Ordinary Language Philosophy Revisited

Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP) has become unfashionable with the rise of 'naturalism' and the cognitive science approach to traditional philosophical issues. There are some hints (e.g. several recent books) that with meta-philosophical reflection some reconsideration of OLP takes place, to the advantage of Analytic Philosophy. Philosophical fashions are not more sustainable than other fashions, so that ideally the merits of supposedly 'superseded' approaches should be incorporated into their descendants. Notwithstanding disagreements with individual claims made by ordinary language philosophers – where in philosophy do we not disagree with parts of theses or do not recognize partial error? OLP with its focus on the central importance of language and the impact of established usage, admitting language authority in philosophical debates, contains valuable insights and methodology for any future Analytic Philosophy.

OLP, of course, need not and should not be taken as the only form of philosophy and philosophical reasoning. Obviously the (following) arguments in favour of OLP are not simply exercises of OLP, and other philosophical approaches (most notably in the context of the tradition of Analytic Philosophy its so-called "Ideal Language Philosophy"-branch [ILP]) have their merits as well.[1]

§1   *Prima Facie* Worries about Ordinary Usage

Gareth Hallet (2008) organizes the issue of 'linguistic philosophy' as centring on the 'authority of language', a well-chosen point of departure.

As we like to deal with *philosophical* issues we often want to supersede a more chronicle of usage. To do otherwise rests authority on (all) philosophical issues on a mere socio-historic record, it seems. Where should the philosophical qualification of that usage come from? Usage has become embedded over time in (useful) ways of acting, but may have had a limited scope of situations confronted. Thus usage stays silent on many problematic scenarios. It just does not decide one way or the other on how to employ an expression in these circumstances. It is not fixed in universally applicable criteria of sufficient and necessary features of something. Thought experiments, thus, cannot be decided, at least often, in favour of one of the supposed views based on them. Intuitions with respect to them are not completely grounded in language then, but contain minimal theories stemming from one's prior view on the issue in question or related affairs.

Why should we expect ordinary language to have sufficient authority in cases of theoretical issues?

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[1]   The present paper does not aim at justifying OLP as the best philosophical approach, not even within the confines of analytic philosophy – see the outline of my understanding of analytic philosophy and the (limited) role of OLP therein in (Bremer 2005, pp. 390-94). The present paper rather aims at justifying OLP as an integral part of analytic philosophy, not to be completely rejected or neglected.

The occasions of such questions being spoken about may be severely limited. Ordinary language seems to be the wrong place to look for (hidden) theories and well-defined concepts.

§2 Philosophical Issues and Ordinary Usage

One may consider philosophical issues to be an exception to these worries. As many of them concern foundational issues in our conceptual scheme one may surmise that (even) ordinary language contains enough structure and rules concerning them. One may even insist that in case that ordinary usage does not reveal something about them then nothing (else) can be revealed about them. Anything important about foundational concepts has to have left its trace in ordinary language, otherwise these concepts just would not be foundational but optional.

So, looking at, listening to ordinary usage on foundational concepts is a live option and may even delimit where we cross from conceptual knowledge to our additional intuitions stemming from other parts of our world view or our cherished theories. We may discover, to our dismay, that some of these foundational concepts are not sharp in the sense of laid tracks of sufficient and necessary conditions of applying a term. This in itself may be a discovery worthwhile. Not all conceptual links have to be drawn by (complete) definitions.

We may see the proper role of a foundational concept despite its vague nature. Some questions have not arisen in human history and may not be live concerns to be prepared for (except in some option of coherent extension of the concept to new situations of usage).

Therapeutic concerns may also enter at this point, as one might point out where a (philosophical) use leaves the boundaries of ordinary usage without being explicit of its stipulative character. The therapy points out what content does not properly belong to the concept in question. Therapy of philosophical extensions of concepts is linked to the idea of sufficient foundations: philosophers sometimes want to regulate affairs which need no regulation as there are hardly occasions on which they may arise. Concepts may be suited to ordinary circumstances, and here are sufficiently regulated. Any supposed conceptual gap or missing clarity should first be considered as to its likelihood of playing any role in ordinary affairs at all.

Again, affairs being side-lined now may become important tomorrow, but unless then they are just artificial. Stipulation may deal with them as real occasions arise.

