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# PHILOSOPHY

## What Is Analytic Philosophy? General and Restrictive Concepts

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*“Philosophy is the replacement of category-habits by category-disciplines.”*  
(Gilbert Ryle)

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**O**NE SHOULD not expect a fully satisfactory answer to such a question. Those who have employed and who are still resorting to the phrase “analytic philosophy” refer to various things. Moreover, trying to set the boundaries of analytic philosophy by providing a general description of it would not change anything in this respect. More often than not, whenever the educated audience comes into contact with any member of the analytic family, they may be under the impression that what they have been presented with is analytic philosophy *tout court*. It is very instructive for one to see how these impressions arise.

Some intellectuals believe even to this day that analytic philosophy is the philosophy of logicians, a sort of philosophy which authors who employed the instruments rendered available by modern logic—symbolic and mathematical logic—created so as to attain clarifications of a conceptual nature. These intellectuals have in mind the research tradition set up through the work of authors such as Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell and Rudolf Carnap.

The use of such instruments provided by modern logic with the purpose of attaining some conceptual clarifications doubtlessly constitutes a representative variety of analytic philosophy. Reference to logical analysis provides the best justification for the phrase “analytic philosophy,” because clarifications are obtained by taking apart some language sequences and by reconstructing them from the component parts. One employs words such as *analysis* and *synthesis* in order to refer to such operations. The fact that logical analysis enjoyed a hearty welcome in a period of time which was prone to enhance the prestige of science is not at all surprising. The use of precise languages which had been built by logicians—wherein the meaning of terms and phrases is fixed by means of rules which do away with ambiguity and context dependence—enabled one to obtain various results such as clarifying the fundamentals of various disciplines with a high level of abstraction and generality, indicating the way in which the so-called logical-semantic paradoxes may be constructed and discarded, pinning down, through logical reconstruction, some central concepts in philosophy and theoretical sciences e.g., meaning, truth, space, time, causality and probability. Many philosophers who were familiar with the exact sciences have been tempted to believe that one may solve important philosophical problems by means of constructing some precise languages, which were ‘perfect’ in this respect. And even if some research programs which were developed within this orientation, such as the logicist program of reducing mathematical notions and enunciations to notions and enunciations pertaining to the realm of logic, the program concerned with designing a precise descriptive language for mental and bodily states through logical construction of expressions out of elementary data regarding the senses, the formulation of an empiricist criterion for meaning and the separation of enunciations which are objectively controlled from enunciations such as the ones pertaining to speculative philosophy and theology could not attain the initial objective, one cannot deny their being prolific in indicating new topics and directions for logical philosophical research.

Those who, bearing in mind this type of research, i.e., what has been tagged as “the philosophy of ideal languages,” reproach analytic philosophy for contenting itself with approaching problems that may be satisfactorily solved only by resorting to formal methods while narrowing the horizon of philosophical thinking in a fatal way are in the wrong. This because when speaking about analytic philosophy they only refer to one of its varieties, which is by no means the most representative one. Indeed, if the analytic reorientation within philosophy is to be confined to “logical analysis,” then authors such as George Moore, Ludwig Wittgenstein, in the second half of his creative endeavors, Gilbert Ryle and Peter Strawson will not be ranged together with other representatives of analytic philosophy. However, those who believe that an endeavor to clarify some

concepts that remain central to human thinking and to separate this type of research from that research which focuses on enriching knowledge are highly characteristic for the so-called “analytic” philosophy, will deem the contributions of these authors central. Their work has pointed to the existence of resources for conceptual clarification that have an exceptional potential, which differ from those put forth by formalized languages and which may be fully capitalized on by means of research on common language expressions. What is striking in this way of doing research on what has been deemed as an important objective ever since Socrates and Plato—concept clarification—is that the philosopher may obtain significant results without resorting to special techniques. He just puts to good use analytic and imaginative capacities which are characteristic of human thinking in general. In this way, philosophical research is endowed with maximum autonomy.<sup>1</sup> In order to highlight that which separates the “philosophy of ideal languages” from this important variety of analytic philosophy, which has been mainly promoted by authors from Great Britain, one has labeled it “ordinary language philosophy.” One has to stress upon this contrast as it warns against the widespread tendency of setting the identity of analytic philosophy by only relating to one of its branches and by underestimating the great variety of this philosophic scenery for the naming of which one employs the expression, thus favoring a monolithic representation which is very misleading. In order to perceive some of the dimensions of this contrast we can examine Strawson’s criticism of Russell’s theory of descriptions in his article “On Referring” (1950), or the way in which Wittgenstein would reject his own representation of language form *Tractatus* in his manuscripts written after 1930, and especially in the one which was published under the title *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>2</sup>

Dwellers of other philosophical worlds relate the representation about analytic philosophy as a technical philosophy which resorts to specialized instruments taken from logic and modern mathematics to the idea that it is exclusively a philosophy of logic, of language and of science. It is true that logical empiricism—a philosophical orientation which came into being within the Vienna Circle as well as within other groups close to the German-speaking space—turned the logical analysis of scientific language into the major topic of philosophical pre-occupations. Yet, during the same period of time “the philosophy of common language” had gained a dominant place within British philosophy, a fact deplored by personalities such as Bertrand Russell and Karl R. Popper.<sup>3</sup>

