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CONCEPTUAL TUNING: A PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD

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Abstract

Different human practices require various methods to carry them out successfully. Philosophy, an activity with 2500 years of history, must also have its own method, which demarcates a philosopher from a lay person. This thesis embarks on a project of philosophical method—conceptual tuning. How to do philosophy belongs to the category of metaphilosophy or philosophy of philosophy. Boxers usually do not care about the conceptual question 'What is boxing?' and biologists barely ask 'What is Biology?'. For them, this kind of question is a higher order question which concerns the nature of the thing in itself. It is an external question for most disciplines. But for philosophy, the question concerning the nature of philosophy is an internal question. Self-awareness is a *sine qua non* of doing philosophy.

With such a long history and so many traditions, the method of doing philosophy must be miscellaneous. My thesis attempts to contribute to the discussion of philosophical methodology by proposing a method I shall call *conceptual tuning*. Conceptual tuning is grounded in the philosophical method of conceptual engineering, advocates of which endeavor to improve our concepts. According to the method of conceptual engineering, philosophical problems stem from defects in our understanding of concepts, and it is the philosopher's task to fix them. While most conceptual engineering approaches only narrowly focus on the perspective of 'repairing' or 'fixing', conceptual tuning calls for attention to the 'expressive' perspective. In other words, we should put this method in the broad framework of the practice of asking for and giving reasons. In this thesis, I also attempt to explain some previous conceptual methods under the title of conceptual tuning, such as Brandomian method, ordinary language philosophy, and the traditional conceptual analyses.

Introduction

> Anything you can do I can do Meta. - Douglas Hofstadter

This introduction has two main aims: 1) I will present three core issues of metaphilosophy; 2) I will offer an outline of the thesis chapters.

In everyday life, the questions we are interested in are dependent on the perspective we occupy. For instance, we might look at questions related to the death of John Kennedy. Historians would be interested in question such as 'What were the historical circumstances leading to Kennedy's death?'; politicians would be concerned by questions such as 'What are the political consequences of his death?'; the police would focus on questions such as 'Who is the murderer?', etc. Philosophers tend to tackle such issues at the most abstract level, and they might address questions such as 'What is death?', 'Do we have free will?', 'What is moral responsibility?', or 'Do we have absolute moral principles' and how can they help us understand J.F.K's death. Moreover, a philosopher can also embark on questions concerning philosophy itself, such as 'What is philosophy?', 'What is the scope of philosophy?', 'What is a philosophical problem?', 'What is the value of philosophy?', "How to do philosophy?', 'Do men and women have different philosophical intuitions?', 'Can there be progress in philosophy?', or 'What is experimental philosophy?'. We call these questions meta-philosophical inquiries.

So, what is meta-philosophical inquiry? A simple answer would be that it is just one of the branches of philosophical inquiry, like philosophy of religion, philosophy of language, epistemology, etc. Nicholas Rescher characterizes this view as: 'Metaphilosophy is the project of examining philosophy itself from a philosophical

point of view—it is the philosophy of philosophy, if you will'[1]. Since we have philosophy of action, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, philosophy of religion, philosophy of logic, philosophy of sports, why couldn't we have philosophy of philosophy? As Timothy Williamson writes: 'Clearly, the investigation of philosophical methodology cannot and should not be philosophically neutral. It is just more philosophy, turned on philosophy itself'.[2] However, it is still possible that the nature of philosophy might not be clarified by this philosophical approach. For example, Bob Plant claims that we can appeal to other disciplines to deal with the meta-philosophical questions: 'It seems to me that sociological considerations (broadly construed) bear upon meta-philosophical issues in highly significant ways'.[3] I will not get involved into this debate here.

I also think that meta-philosophical inquiry manifests the *sui generis* feature of philosophy—*self-consciousness*. Athletes do not ask what sport is; economists do not ask what economy is; pilots do not ask what aeronautics is; biologists do not ask what biology is. By contrast, philosophers do care about what philosophy is (or what philosophy should be). Arthur Danto uses the distinction between an 'internal question' and an 'external question' to explain this feature of philosophy. As he says:

> the question of the nature of philosophy, in contrast with the question of the nature, say, of physics, is unfortunately, an internal question. It might be argued that, since the external questions regarding the natures of all the other disciplines are, in fact, an internal question of philosophy—the definition of the nature of science or of art is not a scientific or artistic problem, but a philosophical problem—why should the external question of the nature of philosophy itself

[1] Rescher, 2014, p. xi.

[2] Williamson, 2008, pp. 5-6.

[3] Plant, 2007, p. 8.

not be an *internal* question of philosophy too?[4]

As Danto points out, the meta-philosophical inquiry is internal to philosophy, and therefore 'doing philosophy' and 'talking philosophy' are indistinguishable, which is a distinctive character of philosophy. Plant expresses a similar view:

> That "What is philosophy?" is one of philosophy's most stubborn questions is not because philosophers happen to be more cantankerous or befuddled than historians, chemists, anthropologists, or mathematicians. Rather, it is part of the philosopher's task to question the nature and value of his own activities. For not only is "What is philosophy?" tacitly in play whenever we are doing philosophy, being reflective about what philosophy is constitutes a basic philosophical responsibility. That is to say, "What is philosophy?" is not only a legitimate philosophical question, it belongs to philosophy in a way that, for example, "What is science?" does not belong to physicists, chemists, or biologists.[5]

Though many different meta-philosophical questions and debates can be found, I think three of them are core questions, namely 'What is philosophy?', 'How to do philosophy?' and 'What is the value of philosophy?'[6] These three questions can be addressed separately, but they are somehow logically entangled with each other.

'What is philosophy' is the most prominent meta-philosophical question. According to Gilbert Ryle, Kant was the first modern philosopher to embark on this question. As Ryle says:

> Until fairly recently philosophers have not often stepped back from their easels to

[4] Danto, 1968, pp. 15-6.

[5] Plant, 2017, pp. 6-7.

[6] Of course, there are also other important peripheral questions such as 'What can philosophy do?', 'What can we expect from philosophy?' and so on.

> consider what philosophy is, or how doing philosophy differs from doing science, or doing theology, or doing mathematics. Kant was the first modern thinker to see or try to answer this question—and a very good beginning of an answer he gave.[7]

Only after Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* was published did other academic philosophers start pursuing meta-philosophical inquiry and realize its significance, says Ryle. We have myriad attempted answers to the question 'What is philosophy?'. Philosophy can be defined as 'the activity of thinking hard about fundamental questions, the attempt to make sense of ourselves and the world, an inquiry into what is true, the analyses of concepts, reflection on anything one happens to be interested in, an examination of those things we ordinarily take for granted, the love of knowledge, the search for wisdom, the process of clear and critical reflection, understanding what really matters, an inquiry into what is unknown, and an investigation into the meaning of life'.[8] Wilfrid Sellars has famously defined the task of philosophy as to 'understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term'.[9] Søren Overgaard et al. classify all these answers into nine approaches in *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*. I will briefly introduce their classification now.

View [1] *Philosophy as part of science*. Quine insists that philosophy is continuous with science or that philosophy is a part of science, based on his meaning holism. For him, in fact, all disciplines are part of science. As Overgaard et al. interpret Quine: 'no propositions are immune to revision in the light of experience, for him there can only be a difference in degree between "natural" and "formal"

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[7] Ryle, 2009a. p. 379.

[8] Plant, 2007, pp. 3-4.

[9] Hetherington, 2013, p. 21.

science'.[10] According to this view, just as propositions of mathematics and logic, propositions of philosophy have their own position in the web of science, even if they might not occupy the central parts of this web.

View [2] *Philosophy as immature science*. This view states that philosophy is science that is not fully developed. Overgaard et al. characterize it as 'a science that has not yet, or has only very recently, "matured", that is, "attained a clear view of its subject-matter and its goal" and settled on a method or a set of methods that permits it to achieve those goals in a systematic fashion'.[11] However, this view has its disadvantages. For example, assuming that philosophy has now finally been put on the path of science, then why should we still read classic works, say *Meditations on First Philosophy,* anymore? It would be absurd for philosophers to simply jettison all these classics.

View [3] *Philosophy as 'midwife' and 'residue' of the sciences*. According to this view, philosophy is supposed to deal with 'questions to which no definite, conclusive answers have yet been given'.[12] And when the definite knowledge of this subject is possible, it becomes science. As John Searle says: 'As soon as we can revise and formulate a philosophical question to the point that we can find a systematic way to answer it, it ceases to be philosophical and becomes scientific'.[13] This residue view also needs to meet many challenges. One challenge is that it could not cover moral and political philosophy. Another challenge is from Peter Hacker: 'it would be misguided to suppose that questions in the philosophies of the special sciences remain philosophical only because they are insufficiently clearly understood to be handled by a new meta-science'.[14]

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[10] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 26.

[11] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 27-8.

[12] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 31.

[13] Searle, 1999, p. 2069 (cited in Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 31).

[14] Hacker, 2009, p. 132 (cited in Overgaard et al., 2013 pp. 31-2).

View [4] *Platonism*. This view claims that philosophy aims to answer something that cannot be answered by empirical science: 'philosophy, properly conceived, is the study of some particularly "deep" and intangible part of reality beyond reach of the empirical sciences'.[15] Plato's allegory of the cave is helpful to understand this view. Empirical science only touches on the world of 'shadow' in Plato's allegory, while the philosopher can perceive through the shadow and reach 'the intelligible region' beyond.

View [5] *Philosophy as the logic of science*. This view can be exemplified by Logical Positivism. Moritz Schlick, one of the leading logical positivists, says that while science endeavors to uncover the truths of reality, philosophy is 'the activity of finding meaning'.[16] Rudolf Carnap, another towering figure of the Vienna Circle, proposes a similar view: '*Philosophy is the logic of science*, i.e., the logical analysis of the concepts, propositions, proofs, theories of science'.[17] Basically, according to this view, the task of philosophy is to clarify or elucidate the scientific concepts, paving the path for scientific researches.

View [6] *Philosophy as a contribution to human understanding*. This train of thought is inspired by Wittgenstein, who is famous for his therapeutic view of philosophy. According to him, philosophers should address philosophical questions just like doctors treat ailments. And he indicates that the role of philosophy is to provide 'perspicuous representation'. Peter Hacker, one of Wittgenstein's contemporary followers, claims that the negative therapeutic view should be combined with the positive method of connective analysis in order to pursue philosophy, and he proposes that philosophy is 'the pursuit not of knowledge but of understanding. The task of philosophy is not to add to the sum of human knowledge,

[15] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 32.

[16] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 34.

[17] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 34.

but to enable us to attain a clear understanding of what is already known'[18].

View [7] *Philosophy as transcendental inquiry*. This view is popular within Continental philosophy. The general idea is that the task of philosophy is to elucidate something that is already known to us. For example, Husserl thinks that his method of phenomenological reflection can transform 'the universal obviousness [*Selbstverständlichkeit*] of the being of the world [. . .] into something intelligible [*eine Verständlichkeit*]'.[19] Another phenomenologist, Merleau Ponty, shares the view that phenomenological reflection reminds us of our 'basic experience of the world'.[20] However, this view is different from Wittgenstein's view of philosophy because it is not only focused on language use but also trying to describe our experience in everyday life. We can also explain this view in terms of transcendental inquiry: 'transcendental philosophers reflect on our (first-order) knowledge with a view to unveiling the "conditions of possibility" of such knowledge'.[21]

View [8] *World views*. Some philosophers think that the aim of philosophy is to provide a world view. This idea of understanding philosophy in terms of shaping a world view is not only intended to describe what our world view is, but also endeavors to influence our practice: 'The point of a world view, however, is not just to describe our experience of the world but to do so in a way that can shape our attitude to it and inform our practical decisions'.[22] Therefore, this view is connected with our inquiry of the meaning of life.

View [9] *Philosophy as 'edifying conversation'*. Richard Rorty, the proponent of this view, claims, 'philosophy is not a name for a discipline which confronts

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[18] Hacker, 1996, pp. 272-3 (cited in Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 36).

[19] Husserl, 1970, p. 105 (cited in Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 38).

[20] Merlau-Ponty, 2002, p. ix (cited in Overgaard et al., 2013 p. 38).

[21] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 39.

[22] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 40.

permanent issues, and unfortunately keeps misstating them, or attacking them with clumsy dialectical instruments. Rather, it is a cultural genre, a 'voice in the conversation of mankind'".[23] Embracing this view, the philosopher is supposed to keep finding new ways of talking, rather than finding objective truth[24]. According to Rorty, Dewey, Heidegger and Wittgenstein are great examples of edifying philosophers.

Richard Double (1996) also suggests four answers to the question of 'What is philosophy?': philosophy as conversation; philosophy as praxis; philosophy as providing underpinnings; philosophy as worldview construction. Since philosophy as conversation and philosophy as worldview have already been mentioned by Overgaard et al., I will just briefly introduce the last two as complementary to Overgaard et al.'s classification.

View [10] *Philosophy as providing underpinnings*. As this view suggests, philosophy should provide underpinnings for common sense, religion, law, natural science, or special sciences. Double explains that there are two ways of understanding this view: 'One way to arrive at an Underpinnings view is to believe that philosophy has no special truth-determining qualifications that the underpinned area lacks. Another route is to judge that regardless of philosophy's qualifications, the best goal for philosophy is to support that other area.[25]

View [11] *Philosophy as praxis*. This view suggests that philosophy should instrumentally contribute to making us better persons, which can be understood in terms of moral perspective: 'philosophy has a moral function to serve by giving'.[26]

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[23] Rorty, 2009, p. 204 (cited in Overgaard et al., p. 43).

[24] This metaphilosophical view is quite inconsistent with the conceptual tuning method that I am proposing in this dissertation.

[25] Double, 1996, p. 26.

[26] Double, 1996, p. 25.

Or it can be understood non-morally, for example, it can help us 'to deal with the frustration and despair that can be brought about by science or philosophy'.[27] Praxis thinkers see the major task of philosophy as providing *well-being*, rather than focusing on *truth-seeking*.

As set out above, we have eleven different views of philosophy. These eleven answers, of course, do not exhaust all the possibilities. And it is not the case that these eleven answers are all incompatible with each other. Some of these views are overlapping and continuous. For example, views [1], [2], [3] and [5] all propose to understand philosophy by virtue of science and are premised on the idea that philosophy is continuous with science to a certain extent. View [10] seems to attribute a foundational role to philosophy, in the sense that philosophy should ground all other kinds of knowledge[28]. In other words, philosophy should be the queen of all sciences. Views [4], [6], [7] intend to establish the *sui generis* role of philosophy by stipulating the distinctive nature of philosophy, which is completely different from that of science. Views [9], [11] aim at connecting philosophy with human practice and the meaning of life (our well-being). With these two views, the answer to what philosophy is, then, is closely related to the answer of what the value of philosophy is. Besides these eleven views, I will introduce one more view—*philosophy as game*, in Chapter 7.

Now let us consider the second core meta-philosophical question—how to do philosophy. What does this question mean? Penelope Maddy has an explanation:

> [. . .] but they [philosophers] *are* often puzzled, especially in recent years, by the question of method: how should we approach the task of addressing these typically philosophical questions?, is there a special faculty of philosophical insight that philosophers alone employ?, can we learn about the world by some

[27] Double, 1996, p. 25.

[28] This is also known as *first philosophy*, which is in contrast with the naturalistic view.