§3 Ordinary Usage Is Not Theoretical

Ordinary usage, although non-arbitrary, does not express a considered theory which guides it. Common usage should not be identified with 'common sense' or folk theories, simply because huge theoretical differences can be expressed within the same language. The distinction between language and theory is partially well drawn as not all theoretical assumptions enter into meaning

and change the way expressions are used, a distinction sometimes highlighted by separating analytic links (analyticity) in meaning from entrenched or not so entrenched opinions and theories in which an expression occurs. The distinction is partially not well drawn as language use *may* involve minimal theories, but usage primarily concerns concepts (*via* the way words expressing them are used) not theories. Concepts may sometimes be defined in a way corresponding to theories, more often they are left vague or just referential (in the sense that the corresponding terms are rigidly designating kinds of entities). In most cases usage can be a guide to identify the natural or non-natural kind of entities linked to an expression in question, or to capture the core assumptions linked to a (vague) concept. Such core assumptions, although they are theoretical in involving beliefs about the world, can be non-theoretical with respect to a theoretical dispute under discussion. Either, in the simplest case, by dealing with what counts for a theoretical dispute in question as 'observational' or – in more interesting cases – containing the agreed upon conceptual core shared between the alternative theories.

§4   Intuitions and Linguistic Judgements

OLP does not rest its claims on 'intuitions'. "Intuition" has too many different meanings: these range from opinions based on 'common sense' or folk theories (so that claiming something to be 'intuitively' so may hedge the claim made) to the intellectual apprehension of conceptual insight (e.g. in some philosophies of mathematics). One might call reliance on one's unsystematic (i.e. pre-theoretical) understanding of language rules 'intuitive', but as the term has been used for quite different forms of belief, it may be better to speak of 'an expression of language competence' or 'linguistic judgement' or '(pre-theoretical) knowledge of language' or 'meta-linguistic beliefs'. In OLP we investigate possible cases under the directive of *what we would say if*. The evidence which turns up with this rests on linguistic judgements or pre-theoretical knowledge of language.[2] Philosophical 'intuitions' either appeal to shared convictions in some (folk) theory, which carries little argumentative weight, or are guided by a (partial) apprehension of rules of word usage. Intuitions in this latter sense are philosophically useful and necessary as an element of analysis. Positively one may surmise that the new fashionable recourse to 'intuitions' stems from a dissatisfaction with 'naturalism' and mere stipulation of language forms. Pleas to 'intuitions' want to come close to a source of *philosophical* insight, where this source better be language.

Can an ordinary language philosopher just rely on his or her own linguistic judgement? Critics of OLP often complain that the observation made – in the proverbial easy chair – are too unsystematic and merely proto-science awaiting a more methodological and representative survey done in

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2   Having said this we may sometimes follow the custom of calling such judgements "intuitive", but only if the context does not allow to confuse them with common prejudices or folk theories.

linguistics. This criticism suggests that analysis of meaning needs empirically scientific methods of observing language use. Interesting as such linguistic surveys may be, one can nonetheless reject this objection to OLP. The (tacit) knowledge of language that OLP tries to capture and analyse has to rest in *each individual's* competence of language use, including the philosopher. As speakers of a natural language we might err in our conceptions of usage and word meaning, this being the reason ordinary language philosophers putting their theses to the criticism of their audience, them being competent speakers as well, but as competent speakers we know (tacitly at least) what we need to know and are not in need of statistical data on language use (cf. Hallett 2008, pp.153-54; Hanfling 2000, pp.53-56). This proves right even more so when considering fundamental concepts. The ordinary language philosopher participates in the conventions of her linguistic community. Aiming at her own (tacit) grasp and attunement to these patterns of usage she aims at the (tacit) grasp of them of any competent speaker. She does not infer to the others' knowledge by means of an syllogism (involving *assumptions* with respect to their linguistic community) or statistical data. *Prima facie* and by default the ordinary language philosopher possesses as much knowledge as is targeted by a conceptual investigation.

§5   Conceptual Analysis Is Not Empirical

Reports of statements or assertions about language or use report events, i.e. are empirical sentences. A description of a pattern of usage in a linguistic community is an empirical sentence. Neither of these classifications implies that conceptual analysis is empirical. A description of a pattern of usage describing the rules or conventions of a linguistic community is true only if these rules or conventions are *in force*. Reporting rules or conventions does not transform them into reports. The reports are descriptions backed up in regularities of behaviour (i.e. events), described empirically. The regularities in question exist because the speakers of the linguistic community orient themselves (at least tacitly) on rules or conventions, which are norms and expressed by the use of deontic modal vocabulary. Assertions made by oneself or witnesses about language are events, but their content are judgements whether a linguistic rule has been applied correctly or not; rejecting, for example, a sentence as a category mistake contains the judgement that some semantic rule has been violated. The semantic rules in question concern conceptual links (like 'numbers are not spatio-temporal'), which at least partially constitute the concepts involved; completely so only if a concept can be completely analysed into a definition involving informative necessary and sufficient conditions of applying the concept, which may be feasible only for a small minority of concepts. Even if most concepts, however, are atomistic in the sense of not having such a definition (as claimed by Conceptual Atomism [Fodor 1998]) they are accompanied by conceptual links: knowing or possessing them within the framework of our concepts involves knowing of these conceptual