Michael Dummett’s retrospective accounts are especially interesting in this respect. Speaking about the period of time when he studied at Oxford, after World War II, Dummett noticed that internal confrontation lay first in the development of analytic philosophy. Ryle’s main adversary, who was back then the dominant figure at Oxford, was Carnap and not Heidegger. “He was the one whom, at Oxford, Ryle perceived as the epitome of all philosophic errors and, above all,

of a mistaken philosophical methodology.”<sup>24</sup> The differences between the analytic philosophy in the United States and the one in England, the places where Carnap’s writings on the one hand and the philosophical practice of Moore, Wittgenstein or Ryle on the other functioned as paradigms back then, were perceived as fundamental by all those involved. Although they clearly distinguished philosophy from the science of nature, both through its objectives as well as through its methods, Carnap’s followers saw this as a systematic activity wherein one could progress due to the accumulation of results which obtained from the cooperative interaction between researchers. In this respect, the status of the logical analysis of language was the same as that of any scientific discipline. The perspective of those who chose to follow the older Wittgenstein or Ryle was essentially different. To these, the objective of philosophical analysis amounted to the identification and the correctness of some conceptual confusion generated by the misunderstanding of language expressions. Dummett clearly expressed the contrast between this understanding of the finality of philosophical analysis and the one promoted back then by Carnap’s followers: “The undertaking of the philosopher, just like the one of the mathematician, does not end with theorems which he can make public afterwards; his mission is accomplished as soon as he has untied the knot and the various strings stand apart. This is when we see the world correctly. There is nothing which might be retained in enunciations as a result of philosophical work; an undeformed way of seeing does not amount to a visible object.”<sup>25</sup>

Dummett considered that afterwards, in the ’70s, there was a remarkable coming together of the different varieties of analytic philosophy. On the two shores of the Atlantic they reached a consensus with respect to the fact the theory of language occupies a central position in philosophy. “We can call analytic philosophy the one which conceives the philosophy of language in relation to Frege as the fundament for the rest of the domain.”<sup>26</sup> Just like in the case of the philosophy of language practiced as a logical analysis of the language of science, the philosophy of language has also lost its leading position. At the center of the pre-occupations of those philosophers who declare themselves as pertaining to the analytic tradition lie metaphysics, the philosophy of mind and moral philosophy. The philosophy of art, of religion and of values are not neglected either.

There exist authors who still believe that the unity of analytic philosophy is given by something easy to identify, which consists in approaching issues recognized as philosophical by resorting to the method of analysis. Such a concept of analytic philosophy is, however, intolerable and restrictive. Such a criterion was accepted only by Russell and his followers, during the times when he embraced the point of view of “logical atomism” that would probably fit the name of philosophers with an analytic orientation. Frege’s approach would not have been a strictly “analytic” one for he believed that the meaning of

words could only be determined within the context of sentences. Less so would have been Wittgenstein's approach in the *Tractatus*. The second sentence in this work, 1.1, states that the world is made up of facts and not things, and Wittgenstein carries on by showing that names have a meaning within sentences, which means that a complete analysis, in the sense of "logical atomism," is not possible. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein explicitly rejects the supposition that isolated expressions have well defined meaning. The meaning of expressions, he claims at this point, may be determined only by considering the language games in which they show up, their relation to various activities of human communities. "For a *large* class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (*Philosophical Investigations*, §43). The conclusion is one and the same: all attempts to establish the identity of analytic philosophy in relation to the object of its research, to the topics and methods that might be specific to it, seem destined to fail.

**T**HUS, IT is by no means surprising that with many of the attempts of fixing the profile of analytic philosophy the emphasis was laid on stressing on that which divided the philosophers considered to be representative for this orientation in human thought from those pertaining to other great philosophical traditions. The explanation for this seems very simple to me. Allegiance to what has been called "analytic philosophy" may be perceived in terms of affiliation to a family whose members are connected one with the other less through principles and common methods and more through idiosyncrasies, aversions and limitations with respect to prestigious styles of thinking. This is achieved by refusing to approach directly issues of the most general type, through an orientation towards laborious research of some specific issues; by indulging in the conviction that such research may shed new light on certain questions that have been long established by tradition and that it may lead to the reformulation or the dissolution, even, of some established philosophical topics; through the effort of enhancing the transparency and the controllability of the philosophical endeavor, highlighting that which is vague and blurred in the concepts and argumentations of some great philosophers, such as Descartes's or Husserl's considerations concerning rational evidence or Kant's synthetic a priori; by emphasizing and by insistently practicing the resources of conceptual imagination when it comes to investigating some matters which stand out neither through their range nor through their novelty but which may prompt us into reconsidering some of the intuitions that orient our way of thinking. It has been agreed that the analytic tradition is made up of independent minds who are not drawn together by a common program or by their adherence to the same founding work but by various motivations which converge to some extent as it was the case of

Neo-Kantianism, historicism and “the philosophy of life, the Post-Hegelian idealism or phenomenology at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>77</sup> As a consequence, it was admitted that philosophers who differ in many ways may actually pertain to the same family. A well-known researcher working on Frege and contemporary with him, Hans Sluga, suggests that it is precisely by taking into account such considerations that the current representation with respect to what the expression “analytic philosophy” covers was formed: “Following a common practice, I take analytic philosophy as originating in the works of Frege, Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein as encompassing the logical empiricism of the Vienna Circle, English ordinary language philosophy of the post-war period, American mainstream philosophy of recent decades as well as their worldwide affiliates and descendants. This is hardly a precise characterization and it is by no means unproblematic . . . I believe that a plausible case can be made for the understanding of the term ‘analytic philosophy’ I have adopted.”<sup>78</sup>

I find Sluga’s enumeration important. It is precisely by resorting to such a representation of the make-up of the analytic family, going as far as to the distant relatives, that we will be able to better examine the various attempts at finding its identity. Just like in the case of other expressions whose purpose is to name great philosophical orientations, in the case of the phrase “analytic philosophy” there are attempts meant to identify the distinctive features which render possible its clear and complete separation from other forms of philosophic life.

