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ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY: BEYOND THE LINGUISTIC TURN AND BACK AGAIN

P.M.S. Hacker

1. *Analytic Philosophy*

There is extensive controversy over the correct characterization of analytic philosophy. Some have tried to define it in terms of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. The result has been the exclusion of most of the philosophers of the twentieth century who lauded the methods of 'analysis' (variously conceived) and who deemed themselves analytic philosophers. Others have tried to define it as a family resemblance concept. The result has been the unavoidable inclusion of some of the ancient Greeks. While there is no disputing that some characteristic features of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are shared with twentieth-century analytic philosophers, it is doubtful whether this classificatory term, if it is *thus* explained, does anything more than distinguish ratiocinative, discursive philosophy from the pronouncements of philosophical sages and prophets. It seems to me more fruitful and illuminating to use the term 'analytic philosophy' as the name of a specific phase in the history of our subject. Like the Romantic movement, analytic philosophy has numerous precursors. One can find powerful strands of romanticism in the writings of Spencer and Shakespeare – but that does not make them part of the Romantic movement, which was a distinctive phase of European cultural history in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Similarly, the fact that one can find common elements with various phases of analytic philosophy in the writings of Leibniz, Bentham, Bolzano, Mill and Frege, not to mention Plato and Aristotle, does not make them part of the analytic movement.

Analytic philosophy, understood as a phase in the history of ideas, originated in Cambridge in the late 1890s with the revolt, by the young Moore and Russell, against the neo-Hegelian Absolute Idealism that had dominated British philosophy in the last third of the nineteenth century. What Moore and Russell shared was a commitment to realism, as opposed to Hegelian idealism, and to analysis, as opposed to Hegelian synthesis. Neither Moore nor Russell conceived of themselves as concerned with language or thought – they were concerned with discovering special, very general, truths about the world. Russell's early pluralist Platonism evolved, via the theory of denoting concepts, the theory of descriptions and the theory of types, on the one hand, and the distinction

between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description, on the other, into the more austere doctrines of logical atomism. Logical atomism attained its most sophisticated form in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. The most important achievements of that book were twofold. Negatively, it gave profound criticisms of the Fregean and Russellian conceptions of logic, language, and intentionality. Positively it made great strides in clarifying the nature and status of the necessary truths of logic. The *Tractatus* was the culmination of the first phase of analytic philosophy and the primary source of the next two phases.

The second phase was Cambridge analysis of the 1920s and early '30s (e.g. Ramsey, Braithwaite, Wisdom, Stebbing) a movement greatly influenced by Moore and Russell and inspired by Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. It was short lived, for Wittgenstein himself terminated it through his own teachings in Cambridge from 1930 onwards, when he repudiated the *Tractatus* and self-consciously engineered a revolution in philosophy – dismissing its aspirations to disclose truths about reality, and insisting upon its restriction to the disentangling of conceptual confusions.

The third and more influential phase, which also stemmed from the *Tractatus*, was the logical empiricism of the Vienna Circle and its affiliates. Under the influence of the *Tractatus* programme for future philosophy, and greatly impressed by its explanation of the vacuous character of the propositions of logic, the logical empiricists repudiated the ambitions of philosophy to investigate the nature of the world, vehemently rejected the aspirations of metaphysics, and restricted philosophy, by and large, to what they called 'the logic of scientific language'. They proposed the principle of verification as the key to the notion of linguistic meaning and invoked verifiability as a criterion of meaningfulness. The latter was wielded, rather heavy-handedly, in the anti-metaphysical polemics of the Circle, which lacked the subtlety of Wittgenstein's criticisms of metaphysics of the mid-1930s.[1] The Circle was destroyed by the Nazis, and the leading logical empiricists (e.g. Carnap, Feigl, Reichenbach, Hempel, Frank, Tarski, Bergmann, Gödel) fled to the USA, where they played a major role in the post-war years in transforming American pragmatism into logical pragmatism.[2]

[1] For a comparison of the Carnapian and Wittgensteinian styles of anti-metaphysical thought, see P.M.S. Hacker, 'On Carnap's Elimination of Metaphysics', repr. in *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2001). For a sketch of Wittgenstein's criticisms of metaphysics, see P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1996), pp. 117-23.

[2] For a thorough-going critical examination of logical pragmatism, see H.J. Glock, *Quine and Davidson on Language, Thought and Reality* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003).

The fourth phase of the movement was the emergence of postwar Oxford analytic philosophy, led by Ryle (influenced by Wittgenstein) and Austin (influenced by Moore), with such colleagues as Berlin, Hampshire, Hart, Grice, and after 1959, Ayer (influenced by the Vienna Circle), and among the postwar generation Strawson and Hare. From Oxford, its influence spread throughout the English speaking world and beyond. Unlike the Vienna Circle, this was no 'school' of philosophy, it published no manifestos, and contrary to current myth, cleaved to no dogmas. But there was broad consensus on three points. First, no advance in philosophical understanding can be expected without the propaedeutic of investigating the use of the words relevant to the problem at hand. Second, metaphysics, understood as the philosophical investigation into the objective, language-independent, nature of the world, is an illusion. Third, philosophy, contrary to what Russell had thought, is not continuous with, but altogether distinct from science. Its task, contrary to what the Vienna Circle averred, is not the clarification or 'improvement' of the language of science.