> exercise of pure reason?, how does philosophical inquiry relate to scientific inquiry? It's the draw of this range of issues that prompted me to pose our leading question in the form I've given it: what do philosophers do?[29]

One thing is quite obvious. The question of what philosophy *is* is always associated with the question of how to do philosophy. In certain situations, the answer to what philosophy is cannot be separated from the answer to how to do philosophy. For example, those who adopt view [1] (philosophy as part of science), might also think we should appeal to empirical method in addressing philosophical problems. And those taking view [6] (philosophy as a contribution to human understanding), might hold that connective analysis is the proper way of treating philosophical problems. Nevertheless, some answers to what philosophy is can be compatible with different philosophical methods. In this dissertation, I propose a philosophical method named *conceptual tuning*, which holds that the concepts we use are open to revision, and philosophers, therefore, should be dedicated to considering which concept should be adopted for the specific purpose[30]. Conceptual tuning is consistent with view [9], since this view also calls for the development of our conversations or vocabularies.

Many philosophers have discussed philosophical methods, namely how to do philosophy. For example, in *The Way of Knowing*, William Pepperell Montague lays out several philosophical methods: 'the method of authoritarianism; the method of mysticism; the methods of rationalism and empiricism; the method of pragmatism; the method of scepticism; the method of objectivism; the method of epistemological dualism and the method of subjectivism'.[31] Jerry Fodor offers a brief sketch of the development of philosophical method in analytic philosophy over the last fifty years

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[29] Maddy, 2016, p. 2.

[30] This answer to the question of 'how to do philosophy' can be compatible with several answers to the questions of 'what is philosophy', such as view [6], [9].

[31] Cf. Montague, 1925.

in a review.[32] According to him, there are three crucial stages. Stage one is conceptual analysis. Conceptual analysis reached its summit after World War Two. Using this method, philosophers could sit in their armchair reflecting and analyzing concepts. It is Quine who brings us to stage two. Fodor thinks that Quine's successful rejection of the distinction between analytic truth and synthetic truth leads to the conclusion that conceptual truth is a chimera, and therefore it puts conceptual analysis in peril. Kripke is the vital philosopher for stage three. His understanding of necessity in terms of modality is taken to be the savior of conceptual analysis. In a literature review on metaphilosophy for *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Philosophy*, Yuri Cath also distinguishes several philosophical methods: 'the method of case and conceptual analysis; the method of reflective equilibrium; methodological naturalism, and experimental philosophy'.[33]

Despite these enlightening classifications, I will propose a personal taxonomy. Concerning how to do philosophy, I think that there are three major approaches: the *naturalistic approach*, the *formal approach*, and the *conceptual approach*. Conceptual tuning, the method I propose in this dissertation, belongs to the conceptual approach. Let me now detail these approaches.

Approach [1]: the *Naturalistic approach*. What is naturalism? Timothy Williamson explains: '[For naturalism], there is only the natural world, and the best way to find out about it is by the scientific method'.[34] Or in Alex Rosenberg's words, 'Naturalism is the philosophical theory that treats science as our most reliable source of knowledge and scientific method as the most effective route to knowledge'.[35] Or more specifically: 'Naturalism's agenda is to show how interpretative understanding

[32] Cf. Fodor, 'Water's water everywhere', in *London Review of Books*, 2004.

[33] Cf. Cath, 2011.

[34] Haug, 2013, p. 29.

[35] Haug, 2013, p. 32.

could really turn out to be causal explanation of the sort hard science seeks'.[36]

The distinction between methodological naturalism and metaphysical naturalism is widely accepted. As Scott Aikin states: '*Naturalism* is a two-part view. The first part is a methodological/epistemological commitment: that the criteria for acceptable justification and experiment are those exemplified in the natural sciences. [. . .] The second part is an ontological–metaphysical commitment: that all that is, and every property of what is, is natural'.[37] Or as Jack Ritchie articulates: 'there is a distinction between methodological naturalists and metaphysical naturalists. Methodological naturalists think that the methods of science should be as far as possible adopted by philosophers. Metaphysical naturalists start not with scientific method but a view about how the world is—a view that they claim is derived from our best science'.[38] Since I am talking about how to do philosophy, the naturalism I am concerned with refers to methodological naturalism.

The methodological naturalist is usually hostile to traditional armchair philosophy, especially conceptual analysis. As Chalmers says: 'when Ruth Millikan (1983, 73) gives her teleological theory of meaning, she says that she is not analyzing the concept of meaning and that she is instead giving a theory about the natural nature of meaning. Likewise, when Hilary Kornblith (2002, 1–2) gives his naturalistic account of knowledge, he says that he is not analyzing the concept of knowledge and is instead giving an account of knowledge itself'[39]. Millikan holds that conceptual analysis is 'a confused program, a philosophical chimera, a squaring of the circle, the misconceived child of a mistaken view of the nature of language and thought'.[40] Fodor, a hard-nosed naturalist, also believes that most epistemological conundrums

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[36] Haug, 2013, p. 41.

[37] Aikin, 2016, p. 318.

[38] Ritchie, 2014, p. 196-7.

[39] Chalmers, 2011, p. 538.

[40] Millikan, 1989, p.290.

can be solved by empirical methods. When discussing the topic of non-conceptual content, Fodor declares that 'it would seem that the issue is empirical; finding out whether there is is no philosopher's business. On the other hand, the experimental outcomes should be of professional concern to philosophers who argue a priori that there can't be a given because it's a priori that all content must be conceptualized'.[41]

One method favored by methodological naturalists is 'abduction' or 'inference to the best explanation'. Timothy Williamson is one polymath of this method: 'I propose that philosophy should use a broadly adductive methodology. Indeed, to some extent it already does so. I propose that it should do so in a bolder, more systematic, more self-aware way'.[42] Fodor also prefers the method of the 'inference to the best explanation'. For example, his theory of the language of thought is constructed by this method.

Moreover, with a critical attitude to the conceptual analysis, most methodological naturalists are in favor of the method of stipulating theoretical definition. What is theoretical definition? As Karen Neander characterizes:

> [. . .] a theoretical definition is an attempt to explain some aspect of the thing referred to, or some aspect of the relationship between utterances of the term and the actual world. Millikan argues (this is a crude rendition) that a theoretical definition should describe what a term refers to that explains the use of the term and why the term has survived and continued to be used (1984). She also suggests that theoretical definitions should describe the underlying phenomenon that explains the surface analogies by which we have recognized that things are things of a kind (1989, 293).[43]

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[41] Fodor, 2008, p. 191-2.

[42] Williamson, 2016, p. 268.

[43] Neander, 1991, p. 170.

David Spurret gives a general picture of naturalism in his paper 'Why I am not an analytic philosopher'[44]. In the first place, Spurret challenges the traditional dichotomy between analytic and continental philosophy. For him, the idea that analytic and continental philosophies are mutually-exclusive does not stand. He gives us several reasons. Firstly, if this distinction is real, then analytic Heideggerians would make no sense any more. Secondly, there are some prominent figures in both analytic and continental traditions, such as Wittgenstein, Descartes, Aristotle and Kant. Thirdly, not every topic can be clearly labelled as analytic or continental, especially in applied philosophical practice. Moreover, subjects like philosophy of religion or African Philosophy are generally neither analytic nor continental. Fourthly, besides analytic philosophy and continental philosophy, we have other alternatives, such as pragmatism. Fifthly, as Rorty indicates, the distinction between different metaphilosophy, is in fact an institutional one, whose main function is to maintain the employment market. On the basis of these discussions, we can conclude that the analytic-continental distinction is problematic. Besides these problems, Spurret thinks that even in the community of analytic philosophy, it is not easy to pinpoint the common target. Instead of indulging in this false dichotomy, Spurret proposes the agenda of naturalism:

> This approach is naturalism. In keeping with some streams of logical positivism, naturalist philosophy admires science, but views philosophy as continuous with science rather than performing logical housekeeping for it. Quine's famous attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction (an old distinction, but it's Carnap's version Quine was stalking) was a crucial contribution to the most recent version of the tendency to view philosophy as continuous with the empirical science, and the rejection of the view that conceptual analysis was an epistemically defensible

[44] Cf. Spurret, 2008.

enterprise.[45]

What Spurret suggests is that the naturalistic enterprise could bypass the trivial analytic-continental distinction. And the traditional philosophical method, logical analysis and conceptual analysis, should be abandoned, and in turn we should embrace the empirically oriented method.

Spurret offers two main reasons to support this naturalistic approach. The first one is that our folk intuition is not reliable. According to him, 'What people find intuitive is neither highly determinate nor stable [. . .] they are not designed to produce reliable guidance in philosophy, mathematics or the scientific study of the world'.[46] Once checked by the scientific or mathematical theories, our intuitions would be proved to be systematically misleading. A typical case would be: 'many people will, for example, assert that the conjunction of two possibilities is more likely than one of the conjuncts alone'.[47] The second reason is based on the idea of experimental philosophy. Experimental philosophers are not satisfied with traditional armchair method, and they 'have directly conducted experiments concerned with intuitions and folk opinions in a range of areas'.[48] Finally, Spurret concludes that the motive behind this naturalistic method is grounded in the nature of philosophy, which cannot be separated from science[49]: 'It's broadly naturalist in a roughly Quinean sense—philosophy and science are distinguished to the extent that they are, again roughly, by the degree of generality of the conclusions they aspire to consider and defend, and not because philosophy can claim any legitimate methodological or other autonomy'.[50]

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[45] Spurret, 2008, p. 158.

[46] Spurret, 2008, p. 159.

[47] Spurret, 2008, p. 159.

[48] Spurret, 2008, p. 159-60.

[49] As I mentioned, the answer to the question of 'what is philosophy?' is usually connected with the answer to how to do philosophy.

[50] Spurret, 2008, p. 160.

Naturalism is not exclusive to analytic philosophy. Some continental philosophers also uphold the flag of naturalism. Dan Zahavi is one of them. However, instead of insisting that phenomenology should be gradually replace by natural science, he proposes a more modest version of a naturalized phenomenology:

> To naturalize phenomenology might simply be a question of letting phenomenology engage in a fruitful exchange and collaboration with empirical science. Phenomenology does study phenomena that are part of nature and therefore also open to empirical investigation, and insofar as phenomenology concerns itself with such phenomena it should be informed by the best available scientific knowledge.[51]

Approach [2]: the *Formal approach*. What is the formal approach in philosophy? Haim Gaifman describes it as follows: 'Strictly speaking, the use of formal methods means that some formal (or mathematical, or semi-formal) setup is offered in order to model, or analyze a given subject. More broadly, it can mean the inclusion of a sufficient amount of formal or mathematical items, which cannot be avoided if the subject requires it'.[52]

Williamson thinks that model-building is an essential method in philosophy. What is a model? Williamson provides a rough answer:

> The models are typically presented in mathematical terms: for instance, by differential equations for the rise and fall in population of a predator species and a prey species, interacting only with each other, or by a set of ordered pairs for the networking relations in a society.[53]

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[51] Zahavi, 2010, p. 8.

[52] Cf. Gaifman, 2005.

[53] Williamson, 2016, p. 1.

Williamson suggests that model-building should be widely employed in philosophy, and he notes that this method has already been proved fruitful in many philosophical domains such as metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of language.

Pascal Engel has an illuminative description of the tension between the formal approach and the other two approaches: 'Wittgensteinians dislike them because they believe that there is a conceptual core in philosophy which cannot be represented by any formalism, and "experimental philosophers" dislike them because they take them to be typical of the armchair method'.[54] Engel notes that formalization has both advantages and disadvantages. The virtues of formalization are its 'clarity': 'formalism helps us to make philosophical problems and their possible answers precise: they improve its formulation, make more visible the possible assumptions, the possible solutions and their consequences, and help see clearly what the options are'.[55] Also, this method has its shortcomings: 'It has been objected that it misses the force of some philosophical problems by reducing them to their expression into a formalism, that it mistakes properties of the models for properties of the things to be modelled'.[56] Engel has a definition for the method of formalization:

> Formalization is not a mere regimentation of natural language into a symbolic language, such as predicate calculus, probabilistic models, or modal logic. It involves a preliminary regimentation of philosophical language into formal language, which has primitives, axioms, and metatheoretical properties, such as soundness and completeness – if possible. It involves a choice of formalisms and the possibility to compare them. It then involves the use of the properties of the formal language to clarify the assumptions of a fragment.[57]

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[54] Engel, 2010, p. 1.

[55] Engel, 2010, p. 1-2.

[56] Engel, 2010, p. 2.

[57] Engel, 2010, p. 2.

Johan van Benthem also suggests a general relation between formal method and philosophy:

> But the two have been lifelong friends and allies. In this contact, logic can help to clarify philosophical views and make them precise, but at the same time, in doing so, it also enhances creativity, as abstraction is always a source of new possibilities. Logic also helps observe analogies across different fields of philosophy: as it cuts across pairs such as epistemic – ontological, facts – norms, information – action. In doing so, it offers new options for developing philosophical frameworks and positions.[58]

Approach [3]: the *Conceptual approach*. Before moving on, one thing is worth noting. When wrestling with concepts, it is not the case that philosophers only care about the words *per se*. On the contrary, the real concern is the *reality* or the *world*; as McGinn says, 'The target of analysis is the objective world'.[59] According to him, we can explain the concept-world relationship from two perspectives. Firstly, he defines a concept as 'a reference to a property'.[60] Based on this stipulation, the content of a concept is given by the property it denotes. Therefore, we can bridge the gap between concept and reality: 'the concept is individuated by the property—its content consists in its reference. Thus we are not inferring from the concept to the property; we are analyzing the concept *by* analyzing the property'.[61] Secondly, the term 'conceptual analysis' is ambiguous. It can either mean that we analyze the concepts, or that we analyze the objects conceptually. It is the latter understanding that McGinn endorses: 'it tells us the nature of things—games, knowledge, husbands—*by* employing a particular method, that is, viewing those things conceptually'.[62] Based on these two

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[58] van Benthem, 2015, p. 149.

[59] McGinn, 2012, p. 65.

[60] McGinn, 2012, p. 65.

[61] McGinn, 2012, p. 65.

[62] McGinn, 2012, p. 67.

aspects, we might conclude: 'Conceptual analysis is outer-directed, worldly, objective—just as much as science or history'.[63]

Usually, when we talk about the conceptual method, the first thing comes up to mind would be conceptual analysis, the result of which is to provide a sufficient and necessary condition for the concept being analyzed[64].

However, the conceptual approach in philosophy is not limited to traditional conceptual analysis (the decompositional analysis). As Kirk Ludwig points out, we should have a broader and a narrower understanding of conceptual analysis:

> There is, on the one hand, the project of providing informative necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of a concept, i.e., reductive analysis. On the other hand, there is the project of tracing constitutive connections between concepts, propositions, and experience, and ordering families of concepts, so far as that is possible, in terms of relative priority, i.e., conceptual elucidation.[65]

Accordingly, the narrower understanding refers to reductive analysis, while the broader one refers to connective analysis. Concerning the broader notion, Konrad Banicki has a detailed discussion in his paper 'Connective conceptual analysis and psychology'. According to him, the method of connective analysis can be detected in the text of Wittgenstein, Peter Strawson and Gilbert Ryle. And he points out that connective analysis has three defining features being: '(a) holistic, (b) descriptive, and, not surprisingly, (c) connective' (Banicki 2012, 314).[66]

The holistic feature can be explained through the lenses of Ryle's conceptual

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[63] McGinn, 2012, p. 67.

[64] I will address the relationship between conceptual analysis and conceptual tuning in Chapter 6.