The point of view, which is undoubtedly appealing, that analytic philosophy amounts to a movement which may be deemed unitary through its objectives and methods, has been put forth for instance in Michael Dummett’s well-known book *Origins of Analytic Philosophy*. Dummett’s view is that analytic philosophy has its origins in a “turn towards language,” which might have been accomplished through Frege’s logical philosophical work. Dummett states that “What distinguishes analytical philosophy, in its diverse manifestations, from other schools is the belief, first, that a philosophical account of thought can be attained through a philosophical account of language, and, secondly, that a comprehensive account can only be so attained.”<sup>79</sup>

Recent researchers in the history of analytic philosophy have questioned both the correctness of this characterization of Frege’s philosophical practice as a whole, and the fact that such a general characterization of analytic philosophy might be harmonized with the current representation concerning the authors and the philosophical practices which are usually subsumed to “analytic philosophy.” It has been stressed, for instance, that authors such as Russell and Moore, whose allegiance to the analytic movement is by no means questioned but rather emphasized, rejected the idea that the main task of philosophy would be language analysis,<sup>10</sup> and that, on the other hand, Heidegger and the hermeneutic philosophy

had granted special attention to language although nobody believes that these philosophers were significantly close to the analytic philosophy.<sup>11</sup> Dummett's statement that Frege could be characterized as "a philosopher of meaning" and that his having re-oriented himself towards language represents a trait of his philosophical work in general, has been questioned.<sup>12</sup> Just like other researchers in the analytic tradition, Sluga rejects Dummett's claim that what was labeled "analytic tradition" stands out through several ideas that all those who are considered its prominent representatives share. Stressing the fact that one may distinguish several threads in the development of this tradition, where priority is given to the focus on the fundamentals of mathematics, the analysis of conceptual structure of empirical sciences or on language and meaning, he concludes: "Even this image is too simple because each of the personalities who have authority in the realm of early analytic philosophy—Frege, Moore and Russell, Wittgenstein, Schlick, Carnap and Neurath among them—has brought into this tradition his own specific agenda."<sup>13</sup>

If we are to add to these names the name of other philosophers that were influential in more recent times, it will then become clear that the best reason to employ such a label as "analytic philosophy" is the existence of some family resemblances between philosophical practices which are very different at first sight and not only at this level. In order to justify this labeling of both the authors who declared themselves interested in achieving a better knowledge of the world and of those who believe that philosophical matters are essentially linked to language, of both those who believe that the medium for philosophic clarification is the construction of some models rendered through formalized languages and of those who claim that philosophic research should be a systematic activity as well as of those who reject this, of those who believe that there are authentic philosophical issues which may acquire solutions and also of those who deny the existence of such issues, we will have to commit to exploring some stylistic juxtapositions which are harder to identify and to clarify.<sup>14</sup> We will not be able to avoid such an endeavor if we are keen on rendering justice to the process of subsuming so diverse configurations such as the representative works of Russell, Carnap, Ryle, Quine as well as the texts written by Wittgenstein during the last twenty years of his life under the label of analytic philosophy. At the same time, we will have to acknowledge that, to serve the purpose of current orientation within the variegated variety of the contemporary philosophical world, one feels the need for criteria which can be easily handled, even if these are hard to defend when faced with all those configurations within the philosophic landscape which are currently subsumed under analytic philosophy. I will present and subject to a historical and critical examination some of these criteria which amount to more restrictive or more general concepts of analytic philosophy.

IT WILL be easily agreed that a philosophy centered on language, which tends at the same time towards theoretical systematic elaborations is “analytical.” Under such a view, analytic philosophy recommends itself as “the scientific philosophy par excellence.” Both its domain and its research methods are quite well delineated, its standards of excellence are clearly set, which renders possible a cooperative interaction among the researchers in the field, the progressive accumulation of results. Thus, analytic philosophy seems the antipode of speculative tradition, of philosophy understood as a sequence of personal systems, each a new beginning. From this point of view, characterizing analytic philosophy as a profound change in the way of conceiving of and practicing philosophy, as a “revolution in philosophy” seems fully justified.

Dummett provided a very clear formulation of this concept of analytic philosophy. To him, the center of analytic philosophy consists in a theory of the meaning of language expressions. In this respect, analytic philosophy will be characterized as that philosophy which is subsumed under the sign of Frege’s project. As Dummett puts it, Frege was the first to indicate the general form which such a theory should take. By contrast, there are no starting points in what Wittgenstein left to us.<sup>15</sup> If we take into account the fact that during its long existence philosophy lacked the methodology and the generally accepted criteria for excellence, and therefore a body of unanimously accepted results, it follows that a philosophy which is systematic in the sense that it represents a piece of theoretical research unfolded through methods which are generally acknowledged, whose results are accepted or rejected on the basis of some criteria that all researchers share, will amount to an entirely new phase in the development of the domain. This philosophy is precisely what Dummett understands by analytic philosophy. It is only a philosophy whose center is the project of a theory of meaning in Frege’s understanding of the term that could be called analytic philosophy in the strict sense of the word: “If the standpoint I have defended in this study is correct, then it is only recently that philosophy has come out of its early stage reaching maturity. Frege’s work was a turning point but its importance was largely acknowledged only half a century after his death . . . during the interval of time between Frege’s work and our times there have been many wrong interpretations and rather arrogant misreadings of Frege’s fundamental theories and half a century passed after his death until we could clearly recognize what is in his view the true purpose of philosophy.”<sup>16</sup>