links (cf. Bremer 2008, pp. 31-45). Sentences expressing conceptual links are analytic and thus in the traditional sense *a priori*. Such sentences may be embedded in deontic modalities so that rules result, which demand that the conceptual links have to be taken into account, that words are only employed assertively in a way that does not result in nonsense (i.e. that the constraints of the conceptual links are obeyed). The rules may be understood as more specific (e.g. 'In assertions never apply a predicate implying spatio-temporal existence to a singular term when the singular term, say a numeral, is used to designate a number') or there may be a few general rules (e.g. 'Assertoric use of a sentence should not contradict the analytic sentences'). The latter alternative has the advantage that we represent our linguistic knowledge more efficiently: we have the rules of reference and meaning postulates, and what follows only by them expresses conceptual links. We need these representations in inferring anyway. Rules demand in the general fashion indicated semantic correctness. Individual rules and verdicts on use follow from the combination of the two components. Because of the 'authority of language' [cf. §7], sentences analytically true (true by conceptual links) nevertheless can safely be assumed to speak truly about the reference of the words employed: "Cats are animals" is analytically true: even if "cat" cannot be completely analysed into necessary and sufficient conditions of being a cat – apart from reference to an usually unobservable genetic code – a partial definition of "cat" consists in this postulate. Nevertheless the sentence tells us that cats *are* animals. The sentence is *about* cats, not about concepts. *That* the sentence is analytic tells us something about the concepts involved, thus our conceptual framework and our language. The results of conceptual analysis thus contain several kinds of sentences or qualities of sentences ('analytic', 'empirical'...), the fundamental sentences, however, are those expressing, re-constructing or explicating conceptual links, i.e. non-empirical sentences. Again, reporting that we *have* such and such a conceptual framework, which is an empirical anthropological claim, does not make philosophical re-constructions of the structure of that system empirical claims. Claiming that most mathematicians believe that Peano Arithmetic is true and thus use the system is an empirical report, that 0 has no predecessor is not.

§6   Contextualism

Analysis of language does not focus on individual words, not even individual sentences, but on the use made of them in some contexts. A linguistically therapeutic remark in most cases does not put into question a sentence in general, but a inappropriate use of it, or more restrictedly, an improper understanding of a usage of a sentence. There lay many of the errors and aberrations analysis of proper usage reveals. The mistake often rests in assimilating in our understanding of them sentences properly used on one context to similar (or even the same) sentences improperly used – or at least improperly understood – in other contexts. Few will look for an entity corresponding to the subject

of the sentence "It rains", but talk of discrete objects misleads many in assimilating sentences like "Our will is indefatigable" to this, postulating the common will as an entity.

OLP, however, should not be identified with a 'meaning is use'-theory of meaning. Analysis of usage includes analysis of pragmatic features of usage, as covered in a theory of speech acts and illocution (as introduced by the ordinary language philosophers Austin and Searle). Otherwise Grice's theory of conversational implicature or Relevance Theory in present cognitive science are mistaken for refutations of OLP in general (although individual claims e.g. by Wittgenstein on 'know' may lack from insufficiently distinguishing semantic and pragmatic factors), whereas Grice establishes his theory by focussing on the varieties of usage.

§7   The Authority of Language

Where does the authority of ordinary language come from? The question is misleading as one may read it as presupposing a trust in common sense, which often went wrong and cannot claim scientific authority. Of course ordinary usage has neither authority in a verbatim reading of it in clashes with scientific discoveries (the sun just does not "rise"), nor does it exclude introducing more appropriate ways of speech for scientific purposes. There is no authority of a supposed general common way/context of talking over some specific context of language use. The authority resides, firstly, within contexts of usage. Established patterns of usage rest on a history of successfully employed language. Such patterns fit to reality and human endeavours in it. Therefore they also are often descriptively adequate (enough). A usage following these patterns thus possesses a higher chance of being successfully embedded in our dealing with the world, including its description (starting from simple cases of following the usage of "tree" to identify trees). Very often the use of a sentence in a situation corresponds to the world because it corresponds to established usage. Such *correspondence of usage* (intersubjective *coherent* usage) precedes correspondence of language and world (e.g. in the sense of a robust correspondence theory in which true statements correspond to facts). This role of correspondence of usage founds the authority of ordinary usage.

Truth-conditional semantics coupled with the meta-rule to assert sentences according to their truth conditions tries to capture this double correspondence.

OLP should not be equated with anti-realism tout court. At least some realist theories of meaning combine their realism with a focus on norms of usage and justificational procedures close to the meaning of a sentence, where they take the core of the meaning of an expression to rest in the referential links between the concept expressed by the expression in question and parts of reality (e.g. objects, events and their properties), so that proper usage is (at least indirectly) a way of tracking features of reality (cf. Bremer 2008, Peacocke 2008).

The authority of ordinary usage must not be confused with a privileged role of folk theories or folk

interpretations accompanying this usage. Such folk theories or interpretations may illicitly move from the contexts of ordinary usage to the context of (scientifically) theorizing about the world, and in that context scientific theories usually fare better.