[65] Haug, 2013, p. 220.

[66] Banicki, 2012, p. 314.

geography image. As Ryle believes, it is necessary for philosophers to grasp the connections among different concepts, a panoramic view, rather than just focusing on the individual concept:

> Here too the problem is not to pinpoint separately the locus of this or that single idea but to determine the cross-bearings of all of a galaxy of ideas belonging to the same or contiguous fields. The problem, that is, is not to anatomize the solitary concept, say, of liberty but to extract its logical powers as these bear on those of law, obedience, responsibility, loyalty, government and the rest. Like a geographical survey a philosophical survey is necessarily synoptic. Philosophical problems cannot be posed or solved piecemeal.[67]

Strawson's grammatical picture can help us to understand the descriptive feature of connective analysis. He provides the following example: When presented with first Castilian grammar, Queen Isabella of Castile dramatically doubted the use of this grammar book, since all the people can speak Castilian well without knowing the grammar. So, what else can we learn from the grammar? Strawson points out that 'being able to do something [. . .] is very different from being able to say, how it's done; and that it by no means implies the latter'.[68] Even though I am a competent Castilian speaker, it does not mean that I am capable of explicitly formulating the grammatical rules of Castilian. The job of philosopher, to some extent, is like the grammarian's, in the sense that philosophers intend to formulate the philosophical grammar of our concepts: 'The descriptive task of connective conceptual analysis is to draw an accurate map of the "parishes" that are constituted by the discourses of psychological specializations (paradigms) as well as the "neighbouring area" of other, non-psychological disciplines'.[69]

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[67] Ryle, 2009, p. 211.

[68] Strawson, 1992, p. 6.

[69] Banicki, 2012, p. 317.

The third feature of this method stipulated by Banicki is its connectiveness or non-reductiveness. Unlike the decompositional analysis, the aim of the connective analysis is not to dismantle the concept into simple atoms. Instead, this approach suggests that we understand a single concept inside the whole conceptual network.

In fact, the method of connective analysis is very close to the method of ordinary language philosophy[70]. Ordinary language philosophers set out to tackle concepts in a specific context with a specific point. John Wilson expresses some similar idea in his *Thinking with Concepts*:

> The best way of looking at this point is to say that in questions of concept we are not concerned with the meaning of a word. Words do not have only one meaning: indeed, in a sense they do not have meaning in their own right at all, but only in so far as people use them in different ways. It is better to say that we are concerned with actual and possible uses of words.[71]

Robert Brandom also contends that the content of a concept is constituted by its use, more specifically, its inferential rules. His project pushes this 'use' approach a step further by making explicit the inferential rules involved in the use of the concept. He thinks that the task of philosophy should be an expressive one[72].

Most methods belonging to conceptual approach are hostile to the naturalistic approach. However, not all of them are anti-naturalist. There is an attempt to reconcile conceptual analysis with naturalism, which is known as the Canberra Plan. This method is led by David Lewis, Frank Jackson, David Braddon-Mitchell, Robert Nola, and others. The method of the Canberra plan (Canberra analysis) can be divided into three steps according to Chris Daly's interpretation. Suppose we have a subject *X* (or

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[70] I will address the relationship between ordinary language philosophy and conceptual tuning in Chapter 5.

[71] Wilson, 2013, p.10.

[72] I will address the relationship between the Brandomian method and conceptual tuning in Chapter 4.

concept *X*) to analyze. Firstly, we need to collect the folk platitudes about *X*. In other words, we need to figure out the widely shared intuition about *X*. And this step is an *a priori* exercise. Suppose that the target concept is 'Colour', then we need to know how people talk about colour, such as that 'colours appear to be visible properties of objects, that they can persist through changes in lighting conditions, that they cause sensory experiences of colour, that there is something visible that all things of the same colour have in common, and so on'.[73] The list of the folk platitudes describes the role of the concept being analyzed. Secondly, after the role is delineated, we need to find out what occupies that role, which is an *a posteriori* task. As Daly says, 'it requires *a posteriori* investigation to tell what occupies, or is the best candidate for occupying, the role marked out by a list of folk intuitions'.[74] And the third step is to 'identify the subject matter with what occupies the role'. As Daly puts it, 'to be *F* is to occupy the *F*-role'.[75] Daly also explains why conceptual analysis, according to the Canberra plan, is essential to the naturalistic project: 'To defend the view that there are colours or minds in our world, we need to show how things as told in the vocabulary of fundamental physics make true things told in the vocabulary of colour or of psychology. This requires us to define the subjects, and to do this we must do conceptual analysis'.[76]

None of the conceptual approaches I have discussed so far takes 'history' as a pivotal element. Catarina Dutilh Novaes reminds us of the significant role of 'history' by proposing the method of conceptual genealogy in her paper 'Conceptual Genealogy For Analytic Philosophy'. She claims that analytic philosophy should be more thoroughly informed by the history of philosophy. She writes[77]:

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[73] Daly, 2010, p. 76.

[74] Daly, 2010, p. 77.

[75] Daly, 2010, p. 77.

[76] Daly, 2010, p. 77.

[77] I think the spirit of conceptual genealogy is consistent with my project of conceptual tuning.

> I discuss in detail a philosophical methodology that I call 'conceptual genealogy'. [. . .] I argue that analytic philosophy in general has much to gain from incorporating the historicist component of genealogical investigations. Analytic philosophers too must take seriously the idea that philosophical concepts may be historical products rather than a-temporal natural kinds or essences, and that they bring long with them traces of their historical development as well as of broader cultural contexts. Indeed, one of the key aspects of typical genealogical approaches (as is clear in particular in Nietzsche) is an emphasis on the *contingent* nature of (philosophical) concepts and phenomena as products of long and winding historical developments.[78]

Continental philosophy is not only famous for its historical insightfulness, but also for its imaginary creativeness which can be exemplified by Deleuze's method of conceptual creation (or conceptual invention)[79]. Jeffrey Bell depicts this method as follows:

> If the distinctive task of philosophy is to create concepts, or, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, if "the concept belongs to philosophy and only to philosophy" (WP 34/QP 37), then let us start with the obvious question: what is involved in creating a concept and why do concepts belong "only to philosophy"?[80]

Besides conceptual genealogy and conceptual creation, phenomenological description is another vital method in the continental tradition. Amie L. Thomasson argues that, despite the apparent difference, phenomenological description and conceptual analysis share more in common than is often supposed:

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[78] Novaes, 2015, p. 75.

[79] Deleuze and Guattari invented many philosophical concepts such as rhizomes, platueaus, abstract machines, concrete assemblages, and fields of immanence.

[80] Bell, 2016, p. 27.

> I will argue that both phenomenology and early to mid twentieth-century analytic philosophy also offered the same sort of alternative solution: seeing philosophy as distinctively involved in the analysis of meanings or concepts, not the discovery of empirical facts and regularities.[81]

In this dissertation, I propose a philosophical method which might be called *conceptual tuning*, which is grounded in the contemporary *conceptual engineering* project. Chapter 2 will address six versions of conceptual engineering, most of which hold that our current linguistic devices or concepts could be defective, and the philosopher, therefore, should aim to improve them or decide which concept we should adopt for the current purpose. David Plunkett says that:

> The central issues we focus on are evaluative issues about which concepts are better or worse (for use by a given agent, in a given context), and normative issues about which concepts an agent should use (in a given context).[82]

Many works on metaphilosophy have been devoted to the domain of the nature of philosophy and the method of philosophy, while we have fewer works on the value of philosophy. Overgaard et al. indicate that there are two sorts of criticism concerning the value of philosophy. Firstly, according to Russell, if philosophy is simply the investigation of words, then it runs the risk of making philosophy a trivial business because understanding sentences is 'at best, a slight help to lexicographers'[83]. Karl Marx also argues that philosophers should not only interpret the world, but also change the world. Lloyd describes the challenge against the value of philosophy as follows:

> Lawyers, engineers, statesmen, artists, even clergymen would be thought to meet

[81] Beaney, 2010, p. 270.

[82] Plunkett, 2016, p. 38.

[83] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 117.

> together for some purpose, but we philosophers, stupid and impractical theorizers, must be well satisfied if the times which willingly or unwillingly have given us birth only feel some parental affection for us, mingling this with their laughter. How can we expect anything more? How can we at this critical time even take ourselves quite seriously?[84]

All these critics ask what the value of philosophy is. Overgaard et al. discuss this problem from various perspectives. For example, if the method of philosophy is conceptual analysis, then the 'analysis of concepts throw[s] light on substantive questions and whatever value they have derives from this'.[85] For different philosophers, the method of analysis manifests different values. For Russell and G. E. Moore, they 'deploy their analyses specifically against what they take to be false philosophical views'.[86] For Peter Strawson, 'the value of analyses is an independent value, consisting in whatever value such a descriptive metaphysics which consists of them possesses'.[87] For Frank Jackson, '[t]he value of analysis within this programme is primarily subtractive rather than additive–revealing where, if our world view is correct, we should revise beliefs couched in terms of certain concepts such as our current concept of free will'.[88] And if we take philosophy as providing a world view, then the value of philosophy is to 'affect people's attitudes in a way that ordinary scientific theories do not'.[89] Overgaard et al. also point out that the value of a specific type of world view 'will depend upon whether we really need such world views'.[90] To contribute to the discussion of the value of philosophy, my thesis will focus on the intrinsic value and instrumental value of philosophy through the analysis of the

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[84] Lloyd, 1919, p. 505.

[85] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 195.

[86] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 196.

[87] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 197.

[88] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 198.

[89] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 198.

[90] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 201.

relationship between game playing and philosophy.

Before tackling conceptual engineering and conceptual tuning, Chapter 1 'On Reflexive Philosophy' addresses the problem of the legitimacy of metaphilosophy. As Plant describes: 'Few philosophers enjoy being asked "What is it you do?" Fewer still relish the follow-up question "What is philosophy?" Even if one is sufficiently confident to describe oneself as a "philosopher," one invariably struggles to say anything plausible and informative when asked "What is philosophy?"'[91]. Since the domain of metaphilosophy is not well recognized and acknowledged in the philosophical community, it is necessary to justify the importance of addressing the metaphilosophical problems by responding to several objections. I will deal with three possible challenges to the legitimacy of metaphilosophy: the argument from the 'knowing that-knowing how' distinction, metaphilosophical skepticism, and the argument from circularity.

Chapter 2, entitled 'What is Conceptual Engineering', provides the exposition of six different versions of conceptual engineering: Cappelen's conceptual engineering; Carnap's Method of Explication; Zagzebski's Exemplarism; Ludlow's Lexical Warfare; Plunkett's Metalinguistic Negotiation; and Haslanger's Ameliorative Approach. With these outlines, we can have a clear idea of this philosophical method. Despite their differences, they all insist that philosophy should focus on the proper use of our concepts: 'which concepts we should use in a given instance of inquiry is (at least in part) determined by which concepts will help make that inquiry go best'.[92]

After mulling over six existing conceptual engineering approaches, Chapter 3, 'From Conceptual Engineering to Conceptual Tuning', aims to modify these conceptual engineering approaches, and to establish my own version: *conceptual tuning*. By

[91] Plant, 2017, p. 3.

[92] Plunkett, 2016, p. 37.

distinguishing between two types of conceptual engineering, the meaning-repairing centered one and the meaning-negotiating centered approach, section 3.1 provides choosing justification of the tag ‘conceptual tuning’. I will also stress that conceptual tuning should be understood in terms of knowing how. Section 3.2 presents the 7 core ideas of the method of conceptual tuning. Section 3.3 addresses the relationship between verbal dispute and conceptual tuning, arguing that the meaninglessness of verbal dispute does not apply to conceptual tuning.

From Chapter 4 to 6, I demonstrate how the Brandomian method, the method of ordinary language philosophy, and conceptual analysis can also be understood as conceptual tuning. The task of Chapter 4, ‘The Brandomian Method and Conceptual Tuning’, is to argue that the Brandomian method can also be understood as a form of conceptual tuning. To fully understand the Brandomian method, it is necessary to introduce Brandom’s discussion of social and linguistic practice, which is the content of Section 4.1. According to Brandom, the defining feature of the human is that we are the concept users, while non-human animals or inanimate machines are not. Section 4.2 presents Brandom’s notion of ‘scorekeeping’ and its game-playing model for social and linguistic practice. In a nutshell, he claims that linguistic practice is a game of giving and asking for reasons: ‘Conceptual commitments are distinguished by their inferential articulation, by the way they can serve as reasons for one another, and by the way they stand in need of reasons, their entitlement always potentially being at issue’ (Brandom 2009, 128-9). Based on this reason-giving model, section 4.3 attempts to outline the Brandomian method, whose task ‘is understanding the conditions, nature, and consequences of conceptual norms and the activities—starting with the social practices of giving and asking for reasons—that they make possible and that make them possible’ (Brandom 2009). Section 4.4 offers a detailed discussion on why the Brandomian approach can be taken as conceptual tuning.

Chapter 5 ‘Ordinary Language Philosophy and Conceptual Tuning’ addresses the

relationship between ordinary language philosophy and conceptual tuning. Section 5.1 presents an introduction of ordinary language philosophy, from the classic version to the contemporary one. Section 5.2 articulates the tension between ordinary language philosophy and conceptual tuning. In section 5.3, I argue that the existence of the tension is based on an erroneous understanding of ordinary language philosophy. Section 5.4 sketches Alver Baz's version of ordinary language philosophy, which I take to be the proper version. And in section 5.5, I will argue that on the basis of Baz's version, ordinary language philosophy is consistent with conceptual tuning.

Chapter 6, 'Conceptual Analysis and Conceptual Tuning', focuses on the relationship between conceptual analysis and conceptual tuning. Section 6.1 provides a general picture of conceptual analysis, by surveying the characterization of conceptual analysis provided by different philosophers. Section 6.2 endeavors to describe Colin McGinn's detailed framework of conceptual analysis, as well as his reply to possible challenges. Section 6.3 is an exposition of a brief tutorial for conceptual analysis sketched by Sven Ove Hansson. Section 6.4 addresses a specific case—the concept 'lying'. Section 6.5 displays the tension between conceptual analysis and conceptual tuning. Finally, section 6.6 provides a solution to resolve this tension, and concludes that conceptual analysis can be a form of conceptual tuning.

Chapter 7, 'The Value of Philosophy', discusses a specific metaphilosophical view—'philosophy as game'. Through this view, I address the problem of the value of philosophy.

Chapter 1 On Reflexive Philosophy

> Every genius is the inventor of new methods and he must therefore be some sort of a critic of principles of method. — Gilbert Ryle

My thesis embarks on the discussion of metaphilosophy. But what is metaphilosophy? Why should we do it? Roughly put, metaphilosophy amounts to the philosophy of philosophy. The English term 'metaphilosophy' was coined by Morris Lazerowitz in 1940. He gives a brief definition of metaphilosophy: 'Metaphilosophy is the investigation of the nature of philosophy, with the central aim of arriving at a satisfactory explanation of the absence of uncontested philosophical claims and arguments' (Lazerowitz 1970, 91). In the Preface of *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*, Søren Overgaard et al. describe metaphilosophy as 'the branch of philosophy that asks what philosophy is, how it should be done and why we should do it'.[93] It mainly concerns the nature of philosophy, the method of philosophy and the value of philosophy. In philosophical practice, we may face different first-order philosophical-questions such as 'What is self-knowledge?', 'What is justice?', 'How can we be virtuous?', 'Can consciousness be reduced?' These are first-order philosophical-questions, in contrast to metaphilosophy, which is high-order philosophy. Metaphilosophy, though it is still philosophy, is devoted to questions such as 'What is the mission of philosophy?', 'Can we defend ordinary language philosophy?', 'Can philosophy be objective?', 'Does philosophical thought progress over time?', 'Should philosophers rely on intuition?'