It is not difficult to claim that the standpoint which Dummett formulates in this way is too restrictive when it comes to outlining the domain of analytic philosophy. Those who adopt this point of view will have to cast out from this orientation not only Moore, Ryle or Wittgenstein in the latter part of his activity, but also the author of the *Tractatus* himself. The objective set in the *Tractatus*



is to separate what can be “thought” and “said” from what cannot be “thought” and “said” from the inside, and not from the outside, by examining the logical form of expressions in the same way in which this is shown in symbolism. Wittgenstein states that nothing may be said about the logical form of language; this is “shown” in 6.54, sentences in the *Tractatus* as well as the sentences referring to logical form of language being qualified as “nonsensical.” It is well known that Wittgenstein was deeply affected by the fact that Frege and Russell did not notice what he considered to be the essential novelty of his approach, searching in the *Tractatus* a theory of logic and language. Wittgenstein would have definitely rejected the suggestion that the *Tractatus* provided a representation of the logical structure of language which was close to Russell’s logical atomism. We can thus wonder: who is more representative for analytic philosophy if not the author of the *Tractatus*? Many historical and synthetic works consider Wittgenstein’s early book as the most representative for this “linguistic turn” which inaugurates analytic philosophy.

Objections such as this may be discarded by adopting a more comprehensive concept for analytic philosophy. Such a concept, which we could name “the programmatic concept of analytic philosophy,” will separate philosophy from the sciences along the lines of the opposition between meaning and truth. Philosophical research is purposely oriented towards clarifying those concepts which occupy a central position in our thinking and not towards discovering new truths. The ways in which this objective is to be attained are varied. There is a wide range of ways to practice philosophy which may be deemed as “analytic.” What draws them together is a clear conscience of what separates conceptual issues from those having to do with knowing the world as well as the focusing of philosophical research on the former.

This is the position adopted in many respects by various thinkers such as Moore, Wittgenstein, Schlick, Carnap and Ryle. It is that aspect under which Wittgenstein’s way of thinking, which underwent deep transformations over time, displayed a remarkable continuity. Stating that “the totality of true propositions is the total natural science,” Wittgenstein stressed in his *Tractatus* that philosophy is not a science of nature and noticed that the results of philosophy are not “philosophical propositions,” but that the propositions become clear (see *Tractatus*, 4.111–4.112).<sup>17</sup> At Cambridge, Wittgenstein began his lectures in the year 1932–33 with the observation: “In this discussion I will disregard those questions which receive an answer through experience. Philosophical issues do not get a solution by resorting to experience.” Finally, in *Philosophical Investigations* we come across memorable statements such as these (§ 109): “There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. These are,

of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in spite of* an urge to misunderstand them.” The representatives of logical empiricism, a philosophical movement which initially developed within the Vienna Circle and some other groups close to it, would also set themselves apart in the philosophical landscape by stressing on the fact that philosophical endeavor focuses on conceptual clarifications by preferably resorting to the construction of some logical models as well as to other modalities. Schlick, for instance, put a lot of effort in order to clarify the concept of knowledge, and Carnap, Reichenbach and Hempel proposed rational reconstructions for concepts such as probability, induction, explanation or scientific theory. This practice found an echo in many of their programmatic declarations.<sup>18</sup>

In this context, the way in which Gilbert Ryle practiced philosophy, as well as his statements with respect to the goals of philosophical research, will be of special interest to us if we recall that he perceived Carnap as his philosophical adversary. The opposition between them, however, had to do more with the ways and the methods of research and less with its more general objectives. Carnap was particularly interested in the fundamentals of physics. (One of his books, entitled *Philosophical Foundations of Physics*, contains contributions to the logical clarification of concepts such as explanation, probability, measurement, space, causality, determinism, laws and theoretical concepts.) One of Ryle’s most important works, *The Concept of Mind*, is devoted to the investigation of the conceptual fundamentals of psychology. In the first lines of his brief “Introduction,” the author writes: “The philosophical arguments which constitute this book are intended not to increase what we know about minds, but to rectify the logical geography of the knowledge which we already possess.” In the last part of this section he adds: “The logical type or category to which a concept belongs is the set of ways in which it is logically legitimate to operate with it. The key arguments employed in this book are therefore intended to show why certain sorts of operations with the concepts of mental powers and processes are breaches of logical rules . . . Philosophy is the replacement of category-habits by category-disciplines.” Ryle’s interests as a philosopher were as different from those of researchers in psychology as were Carnap’s interests from those of researchers in physics (which does not mean that endeavors focused on conceptual clarifications were deprived of any interest for the latter). On the other hand, irrespective of what Wittgenstein might have said about the way in which Ryle saw the mission of philosophy, he would have agreed with Ryle in considering that the distinction between that which has meaning and that which is nonsense amounts to a more significant and radical distinction than the more familiar one distinguishing between truth and falsity. As for Ryle, he considered, in a talk on the radio occasioned by Wittgenstein’s death, that the philosophical

world was deeply indebted to him for having shown this in the most impressive and convincing way: “But Wittgenstein’s demolition of the idea that philosophy is a sort of science has at least made us vigilant about our tools. We no longer try to use for our problems the methods of arguing which are the right ones for demonstrating theorems or establishing hypotheses. In particular, we have learned to pay attention to what can and cannot be said. What has, since the beginning of this century, been G. E. Moore’s practice has received the reason to exist from Wittgenstein.”<sup>19</sup>

Setting the identity of analytic philosophy on the basis of the criterion put forth by the distinction between conceptual clarifications which represent a gain for understanding and contributions which enhance our knowledge of the world and man seems more satisfactory than others. This procedure is not, however, safe from objections. There are important authors, whose affiliation to analytic philosophy will never be questioned by the current perception within the philosophical milieu, who have never granted importance to this distinction in their work, even refusing to support and accept it as a main point of view.