Philosophical theories may often be just such elaborated folk interpretations of ordinary usage that remove it out of its ordinary context or mix different contexts of usage (e.g. reading expressive utterances as referring to entities just as descriptions do, thus arriving at an extravagant ontology). One may dismiss such 'theories' out of hand by outlining their deviant usage. One may also criticize them. Criticizing such 'theories' may take two forms: (i) rejecting them by confronting them with better scientific theories, or, more interesting, (ii) rejecting the as theories, but, at least in some cases, maintaining or even elaborating them as an insight into our naïve conceptual framework, or into some common mistakes invited by our conceptual framework. OLP need not claim that in our conceptual framework all discoveries of future science are hidden. Our conceptual framework *may* contain constitutive errors or misleading constructions. Nevertheless and even because of this OLP puts emphasis on revealing them as they are.

§8   Conceptions of Concepts

In analysis of ordinary usage we understand our concepts at a level even beneath folk theories. Still, what we analyse here are the basic *conceptions* of our concepts, of our conceptual framework. These conceptions need not be entirely accurate. That they are not could be seen either by relating them to other investigations about our conceptual framework (as of theories of cognition or linguistics) or because of incoherencies in ordinary usage. Only if ordinary usage was acceptable as it is in its patterns, ordinary usage would carry *full authority* on our basic conceptions of our conceptual framework. Incoherence, however, clashes with the idea that even what is said about vague concepts need not be vague, that what is said about, seemingly, inconsistent employment of a concept need not be inconsistent itself. A supposedly incoherent usage at least invites further conceptual distinctions which then distribute the apparent clashes over at least two sub-concepts each of which with a coherent usage.

One method to keep folk theories at bay may be (following Austin) to attack a concept not from its disquotational linguistic expression (e.g. analysing how we use "freedom" to analyse the concept of freedom), but from accompanying, still central terms which are not as closely associated with folk theories (e.g. analysing "involuntary" and "could have done").

If we just report usage this type of descriptivism ascribes full authority to usage and *records* a state of our conceptions of our concepts. Getting to know this state possesses some interest in itself, and might be considered as part of our cultural history. Of course often philosophy aspires to more than to a history of ideas, which then makes it move beyond mere descriptivism. On the other hand

usage changes and thus even the core level of our conceptions of our concepts may shift, in almost glacial speed, with it. Supposedly it shifts given new contexts of usage as culture and technology change, new words entering the language, and even moving away from perceived – however vaguely so perceived – misconceptions. Could we pinpoint a state of usage we might even relate that period's usage to that period's most fashionable theories, including the wrong ones. This again would be part of a more comprehensive cultural history.

In case conceptual analysis tells us that some fashionable identification (say of mind and brain) cannot be stated save conceptual confusions this does not tell us that mind and brain are not identical, and it does not tell us that neurophilosophy has to stop. It tells us, however, that our concepts cannot be unified so easily. It may at least cast into doubt any attempt at such an identification as we have our concepts not by accident but as part of our more or the less successful cognitive equipment. It points at least to the need of a kind of conceptual revolution. And in case of a nonsensical claim of identification of mind and brain it may not be the mental vocabulary that has to give: chemistry and physics could only be united after a conceptual revolution in physics; in analogy a conceptual revolution in the neurosciences and physiology might be needed to support any aspirations of an identity theory.

Further on, attesting some conflicts in our conceptual framework may *not* find an easy remedy – thinking of it like changing a flat tyre! Especially so if some substantial part of our conceptual framework (say basic psychological or metric or semantic concepts) is innate. We cannot drop innate concepts at will. We can only work around some of our conceptual limitations if that was necessary. Compare: However much you liked it, you cannot tell your bladder to produce whiskey. You cannot see some perceptual illusions in the 'proper' way. In just this fashion you might not be able to drop the naïve concept of universal truth and naïve set comprehension. Any call for conceptual revolution should heed (I) to the at least presently given limits of human cognitive nature, and (ii) to the advice that you should not drop what works in most situations and what one cannot improve at will, so that what one ends up with might be some form of conceptual reform process in which extensions of usage or extensions of our conceptual equipment work around the diagnosed errors or limitations. Having abstractly outlined such vague possibilities does not mean that there ever will be pressing philosophical reasons to proceed in this this. (Even neuophilosophy may turn out a blind alley after all.)

§9   Improving on Usage

As usage changes itself to adapt to new circumstances, we may *intervene* to foster its better adaptation or coherence. Introducing finer conceptual distinctions and excluding some ways of word use are ways to regularize usage anew. Analysis of usage so precedes new regulation.

Philosophical analysis leads to a *normative* activity of tweaking rules of usage, of upgrading our conceptions of our concepts.