A strand, which is interwoven with, but distinguishable from, postwar Oxford, even though it ran concurrently with it, is, of course, Wittgenstein's later philosophy and the work of his many distinguished pupils: for example, his successors in the Cambridge chair, von Wright, Wisdom and Anscombe, those of his students who taught at Oxford, such as Waismann, Paul and (again) Anscombe, and those who transmitted his ideas to philosophers in the USA, such as Ambrose, Black and Malcolm.

This fourth phase of analytic philosophy declined from the 1970s, partly under the impact of American logical pragmatism, the leading figures of which were Quine (much influenced by Carnap) and Quine's pupil Davidson (influenced by Tarski), and, in Britain, under the impact of Dummett and later of his pupils. For the first twenty years, a new philosophical endeavour dominated the subject – the project of constructing a theory of meaning for a natural language, an endeavour which promised the key to the great problems of philosophy. Subsequently, as performance failed to match promise, forms of speculative philosophy of mind, focused largely on mind/body questions and converging on emergent self-styled cognitive science, came to occupy centre stage. Whether what resulted from these varied reactions to Oxford analytic philosophy was a fifth phase of a still flourishing tradition or the slow death of analytic philosophy itself is, I believe, still too soon to say. In fifty years time our successors will perhaps be able to see more clearly. But there is no doubt that many philosophers

today who deem themselves analytic philosophers repudiate most of what was achieved, or was understood as having been achieved, in the fifty years between the 1920s and the 1970s. To be sure, what counts as *achievement* in philosophy is itself a moot philosophical issue of no small moment. I shall turn to this matter below.

2. *Analysis, logic and language*

It might be said that one unifying feature of the analytic tradition is the commitment to *analysis*. But, while that is surely correct, too many different things masquerade under the simple name of 'analysis' for this to shed much light on what analytic philosophy is. Early Moore held himself to be analysing concepts, which he took to be not uses of words, but rather constituents of propositions of which reality consists (Moorean propositions being more akin to *Tractatus* facts that to senses of sentences). Analysing a concept, Moore confusedly thought, was a matter of inspecting something that lies before the mind's eye, seeing the parts of which it is composed and how they are related to each other, and discerning how it is related to and distinguished from other concepts. Analysis was, therefore, associated with decomposing complexes into components.

Young Russell was influenced in his reaction against Absolute Idealism by Moore, but his early conception of analysis had other roots too, namely Leibniz and Bradley, on the one hand, and Weierstrass, Dedekind and Cantor, on the other. But, like Moore, Russell thought that analysis is essentially the decomposition (in thought) of conceptually complex things (of which the world supposedly consists) into their simple unanalysable constituents. Russell's exuberant Platonist realism was curbed by his conception of denoting concepts and his subsequent invention of the theory of descriptions. The latter focused his attention on the symbolism with which we describe the world, and led him to distinguish complete from incomplete symbols. This suggested a deficiency in the overt grammatical forms of sentences containing denoting expressions, and bred the myth of 'the logical form of the proposition'.[3] Subsequently Russell came to think of analysis as having facts as its object. He came to think of the form of a fact as one of its constituents, and held that the task of

[3] Russell was to drop this muddled conception of propositions in favour of a slightly less muddled conception of facts as composing the world. Then the sentences of natural language were argued to misrepresent not the real forms of the propositions they signify, but the real forms of the facts they describe.

philosophy is to analyse the most general facts of which the world consists, and to catalogue their forms. Given his epistemological convictions, this committed him to reductive analysis, e.g. of material objects to sense-data.

The young Wittgenstein did not think that forms are *constituents* of objects, propositions or facts. He held that logical analysis of language would disclose the logico-metaphysical forms of facts and of their constituent objects – the substance of the world.[4] For, he held, there is a pre-established metaphysical harmony between language and reality. The logico-syntactical forms of expressions *are* the forms of what, on analysis, they represent. So logical analysis is the key to the (strictly speaking, ineffable) nature of all things.

The Vienna Circle, however, viewed logical analysis as a method merely for the clarification of sentences of 'science' and the elimination of the pseudo-propositions of metaphysics. This conception evolved, in Carnap's hands, first into reductive analysis, and later into the method of explication and of the invention of artificial languages for elucidatory purposes.

The later Wittgenstein was adamantly opposed to reductive analysis. He renounced any claims to penetrate appearances in order to disclose the logico-metaphysical forms of things, not because this is beyond the powers of philosophy, but because there is no such thing to disclose. A proposition is fully analysed, he claimed (*The Big Typescript*, p. 417), when we have completely laid bare its 'grammar' (the sense-determining rules for its use) and present that grammar in the form of a perspicuous representation that will dissolve philosophical confusion. This conception of analysis had non-coincidental affinities with Ryle's 'logical geography' of concepts. It was perspicuously articulated in Strawson's methodological discussion of 'connective analysis' and exemplified in his numerous papers.[5] Connective analysis, or elucidation, is a non-reductive description of conceptual connections, compatibilities and incompatibilities, arrayed for the purposes of philosophical clarification.

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[4] His conception of analysis (which belongs to what he called 'the application of logic') is spelled out more clearly in 'Some Remarks on Logical Form', PASS 1929 than in the *Tractatus* itself.

[5] For the anticipation of Ryle's conception of 'logical geography' of concepts in Wittgenstein , see G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein – Understanding and Meaning*, 2nd extensively revised edition by P.M.S. Hacker (Blackwell, Oxford, 2005), Part 1, pp. 284-8, and Part 2, pp. 33, 261. For Strawson's conception of connective analysis, see P.F. Strawson, *Analysis and Metaphysics* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992), chap. 2.

