such an understanding of what constitutes our concepts it follows that in enquiring into them one might, as Prinz expresses, ‘...end up regurgitating some folk psychological “platitude” that turns out to be false...’²²²

One might, however, wish to resist the idea that that which our ordinary concepts might reveal regarding the nature of at least some phenomena is apt to be superseded or replaced by other accounts. The worry is that in so doing we risk, in Jackson’s words, ‘changing the subject’.²²³ That is if we deviate too far from our ordinary understanding of pain, for example, then we risk having an account that purports to be about pain but which is not.

²¹⁹Hanfling, 248.

²²⁰These are taken from Paul Churchland, ‘Folk Psychology and the Explanation of Human Behaviour’ *The Future of Folk Psychology: Intentionality and Cognitive Science*, ed. John Greenwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 53.

²²¹William Lycan, *Judgement and Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 31.

²²²Prinz, 29.

²²³See Jackson.

It is also worth noting that if this view of concepts is meant to characterise the kind of conclusions influential Analytic Philosophers of the past, such as Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Austin made then it is not clear that such a goal is achieved. It is not clear that the kind of conclusions made by philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Austin, for example, are adequately characterised as platitudes or sets of platitudes. Indeed that many of the conclusions of philosophers such as these were intended to unseat various commonly held convictions would suggest that they ought not be characterised as 'platitudinous'. Ryle's conclusion that to believe a proposition is to act in a way that manifests acceptance of that proposition does not immediately strike as being of the same character as 'a person who suffers a sharp pain will wince' for instance.

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