Richard Feynman made a controversial claim when he said: 'philosophy of science is about as useful to scientists as ornithology is to birds'. A natural corollary would be 'philosophy of philosophy is about as useful to philosophers as ornithology is to

[93] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. vii.

birds'. But should we embrace this idea? Should we jump into the idea that metaphilosophy is otiose? It is too early to give an answer. After all, the claim that 'philosophy of science is about as useful to scientists as ornithology is to birds' is itself disputable. Therefore, its consequence is also open to criticism. A great number of philosophers are already engaged in doing metaphilosophy, while there are also a lot of philosophers who never do so. Additionally, some philosophers explicitly denigrate or discredit the necessity, significance and possibility of doing metaphilosophy, while others acknowledge the importance of metaphilosophy. Those who hold a negative attitude to metaphilosophy would be called *non-reflexive philosophers*, while those who hold a positive attitude would be called *reflexive philosophers*. Since my dissertation aims to propose a metaphilosophical project, I will defend the reflexive view on philosophy,. Three possible arguments bolstering the non-reflexive view will be presented, and I shall address them one by one: (i) Arguments from the distinction between knowing how and knowing that, which aims to dismiss the necessity of doing metaphilosophy; (ii) The metaphilosophical skepticism argument, which holds that metaphilosophical claims are indefensible, thus all our efforts would be inutile; and (iii) The circularity argument, which points out that the debates between two metaphilosophical (conceptual) frameworks are either begging the question or circular. Before presenting my own metaphilosophical project in the subsequent chapters, in this chapter I will reply to these three arguments challenging the significance of doing metaphilosophy, and thereby defend the legitimacy of doing metaphilosophy.

1.1 Argument From the Knowing that-Knowing how Distinction

Overgaard et al. said that, when philosophers focus on questions such as 'what is the structure of perceptual experience?', 'what is a just society?' or 'what is science?', they tend to ignore the question concerning the nature of philosophy and the methods

adopted in answering them: 'This isn't a topic to which they likely have devoted much serious thought. They may have thought a lot about how they should go about doing philosophy. But they may have thought very little about what it is they are doing when they are doing it'.[94] But is there any justification for this negative view on metaphilosophy?

In 'Metaphilosophy as First Philosophy', Robert Piercey draws an illuminating distinction between two ways of doing philosophy, *non-reflexive philosophy* and *reflexive philosophy*. Non-reflexive philosophy refers to the view that philosophers should only focus on the first-order problems such as the nature of consciousness, without heeding the problems related to the nature of philosophy. Moreover, non-reflexive philosophers reckon that first-order philosophy is logically separable from metaphilosophy. On the other hand, reflexive philosophers place an overwhelming emphasis on metaphilosophy. Besides, they hold that the first-order philosophical questions can be discredited without a solid metaphilosophical grounding. As Piercey says:

> I will use the term *reflexive philosophy* to refer to the view that metaphilosophy is first philosophy, and that philosophy is an essentially self-conscious undertaking. Philosophy is reflexive when it actively explains what it is doing as it proceeds, and when it lets this self-consciousness color its treatment of first-order questions. When it does not—when it worries instead about the nature of justice or consciousness, and leaves the metaphilosophical issues to take care of themselves—it is *non-reflexive*. 'Non-reflexive' does not mean non-reflective. It is not a synonym for 'naive' or 'unthoughtful.' It is simply the view that philosophy is not essentially self-conscious.[95]

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[94] Overgaard et la, 2013, p. 3.

[95] Piercey, 2010, p. 336-7.

According to Piercey, Gilbert Ryle is arguably the typical representative of non-reflexive philosophers. According to him, Ryle's famous distinction between *knowing how* and *knowing that* is a strong support for the non-reflexive view. In fact, Ryle's original target is the *intellectualist legend*. According to the intellectualist legend, our *intelligent* behavior (practice) is the step-child of theorizing (theory). Put another way, no intelligent performance can be separated from observing rules, or complying to principles. According to Ryle, the cognates of intelligence include terms such as 'clever', 'sensible', 'careful', 'methodical', 'inventive', 'prudent', 'acute', 'logical', 'witty', 'observant', 'critical', 'experimental', 'quick-witted', 'cunning', 'wise', 'judicious' and 'scrupulous'. But if one is not intelligent, we might describe him as 'stupid', 'dull', 'silly', 'careless', 'unmethodical', 'uninventive', 'rash', 'dense', 'illogical', 'humourless', 'unobservant', 'uncritical', 'unexperimental', 'slow,' 'simple', 'unwise' and 'injudicious'.[96] The intellectualist tradition concentrates on the function of theorizing. As Ryle puts it: 'When we speak of the intellect or, better, of the intellectual powers and performances of persons, we are referring primarily to that special class of operations which constitute theorizing. The goal of these operations is the knowledge of true propositions or facts'.[97] From an intellectualist point, knowing how to tie shoelaces is equivalent to knowing the rules of shoelaces tying. This intellectualist tradition can be traced back to Ancient philosophy's stress on contemplation, which inclines one to put theory prior to practice. However, as Ryle states, *intellect* is equivalent to *knowing that (*propositional knowledge*)*, whilst *intelligence* is equivalent to *knowing how*. If intelligent performance can be accounted for by theoretical knowledge, then the consequence is that knowing how can be explained in terms of knowing that:

> Champions of this legend are apt to try to reassimilate knowing how to knowing

[96] Ryle, 2009b, p. 14-5.

[97] Ryle, 2009b, p. 15.

> that by arguing that intelligent performance involves the observance of rules, or the application of criteria. It follows that the operation which is characterized as intelligent must be preceded by an intellectual acknowledgement of these rules or criteria.[98]

Ryle has several arguments against the intellectualist legend. The most forceful one is the *argument of infinite regress*. Whenever one does something intelligent, according to the intellectualists, her practice should be guided by considering certain propositions or rules. Presumably, these propositions can be considered either *wisely* or *stupidly*, which means that the practice of theorizing presupposes the implementation of intelligence, which can only be accounted for by propositions. If so, it is necessary to adopt some second-order propositions to explain the intelligence in use. But again, initiating the consideration of the second-order propositions also appeals to intelligence, hence, third-order propositions are required to explain the intelligence employed in considering the second-order propositions and so on, ad infinitum. Therefore, we embark on an infinite regress. As Ryle writes: 'The consideration of propositions is an operation the execution of which can be more or less intelligently executed, a prior theoretical operation had first to be performed and performed intelligently, it would be a logical impossibility for anyone ever to break into the circle'.[99] Besides refusing the intellectualist legend, Ryle also presents two positive views: (i) there is a distinction in kind, rather than in degree, between knowing how and knowing that. In other words, knowing how does not belong to knowing that; (ii) knowing how is logically prior to knowing that. For the current purpose, it is not necessary to delve into the details of these two claims.

But how could we use Ryle's arguments to support the non-reflexive view? Here is the idea. If we accept that knowing how is logically separated from knowing that, then

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[98] Ryle, 2009b, p. 18.

[99] Ryle, 2009b, p. 19.

philosophical knowing how should be logically independent of metaphilosophical theories (philosophical knowing that). Consider a related example: suppose Sid has a sense of humor, hence he can easily make up funny jokes and he also can understand other people's jests with ease. But we cannot conclude that he is able to construct a theory of how to be humorous from the fact that he is humorous. As Ryle notes:

> Efficient practice precedes the theory of it; methodologies presuppose the application of the methods, of the critical investigation of which they are the products. [. . .] It is therefore possible for people intelligently to perform some sorts of operations when they are not yet able to consider any propositions enjoining how they should be performed. Some intelligent performances are not controlled by any anterior acknowledgments of the principles applied in them.[100]

Assuming this is true, then we can apply it to philosophical practice. Two natural corollaries would be: (i) philosophical practice (knowing how) is logically independent of metaphilosophy (knowing that); (ii) philosophical practice is logically prior to metaphilosophical theories. As Piercey explains:

> Philosophizing is a practice, and if Ryle is right, we can perform this practice well without being able to explain how we do so. It is possible to know *how* to solve philosophical problems without knowing that we can do because philosophy has such and such a nature. Philosophizing successfully does not require any theory of what philosophy is.[101]

So, it is clear that, based on Ryle's view, metaphilosophy, theories on the nature of philosophy, is not a *sine qua non* in actual philosophical practice. Four rejoinders can be provided to this negative attitude regarding metaphilosophy.

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[100] Ryle, 2009b, p. 19.

[101] Piercey, 2010, p. 339.

The first is from Piercey himself. He declares that there is one important feature of philosophy which is ignored by Ryle and his non-reflexive allies:

> They ignore the importance that philosophers have often attached to self-knowledge. Philosophy has long been described, and indeed defined, as a search for self-knowledge, or as an attempt to understand ourselves and our condition. Philosophy has long been thought of as an attempt to explain, to ourselves and others, what we are doing, and why what we are doing makes sense.[102]

In Piercey's mind, 'self-reflexiveness' is one inner characteristic of philosophy which cannot be removed, just like the Beatles without John Lennon are not the Beatles anymore. So, philosophy without self-knowledge is not real philosophy. Piercey uses three exemples (Socrates, Descartes and Husserl) to demonstrate this claim. In *Apology*, Socrates famously claims that 'examining both myself and others is really the very best thing that a man can do, and that life without this sort of examination is not worth living'. Hence, Socrates sets a good example of reflexive philosophy by asking us to pay attention to what we (philosophers) are practicing. Socrates's maxim is interpreted by Robert Nozick as follows: 'when we guide our lives by our own pondered thoughts, it then is our life that we are living, not someone else's. In this sense, the unexamined life is not lived as fully'.[103] The second example is René Descartes who expresses the character of self-understanding by doubting the foundation of our knowledge. The third exemple is Edmund Husserl. In the *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, he expresses the view that philosophy begins with radical self-understanding and self-questioning, and that we should maintain this tradition. Piercey concludes:

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[102] Piercey, 2010, p. 340.

[103] Nozick, 1990, p. 15.

> most prototypical examples of this enterprise define it as a type of self-examination, or as the attempt to explain what it is we are doing in our various practices. Such self-examination may not be all there is to the discipline. But it is surely an indispensable part of it. If we abandon it, it is not clear that what we are doing should still be called philosophy.[104]

If Piercey is right, then self-examination is an intrinsic feature of philosophy. If this is the case, Ryle's distinction between knowing that and knowing how fails to undermine the necessity of doing metaphilosophy, because it cannot be applied to philosophy, even though it is effective in other domains. It is an undeniable fact that a basketball player does not need a theory of basketball to play the game. Similarly, we can find many philosophers who do not possess a reflexive attitude. But it is not a proper or commendable way of doing philosophy, given that self-examination is at the heart of philosophy. Removing metaphilosophy from first-order philosophy is like peeling a raspberry. Nicholas Rescher holds a similar view: 'The key fact about metaphilosophy is that if forms a part of philosophy itself. This is a unique feature of the enterprise: the philosophy of biology is not a part of biology, the philosophy of mathematics is not a part of mathematics'.[105]

My second reply is based on empirical observation. Philosophical knowing how is a broad notion, which can be subdivided into many forms, such as knowing how to construct arguments, knowing how to debate, knowing how to analyze concepts, knowing how to understand texts or knowing how to detect fallacy. Piercey reads Ryle's establishment of knowing how as a strong support for non-reflexive philosophy. Nonetheless, it is not tenable to label Ryle as a non-reflexive philosopher. Indeed, Ryle has written many metaphilosophical works, such as 'The Theory of Meaning' (1957), 'Phenomenology versus "The Concept of Mind"' (1962). Therefore, it is

[104] Piercey, 2010, p. 341.

[105] Rescher, 2014, p. xi.

unconvincing to assume that Ryle would endorse a non-reflexive view. In the contemporary philosophical community, there are also numerous important works on metaphilosophy: *Philosophy of Philosophy* (Williamson 2008), *Philosophy without Intuition* (Cappelen 2012), *Constructing the World* (Chalmers 2012), *Concepts Audits: A Philosophical Method* (Rescher 2016), *The Philosopher—A History in Six Types* (Smith 2016) etc. With all these fruitful achievements and provocative discussions, why should we refuse to do metaphilosophy?

Thirdly, the main target of Ryle is the intellectualist who believes that knowing how can be fully explained in terms of knowing that. As we agree, the skill of a chef cannot be fully accounted for by a book of cooking directions; the skill of a chess master is not tantamount to a chess guidebook. As a corollary, it is plausible to say that philosophical ability cannot be exhausted by a metaphilosophical theory. However, accepting this does not lead to the conclusion that all knowing how practices can be fully explained in terms of knowing that clauses. In other words, it is still possible to make explicit what is implicit in our practice by invoking knowing that. A distinction between the relationship of knowing how and knowing that can be made: *the reductive relationship* and *the interpretive relationship*. The reductive relationship is a strong claim that all knowing how can be fully reduced to knowing that. In contrast, the interpretive relationship does not insist on the strong claim, but only holds that we can codify what is implicit in our practice.

Consider an example. Pavarotti has one of the best tenor voices in the world. Presumably, it is not possible to fully account for his singing talents in terms of a theory. However, a music theorist can still write a book to discuss how to sing like Pavarotti. The fact that Pavarotti does not need a theory to execute his talents is one thing, but the fact that a theorist does need a theory in order to analyze his skills is quite another thing. The truth of the former does not exclude the possibility and the significance of the latter. Similarly, suppose Sid is a prestigious philosopher. Again,

Sid's philosophical competence cannot be identified with a metaphilosophical theory. Besides, it is also possible that Sid does not need a principle to guide his philosophizing. Nevertheless, Sid still can write a book on metaphilosophy which might be a significant work for the philosophical community. The moral is that even if we accept Ryle's argument, further proofs are needed to reach the conclusion that metaphilosophy is futile. Human social practice is a practice of giving and asking for reasons, and doing metaphilosophy is a part of this reason-mongering practice.

Fourthly, I propose to distinguish two kinds of practice: *methodologically susceptible practice* and *methodologically stable practice*. Methodologically stable practice refers to those practices wheremethods are not easily impacted by other factors. Think of the skill of identifying the sex of chicks. Once one knows how to identify the chicks by sex, further knowledge in this particular area is not required. All the individual needs to do is to perform this method systematically, without further reflection. But, in reality, stable is always a relative term, which means no method is in principle eternal. There is always the possibility of the method evolving.

In contrast, methodologically susceptible practice refers to practice whereby the method is more apt to be affected by different variables. In other words, methodologically susceptible practice is always prepared for the modification of its own method. Consider three cases: (i) Chinese martial arts; (ii) Table tennis; and (iii) Stonemasonry. There are several schools or branches in Chinese martial arts, each of which has its own distinctive fighting style. However, these skills are not fixed, and they frequently evolve. For example, communication between two different schools might cause the amelioration of the practicing skill of either school. Or encountering the western fighting tradition might also lead to the self-adjustment of Chinese martial arts. (ii) Table tennis: The international rules of table tennis are frequently modified by the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF). For example, in 2000, the size of the ball was changed from 38mm to 40mm; in 2001, the use of inorganic glue was

banned. In order to adapt to these new rules, the players have to adjust their skills too. (iii) Stonemasonry: The traditional method of stonemasonry is dependent on traditional tools: mallets, chisels etc. With the development of technology, stonemason's tools have been improved. Therefore, what goes for the tools, goes for the method.

