Conceptual Analysis

LPS 200
Fall 2012-Winter 2013

In this course, we'll examine various points of view on the idea of conceptual analysis -- once considered the only proper method for analytic philosophy. Along the way, some comparisons with other meta-philosophies may help illuminate our main subject. Toward the end, we'll consider some recent alternative takes on what so-called 'analytic philosophy' is and how it should be done.

(Lurking in the background throughout will be an austere form of naturalism that I call 'Second Philosophy'. You might find it helpful to glance at the introductory paper 'Second philosophy' (available on my web site) or dip into Part I (and perhaps also section IV.1) of the book *Second Philosophy*.)

The default requirement for those taking the course for a grade (other than S/U) is three short papers (750-1250 words) due at the beginning of class in the 4th week, 7th week, and 10th weeks. Each paper should isolate one localized point in the readings and offer some analysis and/or critique. (I'm happy to discuss topics and/or read drafts ahead of time, in by e-mail or in person.) Other options are open to negotiation.

I assume everyone has access to copies of

> J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers*.

> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations.*

> Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy*.

The rest of the assigned readings are available to enrolled students on the course EEE web page.

Please come to the first meeting prepared to discuss the reading in Topic 1.

Topics

Some trace the roots of the 'analysis' in analytic philosophy to
Frege, many others cite Moore and Russell more or less as team, still
others pass over Moore in favor of Frege and Russell. We'll look at
all these thinkers, beginning with Frege, in particular, with
Blanchette's recent investigation of Frege's notion of analysis and
its role in his logicism.

1. Frege

    Blanchette, *Frege's Conception of Logic*, chapters 1, 4 and 8.

Addendum:

    Demopoulos, 'The philosophical basis of our knowledge of number'.

    Heck, 'Cardinality, counting and equinumerosity'.

As noted, it's fairly common credit Moore and Russell with the
invention of analytic philosophy. Russell himself insisted that the
crucial early steps away from British idealism were taken by Moore:
'It was toward the end of 1898 that Moore and I rebelled against both
Kant and Hegel. Moore led the way, but I followed closely in his
footsteps' (Russell, *My Philosophical Development*, p. 42). In the
preface to Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*, written in 1902, he
insists that 'on fundamental questions of philosophy, my position, in
all its chief features is derived from Mr. G. E. Moore' (p. xviii).
One such feature, concerning propositions, is 'their independence of
any knowing mind' (and propositions are built out of concepts that are
equally independent). In the course of writing this book, Russell's
initial defense of logicism, he discovered his paradox, which led to
his development of the theory of types (1903-1908) and eventually to
Principia Mathematica (1910-1913).

For our purposes, what's of most interest is the surprisingly
elaborate Platonistic metaphysics Russell derived from the early
Moore: for example, 'A concept is not in any intelligible sense an
"adjective", as if there were something substantive, more ultimate
than it. For we must, if we are to be consistent, describe what
appears to be most substantive as no more than a collection of such
supposed adjectives: and thus, in the end, the concept turns out to
be the only substantive … From our description of a judgment, there
must, then, disappear all reference either to our mind or to the
world. Neither of these can furnish the "ground" for anything' ('The
nature of judgment', pp. 79-80). The tone here is quite different

from that of the more familiar, later Moore, the great defender of common sense. Perhaps it's no surprise, then, that the mature Moore omitted the early essays from the collections of his writings on which our impressions of Moore are so largely based (see Regan's introduction to *The Early Essays*)!

Moore spent the years 1904-1908 in Edinburgh, where he studied Hume and his critic, Thomas Reid, author of *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*. By the time Moore returned to Cambridge in 1911, he had evolved into the celebrated common sense philosopher of his later period.

2. Moore

    Early Moore

    Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 'Preface', §1.1, and §§5-10.

    Baldwin, *G. E. Moore*, pp. 61-65.

Cf., 'The nature of judgment': 'A thing becomes intelligible first when it is analysed into its constituent concepts' (p. 67).

