

# Introduction

A. P. MARTINICH

Though analytic philosophy was practiced by Plato and reinvigorated in the modern era by René Descartes and Thomas Hobbes among others, we are concerned with it only in its twentieth-century forms. As such, it was revived in two centers, Germany and England. In Germany, Gottlob Frege was exploring the foundations of mathematics and logic. His efforts introduced new standards of rigor that made their way into analytic philosophy generally, through the work of Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein. His discussions of the nature of language and reasoning have also become powerful tools in the hands of later philosophers. Among Frege's many books and articles, the *Grundgesetze, Begriffsschrift*, "On Sense and Reference" ("Über Sinn und Bedeutung," 1892) and "Thoughts" ("Gedanken," 1918) stand out as especially significant.

During about the same period in England, G. E. Moore led the way in opposing the then-dominant philosophy of British idealism. While "The Nature of Judgment" is an early criticism of a point in F. H. Bradley's *Logic*, the *locus classicus* of British analytic philosophy is likely "The Refutation of Idealism" (1903), a criticism of the formula *esse est percipi* ("to be is to be perceived"). A crucial part of that argument is Moore's claim that the concept of the sensation of yellow contains two parts: the sensation that is unique to each person and the yellowness that can be perceived by many people. Even when idealists conceded that there was some kind of duality here, they insisted on a kind of inseparability.

To use a general name for the kind of analytic philosophy practiced during the first half of the twentieth century, initially in Great Britain and German-speaking countries, and later in North America, Australia, and New Zealand, "conceptual analysis" aims at breaking down complex concepts into their simpler components. Successive analyses performed on complex concepts would yield simpler concepts. According to Moore, the process might lead ultimately to simple concepts, of which no further analysis could be given. The designation "conceptual" was supposed to distinguish the philosophical activity from various analyses applied to nonconceptual objects. Physics was famous in the twentieth century for breaking down atoms into protons, neutrons, and electrons, and these subatomic particles into an array of more exotic components. And analytic chemistry aims at determining chemical compositions. The analogy between philosophy and science inspired the name "logical atomism," a theory that flourished between

1920 and 1930. Both Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell maintained that there must be simple, unanalyzable objects at the fundamental level of reality. Wittgenstein thought that the simples existed independently of human experience, Russell that they existed only for as long as one's attention was fixed on them.

Notwithstanding the analogy between scientific and philosophical analysis, most philosophers in the first half of the twentieth century maintained that philosophy was very different from science. In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), Wittgenstein wrote: "Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences. (The word 'philosophy' must mean something whose place is above or below the natural sciences, not beside them.)" (4.111). This conveniently left open which was superior.

But if there is anything constant in analytic philosophy, it is change, and the opposite view of the relation between science and philosophy has dominated the second half of the century. Largely owing to the influence of W. V. Quine, many philosophers have come to believe that philosophy is continuous with science. Yesterday's heresy is today's orthodoxy. Whichever view is correct, the division between the philosophical analysis of concepts and the nonphilosophical scientific analysis of nonconceptual objects should perhaps not be taken too strictly. Concepts and hence philosophy would be of no use if they did not make contact with the nonconceptual world. In addition, science uses concepts, many of which may be among the most fundamental of reality. To paraphrase Kant, perceptions without concepts are blind; concepts without perceptions are empty.

Overlapping with the latter period of logical atomism is logical positivism, which may be dated from Moritz Schlick's founding of the Vienna Circle in 1924. One of its principal doctrines was that science is a unity; and one of its principal projects was to show how to translate all meaningful language into scientific language, in other words, to reduce meaningful nonscientific language to scientific language. This project cannot be successful unless something distinguishes meaningful from nonmeaningful expressions. A. J. Ayer probably devoted more energy and displayed more ingenuity in trying to formulate a criterion of meaningfulness than anyone else. His first effort was presented in *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936), the book that became the most widely known statement of logical positivism and which introduced that philosophy to the anglophone public. The basic idea is that a sentence is meaningful if and only if it is either analytic (or contradictory) or empirically verifiable. Various objections were raised to this, and to every revision of this criterion. Part of the problem was the status of the criterion itself. Either it would be analytic and hence vacuous, or it would be empirical but then not completely confirmed. Logical positivism had been dead for some time when it was buried by Carl G. Hempel's "Problems and Changes in the Empiricist Criterion of Meaning" (1950) and W. V. Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951). Nevertheless, Ayer and others never abandoned the spirit of verifiability.