In analysis, in general, we can see the constitutive elements and so gain understanding, even if we leave them as they are, put things together again, in synthesis, as we found them before analysis. We can, however, as well synthesize them in an improved fashion so that synthesis is not just the reverse of analysis, but also an attempt at practical advancement. This applies to technical devices as well as to conceptual frameworks. Creative synthesis achieves a re-construction of a concept. Carnap, at least sometimes, pursued this approach as 'conceptual explication'.

When we distinguish philosophy from the sciences by conceiving it as a *meta-science* not concerned with the world at large, but our concepts and conceptual frameworks of it, that does not mean that philosophy is uninterested in a better fit of our conceptions to the patterns of the world or just to our concepts themselves. Philosophy as an *activity* (which may occur outside of department boundaries) distinguishes itself by reflecting, analysing and re-regulating language and its conventions, exhibited in usage.

With respect to words foundational in special sciences this philosophical activity may involve more re-regulating as scientific theories change faster than our general opinions and attitudes towards the world and ourselves. At this stage, say in case one deals with cognitive science, considerations of a wide reflective equilibrium take centre stage.

With respect to words considered belonging to or relevant to pure philosophy itself (like "knowledge" or "free will") this activity may proceed much more cautiously to avoid the trap of stipulating present day opinions and theories to be conceptually ingrained. All motivation and evidence for improved usage has to come from criteria of improving coherence in present usage. Missing a clear account of such improved coherence, supposed incoherences have to be left in place and mapped as part of our conceptual landscape. Philosophy leaves then everything as it is (in usage) and endorses the authority of usage on an elucidation of our fundamental concepts. The benefit of even this strongly descriptive enterprise rests in increased understanding by analysis, even if synthesis is not creative, and in the therapeutic use of rejecting some (philosophical) theories as clashing with proper usage, which as part of our life carries more weight than those deviant views. A conception Wittgenstein at least sometimes pursues.

Explication in Carnap's sense and the activity of creative synthesis or re-construction of usage in the light of scientific purposes are meta-scientific activities, as such philosophical, nonetheless continuous with foundational reflection in individual sciences. OLP sets itself more apart from the sciences and guarantees philosophy its own field and status. Even if formal re-constructions are employed within analyses their purpose is not to alter usage or to stipulate new language forms. Therefore the distinction between ordinary language philosophy and ideal language philosophy

should not be understood as excluding formal methods from OLP, but still serves some purpose in stressing the non-instrumental perspective that OLP, in contrast to huge parts of ILP, has on language. Explication and creative synthesis have to answer the criticism that they just sweep the complexities of an issue under the carpet of a redefined expression, that their redefinition may be nothing more than confusion about the real issues. Many formal explications just seem to change the subject as the original issue was just too intricate to be dealt with in that fashion.

There can be an explicative, re-constructive approach *not* tied to empirical sciences, namely in case we recognize, supposedly with the help of OLP, that our conceptual framework contains misconceptions and epistemology tries to see more clearly or even tries to intervene into the future development of our conceptions. Conceptual re-construction and re-regulating involves the construction of models and (partial) languages. It combines the traditions of OLP and the study of formal systems and languages.

Descriptivism seems to be a very conservative approach. It need not neglect the change of usage, but sits back and lets present day challenges to our concepts catch up with the slowly changing usage.

Sometimes inventing technical jargon helps to make fine-grained distinctions, explications may aim at a proper updated definition of a term which is more perspicuous than the former one. Often, however, re-definitions are employed not to capture the full control of a term but to facilitate the development of one's cherished theory, disguised as dealing with the old subject matter. One might regard it as ironic that those positivists or 'naturalists' who insist on being concerned not with verbal disputes but the matters themselves, seem to believe that by stipulating a new definition of a term the old problems related to its subject matter (reference) are solved. These problems are rather shoved under the carpet by trying to make them inexpressible. Re-definition and a move to newly regimented (formal) languages have therefore to answer the suspicion that the gain in rigour is outweighed by the preceding flight from the complexities of ordinary language.

§10   Ordinary Language in General

OLP aims at *concepts*, conceptual distinctions and conceptual links. It is only instrumentally, methodologically concerned with an individual language. OLP is neither lexicography nor historical linguistics. The discoveries to be made pertain to all human languages in as far as they are all able to express our conceptual system, even if some language may employ more words to trace fine-grained distinctions. The examples discussed by English ordinary language philosophers in Oxford can be transferred to examples in German discussed in Bielefeld. The writings of OLP have been translated into many languages.