Yet other forms and conceptions of analysis are to be found in latter day analytic philosophers (such as Davidson, Dummett, Putnam and Quine) but it should be evident that the concept of analysis, logical and linguistic, is Protean. Its history is part of the history of the analytic movement, and just because of that, the bare concept of analysis is not a useful tool to illuminate its general character. But there are, I think, two features that can be invoked, not to define, but to characterize this phase in Western philosophy.

The first is the revival, for the first time since the Middle Ages, of interest in, and a philosophical preoccupation with the nature of, formal logic. The invention of the first-order predicate calculus with identity was a stimulus both to further logical invention, e.g. of modal, tense and deontic logics, and to philosophical investigation into the relationships between logic, language and philosophy. To an extent one might say that the brainchild of Frege, Russell and Whitehead set a large part of the agenda for the mainstream of analytic philosophy over the next century. What exactly had they produced? Was it a discovery or an invention? What, if anything, does it show about the world, or about mathematics, or about language and linguistic understanding? Does it expose the logical structure of the world, or the essential forms of thought, or the necessary underlying depth grammar of any possible language? Depending on how these questions were answered, it was plausible to embrace widely differing methodological views on the use and usefulness of formal logic in the analytic task of tackling philosophical questions.

It is philosophically interesting that answers to these questions are controversial to this day. Wittgenstein, who in his youth embraced the new logic as the depth grammar of any possible language, was later to observe wryly, apropos the relationship between the quantifiers in the calculus and the quantifiers in natural language, that 'Philosophers often behave like little children who scribble some marks on a piece of paper at random and then ask the grown-up "What's that?".'[6] There is great need for both clarity and consensus about the character of the Frege/Russell 'scribbles'. It is far from obvious that this invented calculus illuminates the logico-grammatical character of natural languages and enables us better to grasp the nature of reference (singular, plural, definite and indefinite), of predication (classification, description and identification), of adjectival and adverbial

[6] Wittgenstein, MS 112, 58r, cf. *The Big Typescript*, p. 430.

modification, of quantification in all its natural language diversity and richness, and of sentential connection.[7]

The second feature of the analytic movement in the twentieth century is the intense interest in, and meticulous attention to, language and its uses. Although the young Moore and Russell had no philosophical interest in language, and did not link their analytic revolt against the neo-Hegelians with anything pertaining to language, the emergence of the theory of descriptions unavoidably induced a concern with the way in which the symbolism of ordinary language functions, if only to vindicate the belief that it is deeply misleading. The young Wittgenstein put language and linguistic investigations onto centre stage, since he held, against Frege and Russell, that 'ordinary language is all right as it is'; that all philosophy is 'a critique of language'; that the necessary truths of logic are explicable as senseless tautologies by reference to the ineluctable features of any linguistic symbolism whatsoever; and that the sentences of our languages, fully analysed, necessarily reflect the metaphysical form of the world. This heralded, though obviously did not effect, the so-called linguistic turn in analytic philosophy.

Developments in the 1930s, both in Cambridge and in Vienna, inaugurated two very different preoccupations with language. On the one hand, the Carnapian wing of the Circle was committed to the idea that the primary task of philosophy is the clarification and rational reconstruction of what they called 'the language of science' and its logic. Carnap, embracing the 'principle of tolerance' in logic, held that this licensed the construction of artificial languages with alternative logics suited to the subject matter at hand. The sole constraint he recognised was pragmatic. On the other hand, Wittgenstein in Cambridge had come to think that philosophical problems stem largely (but *not* only) from linguistic confusions and are to be resolved largely (but *not* only) by clarification of the uses of words, not by rational reconstruction or depth-analysis. So the methods of philosophy are above all descriptive. What philosophy describes is the ordinary use of words, the ordinary use of technical ones in the higher reaches of philosophy of mathematics or of physics, and the ordinary use of non-technical ones in epistemology, philosophy of mind, ethics and aesthetics. This is not because

[7] The most recent, and most powerful, criticism of the predicate calculus as a representation of the semantics of natural languages is H. Ben-Yami's *Logic and Natural Language: On Plural Reference and its Semantic and Logical Significance* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004). This has added greatly to the Strawsonian criticisms and to those of B. Rundle, in his *Grammar in Philosophy* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979).

language is *the* subject matter of philosophy – it is *not*. The point of the method is therapeutic – the identification and anatomization of subtle forms of nonsense and the consequent dissolution of the problems of philosophy. For this an overview, or partial overview, of the 'grammar' of expressions in the relevant domain is requisite. This conception and these methods evolved, with a less therapeutic emphasis, into Ryle's 'logical geography'. It is patent, perfectly autonomously, in Austin's style of argument in *Sense and Sensibilia*; and in Strawson's connective analysis.

Side by side with this methodology, there evolved an interest in the functioning of language. This had various branches. On the one hand, Strawson's criticism of Russell's theory of descriptions led to a flood of writings on singular (and, more recently, plural) reference, and his demonstration of the deviation of the logical connectives in the calculus from their natural language counterparts led to detailed examination of the uses of connectives and quantifiers in natural languages. Likewise, Austin's typology of speech-acts produced a flurry of writings that investigated this aspect of language and its use for its own independent interest. And Grice's investigations of conversational implicature provoked systematic reflection on pragmatics. Such writings were essentially descriptive, concerned with characterizing the nature and functions of human speech. But in the 1970s a more putatively 'theoretical' concern with language arose, namely the enterprise of devising the general form of an empirical theory of meaning for a natural language. This endeavour, pursued by Davidson and Dummett, far from distancing natural languages from logical calculi, presupposed that the predicate calculus, with modifications, constitutes the depth grammar of any language. So it also provides the backbone for any empirical theory of meaning for a natural language.