An example in this respect is Bertrand Russell, who is considered one of the founding fathers of the analytic tradition. We know it for a fact that, at least after 1920, his philosophical endeavor unfolded from language to thought rather than vice-versa. In *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940), Russell tried to elaborate a theory of meaning based on empirical research in the domain of psychology.<sup>20</sup> He showed himself deeply disappointed by the influence that the so-called “linguistic philosophy,” illustrated by names such as Wittgenstein, Ryle and Strawson, gained in England after World War II. The last part of his intellectual autobiography amounts to his confrontation with this orientation. What he reproaches to Russell is, firstly, his tendency to clearly separate the objectives and the methods of philosophical research from those pertaining to scientific research. It is with difficulty that one may imagine something more alien to the admirers of Wittgenstein or Ryle than the arguments he includes in the final lines of the abovementioned book. Russell notes that “the entire way of thinking and the philosopher’s imagination should be enthused by scientific attitude, he should be constantly aware that through science a new world was opened to us, with new concepts and methods, things that had been previously unknown and about which experience has shown that they are immensely fertile, in strong opposition to the sterility of those concepts and methods that were common before them.” Another example is Willard Van Orman Quine. Although he distinguishes between conceptual research, research concentrating on the meaning of language expressions and “doctrinary” research, i.e., research which aims for truth, the American philosopher claims that they intermingle. His famous criticism of the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions targets precisely the opposition between conceptual and empirical problems in the formulation he grants

to logical empiricism. Quine claimed that we may obtain important clarifications with respect to the meaning of expressions on the basis of research on language acquisition by children or by reflecting on issues raised by the so-called “radical translation.” He puts forth a program meant to naturalize epistemology which aims at dislocating it from its position of primary philosophy and at transforming it into a chapter of psychology. Donald Davidson represents this last example. He went further than Quine in trying to undermine the presuppositions which support the established distinction between conceptual and empirical research. Davidson claimed that the dichotomy conceptual schema-empirical content could be defended just as poorly as the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. The interdependence between opinions which have been accepted as true within a community and the meaning assigned to language expressions would deprive of support the intuitive distinction between differences among conceptual schemes and differences among opinions about facts. “If we choose to translate some alien sentence rejected by its speakers by a sentence to which we are strongly attached on a community basis, we may be tempted to call this a difference in schemes; if we decide to accommodate the evidence in other ways, it may be more natural to speak of a difference of opinion. But when others think differently from us, no general principle, or appeal to evidence, can force us to decide that the difference lies in our beliefs rather than in our concepts.”<sup>21</sup> The contours of the distinction between differences between conceptual schemes and opinions about the world are in this way erased, together with the clear delimitation of philosophy as science, of its contributions to understanding the world in relation to the contributions to knowing the world.

To such counter-examples to the programmatic concept of analytic philosophy one can answer by liberalizing and extending the delimitation of its sphere. Dagfinn Føllesdal has proposed an extension which may be deemed as maximal. Considering that the identity of analytic philosophy will never be defined in a satisfactory way by way of reference to object, methods, doctrines, shared issues or matters, approach or filiation from master to disciple, Føllesdal proposes a very wide circumscription. Affiliation to analytic philosophy could be established by taking into account the significance granted by philosophers to arguments, their rigorous argumentation. One might explain in this way the interest for language and the concern for clarity which are characteristic to great analytic philosophers.<sup>22</sup>

This proposal triggers two observations: the first is that through it one actually gives up a delimitation of analytic philosophy which may support the claim that this would represent a special form of philosophic life. In this respect, Føllesdal has to admit that, at least implicitly, the criterion he proposes is rather a criterion concerning philosophical excellence in general. He admits that all those who are considered to be major philosophers are, according to this criterion, ana-

lytic thinkers to some extent. The different weight of arguments and grounds merely renders possible a gradual distinction among the representative authors pertaining to the most different schools and philosophical traditions. We will thus be able to talk about phenomenologists, hermeticists or deconstructivists who are more or less “analytic,” depending on the importance they grant in their endeavors to arguments and justification. The second observation is that if we do not understand “argumentation” and “justification” in a very general sense, then the author of *Philosophical Investigations* will not be ranged among the philosophers with an analytic orientation. This is so because, when writing his *Investigations*, Wittgenstein strongly rejected the idea that the results towards which he was aiming through his philosophical endeavors could be obtained by formulating theses and arguments. He no longer considered what he had set up to determine in his *Tractatus*—determining the general format of propositions—a legitimate object of philosophical interest. Who could dispute that Wittgenstein’s manuscripts contain highly interesting conceptual clarifications which were obtained by means of descriptions of situations similar to those occurring in daily life or of the use of language expressions in such situations? These set up a strong contrast with the endeavor based on producing grounds and arguments.<sup>23</sup> But who will claim that Thomas, who was very generous in offering arguments and grounds so as to defend his standpoints, was an analytic philosopher whereas the author of *Philosophical Investigations* was not? Yet this is precisely where a thorough application of Føllesdal’s criterion leads to.