Even though usage may shift the underlying conceptual distinctions and links can at least be

captured by rephrasing what is or was said in another language, and what was (considered to be) conceptually true (or false) has to be (considered to be) conceptual true (or false) as expressed in some other language as well. Even grammatical idiosyncrasies of one language which have no direct correlate in another language may point to conceptual issues worth to be expressed by circumscribing them in some fashion in another language without these grammatical idiosyncrasies. All this applies the more OLP looks at foundational concepts shared in all human civilizations. Some adherents of conceptual analysis want to detach conceptual analysis from analysis of (ordinary) language, and see it concerned with our conceptual judgements and not with language at all (e.g. McGinn 2012). This may rest on a confusion about the role of language in linguistic analysis: language need not be taken by linguistic philosophers as the primary *object* of philosophy, but analysis of language (usage) is taken as one crucial or even the privileged *method* of getting at concepts. "Definition" applies to words at least as well as to concepts. Proposing a definition and testing it with cases (similar to proposing a hypothesis and testing it) explores whether the definition covers all cases by testing our judgements to the applicability of a term (the meaning of which contains the concept referring to the property ultimately under investigation). If language was not methodological essential one has (1) to account in some other way for the shared possession of concepts, which on the other hand every theory of concepts has to do, and (2) to find some other way to identify a concept in question intersubjectively. Methodologically language helps to identify a concept in question as the core of the meaning of an expression employed. Further on, many concepts (especially those for social institutions) depend on language and rule governed communities. Concepts like MARRIAGE cannot be separated from special speech acts that *constitute* respective social facts. Many if not most of the concepts interesting philosophers will be of this kind. Epistemological concepts like KNOWLEDGE are at least indirectly tied to language (e.g. by the link from feasible assertions to know something to justifying them towards an audience, of course using language and appealing to shared conventions). Moreover, one may argue that concepts involving powers of reflection and self-representation in thought need language ('inner speech') as representational device. This applies to all forms of shared knowledge ('common knowledge') essential for conventions, and arguably to a full-fledged concept of BELIEF, as this involves reflecting on one's beliefs and their interrelations, and their relation to the world.

So, although conceptual analysis – by definition – aims at concepts, the privileged method to do so is linguistic analysis. As conceptual analysis aims at concepts shared between individual natural languages, no individual natural language is essential for it, and all its cases of analysis have to be transferable in principle from one language to another.

§11 The Paradigmatic Methods of Ordinary Language Philosophy

The methodology of OLP developed over the years, but comprises – besides the usual methods of evaluating hypotheses by, for example, comparing their explanatory power – at least the following (cf. Hoche/Strube 1985, von Savigny 1969):

1.   Substitution tests within sentence frames (as practised e.g. by Ryle to distinguish 'categories' and applied by Sibley to analyse aesthetic judgements) or substitution tests in general discourse, including whole utterances (as practised e.g. by Strawson in stressing performative aspects of "is true"). Categories are not only *part* of an analysis (e.g. classifying something as 'abstract'), but elucidating *them* engages in analyses of kinds (be it ontological, like 'abstract', or epistemic, like 'synthetic').

2.   Paradigm case arguments to outline the core use of an expression, and to identify against this the deviant use of an expression (as practised e.g. by Moore with respect to "good"). [see §12]

3.   Situating sentence use within a context of linguistically mediated action or dialogue (as practised e.g. by Wittgenstein with imagined 'language games' and simulated exchanges, often with Wittgenstein's *alter ego* as interlocutor).

4.   The preceding method may include imagining situations and asking what *we would say* in such circumstances, thus distinguishing empirical regularities of usage from conceptual rules which support counterfactuals (as practised e.g. by Austin to differentiate felicity conditions and illocutionary forces). Even thought experiments may outline the borders of usages, and may then introduce a sharpening of our conceptual boundaries, as extensions of an established usage. Such an extended usage in this case does not go against established use or the authority of language otherwise present. With imaginary situations OLP is more exploratory than with the more descriptive approach to ordinary language in ordinary situations. With imaginary situations OLP asks speakers (in real life or in supposition) what they would say. Conceptual boundaries are explored as well as the borders between the conceptual (i.e. essential usage) and the factual (i.e. possibly extended usage). With respect to possible situations those which are physical and maybe even technologically possible test for our linguistic judgements in other situations, but still within the boundaries of our culture. Far-fetched possibilities can turn out to be problematic easily. Generally ordinary usage *need not* cover situations which cannot arise, so our judgements or lack of them with respect to such situations should carry not so much weight. Moreover, such 'thought

experiments' are often framed in the light of the judgements the author wants to endorse. We meet bizarre stipulations or incomplete descriptions which challenge the claim that such situations are possible at all. A description of such a situation by itself does not prove its consistency. We neither have a complete list of (semantic) postulates which have to be satisfied, nor do we possess a general procedure to determine consistency (for meta-logical reasons, at least). So one reaction to a supposed situation of application or 'thought experiment' may very well consist in rejecting the case as 'not possible', 'not conceivable' or in arguing for its inconsistency (maybe in its own terms or in terms of the conceptual links supposedly to be tested). Thought experiments should be treated with care!