There was, therefore, polarization in analytic philosophy from its early days. Those who conceived of formal calculi as disclosing the sempiternal laws governing the relationships between thoughts, or the syntax of a logically ideal language, or the depth-grammar of any possible language, obviously viewed the calculi of logic as indispensable tools of analysis. Only by their means will we arrive at a correct account of the nature of things, or of thought, or of all possible languages. This conception was full of high promise, but was notably thin on performance – I cannot think of a single major *philosophical* problem throughout the ages that was solved or resolved by means of the calculi of logic. Others took a more sceptical view of such calculi. True, they provide a yardstick against which to judge the validity of inferences and schemata by means of which to represent perspicuously

the structure of arguments. They invite investigations into concepts pertinent to calculi, such as *validity* and *provability*, which are of interest to pure logic and mathematics. They show the possibility of alternative forms of representation of a more primitive and regimented kind than natural languages. Thus conceived they are useful primarily as objects of comparison – simple and logically perspicuous structures that may be used to highlight aspects of our own, much more complicated, conceptual scheme and so to shed light on philosophical problems. But after a century of the new function-theoretic logic, the idea that these calculi provide *the* tools for the solution of the great problems of philosophy is patently misconceived. Given the nature of those problems, that should not be the least surprising. Disentangling knots in our understanding of our conceptual scheme, and producing a connective analysis of a field of concepts or concept-types, requires subtlety, not technology – *l'esprit de finesse*, not *l'esprit de geometrie.*

A similar polarity was patent in attitudes towards natural language. On the one hand, it was viewed as an inferior and optional medium of thought and reasoning, not really fit for the solution of the problems of philosophy, and superseded by formal calculi. On the other, it was viewed as the embodiment of our conceptual scheme, setting the horizon of our thought and will. It is capable of improvement and extension, no doubt, when concrete needs arise. But it is the primary root of the conceptual problems that we now call 'philosophy'. It is to it and its clarification that we must look for the resolution of our conceptual confusions – for difficulties in untying knots in string are not remedied by being offered a different piece of string. It also possesses an intrinsic interest of its own. For although we have all mastered its use, it is singularly difficult to survey.

It may well be that these inner tensions within analytic philosophy meant that it 'contained the seeds of its own destruction'. For a while the two different orientations existed in fruitful conflict within the constraints of the widely shared convictions that philosophy is not a kind of science, that it is not continuous with science, and that metaphysics, unless it is simply the description of the most general features of our conceptual scheme, is an illusion. But these convictions, shared by both the logical positivists and Oxford analytical philosophers, were eroded by Quine's influence in the USA, and by Kripke's reflections on names that were directly responsible for a virulent outbreak of metaphysics and metaphysical enthusiasm.

3. *Analytic philosophy: the linguistic turn and beyond*

Analytic philosophy has sometimes been characterized by reference to the *linguistic turn*. But there is considerable unclarity over what this is. It is not a phrase used by any of the major philosophers of the period to refer to their work. Richard Rorty borrowed it from Gustav Bergmann as the title of his 1967 anthology of essays.[8] He deemed members of the Vienna Circle, Wittgenstein and his followers, Oxford philosophers, and sundry Americans associated with these groups (including Quine), to be *linguistic philosophers* – participants in 'the most recent philosophical revolution'.[9] They shared, Rorty suggested, the common belief that the problems of philosophy may be solved or dissolved either by reforming language (the advocates of this were dubbed 'ideal language philosophers') or by understanding more about the language we actually use ('ordinary language philosophers'). Thus conceived, the linguistic turn characterizes the third and fourth phases of the analytic movement. Rorty sensed, rightly I think, that a deep and important change had occurred in analytic philosophy in the 1930s and 1940s – a shift in the conception of the problems and methods of philosophy that to some extent bridged the gulf that separated the Vienna Circle and affiliates (with all the differences there were between the Schlick/Waismann wing, on the one hand, and the Neurath/Carnap wing, on the other) from Oxford philosophers and affiliates and followers of Wittgenstein (with all the differences between *them*). Despite these great differences both within and between these two streams, a sea-change had occurred.

Rorty was writing at a time when the conflict between 'ideal language philosophers' and 'ordinary language philosophers' was alive. His explanation of what the 'linguistic turn' amounted to was geared to those specific issues, and is perhaps a little thin and myopic. His use of the term 'ordinary language' was unfortunate, since it was quickly forgotten that *ordinary language* amounted simply to *natural language*, no matter whether ordinary or sophisticated, non-technical or technical (e.g. the technical language of law, mathematics or physics). It was not confined to the language of the man on the Clapham omnibus, but to *natural language* that was contrasted with the *artificial languages* of the invented calculi of logic (vide Carnap) and associated forms of regimentation (*vide*

[8] G. Bergmann, *Logic and Reality* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin, 1964), p. 177, see Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn* (University Of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967), 'Introduction', pp. 8f.

[9] Rorty, ibid., p. 3.

Quine).