In the first case, the change of method is due to communication. In the second case, the method is adapted with the change in rules. In the third case, it is the development of the technology that causes the changing of method. What about philosophical practice? Since philosophical methods can be affected by different factors, philosophical methods, therefore, should be aligned with methodologically susceptible practice. For example, conversation is a prominent feature of philosophy. The exchange of ideas among different philosophical traditions can beget the reconsideration of their own philosophical method. Moreover, with the current prevailing scientific image, philosophy has been expelled by science in many domains. It is time for us to turn to the domain of philosophy. Many promising metaphilosophical movements have been witnessed recently: the pragmatic turn, experimental philosophy, the Canberra plan, and conceptual engineering, amongst others.

1.2 The Metaphilosophical Skepticism Argument

In the previous section, I defended the necessity of doing metaphilosophy by indicating that self-examination is an intrinsic character of philosophy, and thus cannot be eliminated from philosophy. In this section, we will address another argument—the skepticism argument—which is supposed to undermine the significance of metaphilosophy by questioning the objectivity of philosophy.

In *Metaphilosophy and Freewill*, Robert Double establishes a metaphilosophical

relativism. According to him, metaphilosophy is unprovable and no metaphilosophy is objectively best: 'a metaphilosophical claim… is invulnerable to refutation. As I argue in this book, because metaphilosophy is unprovable, citing a metaphilosophy does not settle anything'.[106] Thus, if there is no objective truth in metaphilosophy, then embracing metaphilosophical relativism would be a reasonable choice.

How does Double support this view? In Double's view, metaphilosophy is determined by three factors: (i) Our beliefs about what philosophy is, (ii) our beliefs about what philosophy can accomplish, and (iii) our desire-for-philosophy. Firstly, Double claims that, arguably, there is no unanimous solution to the definition of philosophy. On the contrary, there are many conceptions of philosophy, and accordingly, if no consensus on 'what philosophy is' can be reached, then that also goes for what philosophy can accomplish. Secondly, the nature of metaphilosophy is also determined by our desire-for-philosophy. It is generally accepted that 'belief' has a *mind-to-world direction of fit*. As John Searle explains: 'The mental state fits or fails to fit how things really are in the world. Beliefs, convictions, hypotheses, etc., as well as perceptual experiences, all have this mind-to-world direction of fit'.[107] We can use 'truth' and 'falsehood' to judge whether a belief achieves the mind-to-world direction of fit. On the other hand, 'desire' has a *world-to-mind direction of fit*. As Searle puts: 'Desire and intentions are not true or false the way beliefs are, because their aim is not to match an independently existing reality, but rather to get reality to match the content of the Intentional state'.[108] Double stresses that metaphilosophy is also decided by world-to-mind direction of fit, given that our desire-for-philosophy is one important part of metaphilosophy. Taking one step back, even if we accept that there are some deep metaphysical truths which can tell us which among different desires is true, according to Double, it is not likely that we can ever gain access to that truth:

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[106] Double, 1996, p. 33.

[107] Searle, 2004, p. 168.

[108] Searle, 2004, p. 168.

> we could never know that we have found the true desires, because having such knowledge entails knowing which desires are objectively best, and in 2,500 years of Western philosophy, no-one has ever shown how we can have knowledge of evaluative facts. This would guarantee that as a matter of fact, the selection of a 'true' metaphilosophy cannot be expected.[109]

Based on these considerations, Double concludes that there is no objective metaphilosophical thesis, and that we must therefore embrace metaphilosophical relativism.

Rescher (2014) holds a similar view by propounding the notion of *orientational pluralism*: 'in philosophy we just are never going to achieve consensus'.[110] Rescher's orientational pluralism is based on his notion of 'experience'. According to him, there is a distinction to be made between 'narrower and episodic experience' (*Erlebnis*) and 'wider and systematic experience' (*Erfahrung*):

> More narrowly construed experience-1 is typified by sensory experiences but extended by affective experience (stiches, toothaches) and even ever by evaluative experience (engagement, aversion). But experience in the larger sense is something much broader. Here theory and its testing by its trial and error (the 'course of experiences') becomes a paramount consideration. A way of looking at things, a 'conceptual scheme' and even a 'world view' (Weltanschauung) is the sort of thing that functions at this larger level of 'experience.'[111]

From this characterization, it is clear that a narrow experience is limited to sensory and evaluative experience, while a broad experience is congenial to conceptual scheme or world view. Hence, the question becomes that of which experience plays a

[109] Double, 1996, p. 34.

[110] Rescher, 2014, p. 133.

[111] Rescher, 2014, p. 129.

role in shaping our metaphilosophy: a narrow experience or a wide one? Since metaphilosophy is related to a world view and a conceptual scheme, the answer would be the wide experience. Different schools of philosophers adopt different metaphilosophical positions, because philosophers have different experiences in the wider and systematic sense. As Rescher says: 'And since in different conditions as to time, place, and cultural context will afford altogether different bodies of experience it is only normal and natural that different philosophers should carve out different doctrinal positions'.[112] Our philosophical practice is based on our own experience. In other words, we take our experience as our philosophical *data*. According to Rescher, these data are affected by factors such as the teaching of 'common sense', the regularities they have themselves observed, the judgments of others (as a whole or in particular groups), and the teachings of particular fields of inquiry. Different bodies of experience function importantly in our cognitive practice, because they 'orient thinkers in different direction in the evaluation of philosophies and possibilities. They orient the instruction of thought differently'.[113] Philosophical disagreements are caused by our *orientational disagreement*, which happens at the methodological level. The orientational disagreement is not disagreement concerning claims or propositions, rather it is about how you make judgments (the methods used): 'what is involved in such an orientation is not a matter of theses but rather one of *methods*—methods, to be sure, of a rather special sort, namely *probative* methods for the content of rationally cogent inquiry and substantiation, and specifically the devices inherent in our methods of cognitive appraisal or evaluation'.[114] Rescher claims that orientational disagreement (philosophical disagreement) is a *value* disagreement:

> the orientations at issue are value orientations with regard to probative and evidential issues. This is what makes the learning of philosophy not only a matter

[112] Rescher, 2014, p. 129.

[113] Rescher, 2014, p. 130.

[114] Rescher, 2014, p. 130.

> of mastering facts but also one of the acquisition of attitudes and 'point of views'—a consideration that occasionally even endows the enterprise with a certain national and parochial coloration and serves to account for the gulf of mutual noncomprehension that separates various schools.[115]

Rescher sees philosophical disagreements as *axiological* in nature. Since different philosophers are embedded in different bodies of experience, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' resolution of philosophical issues. Evidently, this orientational pluralism applies to metaphilosophy: 'we must recognize that pluralism also operates at the methodological level: the situation here is the same as in substantive philosophy'.[116] Therefore, different experiences lead to different philosophical methods.

Though with different forms, Double's and Rescher's arguments seem to lead to the same outcome, namely, there is no objective metaphilosophical truth, which is called *metaphilosophical relativism* by Double and *orientational pluralism* by Rescher. In what sense, does metaphilosophical relativism vitiate the significance of doing metaphilosophy? The problem is that metaphilosophical relativism will prompt *metaphilosophical skepticism*: 'In the skeptic's opinion, the absence of a standpoint-transcending process for resolving the battle of the schools indicates the ultimate futility of the whole enterprise. If that's what philosophy is, the game is not worth the candle'.[117] If this is right, accordingly, Double's metaphilosophical relativism and Rescher's orientational pluralism are supposed to prove that doing metaphilosophy is otiose, a Sisyphean project. I will reply to Double's argument and Rescher's respectively.

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[115] Rescher, 2014, pp. 130-1.

[116] Rescher, 2014, p. 134.

[117] Rescher, 2014, p. 127.

Firstly, I will tackle Double's metaphilosophical relativism by resorting to Fiona Ellis's arguments. Ellis (2001) disagrees with Double's statements. Concerning Double's claim that no consensus can be reached on 'what is philosophy', Ellis argues that the existence of many conceptions of philosophy does not entail that there is no objectively best one. More explanations are expected. And concerning the desire-for-philosophy argument, Ellis makes several remarks: (i) It is necessary for Double to explain the indivisible relation between 'desire' and 'metaphilosophy'[118]. It is not so obvious that our desire of 'what philosophy should become' is closely related to our understanding of the nature of philosophy: 'For the claim that our desire-for-philosophy cannot be true seems to imply at most that there is no true desire for philosophy' (Ellis 2001, 363). (ii) It is hardly true that metaphilosophy is only concerned with the value of philosophy. Double's inference from value relativism to metaphilosophical relativism entails a mistaken assumption that metaphilosophy is only concerned with the value of philosophy. (iii) To say the least, even if we accept the (false) assumption in (ii), the inference from value relativism to metaphilosophical relativism is still untenable. According to Ellis, the claim that there can be no knowledge of evaluative facts is controversial. In fact, it is an ongoing debate in the contemporary philosophical community: 'Certainly, we can agree with Double that there is philosophical work to be done for those who wish to secure the metaphysical and epistemological respectability of evaluative facts. And it may well be that there are some philosophers who will remain forever opposed to the possibility of achieving such an end'.[119]

These replies by Ellis at least show that Double's metaphilosophical relativism is not unassailable. However, Ellis's most vital objection is based on Double's self-defeating fallacy. In his book, Double concedes that 'critical thinking' is the general

[118] In fact, Rescher's argument from 'experience' can explain this question.

[119] Ellis, 2001, p. 363.

philosophical method:

> I represent the methodology as critical thinking, which includes both intellectual and temperamental traits. Primary among the intellectual traits of the critical thinker is careful attention to meaning, especially to understanding what the questions and their answer mean, mapping all possible alternative answers to the questions, and canvassing all the considerations one can imagine that might lend support to one view over another. Among temperamental traits are the desire to see things clearly, the willingness to follow lines of reasoning that may be contrary to one's own beliefs, the desire to evaluate fairly all competing views, and a readiness to suspend judgment, even on our longtime views, when we cannot provide reasons that support one position over another.[120]

According to Ellis, with this description, it is natural to assume that Double's metaphilosophical relativism theory is produced by the process of critical thinking. Yet, according to the doctrine of metaphilosophical relativism, there is no way that any arguments posed by a specific philosophical method (a metaphilosophy) can be justified. Thus, critical thinking is also vulnerable to attack. Ellis reframes Double's thoughts as follows:

> (Using method *m*)
>
> (1) Metaphilosophical relativism is true.
>
> (2) If metaphilosophical relativism is true, then there is no justification for using method *m*. Therefore

[120] Double, 1996, pp. 20-1.

(3) Using method *m*, we reach the conclusion that there is no justification for

using method *m*.[121]

As we can tell, it is impossible for Double to both acknowledge the legitimacy of using critical thinking and stick to metaphilosophical relativism. If we accept metaphilosophical relativism, then critical thinking is not justifiable. With these considerations, we will face a serious and dim consequence: embracing metaphilosophical relativism means that we cannot justify the method of critical thinking which is used in almost every philosophical practice. As Ellis points out, Double uses method *m* to establish theory *S* which will in turn undermine the credibility of *m*, and by doing so he reaches a stalemate. To break the deadlock, we need to give up the metaphilosophical relativism.

As I noted, metaphilosophical skepticism follows from metaphilosophical relativism. Ellis attempts to question the premise of this inference, contending that metaphilosophical relativism does not hold. However, we can also reject metaphilosophical skepticism by arguing that the inference from metaphilosophical relativism to metaphilosophical skepticism is invalid. Rescher claims that orientational pluralism should not stop philosophers from pursuing metaphilosophy. He provides several arguments: (i) When one denies the value of metaphilosophy, one is in fact already doing metaphilosophy. As Rescher puts it: 'one can abandon philosophy, but one cannot *advocate* its abandonment through rational argumentation without philosophizing'.[122] (ii) According to Rescher, one's claim can only be warranted from the perspective of one's own experience: 'the proper mission of the overall philosophical enterprise is not the attainment of a general consensus, but the

[121] Ellis, 2001, p. 371.

[122] Rescher, 2014, p. 128.

development of a debate of high quality in whose course one's own position can appropriately be sustained on the basis of a conclusive warrant of evidentiation'.[123] Philosophers being entrenched in their experience, metaphilosophical relativism is inevitable: 'there are other metaphilosophical approaches which are also somehow or other "available." But he insists that from where he sits (from *his* methodological stance) this fact is actually confirmatory'.[124] (iii) Metaphilosophical relativism is unacceptable only when the ultimate goal of philosophy is to reach a permanent consensus. However, what's important about philosophy is not discovering the absolute truth, instead, it is 'enhancing the quality of the argumentation and gaining a deepened understanding of the structure of alternative positions'.[125] With this view, as long as our metaphilosophical discussion is fruitful and provocative, it is worth the effort: 'No abandonment, no indifferentism is at issue here, but a perennial struggle that yields not final solutions but broader and deeper insights'.[126] Unlike science, philosophy is not supposed to provide objective truth. Rescher draws a distinction between *a globally correct* solution and *a locally optimal* solution. A globally correct solution aims at an ultimate answer which is 'one-size-fits-all'. In contrast, a locally optimal solution does not stick to a universal theory, rather, it is an answer which is adequate based on the given experience. As Rescher puts it, it is 'cogent for those committed to a certain probative-value orientation'.[127] So, concerning metaphilosophy, rather than achieving a globally correct one, we should embrace different locally optimal solutions. Thus, we don't need to give up pursuing metaphilosophy, neither should we accept that doing metaphilosophy is akin to goose chasing, since we can gain a rich understanding through the metaphilosophical discussions.

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[123] Rescher, 2014, p. 133.

[124] Rescher, 2014, p. 133.

[125] Rescher, 2014, p. 138.

[126] Rescher, 2014,

[127] Rescher, 2014, p. 138.

To recapitulate: Metaphilosophical relativism poses a threat to those who adopt the reflexive view on philosophy when it slips into metaphilosophical skepticism, since metaphilosophical skepticism aims to eliminate the role of metaphilosophy in the philosophical practice. Firstly, as Ellis's arguments show, metaphilosophical relativism is mistaken. Secondly, even if we don't reject metaphilosophical relativism, according to Rescher, we can still embrace the reflexive view.

Besides being against metaphilosophical relativism, Ellis, indeed, has a positive solution in her mind. She holds that 'critical thinking' is the substratum which unifies all the metaphilosophies. In other words, 'critical thinking' is the grounding of all philosophical practice. As she put it:

> this presupposition is an expression of our acceptance of the critical procedures we follow when we philosophise, when, for example, we assess particular philosophical positions and make explicit the assumptions they involve and the implication they contain.[128]

If Ellis is right, then different metaphilosophies share at least one common ground: 'we have identified critical thinking as the phenomenon which is to be located at this deeper level of metaphilosophical enquiry'.[129]

1.3 The Argument From Circularity

So far, we have addressed two arguments that try to show that metaphilosophy is pointless. In this section, we will address a third one: the argument from circularity.

For the sake of discussion, let us call a debate between two metaphilosophical

[128] Ellis, 2001, p. 372.