What had already begun to take the place of logical positivism in the 1940s was ordinary-language philosophy, one strand of which emanated from Cambridge in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, the other from Oxford. One of Wittgenstein's motivating beliefs was that philosophy creates its own problems, and that means that they are not genuine problems at all. The confusion arises from philosophers' misuse of ordinary words. They take words out of their ordinary context, the only context in which they have meaning, use them philosophically, and thereby discover anomalies with the

displaced concepts expressed by these words: “For philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*.” Wittgenstein questioned many of the assumptions of analytic philosophy – from the nature and necessity of analysis to the nature of language – in a discursive and dialectical style so inimitable that it was as if Ludwig were talking to Wittgenstein. His oracular aphorisms, such as “Don’t ask for the meaning, ask for the use” and “To understand a sentence is to understand a language” stimulated a variety of reactions, from the Fregean interpretations of Peter Geach and Michael Dummett, to the holism of Quine and Donald Davidson, to the deconstructivist approaches of O. K. Bouwsma and D. Z. Phillips.

The other strand of ordinary-language philosophy came from Oxford, under the leadership of Gilbert Ryle and J. L. Austin. These philosophers, more numerous than the Cambridge group (Antony Flew, J. O. Urmson, and G. J. Warnock, deserve to be mentioned), did not so much think that there were no philosophical problems as say that philosophical problems could be solved through the careful analysis of the distinctions inherent in ordinary language. The purpose of Austin’s “Ifs and Cans” and “A Plea for Excuses” was to elucidate the problem of freedom and determinism, which arose from his understanding of Aristotle (see his *Philosophical Papers*, 2nd edition, p. 180). He said that while ordinary language was not the last word in philosophy, it was the first. He certainly was not opposed to philosophers developing theories.

Austin, who had been a closet logical positivist according to A. J. Ayer, coined the term “performative utterance” as part of his refutation of the central thesis of logical positivism, namely, that all sentences that were cognitively meaningful were either true or false. Austin pointed out that some straightforwardly meaningful sentences, sentences that did not contain suspicious words like “beautiful,” “good,” or “God,” were not the kind of sentences that could have a truth-value: “I bequeath my watch to my brother,” “I christen this ship the Queen Elizabeth II,” and “I bet ten dollars that Cleveland wins the pennant.” Although the concept of performatives did the work it was designed to do, the distinction between performatives and “constatives” (roughly, statements) could not be sustained; and Austin replaced that distinction with another, between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. In the 1960s, John Searle, who was trained at Oxford by ordinary-language philosophers, showed that Austin’s latter theory was itself inadequate and replaced it with his own fully-developed theory in *Speech Acts* (1969) and *Expression and Meaning* (1979).

By the late 1960s ordinary language had lost its dominance. Some of the Oxford philosophers were instrumental in its demise. Searle, as mentioned, developed a full-fledged theory of speech acts, and then used it as inspiration for foundational work on the nature of intentionality and the social world. One of his teachers and a colleague of Austin’s, H. P. Grice, developed his own theory of language use, a theory complementary in many ways to Searle’s.

A more dramatic cause of the demise of ordinary language philosophy is attributable to one of its chief practitioners, P. F. Strawson. In *Individuals* (1959), he resurrected metaphysics, an area of philosophy that was considered unacceptable by logical positivism. Strawson distinguished between “stipulative” (bad) metaphysics and “descriptive” (good) metaphysics. His descriptive project, to lay “bare the most general features of our conceptual structure,” was supposed to differ from logical or conceptual analysis only “in scope and generality.” At almost the same time, the American W. V. Quine

published *Word and Object* (1960). His approach differed from Strawson's primarily in emphasizing the genesis of the most general concepts and in accommodating itself explicitly to empirical psychology and physics.

Once metaphysics had been made respectable again, philosophers felt more comfortable pursuing a large variety of problems in a variety of ways. Metaphysical systems became more elaborate when Saul Kripke used possible worlds to prove theorems about modal logic. Some subsequent positions can even be thought outlandish, such as David Lewis's view that every possible world exists, and exists in the same sense our own world does – outlandish but not disreputable. Some disciplines that had been relatively neglected between 1930 and 1960 were reinigorated, for example, ethics and political philosophy by John Rawls, most notably in *A Theory of Justice* (1971); and some questions, such as the meaning of life, were mulled over by, for example, Thomas Nagel in an analytically respectable way. Perhaps two of the most salient characteristics of the period from 1970 onwards were first, the interest of analytic philosophers in the foundations of empirical sciences, from physics through biology to psychology, and second, their use of and contribution to artificial intelligence and cognitive science. Analysis was largely abandoned and replaced by a desire for philosophical doctrines that were variously more intelligible or intellectually respectable to physicists, logicians, or psychologists. This would explain the large presence of philosophers in cognitive science, linguistics, logic, and the philosophy of science; but has perhaps also led to what Searle has called “the rediscovery of the mind” in a book by that name.