With the benefit of another thirty eight years' hindsight, I myself should wish to elaborate Rorty's account. The linguistic turn, I suggest, was taken when it was proposed

1. That the goal of philosophy is (a) the understanding of the structure and articulations of our conceptual scheme, and (b) the resolution of the problems of philosophy (to be specified by paradigmatic examples), which stem, *inter alia*, from unclarities about the uses of words, from covert misuses, and from misleading surface grammatical analogies in natural languages.

2. That *a* primary method of philosophy is the examination of the uses of words in order to disentangle conceptual confusions.

3. That philosophy is not a contribution to human knowledge about reality, either superior to or on the same level as scientific knowledge, but a contribution to a distinctive form of understanding.[10]

This turn had been initiated by Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. It could be completed only when the metaphysical doctrines of the *Tractatus* were jettisoned and the logical doctrines accordingly modified. This was effected by Wittgenstein himself in the 1930s, and, partly under his influence, by the Vienna Circle. The three claims are common ground to most of the logical positivists, most Oxford analytic philosophers and their followers, and most of Wittgenstein's pupils. One cannot therefore characterize analytic philosophy as such, but only its third and fourth phases, by reference to the linguistic turn.

Professor Timothy Williamson has recently intimated that the linguistic turn was a bad mistake, and proclaimed that 'over the last twenty years, fewer and fewer of those who would accept the label "analytic philosophy" for their work [himself included] would also claim to take the linguistic turn'.[11] Why these revisionists would nevertheless accept the label "analytic philosophy"'

[10] This requires marginal qualification: since the examination of the use of words may bring to light analogies and disanalogies of which we were not aware, and may thus bring us to *realise* things about our conceptual scheme that we had not realised before, one might concede that *in this sense* philosophy may enlarge our knowledge. It does not enlarge our knowledge of the world and it does not *discover* new knowledge of the world or produce confirmable hypotheses or theories about it. But it may give us knowledge of aspects of our conceptual scheme (our forms of representation) by way of *realisation* of the character of what is, so to speak, before our eyes. An appropriate response to scientific discovery is, figuratively speaking 'Goodness me, who would have thought of that?', but the proper response to philosophical insight is, so to speak, 'Yes, of course; I should have thought of that'.

[11] T. Williamson, 'Past the Linguistic Turn', in B. Leiter ed. *The Future for Philosophy* (Oxford University

is unclear, and needs to be spelled out by them. The mere employment of the logical technology of analytic philosophy does not by itself make one into an analytic philosopher.

Curiously enough, Williamson does not identify the linguistic turn, as Rorty had done, by reference to the dramatic changes in analytic philosophy that occurred in the 1930s. Nor does he examine for himself the history of the analytic movement to see when a sea-change occurred. Rather he turns to Michael Dummett who, according to Williamson, 'gave a classic articulation of the linguistic turn, attributing it to Frege'. Dummett proclaimed that 'Only with Frege was the proper object of philosophy finally established: namely that the goal of philosophy is the analysis of the structure of *thought*; secondly that the study of *thought* is to be sharply distinguished from the study of the psychological process of *thinking*; and, finally, that the only proper method for analysing thought consists in the analysis of *language*. ... the acceptance of these three tenets is common to the entire analytic school.'[12]

An articulation is *classic* if and only if it is *authoritative*. Dummett's articulation, far from being authoritative, is radically mistaken. First, it is not a view Frege ever expressed or one to which he was implicitly committed. Indeed, Frege had no view whatsoever on the proper goals of philosophy of mind, of philosophy of physics or of biology, or of ethics and aesthetics, or of legal and political philosophy. Secondly, Frege did not hold that the only proper way of analysing thought (the *Gedanke*) or relations of thoughts is analysing *natural* language – on the contrary, he held that 'It cannot be the task of logic to investigate language and determine what is contained in a linguistic expression. Someone who wants to learn logic from language is like an adult who wants to learn how to think from a child.'[13] The proper way to analyse thought, according to Frege, is by means of the function-theoretic concept-script that he invented. Thirdly, it is *not* a tenet common to the entire analytic school – on the contrary, most of the analytic school, both before and after 1930, harboured

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Press, Oxford, 2005), p. 107.

[12] M.A.E. Dummett, 'Can analytic philosophy be systematic and ought it to be?' repr. in *Truth and other Enigmas* (Duckworth, London, 1978), p. 458, quoted by Williamson, ibid. Williamson rightly notes that by Dummett's criteria Russell would not count as an analytic philosopher.

[13] G. Frege, letter to Husserl 30. 10. 1906/1. 11. 1906, in *Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1980), pp. 67f.

ambitions that reached far beyond the investigation of the 'structure' of thoughts (propositions).[14] Finally, a *thought* (what Frege held we think when we think that *p*) no more has a structure than does a guess, a suspicion, a wish, an expectation, a hope or a fear – it is the *expression of a thought* that has a structure.