[129] Ellis, 2001, p. 374.

frameworks (or conceptual schemes[130]) *meta-debate*. In a meta-debate, one should presumably justify one's metaphilosophical theses by invoking one's own philosophical methodology. But, frequently, one's methodology is premised on some metaphysical or epistemological theses entailed by one's own metaphilosophical theses. Therefore, we will either beg the question or meet with a vicious circularity. Matthew C. Haug explains this predicament as follows:

> [. . .] proponents of any methodological problem face a dilemma. On one hand, if the epistemological and ontological thesis that are required to support a given method can, in turn, be defended only by employing that method, then they are open to the charge of circularity. On the other hand, if these theses are left undefended but are still (at least implicitly) used to support their favored method, then they are left open to the charge of begging the question.[131]

In meta-debate, our concerns are not just some specific problems such as whether the death penalty should be allowed. Instead, we focus on justifying our own metaphilosophy and methodology. The problem is that usually one's metaphilosophy is indistinguishable from one's methodology. So, it won't be persuasive to justify one's metaphilosophy with one's methodology, or to justify one's methodology with one's metaphilosophy. Suppose that Sid endorses metaphilosophy *A*, and his philosophical methodology *B* is entailed by metaphilosophy *A*. Obviously, either justifying *A* with *B* or justifying *B* with *A* is not credible.

According to Piercey, such a problem can be found in Richard Rorty's discussion of 'conversational philosophy' and 'edifying philosopher'. Before addressing Rorty's

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[130] Cf. Davidson, 1984.

[131] Haug, 2013, p. 4.

problem, we need to introduce his version of reflexive philosophy, which according to Piercey, he fails to justify.

In 'Analytic and Conversational Philosophy', Rorty puts forwards a new notion of philosophy, namely, 'conversational philosophy'. According to this notion, philosophers should keep updating the vocabularies they use in philosophy. The conversational philosopher holds that 'discussing what philosophy has been and might be is as respectable a way of doing philosophy as, for example, discussing how to give referentially opaque contexts their proper place in a semantic theory'.[132] The reason Rorty dubbed them 'conversational' is that these philosophers are devoted to 'suggesting changes in the uses of words' in order to 'break through impasses' and 'make conversation more fruitful'.[133] Indicating that analytic philosophy and conversational philosophy are antagonistic, Rorty argues that the goal of analytic philosophy is similar to natural science, namely it aims to seek the objective truth of nature. And it claims that there exist 'permanent structures of thought, or consciousness, or rationality, or language or *something*, for philosophers to reveal'.[134] Rorty takes himself as one of the conversational philosophers 'who are sufficiently historicist as to think of themselves as taking part in a conversation rather than as practicing a quasi-scientific discipline'.[135] As this explanation indicates, the notion of 'historicist' is essential to conversational philosophy. Rorty claims that possessing historical self-awareness is the *sine qua non* for distinguishing the fruitful philosophical questions from the pointless ones.

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (PMN), Rorty demonstrates a similar thought with different expressions. In PMN, he draws a distinction between 'edifying

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[132] Rorty, 2015, p. 129.

[133] Rorty, 2015, p. 124.

[134] Rorty, 2015, p. 127.

[135] Rorty, 2015, p. 126.

philosophers' and 'systematic philosophers'. Edifying philosophers are those who 'refuse to present themselves as having found out any objective truth', and take themselves 'as doing something different from, and more important than, offering accurate representations of how things are'.[136] Therefore, edifying philosophy aligns with conversational philosophy. On the other hand, systematic philosophers are those 'whose work is essentially constructive'.[137] Given that edifying philosophers possess historical self-awareness, it is plausible to count them as doing reflexive philosophy. Piercey claims that Rorty aims to invent new ways of philosophical talking, and being self-conscious by reflecting on one's historical situation.[138]

Rorty's metaphilosophy is well situated in the category of reflexive philosophy. Rejecting a universal solution to metaphilosophy, Rorty suggests that we should keep examining our current vocabularies in philosophy and provide an improved and bracing way of doing philosophy which is consists in bringing up new concepts[139]. Piercey agrees with Rorty's reflexive view, but he does not think Rorty's claim suffices to support his reflexive approach over the non-reflexive one. He notes: 'when Rorty criticizes non-conversational philosophers for being unconversable, he is defending the conversational standpoint *from* the conversational standpoint by using criteria available only *to* that standpoint. From the perspective of someone outside that standpoint, he is begging the question'.[140] The problem is that his justification of reflexive philosophy is premised on the advantages of this approach. Therefore, for those who do not accept reflexive philosophy, Rorty begs the question. Piercey holds that justifying edifying philosophy by using the principles of edifying philosophy will not be accepted by those who do not embrace edifying philosophy in the first place.

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[136] Rorty, 2009, p. 370.

[137] Rorty, 2009, p. 366.

[138] Piercey, 2010, p. 344.

[139] Rorty's metaphilosophical spirit is consistent with the conceptual engineering project I will discussed in the following chapters.

[140] Piercey, 2010, p. 345.

However, Piercey has a solution in mind: resorting to 'arguments' would be wrongheaded and futile: 'we should not expect to settle this dispute through straightforward appeals to arguments. Arguments that satisfy reflexive philosophers like Rorty will articulate intuitions accepted by reflexive philosophers, and for that reason will probably be unconvincing to non-reflexive philosophers such as Ryle and Fodor' (Piercey 2010, 346). So, the consequence is that arguments do not work in debates between different conceptual schemes: 'when one scheme supplants another in this way, it is not as a result of knockdown arguments'.[141] After rejecting the approach appealing to arguments, Piercey offers a positive solution which is on the basis of *narrative*:

> Rather, when one scheme prevails over another, it is because the first scheme proves more successful than the second in ways that adherents of the second can understand and accept. The first may, for example, succeed in all the same ways as the second *and* solve a nagging problem that the second has been unable to solve on its own. [. . .] The first will have to show the second that it can do something the second cannot. What is more, the first will have to show this in ways that defenders of the second approach can understand and accept.[142]

Therefore, the narrative works only when the first scheme can make clear why it is better than the second scheme. How could we use Piercey's narrative approach to justify reflexive philosophy? According to Piercey, reflexive philosophy's overwhelming advantage is that it can explain the existence of philosophical/metaphilosophical disagreement which cannot be explained by non-reflexive philosophy: 'reflexive philosophy can make its appeal plain to its rival. It can solve a problem that non-reflexive philosophy cannot: the existence of interminable disagreement, with respect to both first-order questions and

[141] Piercey, 2010, p. 347.

[142] Piercey, 2010, pp. 347-8.

metaphilosophical debates'.[143] Those proponents of reflexive philosophy need to show why their approach is better than non-reflexive way. Instead of employing arguments, Piercey advocates the narrative approach: 'To vindicate reflexive philosophy, therefore, we would have to tell a certain kind of story about the history of this approach'.[144]

Does Piercey's strategy work? It seems that Piercey's solution still relies on the notion of 'historicism', a notion belongs to reflexive philosophy, and might not be accepted by the non-reflexive philosophers. It is plausible to imagine that Piercey would reply that he is trying to tell a story in opposition to employing arguments, and story-telling is immune to the question-begging charge. Moreover, he still owes us an explanation of the difference between 'argument' and 'story-telling'. Piercey admits to a certain extent that this distinction is blurry: 'in order to resolve this debate, we will have to blur the line between giving an argument and tracing a history'.[145] In the philosophical community, arguments are usually understood as a reason-giving activity. Here is a definition given by Julian Baggini & Peter Fosl:

> an argument is the most basic complete unit of reasoning, an atom of reason. An 'argument' is an inference from one or more starting points (truth claims called a 'premise' or 'premises') to an end point (a truth called a 'conclusion').[146]

According to this definition, as long as we provide reasons to support our claim, we are offering an argument. Another version is given by Scott Aikin & Robert Talisse:

> In the most general sense, argument is the attempt to make clear the reasons why we believe something that we believe. [. . .] Argument is the attempt not only to

[143] Piercey, 2010, p. 348.

[144] Piercey, 2010, p. 349.

[145] Piercey, 2010, p. 349.

[146] Baggini and Fosl, 2011, p. 2.

> make clear what our reasons are, but also to *vindicate* or *defend* what we believe by showing that our belief is well-supported by compelling reasons.[147]

With these definitions of 'argument' in mind, it is implausible to claim that 'story telling' is not an argument, given that a story teller is trying to explain her advantages over her opponent in order to support its conclusion that her idea is better[148].

Concerning the idea of the limitation of 'argumentation', Piercey is not the only one who notices it. In 'L'épouvantail De L'argument', Pierre Cassou-Noguès also tries to argue that the power of 'argument' in philosophy is limited. According to him, 'arguments' are usually associated with analytic philosophy. He characterizes how analytic philosophers tackle the philosophical problems as follows:

> Raise a problem, formulate a thesis which can be defended by an argument, and also ready for the amendments of the arguments concerning the possible objections.[149]

Cassou-Noguès does not think that this way of doing philosophy is the only game in town. For instance, he takes Wittgenstein as a counterexample to this picture. As he indicates, we can extract arguments from Wittgenstein's thought just as we can extract the story from Borges's fiction, but that does not necessarily entail that Wittgenstein pursued philosophy by constructing arguments. Instead, Wittgenstein often prefers

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147 Aikin and Talisse, 2013, p. 11.

148 Richard J. Bernstein expresses a similar view in his book *Ironic Life*. In a review of this book, Barry Allen introduces Bernstein's idea as follows: 'Bernstein thinks this is a terrible idea. What does Rorty suppose argument is? His canon, seldom (if ever) made explicit, draws from Aristotle and Carnap: clearly demarcated premises and a conclusion incontrovertibly derived by uncontroversial rules of validity. If that is what an argument is, then Rorty's work is not argument. But neither is ninety-nine percent of anything we describe as argued or well reasoned. It is a terrible model, that makes nonsense of practice professional and ordinary. As for redescription, that turns out to be rather closer to what the rest of us call argument. Everything that makes Rorty's idea of redescription ("mere" redescription) different from what he deigns to call (real, proper) argument, the more closely it corresponds with argument as people, including him, actually practice it.' (Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews)

149 Cassou- Noguès, 2012, p. 58.

using some images and analogies to remind us what is going wrong in traditional philosophy. Further, Cassou-Noguès warns us that the overwhelming priority of argument would blind our insights, and many conceptual creations could be missed. Cassou-Noguès is right that 'argument' should not be the only game in town, since there are always other choices among the diverse philosophical communities, such as Wittgenstein's philosophy as therapy, phenomenological descriptions, philosophy as poetry, contemplation, philosophical novels, or using allegory.

However, we can still draw a distinction between 'the method of doing philosophy' and 'the method of justifying the method of doing philosophy'. We don't deny the fact that ways of doing philosophy are miscellaneous, and that providing arguments might just be one of the ways in which it can be done. In meta-debates, appealing to your own doctrines would beg the question. But it does not mean that we should give up the conversation between different philosophical frameworks. In contrast to Piercey, I propose that appealing to argument is the only option that is viable in meta-debates, as long as we obey the following rule:

> *In meta-debates, one should not take the principle of her own conceptual scheme as one's premise without justification, if it is not accepted by one's opponent defending an alternative conceptual scheme.*

So, in meta-debates, we should avoid using a distinctive methodology which might not be accepted by our opponents. For example, my using 'the archaeology of knowledge' to justify the method of the archaeology of knowledge would be illegitimate, if my opponent does not accept this approach at all. The question is whether, adopting this principle, it is possible to avoid circularity or question-begging in meta-debates. We shall answer it by diagnosing some cases.

In 'For the Love of Reason', Louise M. Antony tells us a story about her intellectual

development. She was raised in a religious (Catholic) family. She had a curious mind, and could not stop questioning her religious faith, even when she was very young. Religious notions such as 'Limbo', 'Trinity' or 'Santa Claus' always confused her. She found that these notions were not consistent. After Antony had taken courses of philosophy in college, she found out that, in fact, those religious concepts have been challenged and defended by many philosophers. There are numerous arguments for the existence of God conceived by philosophers in history, such as Anselm's ontological arguments, William James's religious experience argument or the argument from evil. However, none of them was persuasive to Antony:

> At last I was ready to admit to myself that I no longer believed in God. [. . .] I felt suddenly free—free of the obligation to avow propositions I didn't understand, free of the struggle to make sense of doctrines that couldn't be made sensible, and free to the need to square everything I learned with Catholic dogma. My only doxastic obligations henceforth would be to reason and evidence.[150]

In this case, we have a Catholic Antony A_1 in contrast to a Skeptic Antony A_2. To vindicate the religious concepts, Antony A_1 is not supposed to use religious principles. Is it possible? The answer is yes.

Take a specific example on abortion. As well known to us, abortion is prohibited by the Catholic hierarchy. Suppose that Antony A_2, an atheist, supports women's right to abortion. Then, Antony A_1, a Catholic, disagrees with Antony A_2. How could Antony A_1 argue against Antony A_2 without begging the question? Don Marquis offers one solution in 'Why Abortion is Immoral'. He defends the anti-abortion view without resorting to the Catholic doctrines. Put another way, Marquis has successfully provided a non-religious argument against abortion. One version of Marquis's argument can be paraphrased as follows. He firstly claims that it is prima facie

[150] Antony, 2007, p. 51.

seriously wrong to kill adult human beings. With this accepted condition, then, he poses the question: 'What is the essence of the wrongness of killing adult human beings?' The answer, according to him, would be that killing someone is wrong, because killing inflicts (one of) the greatest possible losses on the victim. As Marquis puts it: 'it would seem that what makes killing any adult human being prima facie seriously wrong is the loss of his or her future'.[151] Marquis argues that this essence of wrongness also applies to the fetus.

From this case, we can see that it is possible to have meta-debates between different religious systems, leaving aside whether Marquis's argument is impeccable, given that my purpose is not to show that Marquis provided a knocked down argument. Of course, many challenges can be made. The point is that meta-debates without committing circularity or begging the question are possible.

The debate between conceptual analysis advocates and experimental philosophy advocates serves as a good example to show how to avoid begging the question or circularity in meta-debate. Experimental philosophy is a philosophical methodology movement which 'seeks to replace or supplement traditional analysis with empirical, experimental data, specifically collected for the purposes of illuminating some philosophical question'.[152] 'Burning the armchair' is their slogan; traditional armchair method (conceptual analysis) is their target. As Shaun Nichols puts it, 'as long as we can offer an account of the internal psychological processes that underlie our judgment, we do not also need to find necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of the concept in particular case'.[153] Those experimentalists indicate that conceptual analysis highly relies on philosophers' intuitions which are not reliable at all. For them, intuition is too weak to be taken as philosophical evidence. So, can we

[151] Marquis, 1989, p. 190.

[152] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 88.

[153] Nichols, 2008, p. 5.

justify conceptual analysis in a proper way? What I mean by this is whether it is possible to defend conceptual analysis without appealing to the doctrine of conceptual analysis, such as providing definitions or appealing to intuition.