    Late Moore

    Moore, 'A defence of common sense', especially §IV.

It's worth reading through this famous paper from the beginning to feel for oneself the shock of having nodded absently through pages and pages as Moore endorses propositions like 'There exists at present a living human body, which is *my* body', only to find in these final paragraphs that the analysis of such propositions reveals the existence of sense data! We'll consider one of these earlier sections two weeks from now.

    Moore, *Lectures on Philosophy*, pp. 153-196.
          'Reply to my critics', pp. 660-667.

    Baldwin, *G. E. Moore*, pp. 193-195, 219-226.

Extra reading:

    Early Moore

    Moore, 'The nature of judgment'.

    Hylton, *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*, chapter 4, especially pp. 143-146.

    Baldwin, *G. E. Moore*, the rest of chapter 2.

    Late Moore

Moore, 'A defence of common sense'.

Baldwin, *G. E. Moore*, the rest of chapter 7.

Fratantaro, *The Methodology of G. E. Moore*, chapter 5.

One of Moore's biggest fans was J. L. Austin, who once remarked, 'Some people like Witters [i.e., Wittgenstein], but Moore's my man!' (Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Philosophy*, p. 172, cites Strawson and Grice as sources for this quotation). Still, Austin's take on philosophical method would appear to depart somewhat from Moore's.

3. Austin

'Are there a priori concepts?'

'The meaning of a word'

'A plea for excuses', especially pp. 175, 181-189, 201-204.

'Ifs and cans', especially pp. 231-232.

Sense and Sensibilia, pp. 62-64.

Urmson, 'Austin's philosophy', especially pp. 24-26.

Urmson describes the technique Austin used in discussions on his famous 'Saturdays'.

Extra reading:

Warnock, *J. L. Austin*, chapter 1.

Quine, 'On what there is'.

As Urmson's description and Austin's writings make clear, much of what Austin is up to is clearly and self-consciously empirical. (Elsewhere, Urmson notes, 'Austin, who must have read through the *Little Oxford Dictionary* very many times, frequently insisted that this did not take so long as one would expect' ('A symposium on Austin's method', p. 79).) Though his own training was 'as a classical scholar and a linguist', Warnock remarks, 'That this was his own training was, as he knew, significant for him; but he was very far from assuming, for that reason, that it was the best sort of training to have. It is possible that he himself would have preferred to be a scientist, and certain that he would have wished to know a great deal more about the sciences … his exacting habits of thought led him to question the value of the educational method by which he had acquired them, and he was sometimes inclined to think that he had wasted a

great deal of time' (Warnock, 'John Langshaw Austin, a biographical sketch', p. 4).

We nowadays can't help but be reminded of the contemporary school of so-called 'experimental philosophy', so it seems worth jumping out of historical order to think a bit about how the two approaches compare and contrast. But first let take a moment to meditate on that kind of thing generally lumped together under the rubric of 'ordinary language philosophy'. (Austin is almost always included; as we'll see, Moore and Malcolm disagree about Moore himself, but Malcolm seems a straightforward case; and the late Wittgenstein is sometimes included, sometimes not.) Our example is the word 'know' and/or the nature of knowledge.

4.   Some so-called 'ordinary language philosophers' on 'know'.

    Austin, 'Other minds', especially pp. 76-97.

As another case for comparison, we'll consider Malcolm's two papers on Moore. (If you've never read the corresponding pieces by Moore, you might have a look at the readings in parentheses.)

    (Moore, 'Defence of common sense', especially §I.)

    Malcolm, 'Moore and ordinary language', especially pp. 345-361.

Here Malcolm argues that Moore is really an ordinary language philosopher. Of course, as we've seen, Moore is careful to insist that he's not primarily interested in language, but Malcolm himself endorses the approach he attributes to Moore, so the paper gives us some insight into what he takes 'ordinary language philosophy' to be.

    (Moore, 'Proof of an external world', especially pp. 145-150.)