The general conclusion that may be drawn is that both the more restrictive and the more general concepts through which one has tried to characterize analytic philosophy as a distinct philosophical genus raise major objections. Thus, it seems more appropriate to ask ourselves if we can still justify the use of such a term in order to designate the great variety of philosophical configurations which stretch from Frege’s times to that sort of endeavors which currently dominate the professional practice of philosophy in many Western countries, especially in the Anglo-Saxon ones.

A relevant suggestion in this respect might be that prompted by a well-known researcher of Wittgenstein’s philosophy, P. M. S. Hacker. Hacker suggests that the current use of this phrase will become justified if we become aware that what we designate by it is a historical phenomenon. “Like any historical movement, that movement underwent extensive change and development. I do not believe that it can be fruitfully characterized by reference to any single common tenet or indeed by any conjunction of doctrines or methods accepted by all those who can with justice be called ‘analytic philosophers.’ Rather, it is to be understood dynamically. A variety of strands connect the thought of earlier phases of the movement with that of subsequent phases even though no single strand of any moment runs through all phases.”<sup>24</sup> It seems clear that only by applying

the term in this way can we justify the labeling of some authors whose principles and practices differ greatly from those of the founding fathers of this tradition as “analytic philosophers.” We will thus be justified in enumerating among the members of the analytic family both philosophers whose approach is strictly analytic or, on the contrary, holistic, as well as philosophers who seem more interested in language or the general characteristics of the world, or philosophers whose essential system of reference consists of the most familiar life forms or of the more advanced domains of scientific knowledge, or philosophers who are engaged in the cause of a better understanding of what we all know or in ensuring the progress in knowledge. We may find correspondences between them in at least one respect although they may be very different in others. From this standpoint, the more restrictive concepts of analytic philosophy seem to serve as signals pointing to such overlaps, whereas the more general ones aim at a more general defining trait.

Yet, can we provide an answer to those who are asking whether one may set a limit to this tendency of ever enlarging the circle of analytic philosophy with the aim of subsuming those philosophical varieties in which we can identify a certain relation with the paradigm of analytic tradition? I will venture an answer to this question indicating what I believe to be the minimal requirements that philosophical activities should meet in order for them to be justly qualified as “analytic.” One first request seems to me to be a clear-cut orientation for conceptual clarifications. Through this orientation, analytic philosophy is the successor of that which David Hume called in the first chapter of his *Research*, “an abstract, precise, difficult to understand” type of philosophy, in opposition to “an easy and popular one.” As it has been often noticed, what those who are looking for a philosophical vocation or who choose their readings feel attracted or rejected by in representative works of analytic philosophy is a high degree of rigor which calls for a certain specialization and which favors the creation of research communities which get knitted together through the clearly stated standards of excellence. The second request seems to me to be that of retaining and observing the distinction between a contribution meant to ensure a better understanding and contributions meant to enhance knowledge and of acknowledging the privileged position of the former in what philosophical endeavor is concerned. Taking into account such prerequisites, we will be able to appreciate if current research in metaphysics, language philosophy, mind philosophy and even naturalized epistemology and naturalized philosophy of science may be integrated or not into the analytic tradition.<sup>25</sup>

One last remark: besides several contemporary philosophical movements which delimit themselves programmatically from analytic philosophy, relating to such requirements shows that outside this tradition lie other exercises of the mind which are quite agreeable to the educated audience. I am thinking, for instance,

about the speculations concerning some novel progress of scientific thinking or the pondering on the senses and the ultimate values of human life which is deprived of any severe conceptual rigor. It is very clear that one will never be able to establish any significant continuity between such endeavors and analytic philosophy. This does not mean, by any means, that they may not stand among the most interesting and important philosophical contributions. □

## Notes

1. Gilbert Ryle's book *The Concept of Mind*, which was published in 1949, is justly considered a classical piece of work within the realm of analytic philosophy. Two things will draw the attention of those who will flip through the pages of this rather lengthy book. Firstly, the fact that its author does not employ formal languages or the methods and techniques of modern logic. Secondly, although the book focuses on the mind, which is the object of psychology, and contains titles such as "The Will," "Emotion," "Sensation and Observation," "Imagination," "The Intellect," it does not invoke any results coming from the realm of psychological research. The author draws only on the resources of a well-educated and exercised mind. This proves how inadequate is the representation of analytic philosophy which is still relevant today and which depicts it as a discipline which is par excellence technical, refusing access to all those who do not enjoy the benefits of a logical mathematic background. Quite recently, a French philosopher provided an edifying sample of such a perspective. He claimed that the differences between analytic philosophy and philosophy which is not analytic could be fixed through oppositions such as dry/rich in substance, argumentative-programmatic, logicist-literary, progressive-meditation which is always resumed, specialization-meditation that is accessible to the large public, closed-open—see Jean-Jacques Lecercle, "Philosophie du langage analytique et continentale: de la scène de ménage à la méprise créatrice," in *L'Aventure humaine* (Paris: P.U.F., 1999), 12–14. This characterization is both superficial and inadequate.
2. Strawson concludes his article with the following statement: "There is no Aristotelian or Russellian rule which may capture the exact logic of any expression of the common language for common language does not have an exact logic." Wittgenstein denounces in paragraph 97 of his *Investigations* the supposition that "logic puts forth an *a priori* order of the world," that is "a *super-order* among *super-notions*" and notices that "however, the words 'languages,' 'experience,' 'world' should they have a use, this use should be just as humble as in the case of words such as 'table,' 'lamp,' 'door.'" In the next paragraph he writes: "On the other hand, it is clear that each sentence of our language is 'well-ordered as it is.' This amounts to saying that we do not *aspire* to an ideal. It is as if our usual, vague sentences did not have another, entirely irreproachable meaning and we were to construct a perfect language. On the other hand, it seems clear: there where there is meaning there should be perfect order. Consequently, perfect order should be typical of even the vaguest sentences."