I think the answer is yes. Jens Kipper's 'Philosophers and Grammarians' serves as an example. He argues that intuition is not only employed by armchair philosophers, it is also widespread in linguistic investigation. Therefore, claiming that conceptual analysis is hopeless would affect the method adopted in linguistic community: 'The upshot is that global scepticism concerning conceptual intuitions would lead to global scepticism simpliciter'.[154]

Further, Kipper argues that the judgments of philosophers are more reliable than those of laymen: 'in the case of grammarians most people seem willing to grant them superior expertise in assessing the grammaticality of linguistic forms. Why shouldn't we grant philosophers a comparable kind of expertise?' (Kipper 2010, 524). Philosophers are usually well trained: 'they are aware of some relevant distinctions or possess some relevant concept; they are better trained at identifying and thus factoring out pragmatic influences; etc.'.[155] Moreover, Kipper stresses that philosophical intuition is not something *mysterious*. On the contrary, it is both epistemically basic and explicable:

> We can give reasons why the true justified believer in a Gettier scenario does not know, or why the liquid on Twin Earth is not water. One can thus often find principles which underlie the intuitive judgments. In this respect, intuitions in philosophy are not much different from expert intuitions in other areas.[156]

Colin McGinn, another proponent of conceptual analysis, also provides reasons.

[154] Kipper, 2010, p. 520.

[155] Kipper, 2010, p. 525.

[156] Kipper, 2010, p. 525.

Firstly, similarly to Kipper, McGinn holds that philosophers are competent at making philosophical judgments: 'the trained chair-bound philosopher is in as good as a position as anyone to excavate his implicit knowledge—he should turn to his non-philosopher neighbor for this?'[157] Secondly, a philosopher does not philosophize alone. Usually, she will discuss with her colleagues or students, and modify her ideas on the basis of feedback. So, her arguments are always open to scrutiny. Conceptual analysis is premised on 'dialogue': 'This is why dialogue, in addition to solitary contemplation, is so vital to philosophy, dialogue is, indeed, the crucial testing ground for conceptual analysis'[158] Thirdly, as McGinn argues, empirical evidence can in fact support the results of conceptual analysis rather than reject it:

> Brain scans might in principle be employed, too: assuming that concepts have a cerebral signature, we can test for whether one concept includes another by observing whether the signature of one overlaps with the signature of the other. It is, however, very hard to believe that such neurophysiological evidence could actually overturn an analysis like Suits's analysis of games.[159]

Kipper and McGinn's arguments suffice to show that meta-debates between two different philosophical camps are possible, even if their arguments may be vulnerable to further challenge. The point is that they do not need to invoke their own doctrine to defend their method.

To recap, this chapter examines three possible ways of advocating the otiose view of metaphilosophy, namely 1) argument from the knowing how-knowing that distinction, 2) metaphilosophical skepticism, and 3) argument from circularity. However, I argue that all these three objections can be overturned.

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[157] McGinn, 2012, p. 132.

[158] McGinn, 2012, p. 132.

[159] McGinn, 2012, p. 132.

Chapter 2 What is Conceptual Engineering?

> If one thinks of philosophy as the love of wisdom, and of wisdom as consisting in the grasp of truth, and of truth as the accurate representation of a natural order. Then one has reason to doubt that philosophy is possible. — Richard Rorty

In the previous Chapter, I defended the significance of doing metaphilosophy. In this chapter, I will introduce a metaphilosophical project—conceptual engineering. My own project conceptual tuning is mostly inspired by this project. So, in this Chapter, I will map out six conceptual engineering approaches: (1) Cappelen's conceptual engineering (section 2.1); (2) Brun's interpretation of Carnap's method of explication (section 2.2); (3) Zagzebski's moral revisionist approach (section 2.3); (4) Ludlow's lexical warfare (section 2.4); (5) Plunkett's metalinguistic negotiation (section 2.5); and (6) Haslanger's ameliorative inquiry (section 2.6).

2.1 Cappelen's Conceptual Engineering

Herman Cappelen develops a sophisticated picture of a specific metaphilosophical view: Philosophy as *Conceptual Engineering*. Cappelen has already contributed several works to the domain of metaphilosophy. For example, *Philosophy without Intuition*[160] is a provocative and praiseworthy work that confronts the heated issue of the role of intuition in philosophy. *Philosophy without Intuition* is more critical, challenging the prevailing conception of 'intuition' in the contemporary philosophical climate. In contrast, in his forthcoming book *Fixing Language: Conceptual Engineering and the Limits of Revision*[161], he brings us a more constructive work which establishes a specific metaphilosophical view, namely conceptual engineering.

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[160] Cappelen, 2012.

[161] Cappelen, forthcoming-a.

In section 2.1.1, I will discuss the decline of the philosophy of language and the rise of conceptual engineering. Section 2.1.2 will explain why this project matters. And I will discuss a Strawsonian challenge to conceptual engineering and two rejoinders to this challenge in section 2.1.2, 2.1.3, and 2.1.4. Section 2.1.6 demonstrates Cappelen's austerity framework of this project.

2.1.1 Philosophy of Language

Cappelen's conceptual engineering project is premised on an important distinction between *the representationally complacent* and *the representational skeptics*. The representationally complacent refers to those who are satisfied with our current communication devices or concepts. They use concepts without further scrutiny. On the other hand, the term 'representational skeptics' denotes those who are not fully satisfied with the linguistic tools at hand. Instead, they tend to improve concepts that they inherit from others (peers, teachers, communities, friends, etc.). Philosophers are supposed to possess the latter attitude while pursuing conceptual engineering. In other words, the conceptual engineer is prepared to improve or modify our current concepts at any time. As Cappelen describes, while philosophers engage in such an activity, it is 'a form of conceptual engineering, a form of revisionism, or an effort to ameliorate our concepts' that they engage in.[162] In his paper 'Why Philosophers Shouldn't Do Semantics', Cappelen also gives a brief sketch of this project, including two parts:

- The first part involves an effort to develop a theory of how to assess and improve our representational devices.
- The second part involves practicing the theory developed in part one, i.e., assessing and improving particular representational devices.[163]

[162] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 19.

[163] Cappelen, forthcoming-b, p. 14.

So, there are two steps. First, we need a metaphilosophical theory to justify this method, and then we can focus on numerous particular cases, such as mind, knowledge, game, justice, or gender.

Before moving forward, I will address the role of the philosophy of language in philosophy as a whole. In Cappelen's mind, the idea of conceptual engineering can provide an answer to the question of what kind of philosophy of language still matters today. He provides several reasons. The prevailing view is that the linguistic turn has fallen out of favor in the philosophical community. It has become an old-fashioned philosophy[164]. Assuming this view is right, philosophy of language loses its central role in philosophy, and we can thereby put forth a 'no priority for philosophy of language' assumption:

> *No Priority for Philosophy of Language (No Priority):* It is not the case that questions about justice or race or grounds or consciousness or naturalism or God or social ontology or explanation or causation or knowledge or beauty or action or validity or attention or perception or (continue with more or less any question not directly within philosophy of language) are about or are best solved by studying the properties of words or sentences.[165]

Hence, according to the critical view on the linguistic turn, the gist of philosophy is not simply the study of words or terms. Therefore, we need to reconsider whether natural language semantics is germane to the nature of philosophy. Cappelen proffers four possible answers to the question of 'why should those who reject the linguistic turn care about the properties of natural languages?'[166]

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[164] Some would say that philosophy of mind burgeoned and became the core of philosophy. Or some, like Timothy Williamson, might endorse a conceptual turn instead of a linguistic turn,.

[165] Cappelen, forthcoming-b, p. 5.

[166] Cappelen, forthcoming-b, p. 5.

Firstly, *the abandonment answer* is an absolute negative answer whose advocates rejecting the idea that natural language semantics plays any role in philosophy. Three reasons can be provided. (i) The linguistic turn is the only reason we focus on natural language semantics. Since this turn fell out of favor, natural language semantics has become less important. (ii) Without enough theoretical and practical knowledge in the areas of phonology, syntax, morphology, etc., one is not qualified to investigate natural language semantics—and it appears that most philosophers lack such knowledge and training. (iii) Since it is odd to publish papers on phonology or Romanian syntax in philosophical journals, the same goes for the topic of the semantics of English definites or indefinites. However, Cappelen claims that drawing a distinction between philosophy of language and natural language semantics could resolve the problem.

Secondly, *the accidental historical connection answer* contends that research on natural language semantics carries more weight in philosophy than in other disciplines due to contingent historical reasons. Cappelen points out that this view does not stand scrutiny either. As we know, in history, there are some subjects that were once subordinate to philosophy and later become independent. For example, economics and psychology were once under the umbrella of philosophy and now they are independent disciplines. After separating from philosophy, they developed their own subjects and methods which are independent of philosophy. The same could happen to the study of the natural language semantics.

Thirdly, *the piecemeal and topic-specific significance of natural language semantics answer* suggests that natural language semantics plays its role in some specific branches of philosophy. Giving up the excessive ambition of arguing for an intrinsic relation between natural language semantics and philosophy in general, this approach aims to indicate that the value of doing natural language semantics lies in certain specific philosophical domains. For example, the notion of ‘context’ plays an

important role in the discussion of 'knowledge'. The moral is that the study of natural language semantics is only useful in certain philosophical problems. Again, Cappelen contends that this answer is flawed: 'Piecemeal significance isn't good enough because there's piecemeal significance for *very many disciplines* and we don't think natural language semantics should be a part of those other disciplines'.[167]

Fourthly, *Timothy Williamson's answer* indicates that all philosophical investigations presuppose the use of natural language sentences. Since natural language is the vehicle of philosophical arguments and reasoning, it is necessary to investigate language, the medium for philosophy. Williamson makes a vivid analogy to support his view:

> Some contemporary metaphysicians appear to believe that they can safely ignore formal semantics and the philosophy of language because their interest is in a largely extra-mental reality. They resemble an astronomer who thinks he can safely ignore the physics of telescopes because his interest is in the extra-terrestrial universe. In delicate matters, his attitude makes him all the more likely to project features of his telescope confusedly onto the stars beyond. Similarly, the metaphysicians who most disdain language are the most likely to be its victims. Analytic philosophy at its best uses logical rigor and semantic sophistication to achieve a sharpness of philosophical vision unobtainable by other means. To sacrifice those gains would be to choose blurred vision.[168] (Williamson 2008, 46)

Cappelen argues that even with this telling analogy, Williamson's answer still cannot distinguish the distinctive role that doing natural language semantics plays in philosophy from that it plays in other disciplines.

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[167] Cappelen, forthcoming-b, p. 9.

[168] Williamson, 2008, p. 46 (cited in Cappelen forthcoming-b), p. 11.

These approaches aforementioned either simply abandon the role of natural language semantics or fail to justify it. Cappelen provides two alternative solutions. The obvious answer is based on the assumption that philosophers are always supposed to engage with *foundational questions*. Given this assumption, it's legitimate for philosophers to deal with the foundational questions in linguistics instead of mere natural language semantics. Cappelen lists some options for such foundational questions:

- What it is for something to have representational capacities?
- What are properties and situations (insofar as they play a role in semantics)?
- What are types (insofar as they play a role in, say, syntax or phonology)?
- What are languages, metaphysically speaking? For example: are languages abstract objects or psychological entities or something else altogether?
- What is truth (insofar as this affects e.g. semantics)?
- What is successful communication?
- What [are] agreement and disagreement?
- What is the relationship between language and thought?[169]

Conceptual engineering, the more important answer, is also the main topic in this chapter. So far, we have discussed Cappelen's diagnosis of four possible answers to the relation between philosophy and the natural language semantics. The negative approach, which would make a lot of current work in philosophy meaningless, does not seem to be a wise choice. However, several other strategies proposed to save the status of the study of natural language semantics are not tenable either. Even with this negative information, we don't need to jump to the conclusion that the philosophy of language is moribund. For as Cappelen claims, philosophy of language is important in the promising conceptual engineering project. In fact, similar to Cappelen, Peter

[169] Cappelen, forthcoming-b, pp. 12-3.

Winch (1958/1990) has stated that the philosopher's interests in language are never merely about the trivial linguistic expressions:

> Philosophical issues do, to a large extent, turn on the correct use of certain linguistic expressions; the elucidation of a concept is, to a large extent, the clearing up of linguistic confusions. Nevertheless, the philosopher's concern is not with correct usage as such and not all linguistic confusions are equally relevant to philosophy. They are relevant only in so far as the discussion of them is designed to throw light on the question how far reality is intelligible.[170]

Winch's remark is consistent with conceptual engineering because the focus of conceptual engineering is on human practice rather than on linguistic issues. For example, we should ameliorate the concept of gender in order to contribute to the gender equality.

Let us now turn back to conceptual engineering and see some historical cases described by Cappelen. First, according to Cappelen, the leitmotiv of Frege's work is to improve the deficiency of natural language, which is consistent with the spirit of conceptual engineering. Second, Wittgenstein's claim that philosophical problems arise when 'language goes on holiday' suggests that philosophical problems can be resolved when we pay attention to our use of language. Third, Carnap's theory of 'explication' is an effort to overcome the 'vagueness' and 'indeterminacy' of our pre-theoretical language[171]. Fourth, ordinary language philosophy also aligns with the notion of conceptual engineering[172]: as Cappelen quotes Austin: '[. . .] ordinary language is not the last word: in principle it can everywhere be supplemented and

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[170] Winch, 1990, p. 11.

[171] In fact, I will discuss below how Georg Brun interprets Carnap's method of explication as conceptual re-engineering.

[172] I will discuss the relation between ordinary language philosophy and conceptual tuning/engineering in subsequent chapter.

improved upon and superseded'.[173] In the 1970s, according to Cappelen, *the descriptive turn* stepped onto the philosophical stage. Saul Kripke, Hilary Putnam, and Tyler Burge led the descriptive turn. As Cappelen puts it, 'In order to criticize and improve something, you first need to understand how that thing works. So the descriptivist turn might, in part, have been motivated by a sense that the engineers needed more facts about language to work with'.[174] However, there are still some salient works on conceptual engineering in contemporary philosophy, despite this descriptive turn. And Cappelen proposes that 'we return to the roots of analytic philosophy and make this the core of philosophy of language' and 'in some sense of philosophy more generally'.[175]

Cappelen proposes three conceptual ameliorative strategies: (i) 'Improve the concept and keep the lexical item', which aims to preserve the original lexical item (e.g, belief, knowledge), while changing the meaning/intension/extension of it. (ii) 'Improve the concepts and change the lexical item', which sets out to ameliorate the old meaning/intension/extension, and replace the old lexical expression at the same time. (iii) 'Complete Abandonment'. This is the most radical strategy in the sense that we simply get rid of the defective concepts[176].

2.1.2 Why Conceptual Engineering Matters

Why should philosophers pursue conceptual engineering in the first place? Cappelen justifies the importance of engaging in such activity with two arguments: *the prudential argument* and *the ontological arguments*, (the latter has two versions; language as constitutive of social reality and conceptual amelioration as amelioration of the world).

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[173] Austin, 1956, p. 11 (cited in Cappelen forthcoming-b, p. 16).

[174] Cappelen, forthcoming-b, p. 16.

[175] Cappelen, forthcoming-b, p. 17.

[176] The third approach will be highlighted in the later discussion of Brandomian conceptual engineering.

As Cappelen states, the prudential argument is premised on an assumption that the terminology or concepts which we use to talk and think about a particular subject matter can be defective and can be therefore improved (the revisionist's basic assumption). Granting such assumption, it is natural to claim that

> [i]f our representational devices can be defective in ways W1...Wn, then we should be engaged in two kinds of activities: (i) Investigate whether their concepts are defective and (ii) if deficits are found, then ameliorate.[177]

An analogy might be helpful. When there are viruses on a computer with important data, it is reasonable to find a way to eradicate them. Similarly, with the defective concepts at hand, it is the philosopher's responsibility to take care of them.