Moore spends the bulk of this paper (pp. 127-145) spelling out what counts as something 'external' or 'a thing to be met with in space', which includes human hands. He then offers the proof for which he is famous: 'I can prove now … that two human hands exist. How? By holding up my two hands, and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right hand, "Here is one hand", and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the left, "and here is another" … by doing this, I have proved *ipso facto* the existence of external things' (pp. 145-146).

    Malcolm, 'Defending common sense', especially pp. 201-215 and the
    final paragraph.

In this piece Malcolm comes from another direction, arguing that Moore has offended against ordinary language. He does so by analyzing the proper use of 'know', which bears comparison with Austin's treatment. Given what we've seen, it's no surprise that Moore reacted along these lines:

Moore, letter to Malcolm.

Wittgenstein visited Malcolm in Ithaca from July to October of 1949, after the appearance of Malcolm's paper, which they discussed at length. Here are some representative passages from *On Certainty*, written at the time of these discussions or shortly thereafter:

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §§1-4, 6, 9-11, 18, 40.

During the final weeks of his life, in March and April of 1951, Wittgenstein was back in Cambridge and met regularly with Moore to talk philosophy. During that period, he wrote what we know as §§300-676 of *On Certainty*. Here are some representative passage concerning 'here is a hand', a tree in Moore's garden, and related matters of purported knowledge:

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §§347-355, 387-9, 397-400, 407, 423-425, 462-469, 481-2, 622.

Extra reading:

Marconi, 'Being and Being called: paradigm case arguments and natural kind words'.

Grice, 'G. E. Moore and the philosopher's paradoxes', *Studies in the Way of Words*, chapter 9.

Of course we don't hear much about ordinary language philosophy these days; it comes up mostly as the butt of jokes. What exactly accounts for its demise? The consensus answer is that it was refuted by Grice (see, e.g., Soames, *Philosophical Analysis in the 20th Century*, volume 2, Part 4, 'Paul Grice and the end of ordinary language philosophy'). A minority opinion appears in Uschanov, 'Ernest Gellner's criticisms of Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophy'. The paper opens by remarking that Gellner's book '*Words and Things* is a vehement attack on the style of philosophizing known as … "ordinary language philosophy" (OLP) -- the style of philosophising associated with Wittgenstein along with Oxford philosophers of the last mid-century, such as … J. L. Austin', and defends the thesis that 'the way in which OLP has been written out of history in recent decades is largely the result of Gellner's influence'. (See Dummett's 'Oxford philosophy' for a lively discussion of Gellner's book.) We'll focus here on Grice.

5.   The demise of Ordinary Language Philosophy

Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*, chapters 1, 2, 10, and pp. 376-385.

Here are some tiny snippets, some we're already seen, in which our ordinary language philosophers seem to touch on Grice's concerns:

Austin, 'The meaning of a word', p. 64, 'A plea for excuses', p. 185.

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §§464, 552.

Malcolm, 'Defending common sense', pp. 215-216.

Extra reading:

Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words*, chapter 11.

We might be suspicious of this historical story, given that Grice would appear to consider himself an ordinary language philosopher despite the new complexities he introduces. He seems to conclude only that proper implementation of the method requires careful attention to what is part of a word's meaning and what is part of what we nowadays tend to call its pragmatics. Clearly Moore is on record as recognizing a substantive dividing line here, but what about Austin, what about Wittgenstein? Contemporary debate over the extent to which the two can be separated is conducted in terms of 'literalism' vs. 'contextualism' (see Korta and Perry's entry on 'Pragmatics' in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

Finally, let's loop back to the question of how Austin's methods compare with those of contemporary experimental philosophy. We'll focus on the case of intentional action, first in Austin, then in Knobe, one of the founders of the new school.

6. Experimental philosophy

Austin, 'A plea for excuses' (all of it, finally!)

Knobe, 'The concept of intentional action'.

Alexander, *Experimental Philosophy*, chapter 3.

Knobe and Nichols, 'Experimental philosophy and conceptual analysis'.