3. In the last part of his last work, his intellectual biography entitled *My Philosophical Development*, Russell speaks against the representatives of “the philosophy of common language.” He shows his reader with an interest in history how deep is the estrangement among the orientations of thought usually labeled as “analytic philosophy”. Speaking about the work of the admirers of Wittgenstein’s late philosophy, Russell states that they instill in him the same feeling that Descartes might have had should he have been resurrected in the time of Locke and Leibniz. The point of view of those who reject any attempt to impose “on the uncomfortable complexity of our common language the healthy simplicity of logic” is completely alien to him. With respect to Strawson’s criticism in relation to his theory of descriptions, Russell finds it surprising that Strawson “is endowed with remarkable logical capacities on the one hand, yet he is seized by a prejudice concerning logic in general which is hard to understand (at least for me).” During the same years, in the preface to the first edition in English of *The Logic of Research* published in 1959, Karl R. Popper strongly disagreed with authors whose interests focused on common language analysis. “Although I do not agree that science is just a development of common knowledge or common sense, I claim that the most important and captivating problems of epistemology will be entirely overlooked by those who confine themselves to analyzing common knowledge or its reformulation within common language.”
4. M. Dummett, *Can Analytical Philosophy Be Systematic, and Ought It to Be?* (1977), quoted after the German translation by J. Schulte: *Wahrheit: Fünf philosophische Aufsätze* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 185.
5. *Ibid.*, 189.
6. *Ibid.*, 192.
7. Here are but a few examples. In his well-known work, *Language, Truth and Logic*, whose first edition appeared in 1936, Alfred Jules Ayer promotes a philosophy which opposes the one which professes to be offering a knowledge of reality that transcends the world of science and of the current existence. In his programmatic book, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (1951), Hans Reichenbach considers as a distinctive feature of the new orientation in thinking, which is commonly labeled “analytic,” its focus on conceptual research which goes counter to the elaboration of some systems that profess to provide knowledge which is superior and super-ordered to the scientific one. This new philosophy, as Reichenbach puts it, aims for much more modest achievements. Its ambition is just like the results it manages to attain, which from the point of view of their elaboration and foundation resemble those of mature sciences. Eike von Savigny identifies the distinguishing traits of analytic philosophy in the same way: “Control of the philosophical statements through their consequences; suspicion of hazardous and profound views; tedious work on details; the request for clarity and intersubjective testability; to put it in a nutshell, the conviction that the usual standards of diligent scientific work must be equally valid for philosophers”—E. von Savigny, *Analytische Philosophie* (Munich–Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1970), 15.
8. H. Sluga, “Frege on Meaning,” in *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy*, ed. H.-J. Glock (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 17.



9. M. Dummett, *Originile filosofiei analitice*, trans. Ioan Biriş (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 2004), 14.
10. In his intellectual autobiography Russell takes a very clear stand in this respect. With respect to Ryle and the philosophy of common language, Russell rejects the tendency of granting a linguistic turn to every philosophical issue. The suggestion that this “might completely separate the world of language from the world of facts” seems to Russell a “strange supposition.”
11. See, in this respect, H.-J. Glock, “Introduction” to *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy*, VII–VIII.
12. Sluga also has an explanation about the way in which Frege ended up being considered as the philosopher who gave a decisive impulse to “the language turn.” According to him, Frege’s focus on the meaning of language expressions were characteristic to only a certain period in his activity. “These were the years when Rudolf Carnap became Frege’s student and Wittgenstein visited him in Jena. This suggests that Frege’s image as mainly a philosopher of language, an image conveyed to us by Wittgenstein and Carnap, might have been part of his own creation. Yet, even at this late moment in time, Frege did not, of course, abandon his foundational and anti-empiricist original agenda” (Sluga, 32). Frege’s reputation, which increased immensely after World War II as well as his growing influence on Russell, Wittgenstein or Carnap’s way of thinking would explain why authors such as Dummett could conceive of analytic philosophy as being a coherent and unitary movement.
13. *Ibid.*, 19.
14. I provided some suggestions in this respect in “Filosofia analitică: schiță a unei fotografii de familie,” in *Portret de grup cu filosofia*, eds. Ilona Bîrzescu and Claudiu Mesaroş (Timișoara: Ed. Universității de Vest, 2005), esp. 282–287.
15. M. Dummett, “Kann und sollte die analytische Philosophie systematisch sein?” in *Wahrheit*, 202 sq. Dummett is convinced that only a Post-Fregean philosophy may be analytic in the strict sense of the word. “The idea that a systematic theory of meaning is impossible (to the extent that this is indeed Wittgenstein’s idea) is, in the current state of research, not only questionable but contrary to obvious facts.”
16. *Ibid.*, 218–219. From this point of view, another important researcher for the field of analytic philosophy, Georg Henrik von Wright, comes very close to this line of interpretation. What I have in mind are interpretations such as these: “Although logic as such does not amount to analytic philosophy, one could rightfully assert about what analytic philosophers usually undertake that they do *logical analysis*. What I choose to understand by this is the use of formal logic as an instrument meant to clarify conceptual structures. It is roughly identical with what we also call today ‘philosophical logic’ as opposed to ‘mathematical logic’... In this sort of philosophical logic I see the nucleus of what may be rightfully called ‘analytical philosophy’”—G. H. von Wright, “Die analytische Philosophie: Eine historisch-kritische Betrachtung,” in *Information Philosophie* (1993): 18–19.
17. For other developments, see the chapter “Fața mai vizibilă și fața mai puțin vizibilă a *Tractatus*-ului,” in M. Flonta, *Gânditorul singuratic: Critica și practica filosofiei la Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008).