There were other consequences of the revival of metaphysics. Some philosophers, respected for their work as early as the 1950s, for example Roderick Chisholm and Wilfrid Sellars, but not closely associated with any of the schools we have mentioned, grew in significance. Some philosophers turned to the history of modern philosophy, notably, Strawson and Jonathan Bennett on Kant, Bennett on Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, and Bernard Williams and Margaret Wilson on Descartes. Some philosophers who became important in the last quarter of the twentieth century, notably Richard Rorty, declared analytic philosophy misconceived, bankrupt, or similarly deficient. In making their position clear and in aiming at cogency, they are analytic philosophers in spite of themselves.

It is likely less helpful to talk about one or another movement in philosophy after 1965. No one method or doctrine dominated. Sometimes a philosopher championing a view became its most significant critic or at least moved on to something quite different, paradigmatically Hilary Putnam. What can be said about the last quarter of the twentieth century is that the original conception of analysis and most of its presuppositions were abandoned by almost all analytic philosophers. Gone is the assumption that concepts of philosophical importance are often composed of simpler sharply-defined concepts. Quine's arguments that there is no principled distinction between analytic and synthetic statements is just a special case of the broader thesis that language and hence thought are essentially indeterminate.

We have been explaining and illustrating analytic philosophy in the last century without defining it. It probably defies definition since it is not a set of doctrines and not restricted in its subject matter. It is more like a method, a way of dealing with a problem, but in fact not one method but many that bear a family resemblance to each other.

Once when Gilbert Harman was asked, "What is analytic philosophy?," he said (tongue firmly in cheek), "Analytic philosophy is who you have lunch with." In general, analytic philosophy has become highly pluralistic and in many ways hardly resembles what was done in the first half of the century. The refectory of analytic philosophy is not as clubby as it once was. Many more people sit at the table, and many more different kinds of food, prepared in more ways, are served. Perhaps what makes current analytic philosophers analytic philosophers is a counterfactual: they would have done philosophy the way Moore, Russell, and Wittgenstein did it if they had been doing philosophy when Moore, Russell, and Wittgenstein were. The multiplicity of analytical styles is one reason for organizing the volume by individual philosopher and not by theme.

Over forty of the greatest analytic philosophers of the last century are discussed in this volume. At least thirty of them, we believe, would be on virtually any sensible list of forty outstanding analytic philosophers. Many other philosophers have almost as good a claim to be included in this volume. To name only some of those who are not alive, the following were considered and finally, reluctantly, not included: Max Black, Gustav Bergmann, Herbert Feigl, Paul Feyerabend, Gareth Evans, C. I. Lewis, J. L. Mackie, Ernest Nagel, H. H. Price, H. A. Prichard, A. N. Prior, Hans Reichenbach, Moritz Schlick, Gregory Vlastos, Friedrich Waismann, and John Wisdom.

Some philosophers were excluded because they do not fit squarely within the tradition of analytic philosophy as ordinarily understood: John Dewey, William James, Charles Sanders Pierce, John Cook Wilson, and, ironically, Alfred North Whitehead, co-author with Russell of one of the century's greatest works of logic, *Principia Mathematica*.

While the reputations of some of the philosophers included are as high as they ever were, e.g. Frege and Russell, those of others have declined, not always justifiably, for example, those of C. D. Broad and Rudolf Carnap. In making our decisions we have tried not to be prejudiced either for or against any school, method, or time period, but to reflect the relative importance of various philosophers over the entire twentieth century.

We know that our selection will be controversial, even though it was influenced by the judgments of many colleagues. A referee of our proposal wrote that the editors seem to "aim at enraging the reader." Most analytic philosophers will believe that some other list of people would have been better. We are sympathetic. Neither of us completely agrees with the final selection. Each believes that at least three other philosophers have a better claim to be included than some that were. In order to preserve "plausible deniability," we have agreed not to comment further on the lists in any written form, and not to appear together at any public gathering of philosophers for five years.