After this long development, we return to the early 20th century, to Russell, the second member of the seminal team. In his earlier works, Russell embraced a decompositional form of analysis, along the lines of some parts of Moore (for details, see Griffin's paper under 'extra reading'), but the famous theory of descriptions presents a new approach. Strawson responds on behalf of the ordinary language school.

7. Russell

Levine, 'Analysis and abstraction principles in Russell and Frege', especially pp. 51-58.

Russell, 'On denoting'.

Hylton, ' "On denoting" and the idea of a logically perfect language', especially pp. 91-103.

Strawson, 'On referring'.

Hylton, 'The theory of descriptions', especially pp. 228-232.

Extra reading:

Early Russell

Griffin, 'Some remarks on Russell's early decompositional style of analysis'.

Late Russell

Hylton, 'The theory of descriptions', the rest.

Next we consider Wittgenstein: early Wittgenstein in contrast to Russell, late Wittgenstein in contrast to early.

The *Tractatus* is a challenging read, best understood by total immersion in its complex, interconnected mass of doctrine, but (with a passing nod to those who think the whole book, or most of the book is intended as nonsense) we're going to try to isolate what it has to say (or show) about analysis. To do this, we'll focus on these themes: what is the world like?, how does representation in general work?, how does linguistic representation work?, and what sort of analysis is involved?

Those who'd like some guidance might be helped by:

Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*.

Fogelin, *Wittgenstein.*

Morris, *Wittgenstein and the Tractatus.*

Mounce, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: An Introduction.*

White, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.*

8. Wittgenstein - early

Wittgenstein, *The Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.*

> Preface and 1-2.063   (the world)
> 2.1-2.225 (representation as picturing)
> 3-4.1 (propositions as logical pictures)
> 4.2-4.23, 4.25-4.431, 4.5-5.01, 5.32, 5.471-5.4711 (the sense of a proposition)
> 4.45-4.4661, 6.1-6.13, 6.375-6.3751 (logic)
> 4.128, 5.453, 5.55-5.5571 (a bit more on analysis)

This rather ham-handed selection tries to cover all the bits needed to contemplate *Tractarian* analysis, but please feel free to read the rest!

Extra reading:

> Glock, 'Logical analysis', pp. 203-207.

> Griffen, *Wittgenstein's Logical Atomism*, pp. 41-61.

The grand *Tractarian* scheme came unraveled from the nub of the color exclusion problem (6.3751). Stern, *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language*, pp. 98-110, traces Wittgenstein's line of thought from this problem to his later, very different view of language. Some helpful guides:

> Baker and Hacker, *Wittgenstein on Understanding and Meaning*, *Part II: Exegesis §§1-184*.

> Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, chapter 9.

> Stern, *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations*, chapters 4 and 5.

9. Wittgenstein - late

> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§37-142.

>> §§37-45 (names, the errors of Russell and the author of the *Tractatus*)

>> §§46-59 (simples, another error of the author of the *Tractatus*)

>> §§60-64 (analysis)

>> §§65-88 (family resemblance)

>> §§89-133 (the new philosophy)

> Wittgenstein, *Blue and Brown Books*, pp. 61-62.

> Fogelin, *Taking Wittgenstein at his Word*, pp. 6-11.

Extra reading:

> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§1-36.
>
> Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, pp. 130-132.
>
> Glock, 'Logical analysis', pp. 207-208.
>   'Family resemblance'.

Wittgenstein's notion of a family resemblance concept is one of the few clear cases in which a bit of philosophy was straightforwardly and directly incorporated into science. While we're in the neighborhood, let's pause to survey some of what psychologists these days think about concepts and their analysis.

10. Psychology of concepts

> Murphy, *The Big Book of* Concepts, pp. 1-6, 11-65.

Extra reading:

> Murphy, *The Big Book of* Concepts, chapter 13, especially pp. 494-496.