5.   Semantic-pragmatic combination tests to distinguish semantic entailment from pragmatic (illocutionary) implication (as practised e.g. by Hoche with respect to the concept of moral obligation). These tests can cope with the problem whether judgements on usage are founded in knowledge of meaning of the sentences overtly used or in knowledge of illucutionary acts or other pragmatic conventions.

6.   Symmetry tests to test whether a claim has content by testing whether it has a meaningful negation as well (as practised e.g. by Wittgenstein with respect to 'know' one's own mind). This includes contrastive analysis where two concepts might be elucidated in complementary fashion. Given such a contrastive analysis one can also ask whether two supposed opposites are really incompatible or not (say determined events or body movements and freely chosen actions).

7.   Testing negating and questioning a sentence to refute or corroborate its definitional or 'grammatical' character (as practised e.g. by Moore when questioning definitions of "good" or by Malcolm when discussing sentences like "I am sleeping" or "I am dreaming").

8.   Asking for truth or assertability conditions which allow a sentence to have (objective) content and argumentative force in face of an audience (as practised e.g. already by Frege when he casts doubt on sentences about 'the same experience', taken up by Wittgenstein's remarks on psychology). Some statements of truth or assertability conditions aspire to capture the conventions of ordinary usage (i.e. to capture at least in part the proper meaning of a word). Special caution should be given to the treatment of 'exceptions' of use, as classifying counterexamples as 'exceptions' provides easy immunization of a proposed rule of use. There have to be at least partial explanations relating the supposed exception to the core use as derivative. One may attest the occurrence of exceptions, as a measure of last resort, given that no better re-constructions of the

core rule of use are available.

9.   <u>Rephrasing</u> to elucidate proper usage and exclude improper philosophical interpretations as added linguistic luggage (as practised e.g. by Ryle with respect to psychology or by Wittgenstein with respect to mathematics). Ultimately the ordinary language philosopher tries to capture in some phrases the core use (and thus the core conceptual knowledge) coming with some expression. The resulting sentences should carry with them for all speakers the ultimate degree of linguistic and conceptual certainty. Even if ordinary speakers could not have formulated their implicit knowledge in this form they will recognize these paraphrases as certain, given the philosophical analysis has been successful. OLP makes explicit what has been tacit. By it we gain (explicit) knowledge, but we need not necessarily improve our already given competence. OLP typically resists regulating ordinary language (i.e. issuing new rules of use), but on the other hand one may argue that regulating use is one option present in ordinary language, resting on our ordinary understanding of conventions. In fact, the re-phrasing and re-regulating may aspire to capture with good reasons what ordinary language speakers have regarded already, save the now by the re-regulating excluded improper (philosophical) uses, as proper usage.

10.   <u>Formal language tools</u> in OLP can be seen as attempts to explicate perspicuously what lays implicit in ordinary language. By abstracting away from many of the complexities of ordinary language structures can be highlighted (e.g. when in propositional calculus a shallow analysis of propositional structures helps to see propositional consequences). This helps in exploring and understanding the logical structures of language. It should not be confused with the claim that some formal language helps to express something which could not be expressed in ordinary language. This claim reduces itself to absurdity as the formal language has been introduced by informal (i.e. ordinary) talk about it and its workings. We understand the new expressive tools by reading them in the light of the corresponding logical structures in ordinary language. Again, it may be convenient to have formal tools to focus on some structural features, but this does not mean that they could not be expressed less conveniently in ordinary language.

Some of these methods automatically recommend themselves for a *therapeutic perspective* on philosophical claims (as in Wittgenstein's often practised argumentation that some philosophical claim resulted from detaching words or whole sentences from their original context of use and often add the error to assimilate them to other contexts).
One method related to the therapeutic exposition of ordinary usage consists in

11.   <u>Challenging for systematicity</u> the supposed new supplementary philosophical jargon. Philosophers often revise some words' use and still keep parts of it effecting the supposed continuity to ordinary usage that legitimatises their theories. If they were proposing extensions of ordinary language they should exhibit a systematic usage (e.g. by allowing for contexts warranting or challenging respective claims). Missing such a new systematic usage one can dismiss the deviant use of the ordinary expressions as nonsensical (as practised e.g. by Austin and Wittgenstein when discussing certain forms of scepticism).