Williamson asserts that 'For those who took the turn, language was somehow the central theme of philosophy.'[15] But language was not the central *theme* of all analytic philosophy – rather *the careful examination of language* and its use was *a* salient *method* of analytic philosophy from the 1930s onwards. In support of his contention, Williamson cites only Ayer, who in his youthful work *Language, Truth and Logic*, claimed that the propositions of philosophy are not factual but linguistic in character, that they express definitions or formal consequences of definitions. But this is not even the view of the Vienna Circle in general, let alone of others. The *Manifesto* of the Circle declared unequivocally that 'Clarification of the traditional philosophical problems leads us partly to unmask them as pseudo-problems and partly to transform them into empirical problems and thereby to subject them to the judgment of empirical science. The task of philosophical work lies in this clarification of problems and assertions, not in the propounding of special "philosophical" pronouncements.'[16] In this the members of the Circle were following the *Tractatus* programme for future philosophy. That 'language was somehow the central theme of philosophy' is far too crude and vague an assertion to command the assent of the later Wittgenstein either. On the one hand, he would have denied that, in the sense in which there are propositions of physics, there are any *philosophical propositions* at all. (What he called 'grammatical propositions' are just rules for the use of words in misleading guise.) On the other hand, he insisted that his questions about how a word 'W' is used are as much about *the*

[14] Moore held that 'the first and most important problem of philosophy is: to give a general description of the *whole* universe' (*Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, pp. 1-2); Russell said that his endeavour for the whole of his career had been 'to understand the world as well as may be and to separate what may count as knowledge from what must be rejected as unfounded opinion' (*My Philosophical Development* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1959), p. 217). This was Cantabrigian enthusiasm, but even the later, more sober, Oxonians had quite different ambitions. Ryle's *Concept of Mind* was not an investigation into the structure of propositions, and nor was Austin's 'A Plea for Excuses' or *Sense and Sensibilia;* Hart's *Concept of Law* was an investigation into the nature of law, not into the nature of the thought; and so on.

[15] Williamson, Ibid., p. 106.

[16] *The Scientific Conception of the World: the Vienna Circle* [1929] (Reidel, Dordrecht, 1973), p. 8. The *Manifesto* was signed by Hahn, Neurath and Carnap. Both Feigl and Waismann were involved in the drafting.

nature of W as the traditional philosophers' questions (only their's make us expect the wrong kind of answer).[17] That 'language was somehow the central theme of philosophy' is not a view held by Oxford philosophers in the heyday of Oxford analytic philosophy after 1945, such as Ryle, Austin, Hampshire, Hart, Grice and Strawson. Language is the central *theme* only of philosophy of language, and even there, *not* in the sense in which it is the central theme of linguistics. The only things that can (unhelpfully) be said to be *the central themes* of philosophy are the a priori, conceptual problems of philosophy. But *a* central *method* of philosophy after the linguistic turn was to examine meticulously the uses of words – a method that is discarded, as it is indeed discarded by contemporary revisionists, only at a very high cost.

It is evident that Professor Williamson would reject the linguistic turn as I have characterized it. First, he approves of the post-Kripkean revival of metaphysics. Secondly, he suggests that with the rise of contemporary philosophy of mind and its advocacy of the notion of a mental representation, a *representational turn* has displaced the linguistic turn. So the goal of philosophy 'might' (he says carefully) be argued to be the analysis of representations. Williamson's metaphysical predilections and his sympathies with the investigation of mental representations are synthesized in the thought that 'perhaps one cannot reflect on thought or talk about reality without reflecting on reality itself.' So reflecting on representations can, he suggests, yield knowledge of the world.[18] So, it seems, we can have both a 'representational turn' and *de re* metaphysics as of old. With the 'rigour and precision' provided by the predicate calculus and modal logic, Professor Williamson proclaims, we have only now arrived at 'the end of the beginning' of philosophy.[19]

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[17] See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1953), §370.

[18] Williamson invokes the imprimatur of a remark made by David Wiggins: 'Let us forget once and for all the very idea of some knowledge of language or meaning that is not knowledge of the world itself.' (*Sameness and Substance Renewed* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), p. 12). Williamson interprets that thought as warranted by the alleged fact that 'In defining words – for example, natural kind terms – we must point at real specimens.' Disentangling current confusions about natural kind terms would take a book in its own right, but it is worth bearing in mind some elementary truisms. We do not define what the fundamental particles of nature are by pointing at anything. We define them by their properties, not by their structure, since they lack any structure (cf. H. Ben-Yami, 'The Semantics of Kind Terms', *Philosophical Studies* 2001, pp. 155-84)). Scientists do not define the elements of which all material things consist by pointing at anything either, but by reference to the Periodic Tables and the properties there exhibited. And although we may use specimens as defining samples for biological substances, we need not (and in palaeontology obviously cannot). For humdrum pedagogic purposes of teaching a child what 'elephant' or 'pterodactyl' signifies, a picture will do just as well; for other purposes, a scientific classification will serve.

[19] Williamson, 'Must Do Better', in P. Greenough and M. Lynch, eds. *Proceedings of the 2004 St Andrews*

One may be surprised to learn that thinking alone can yield knowledge of reality. Kant, one might suppose, had something important to say on that matter. But 'appeals to the authority of Kant ...', Williamson avers, 'ring hollow, for they are unbacked by any argument that has withstood the test of recent time.' How then *can* thinking alone yield knowledge? 'Although we do not fully understand *how* thinking can provide new knowledge', Williamson remarks, 'the cases of logic and mathematics constitute overwhelming evidence that it does.'[20] – Perhaps; but also, perhaps not – depending on whether propositions of logic say anything at all, and on whether the mathematician is a discoverer or an inventor. But be that as it may, the cases of logic and mathematics do not constitute any evidence whatsoever that thinking provides new knowledge of *reality*.