18. In his last piece of writing published in 1937, Moritz Schlick separated philosophical research from scientific research in the following way: “The philosopher tries to clarify the meaning of our enunciations while the scientist tries to decide on their truth. These are two different attitudes with respect to the way of posing problems. In the actual process of knowledge these two attitudes are naturally interconnected and interdependent because one cannot decide on the truth of any proposition without knowing something about its meaning, and determining its meaning always presupposes capturing some truths... however, they have to constitute the object of a separation which is in principle a rigorous one as they correspond to different mental attitudes i.e., the philosopher’s and the scientist’s”—M. Schlick, “Școala de la Viena și filosofia tradițională,” in M. Schlick, *Formă și conținut: O introducere în gândirea filosofică*. trans. (Giurgiu: Pelican, 2003), 238. Rudolf Carnap will phrase his ideas in a similar way: “In line with Wittgenstein’s basic view, we, those pertaining to the Vienna Circle have agreed that one of the fundamental tasks of philosophy is clarification or explanation [Carnap has in mind what he calls ‘the explanation of concepts’ and not the scientific explanation—my note, M. E.]. Philosophical achievement will not say anything about the world but about a clearer insight into meanings and the relations between meanings”—R. Carnap, “W. V. Quine on Logical Truth,” in *The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap*, ed. P. A. Schlipp (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1963), 907.
19. G. Ryle, “Ludwig Wittgenstein,” in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Man and his Philosophy*, ed. K. T. Fann (New York: A Delta Book, 1967), 124.
20. See Ray Monk, “Was Russell an Analytical Philosopher?” in *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy*. Monk’s conclusion is that unlike Dummett and Frege, the way he was understood by Dummett, Russell did not consider the crowning of philosophical endeavor to be a theory of meaning. “But to deny, on the basis of this difference—as Dummett does implicitly if not explicitly—that Russell was an analytical philosopher seems perverse. He was, if nothing else, a believer in analysis” (50).
21. D. Davidson, “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” in D. Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 197.
22. Because personalities that have been considered representative for analytic philosophy may reach an agreement with respect to the question “What is analytic philosophy,” Føllesdal concludes that “the emphasis on argument and justification seems to me more characteristic of analytic philosophy than a concern with conceptual analysis, which forms only part of it. My thesis, that analytic philosophy is not characterized by specific doctrines or problems but by arguments and justification can easily be checked. To refute it, one need only find philosophers whom we regard as analytic, but who care little about argument and justification”—D. Føllesdal, “Analytic Philosophy: What is it and why should one engage in it,” in *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy*, 9.
23. See esp. the chapter “Ce este ‘înțelegerea’ și cum poate fi ea obținută,” in Flonta, *Gânditorul singuratic*. It is precisely the acute awareness of what separates Wittgenstein’s later work from that of some authors who are looked upon as the representatives of analytic philosophy which might explain observations such as the one made by

Wright: “About Wittgenstein’s later philosophy one might even say that it is alien to the typical philosophical analytic way of thinking (and the same is true about the reverse, i.e., with respect to way in which many analytic philosophers related to Wittgenstein’s later works)” (von Wright, 12).

24. P. M. S. Hacker, “The Rise of Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy,” in *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy*, 55–56. This characterization is then resumed by Hacker in the introduction to his extensive work *Wittgenstein’s Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997). Hacker stresses that analytic philosophy may not be defined by resorting to doctrines and principles shared by all philosophers who claim allegiance to this movement. The connection between its various forms is established through various strings. There is no unique string linking all its successive forms. “However, it would be misleading to claim that the term ‘analytic philosophy’ expresses a family resemblance concept, for so to conceive it would diminish its usefulness in characterizing a very particular historical movement of the twentieth century. . . . Nevertheless, there is a kinship with family resemblance concepts, inasmuch as each phase in the evolution of analytic philosophy shares methodological, doctrinal and thematic features with its antecedent and subsequent phases” (4–5).
25. Saying that these no longer pertain to analytic philosophy, but to post-analytic philosophy is rather the expression of a terminological preference. I will not discuss here whether and to what extent one can talk, in this respect, of the “decline of analytic philosophy.”

## Abstract

### What Is Analytic Philosophy? General and Restrictive Concepts

Those who seek an answer to the question “What is analytic philosophy?” usually have in mind a form of philosophical analysis (for instance, placing the philosophy of language in the center of philosophical studies, or the use of modern logic tools). The attempts to settle the boundaries of “analytic philosophy” as a self-consisting philosophy through its methods and objectives have, however, significant limitations. As a matter of fact, the term is used in order to refer to various ways of making philosophy which, despite many differences, all have in common the clear-cut distinction with regard to philosophical traditions such as phenomenology, hermeneutics or postmodern philosophy. In this way, one can distinguish various concepts of analytic philosophy, either restrictive or broad. Despite this, some minimal conditions that characterize a kind of philosophy as analytic can be pointed out.

## Keywords

analytic philosophy, ordinary language philosophy, logical analysis