§12   Defending Paradigm Case Arguments

Of these methods the most controversial has been the appeal to paradigm cases. OLP has sometimes been rejected by first identifying it with paradigm case argumentation and then rejecting this type of argumentation. Although the force of this method, in fact, can be overstated it should not be dismissed. One may delimit its argumentative value in the following way:

If there are criteria to employ an expression, however loosely they are specified or understood (at the beginning), the expression has a justified usage. With respect to such an expression factual and justified usage can be distinguished and come apart. In the extreme case all users might employ an expression contrary to its criteria of employment (i.e. wrongly), because they err on the fulfilment of (some of) the criteria of justified use. In an expansion of the extreme case even the supposed paradigms which introduced us to the use of an expression may turn out to be cases where the expression should not be employed at all! We, and the others who introduced us to the expression, erred on the criteria of justified employment of the expression being fulfilled here. Reference to paradigm cases, therefore, carries profound *prima facie* weight in pointing to justified uses of an expression: absent justified doubt we can trust them – but we cannot treat them as logically not refutable cases. As standards of justified use and justified doubt are contextual the *case for* a scepticism may never arise in practice (especially so for the more extreme versions of scepticism), but the sceptical question at least can make proper sense. It asks us whether any of the supposed items we employ an expression in question to really fulfils the criteria of its justified use (i.e. whether an expression with that meaning has a non-empty extension). That we have erred in our judgements that an application of an expression is justified does not entail that we have not understood the rules governing the expression. Thus an expression may have a history of an application of the rules governing it, and thus a use in the language community, without ever having been employed correctly.

On the other hand, putting some paradigm cases into doubt referring to the concept of criteria of justified use employs the idea that we in some way understand or process the criteria in question. Once we leave concepts immediately tied to observation, such criteria, to be understood, have to be

expressed in sentences of some language. There is no harm in some form of holism which states that this language may be the very same language the expressions of which we are justifying in their application. In any case, we are lead to expressions which *themselves* cannot all be employed unjustifiably so far without the idea of confronting a stable usage with failing paradigms and zero extensions breaking down. We can only doubt some paradigms at at time (following this sceptical idea). Pointing to paradigms can at least shift the burden of proof (in this case the burden of coming up with justified doubt) to the sceptic.

§13   Analysis and Analytic Philosophy

Analysis can be understood as referring either to the process or to the result of an inquiry. In philosophy, especially OLP, the result may be seen to consist in stating, explicating or repeating (with therapeutic intent) analytic or 'grammatical' sentences.

Either there are analytic sentences or there aren't.

If there aren't analytic sentences the results of philosophy aren't vindicated by some special status (i.e. being 'analytic', 'a priori', 'unrefutable' etc.), but by being methodologically established by procedures of 'analysis' which fulfil the standards of scientific rigour, and which involve methods (like discussing 'cases' and using tools of formal languages) characteristic of philosophical argumentation. Philosophical argumentation is non-empirical in that it relies on scientific data, in case it relies on scientific data at all, which have been gathered by empirical sciences, not by philosophy itself. Non-scientific data philosophy may rely upon are, for instance, some of the problematic cases discussed. They usually describe a common phenomenon and can trust the general (folk) experience of the reader to know the phenomenon (e.g. that somebody has an accidentally true belief). Analysis in that sense then reveals the structure of a problem or a topic in question. We learn something or see the issue clearer after the analysis. We may give up some of our prior opinions and derive at a clearer description of some part of the world (including ourselves and our cognition). Analysis in this sense ideally arrives at a theory expressing a more adequate, more comprehensive understanding of some part of the world. This may involve means of formal analysis (like inventing new forms of expression or re-regulating prior forms of expression, including – revisionary – explicating ordinary language). Philosophy then can be distinguished from other sciences not by the status of its results, but by (1) a tradition of topics typically not dealt with in the special sciences, or (2) a meta-scientific choice of topics (e.g. focussing on the varieties of a general concept of 'justification', presupposed in the 'special' sciences). Often this type of philosophy will be continuous with the other sciences or at least with their reflection on their own conceptual or methodological foundations. Some of its topics (*inter alia* theories of concepts) will even be identical with topics dealt with in the cognitive

sciences, philosophical and linguistic or psychological theories being hardly distinguishable.

If there are analytic sentences much of what has just been said about philosophy can still be true. The pressing next question, however, asks whether these analytic sentences are substantial or not, where "All cats are mammals" may be an example of an unsubstantial and "Knowledge is true belief" an example of a substantial analytic sentence (supposing that they are analytic). Philosophy aims at substantial insights. There may well be substantial analytic sentences, *even* if they deliver not a complete decomposition of a concept (e.g. knowledge may be essentially more or less than true belief). That these sentences are analytic does not exclude their substantial content, because language ideally captures substantial insights about the world in the meaning or the semantic links of its expression of our conception of the world. Therein rests the authority of language. As not all our insights – even into fundamental questions – had time to be made part of the (partial) definition of a concept or a word, a restriction to state *only* analytic sentences as results of philosophical inquiry will be a curtailment of available insight. The whole issue of the status of the sentences expressing philosophical insights has been overrated and discussed out of proportion. As there is not one single philosophical method and philosophy draws on the results of different sciences or folk observations or common sense or common knowledge, so the status of the results of philosophical inquiry will differ.

Analytic philosophy may distinguish itself from other approaches in philosophy by a canon of methods developed and used in the analytic tradition (of either OLP or ILP). The distinction itself can be worthwhile if enough of these methods achieve higher scientific standards than those practised in other philosophical camps.

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