It seems to me that if this is philosophy after the linguistic turn, the sooner it makes another turn – to the study of the history of philosophy – the better. I doubt whether anyone would wish to appeal to the *authority* of Kant, or of Carnap, Wittgenstein or Strawson.[21] What they would appeal to are their *arguments*. The 'test of recent time' has not addressed these, but only evaded them.

I cannot examine the conceptions of the revisionist metaphysical and representational turn in the detail they require to eradicate the confusions. What I shall try to do all too briefly is to specify critically the great issues. The much vaunted revival of metaphysics is partly dependent upon the ideas that there are such things as contingent a priori truths (e.g. that the Standard Metre is a metre long[22]) and as necessary a posteriori truths (e.g. that water is H_2O).[23] Let me very briefly indicate

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Conference on Realism and Truth (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005), p. ? I recollect another of his predecessors in the Wykham Chair of Logic in the University of Oxford, Professor Michael Dummett, making a similar claim thirty years ago, when he wrote that 'philosophy has only just very recently struggled out of its early stage into maturity' ('Can analytic philosophy be systematic and ought it to be?', repr. in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Duckworth, London, 1978), p. 457. One can blow the Last Trumpet once, but not once every generation. In truth, philosophy reached the end of its beginning in Athens more than two thousand years ago, and struggled into full maturity in the groves of the Academy and the Lyceum, not in the gardens of New College.

[20] Williamson, 'Past the Linguistic turn', p. 127.

[21] Strawsonian 'descriptive metaphysics' is a logico-linguistic investigation into the most general features *of our conceptual scheme* – not of the world. For discussion, see P.M.S. Hacker, 'Strawson's Rehabilitation of Metaphysics', repr. in *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies*, pp. 345-75).

[22] This confusion originates in Saul Kripke's mistaken criticism of *Philosophical Investigations* §50 in his *Naming and Necessity* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1972), pp. 54-6. Kripke claimed that if 'the Standard Metre' is taken as a rigid designator, then the statement that it is one metre long is both contingent and a priori (p. 56). For discussion of Wittgenstein's simple point see G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*, 2nd revised edition by P.M.S. Hacker, Part 1– Essays (Blackwell, Oxford, 2005), 'The Standard Metre'.

why these are not exciting new insights re-licensing the old pseudo-science of metaphysics, but merely new confusions.

Specifying a sample, such as the Metre Bar, as the defining sample of a property, namely the property of being a metre length, is not ascribing to the sample the property which it defines. As Wittgenstein observed, one cannot say of the Standard Metre Bar either that it is a metre long or that it is not a metre long, precisely because it was given the role of the canonical sample of a metre length. Since 'a metre' was *defined* as the length of the Standard Metre under specified conditions, to say that the Standard Metre is a metre long would be to say that it is as long as itself, i.e. to say nothing. And to say that the Standard Metre is not a metre long would be to say that it is not the length it is, i.e. to talk nonsense. 'The Standard Metre Bar is a metre long' is a definition, not a description attributing a length to that platinum-iridium bar. It is not a 'metaphysical truth' (and if it were, it would hardly be something that would-be metaphysicians could be proud of disclosing to the Royal Society as their contribution to our knowledge of reality). Nor is it a 'contingent a priori truth' – there is no such thing. Rather, it is the expression of a rule.[24] (It *can* be said to be true, but only after the fashion in which it can be said to be true that the chess king moves one square at a time.) Of course, we might have had a different rule and might have used a longer or shorter sample – but then 'one metre' would have had a different meaning. Similarly, the Standard Metre Bar might be stretched or compressed – but then we would not continue to use as the standard, and would make a new Standard Metre Bar – we are, after all, not at the mercy of our sample.

Water is not *identical* with H_2O (that makes scant sense, 'H_2O' being a constitutive *formula*, not a name) – rather, the chemical formula for water specifies its molecular constitution. Water *consists* of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen in chemical combination. That is an empirical (a posteriori) discovery, but there is no reason to suppose that it is a discovery of a 'metaphysical necessity'. It is not as if anyone has given a coherent non-trivial account of what a so-called

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[23] Kripke, ibid., Lecture 3, and Hilary Putnam, 'The meaning of meaning', repr. in his *Mind and Reality, Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975) have advanced this view.

[24] See N. Malcolm, 'Kripke and the Standard Metre', repr. in his *Wittgensteinian Themes: Essays 1978-89*, ed. G.H. von Wright (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1995), pp. 56-65, and G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker,'The Standard Metre' in *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*, Part I: Essays, 2nd ed. by P.M.S. Hacker (Blackwell, Oxford, 2005), and exegesis of §50 in Part II.

metaphysical necessity might be. But even if we could make sense of it, that would not provide topic-hungry philosophers with a subject matter. Nor would it make chemists into metaphysicians. For scientific purposes, chemists may harden the empirical proposition that water consists of molecules of H_2O into a rule. Then one may say, not very usefully, that for purposes of chemical discourse it is a 'necessary truth'. All that means is that it is a convention of chemical discourse that if a stuff does not consist of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen in chemical combination, then it will not count as water.[25] The questions raised about the structure, necessary or contingent, of natural stuffs require careful investigation and clarification of the *concepts* of necessity and contingency, and of the *role* of such propositions as 'water is H_2O' – i.e. just more conceptual analysis and clarification of uses of language – the technical language of chemistry – in order to dispel conceptual confusion.