------- End of Fall Quarter/Beginning of Winter Quarter -------

Returning to the legacy of Moore and Russell, to this point we've largely followed up the line of development rooted in Moore, the various philosophers more or less lumped together as belonging to the ordinary language school: Austin, Malcolm, Grice, Strawson. (Some would include the late Wittgenstein, but recall Fogelin's comparison of his approach with Austin's.) Philosophers more influenced by Russell, and by Frege before him, display a contrasting interest in ideal or idealized languages, as in the *Tractatus*. Carnap writes, 'For me personally, Wittgenstein was perhaps the philosopher who, besides Russell and Frege, had the greatest influence on my thinking' ('Intellectual autobiography', p. 25). And Quine writes, 'Carnap was a towering figure … even where we disagreed, he was still setting the theme; the line of my thought was largely determined by problems I felt his position presented' ('Homage to Carnap', pp. 40-41). Famously, one of those disagreements between these two philosophers of the roughly 'ideal language' persuasion, is over analyticity, the backbone of conceptual analysis.

11. Carnap/Quine

> Carnap, 'Empiricism, semantics and ontology', pp. 241-245, 249-251, 256-257.

Quine, 'Two dogmas of empiricism'.
  'Carnap and logical truth', pp. 115-122.

Carnap, *Logical Syntax of Language*, pp. 318.
  'Replies', pp. 921-922.

Grice and Strawson, 'In defense of a dogma'.

Extra reading:

Hillier, 'Mathematics in science: Carnap vs. Quine'.

Quine, 'Carnap and logical truth', the rest.
  'Two dogmas in retrospect'.

Quine, *Word and Object*, §43, especially pp. 206-207.

Creath, 'Quine on the intelligibility and relevance of analyticity'.

Hylton, ' "On denoting" and the idea of a logically perfect language', §4.

Hylton, *Quine*, chapter 3, especially §III.

We arrive, finally, at more contemporary authors. First we consider two followers of the Fregean line. (We'll get to a neo-Austinian below.)

12. Two neo-Fregeans

Dummett, 'Can analytic philosophy be systematic, and ought it to be?'

Hofweber, 'Number determiners, numbers and arithmetic'.

While Dummett addresses a dramatic range of meta-philosophical issues, Hofweber is just going about his philosophical business. See if you can figure out what methodological perspective is informing his approach.

Extra reading:

Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*, especially chapters 1-4.

Hylton, 'Review of Dummett's *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*'.

One influential, contemporary perspective on the role of concepts and conceptual analysis in philosophy can be found down under -- though some of its roots trace to David Lewis, an honorary but not actual Australian -- a perspective that counts itself as 'naturalistic'. The basic idea can be described as the 'Canberra two-step': suppose we'd like an account of, say, 'causation, color, free will, beliefs, moral value, or whatever. … [First] we collect together the "platitudes" concerning our subject matter … claims … that reflect our ordinary use of the term. [These are sometimes called 'Moorean facts', following Lewis (see Braddon-Mitchell and Nola, eds., *Conceptual Analysis and Philosophical Naturalism, p*. 7).] … At the second stage, we look at our theory of the world to tell us what, if anything, plays the role so defined' (Nolan, 'Platitudes and metaphysics', pp. 267-269). So there is room for a kind of a priori conceptual analysis in step one, and room for a contribution from science in step two (that's the 'naturalism'). We'll look at the work of a leading exponent of this approach.

13. The Canberra Plan

Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics*, pp. 1-5, 57-61, 87-101.

Stalnaker, 'Metaphysics without conceptual analysis'.

Jackson, 'Response to Stalnaker'.

Extra reading:

Jackson, 'Précis of *From Metaphysics to Ethics*'.

Stich and Weinberg, 'Jackson's empirical assumptions'.

Jackson, 'Response to Stich and Weinberg'.

Stich and Weinberg raise some questions from the psychology of concepts and the results of experimental philosophy. Jackson responds.

Nolan, 'Platitudes and metaphysics'.