According to Williamson, contemporary metaphysics has as its goal 'to discover what fundamental kinds of things there are and what properties and relations they have ... It studies substances and essences, universals and particulars, space and time, possibility and necessity.' This endeavour, he rightly says, is continuous with traditional metaphysics. But philosophers are not meta-physicists. Physics studies what fundamental kinds of things there are and what properties and relations they have. No one would look to philosophers for discoveries about mesons or quarks; or about space and time – but only for clarification of the concepts of space and time. The study of substances (stuffs) is the province of chemistry. All philosophy can possibly do is clarify the logico-grammatical character of substance concepts – both concepts of stuffs of different sorts and concepts of persistent things of different kinds. The chemist studies substances in his laboratory, but the philosopher does not have the luxury of studying substances *in that sense* in the comfort of his armchair. The most he can do is clarify such purely conceptual matters as: what is an essential property? do all nominata signify things that have an essence? what does it mean to say that redness, or justice, or wisdom exists? The study of *possibility* and *necessity* doubtless sounds impressive: physicists, it seems study the contingencies of this world, but the meta-physicist studies the necessary features of *any possible world*! But this is long-since exploded mythology. The philosophical investigation of necessity and possibility is no more than the (exceedingly difficult) systematic

[25] For detailed criticism, see J. Dupré, *The Disorder of Things* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1993), chap. 1, and H. Ben-Yami, 'The Semantics of Kind Terms', *Philosophical Studies* 2001, pp. 155-84.

description of the many-faceted uses of the modal verbs 'can' and 'must' (their cognates and negations) for purposes of philosophical clarification of confusions such as those exemplified by the new metaphysicians.

Professor Williamson claims that the representational turn has displaced the linguistic turn. The notion of a mental representation is, he contends, central to the new philosophy of mind. Language is one form of representation, and thought is another. 'One might therefore classify both thought and language together under the more general category of representation, and argue that ... the goal of philosophy is the analysis ... of representation. ... We represent how things are when we know or believe or assert that they are some way.' 'What language and thought have most obviously in common', Williamson contends, 'is that they are both manifestations of mind. ... It is no platitude to claim that the goal of philosophy is to analyse [such manifestations of mind].'

Language might be said to be a *medium* of representation. A segment of the grammar[26] of a particular language can be said to be a *form of representation* (e.g. the grammar of colour, sensation, perception). But *thought* is neither a form nor a medium of representation. It is mistaken to suppose that when we know or believe that things are thus-and-so, we represent anything to ourselves. It is only when we say (draw, sculpt, etc.) what we think, know or believe that we represent anything. Thought, knowledge and belief are *all message and no medium*. But, as John Hyman has nicely pointed out, a thing can be a representation of something only if it has, in addition to its representational properties, some non-representational properties in virtue of which it *can* represent whatever it represents – which thought, knowledge and belief patently lack. The spoken word has various non-representational aural properties; the written word various non-representational visual properties (or, in the case of Braille, tactile properties); the painting is made of paint thus thick and canvas thus woven. In Marshall McLuhan's jargon, *the message needs a medium*. But one may think, know or believe that *p*, without saying anything, either aloud or to oneself; and one's thought, knowledge or belief is no representation. If there were such a thing as a *language of thought*, as Wittgenstein once believed (and some still do), then a thought, like a significant sentence in use, would be a representation. But as he came to realise (and explained) in the early 1930s, there can be

[26] In Wittgenstein's sense.

no such thing.[27]

One might suppose not that *a thought* is a representation, but that *thinking* is representing – that when one thinks, knows or believes something, there is (or must be?) a representation of what one thinks, knows or believes *in one's brain*. But that is incoherent. There can be no representations of anything without conventions of representation, and there can be no conventions of representation that are not the conventions of sentient creatures. So, in the sense in which the symbols of a language are used to represent things, neural states and conditions cannot represent anything. They can be signs *of* something, but not signs *for* anything.

Consequently, it is mistaken to suppose, as Professor Williamson does, that one can coherently classify both thought and language together under the more general category of representation. It is therefore also mistaken to argue that the linguistic turn was just the first phase of a *representational turn*. I agree with Professor Williamson that it is no platitude to claim that *the* goal of philosophy is to analyse such manifestations of mind as language and thoughts. It is, as far as I can see, just mistaken, although to be sure, both the concept of language and the concepts of thought and thinking are sources of endless confusion and hence fit subjects for philosophical reflection.

Philosophy is not an extension of science. It is not a kind of conceptual scullery maid for the sciences, as Locke supposed. Nor is it superior to the sciences – a super-science of all possible worlds, to be investigated by means of 'thought-experiments' from the comfort of the armchair, as contemporary revisionists suppose. (Thought-experiments are no more experiments than monopoly-money is money.) It is, as Kant intimated, *the Tribunal of Sense*. So: back to the linguistic turn. The aim of philosophy is the clarification of the forms of sense that, in one way or another, are conceptually puzzling – for they are legion. The charge of philosophy – a Sisyphean labour, to be sure – is the extirpation of nonsense. There is, Heaven knows, enough of it, both in philosophy and in the empirical and a priori sciences. The prize is not more *knowledge* about anything. Rather it is a proper understanding of the structure and articulations of our conceptual scheme, and the disentangling of conceptual confusions.

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[27] For his early hypothesis of a language of thought, see *Tractatus* 3-3.1 and 5.542, *Notebooks 1914-16* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1961), pp. 82 and p. 129f (letter to Russell, 19.8.1919). For discussion, see P.M.S.Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Mind and Will* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1996), 'Intentionality', §2 and §4.

St John's College, Oxford.

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