In the preface to his magnum opus, *Wandering Significance: An Essay on Conceptual Behavior*, Wilson writes, 'I will be flattered if the work is regarded as a worthy continuation of the school of tempered common sense pioneered by Thomas Reid and J. L. Austin' (p. xviii). His account of how predicates correlate with the world brings a whole new complexity to our concept of 'concept'.

14. One neo-Austinian

Wilson, *Wandering Significance,* chapter 1 and pp. 54-58.

Maddy, *Second Philosophy*, §II.6, especially pp. 177-193.

Wilson's book is long and difficult. This passage from Maddy is intended as a sort of 'Cliff Notes' to *Wandering Significance*. (It comes in the midst of a discussion of disquotational truth, but as much of this as possible has been trimmed away in the above excerpt.) Brandom's essay listed below is another such.

Extra reading:

Wilson, *Wandering Significance*, Appendix to chapter 3 and other bits referenced by Maddy.

The appendix to chapter 3 is a list of theses Wilson attributes to the 'classical view' of concepts.

Brandom, 'Platforms, patchworks, and parking garages: Wilson's account of conceptual fine-structure in *Wandering Significance*'.

Another recent defense of conceptual analysis, this time as the unique proper method in philosophy, comes from Colin McGinn.

15. McGinn

McGinn, *Truth by Analysis*, chapters 1, 2, 5, 7, plus pp. 84-85, 132-134.

Extra reading:

Ahlstrom-Vij, 'Review of McGinn, *Truth by Analysis*'.

Yet another defender is Goldman, here joined in debate with Kornblith.

16. Goldman vs. Kornblith

Goldman and Pust, 'Philosophical theory and intuitional evidence'.

Goldman, 'Philosophical intuitions'.

Kornblith, 'Naturalism and intuitions'.
        Knowledge and its Place in Nature, pp. 10-12.

Extra reading:

Kornblith, 'The role of intuition in philosophical inquiry'.

Our last foray into the current philosophical literature on conceptual analysis, and the broader question of what analytic philosophy is or

should be, focuses on a widely-read and influential book by Williamson. First we look at both his extended attack on conceptual analysis and his positive view, then we turn to exchanges with some of his critics.

17. Williamson against conceptual analysis

Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy,* chapter 4.

Extra reading:

Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, chapter 3.

18. Williamson's positive view

Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, Introduction, chapter 1, pp. 141-171, and Afterword.

Extra reading:

Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, pp. 171-178, and Appendix 1 (this last is for those interested in more on the connection between modal and counterfactual logic).

19. Williamson and his critics

Kroedel, 'Counterfactuals and the epistemology of modality'.

Boghossian, 'Williamson on the *a priori* and the analytic'.

Williamson, 'Reply to Boghossian'.

Extra reading:

Jackson, 'Thought experiments and possibilities'.

Williamson, 'Reply to Jackson'.

For those interested in the relationship between Jackson's views and Williamson's.

Kornblith, 'Timothy Williamson's *The Philosophy of Philosophy*'.

Williamson, 'Reply to Kornblith'.

Papineau, David, 'The poverty of analysis'.

Though Papineau discusses Williamson (and Jackson and others), his primary goal is to present a contrasting account of his own.

Kroedel presents an alternative take on the relationship between counterfactuals and metaphysical modality.

For the final session, we take up four cases not directly addressed to any of the issues we've been discussing: Dedekind on continuity, Einstein on simultaneity, Turing on computability, and Malament on rotation. Are these examples of conceptual analysis of one sort or another? What kind of information is being sought and found? Can we draw any conclusions about conceptual analysis and its role in science and/or philosophy?

20.   Continuity, Simultaneity, Computation and Rotation

   Dedekind, 'Continuity and irrational numbers'.

   Einstein, *Relativity: the Special and the General Theory*, pp. 1-30.

   Turing, 'On computable numbers', especially §§1 and 9.

   Malament, 'A no-go theorem about rotation in relativity theory', especially pp. 267-274, 288.

Obviously, we won't attempt to plumb that depths of these papers -- our interest is in trying to understand what type of inquiry they represent.

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