By employing the ontological arguments, Cappelen shows another path for justifying the significance of conceptual engineering. The first version of the ontological arguments is supported by the view that language is in effect the primary constitutive element of social reality. This view suggests that social reality is in fact partially constituted by our concepts that are used to describe social categories. John Searle (2010) is a supporter of this view. He claims: 'All institutional facts, and therefore all status functions, are created by speech acts of a type that in 1975 I baptized as "Declarations".[178] If we accept this theory, then as Cappelen puts it, 'conceptual engineering is engineering of the world as much as it is of our concepts'.[179] Let us now turn to the second version of the ontological argument. The basic premise of this argument is that *x* is what the concept of *x* denotes. Therefore, upshot is: 'The result of the ameliorations is a change in the nature of what these phenomena are. So understood, those who engage in conceptual amelioration are engaged in an effort to

[177] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 47.

[178] Searle, 2010, p. 11.

[179] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 51.

improve aspects of the world'.[180]

2.1.3 The Strawsonian Challenge

In Cappelen's mind, the most devastating challenge to conceptual engineering comes from P. F. Strawson, whose original target is Carnap. However, Cappelen indicates that this objection also applies to his conceptual engineering. So it is necessary to address it. Here comes Strawson's objection:

> [. . .] to offer formal explanations of key terms of scientific theories to one who seeks philosophical illumination of essential concepts of non-scientific discourse, is to do something utterly irrelevant—is a sheer misunderstanding, like offering a text-book on physiology to someone who says (with a sigh) that he wished he understood the workings of the human heart. [. . .] typical philosophical problems about the concepts used in non-scientific discourse cannot be solved by laying down the rules of exact and fruitful concepts in science. To do this last is not to solve the typical philosophical problem, but to change the subject.[181]

The main concern of this argument is that the substitution of the ordinary concepts with scientific ones will not solve the original problem, but simply change the subject. Assuming this principle can be generalized, conceptual engineering is also under attack from this argument. Consequently, for the conceptual engineer, the major problem lies in how to draw the line between revision and topic shifting. Cappelen divides the Strawsonian objection into three parts: (i) *change of topic*; (ii) *truth relativism*; (iii) *the alleged incoherence of conceptual engineering*.

Regarding the (i) change of topic, Cappelen formulates this objection as follows:

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[180] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 54.

[181] Strawson, 1963, p. 505 (cited in Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 60).

> Change of extension and intension (and so sense, if you believe in those) is change of topic, so revisionary project[s] of the kind sketched at the beginning fail. They are not a better way to talk about what we were talking about: they simply change the topic.[182]

This type of challenge can be addressed from three positions. Firstly, (a) *lack of continuity of inquiry*. Consider a question with the ordinary term 'terrorist', such as 'What is it to be a terrorist?', 'Why should we be against terrorists?'. Suppose now we are going to answer these questions with the word 'terrorist' having a new extension (after amelioration). Then we failed to answer the original question, given that the 'terrorist' in our answer has the new meaning. Secondly, (b) *verbal disputes*. Since the intension/extension of the concept has been changed, why don't we adopt a new expression? By using different lexical items to represent the distinction in meaning, we can avoid the charge of verbal disputes. Thirdly, (c) *saying what others said*. Suppose that *a*'s speech contains the concept 'woman', then if *b* reports *a*'s talking with a new meaning of 'woman', then it seems that *b* ends up with mis-reporting.

The second Strawsonian objections is (ii) truth relativism. Adopting conceptual engineering, we might fall into the pitfall of truth relativism. Before the amelioration, what is said by an utterance of *S* is true. After the amelioration, what is said by an utterance of *S* is not true. Cappelen indicates that this kind of problem arises when a post-ameliorator misquotes a pre-ameliorator's utterance. Suppose Sid, a post-ameliorator, misreports a pre-ameliorator Nancy's utterance by saying 'Nancy said that *S*'. However, what Nancy said is true in the context of pre-amelioration, yet false in the context of post-amelioration. It seems that the only choice left is to embrace truth relativism, if we are not ready to give up conceptual engineering.

The last objection is (iii) the charge of the incoherence of conceptual engineering.

[182] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 62.

One would argue that the extension/intension of a given concept is essential. A natural corollary is that any attempts to improve the original concept in fact amounts to abandoning it. So the notion of conceptual improving is incoherent.

2.1.4 Cappelen's First Rejoinder

Cappelen has two strategies to reply to the Strawsonian objections: (i) *appealing to the coarseness of 'same-saying' and 'topic'*; (ii) *appealing to lexical effects*. The first strategy is a robust one, while the second one is weaker because it leads to drawbacks.

According to the first strategy, the topic remains the same, even if we have modulated the extension of a concept. Cappelen expresses the rationale of the first strategy as follows:

> The core of the reply to Strawson is to say that we can talk about the same topic even when we change extension. Sameness of topic doesn't track sameness of extensions. Sameness of topic is more coarse-grained than sameness of extension.[183]

Cappelen reminds us that technical terms such as 'extension', 'intension', and 'reference' can be distinguished from pre-theoretical expressions such as 'what she said' or 'what she is talking about'. The main difference is that pre-theoretical expressions are more *coarse-grained* than philosophical technologies. Therefore, it follows that 'two sentences with different semantic contents (understood as, at least, having the same extensions), can be used to say the same thing, or to talk or be about the same topic'.[184]

Normally, gradable adjectives (cold, hot, smart, interesting, intelligent, tall, etc.) are

[183] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 70.

[184] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 70.

context-sensitive terms, which means that their meaning might change crossing various contexts. For example, Suppose Sid utters 'Bob Dylan is outstanding' prior to Bob Dylan being awarded the Nobel Literature Prize, and Nancy utters the same sentence after the event. Hence, with different contexts, the meaning of 'outstanding' could be different. Many other different contexts can be conceived. With fluctuating contexts, the meaning (intension/extension) of 'outstanding' could be different (Sid does not mean that Bod Dylan is outstanding in literature while Nancy does). However, despite the differences in meaning, it is still plausible to claim that Sid and Nancy are talking about the same subject, namely the good character of Bob Dylan.

In addition, Cappelen employs Dorr & Hawthorne's (D&H) view to bolster his own claim. D&H hold that the right model for describing the relation between semantic facts and non-semantic facts is as follows:

> Plasticity: the relevant semantic facts are like the facts about people's heights: even tiny differences in the microphysical facts will, almost always, induce correspondingly tiny, but still genuine, differences as regards which of them obtain.[185]

Let us consider the word 'salad'. The meaning of salad supervenes on non-semantic facts. Any changes of salad at microphysical levels will bring about changes at the semantic level. In the past, only leaf-based salads count as salad, but clearly, we now have various salads without leaves. Even if the meaning of 'salad' changes through time, it does not jeopardize our use of the term 'salad' to talk about the same thing. Cappelen remarks:

> we are happy to treat ourselves as samesaying an utterance of S in a different context, despite the fact that the difference between our context is likely to mean

[185] Dorr and Hawthorne 2014, (cited in Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p, 74).

> at least a slight difference in extension. The important point here is that we treat ourselves as samesaying diachronically despite a tiny semantic drift.[186]

Cappelen's first rejoinder to various versions of the Strawsonian objection is based on this line of reasoning. As we have noted, the main idea is that samesaying or sameness of the topic is more coarse-grained than semantics, the theoretical term. Bearing this in mind, Cappelen replies to the aforementioned objections one by one. Concerning the challenge of the (a) lack of continuity of inquiry, a simple answer would be, since the topic preserved, so is the question and the answer. The fine-grained feature of the topic preservation helps us to avoid the (b) verbal disputes. The same applies to the challenge of (c) saying what others said.

According to Cappelen, the solution to the challenge from (ii) truth relativism can be found in his notion of 'content relativism': 'what I truly say you said can be true, while what you truly said that you said would be false at the time you spoke'.[187] Finally, Cappelen claims that 'as long as a change in concept does not lead to a change in topic', the (iii) incoherence problem dissolves.[188]

2.1.5 Cappelen's Second Rejoinder

Cappelen puts forward his second strategy by introducing the notion of 'lexical effects'. This strategy is not a profitable one, given that it entails some latent disadvantages. But the advantage of this strategy is that it does not require the preservation of the topic, and thus solves the Strawsonian challenge. Here's the compendium of this strategy written by Cappelen:

> I don't care about whether I'm changing the topic or fail to answer the old

[186] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 75.

[187] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 77.

[188] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 78.

> question. I care about the effects of my speech. The effect is in part a function of which lexical items I use. I've picked these lexical items (say 'woman') because doing so has good effects, despite changing the topic.[189]

As we can see, a prima facie advantage of this approach is that it does not even require preserving the sameness of the topic, thus the Strawsonian challenge dissolves. The proponents of this strategy simply do not care about the issue of topic-preservation. Cappelen describes a more detailed formulation of this strategy:

> Suppose lexical item E has lexical effects F. Someone might develop the following plan: I like these effects, i.e. I like F, so I am going to keep E. I'll do that even though doing so will change the topic and might lead to various verbal disputes, because the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.[190]

Lexical effects can be found in many cases. For example, naming a boy 'Hitler' would definitely engender some negative emotions. Cappelen also mentions that quotations of pejoratives are banned in the *New York Times*, since we all know that pejoratives bring negative influences. Another interesting example is 'Coca Cola'. Imagine what would happen if the brand name of 'Coca Cola' were changed? It is probable that this change would cause a decline in sales.

In what sense can the lexical effect avoid the Strawsonian challenge? Cappelen diagnoses some specific cases. Firstly, he discusses ordinary terms, such as 'marriage', 'rape', 'organic', 'hacker', 'refugee', 'immigrant', 'combatant'. These terms all possess significant lexical effects, either negative or positive. For example, 'rape' has obvious negative lexical effects, while 'marriage' has obvious positive effects. This strategy allows the possibility of topic shifting, as long as lexical effects are ensured.

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[189] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 71.

[190] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 85.

Besides ordinary concepts, Cappelen also discusses theoretical terms. He suggests that some academic communities might be constructed upon the terms they choose to use. Put differently, for them, it is the lexical effects of the theoretical terms that constitutes the community. He uses Francois Recanati's description of Jacques Lacan's followers to corroborate his idea[191], and interprets it as follows:

> Here is a way to think about this situation (assuming for the sake of argument, that Recanati is correct): they were using meaningless lexical items in order to exploit the lexical effects of those terms: the use of these terms could, for example, indicate allegiance to Lacan, membership in a group aligned with Lacan in various ways. This is [a] fairly extreme case: there is no meaning and so all there is to exploit is the lexical effects.[192]

With this characterization, it's not hard to perceive the risk of this strategy. Cappelen makes his warning by calling those who adopt the lexical effects strategy as 'exploiters':

> Call Conceptual Engineers who exploit lexical effects without an effort to make the case that the revision is topic preserving (i.e. Without trying to make the case that it's a better way to talk/refer) 'Exploiters'. Exploiters undermine rational discourse by encouraging verbal disputes and in so doing undermine continuity of inquiry. They treat speech as a medium of manipulation, not as a medium for communication (i.e. as a medium for the exchange of thoughts and ideas). There are Exploiters with good intentions, but the overall effect of their exploitation is to contribute to and encourage a use of language that undermines what we should treasure the most about it: continuous exchange of ideas. Exploiter are in

[191] Cf. Recanati, 1997.

[192] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 91.

effect *anti-intellectualist opportunists that contribute to a destruction of real communication.*[193]

As Cappelen mentions, the second strategy appealing to lexical effects is not a prefered candidate for defending conceptual engineering, as it could undermine our rational communication, and give rise to verbal disputes. Therefore, compared with the first one, it is a weaker reply with pernicious consequences.

2.1.6 Cappelen's Austerity Framework

The Austerity Framework is the core idea of the conceptual engineering project purported by Cappelen. This Framework includes eight ingredients.

[1] Ingredient 1: Extensions and Intensions

Basically, Cappelen holds that the meaning of a concept includes both extension and intension:

> Just as names refer to things, predicates refer to (or pick out or apply to) objects. This is the predicate's extension. The intension of a predicate is a function from circumstances of evaluation (worlds, world-time pairs, or whatever) to sets—the set of things that F picks out in each circumstance.[194]

[2] Ingredient 2: Topic-Stability and Samesaying across Changes in Extension

We have already mentioned this ingredient in section 2.1.4. Given that the topic (same-saying) is more coarse-grained than the semantics, we can maintain the topic even if the meaning of the concept changes.

[3] Ingredient 3: The Contestation Theory: No Algorithm for Topic Preservation

[193] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 95.

[194] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 99.

We might be curious: what is the criterion for the change of the meaning? Are there any rules or principles? Cappelen suggests a case-by-case approach instead of a one-size-fits-all strategy:

> we shouldn't be in the business of trying to look for necessary and sufficient conditions for change in extension to take place. We should be satisfied with case studies and some illuminating generalisations. The significant element of contestation in many of the cases (think of 'marriage' and 'rape') contributes to the unpredictable and non-calculable nature the process of change.[195]

[4] Ingredient 4: Lexical Effects and Communicative Disruptions

In section 2.1.5, I discussed that the 'exploiters' would keep the old lexical term *E* as long as they can exploit its lexical effects, even at the cost of sacrificing the preservation the original topic and jeopardizing rational discourse.

[5] Ingredient 5: A Dash of Externalism

According to Cappelen, conceptual engineering is compatible with a 'healthy dose of' semantic externalism, which allows for change in extensions and intensions. And Kripke's version meets the need, says Cappelen. Kripke mentions a case discussed by Gareth Evans. 'Madagascar' originally referred to a part of mainland Africa by the natives. Marco Polo mistakenly believed that 'Madagascar' was the name of an island and he continued to use it in this way. Today, Marco Polo's erroneous usage has become widespread, overriding the original historical usage. Kripke remarks:

> So real reference can shift to another real reference, fictional reference can shift to real, and real to fictional. In all these cases, a present intention to refer to a given entity (or to refer fictionally) overrides the original intention to preserve

[195] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 100.

reference in the historical chain of transmission.[196]

Cappelen borrows words from Williamson to establish the main idea of his healthy dose of externalism, which he calls anti-creed:

> Anti-Creed: 'A complex web of interactions and dependences can hold a linguistic or conceptual practice together even in the absence of a common creed that all participants at all times are required to endorse'. (Williamson 2008, 125)[197]

[6] Ingredient 6: Topic Amelioration (better ways to talk about a topic)

The aim of conceptual engineering is to provide a framework to assess the way that we talk about the world (or concepts). In Cappelen's mind, philosophers are supposed to offer better representational devices for various purposes. For example, should we change the extension of marriage to include same sex couples?

[7] Ingredient 7: Metasemantics as the Source of Indeterminacy, Incoherence, Inconsistency, and Nonsense

So far, the austerity framework does not have a solution to explain inconsistent, incoherent and indeterminate concepts. However, Cappelen thinks that his austerity framework can explain the inconsistency in a concept by explaining the illusion of the incoherent or inconsistent or indeterminate concepts in terms of *metasemantics*, rather than the semantics or meaning of a concept.

[8] Ingredient 8: Incomprehensible - Out of Control - Will Keep Trying

Cappelen proposes a principle of 'incomprehensible – out of control – will keep trying'. As he formulates:

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[196] Kripke, 1980, p. 163 (cited in Cappelen forthcoming-a, p. 102).

[197] Williamson, 2008, p. 125 (cited in Cappelen forthcoming-a, p. 102).

(i) We are never likely to understand the detailed mechanisms that underpin any particular instance of conceptual engineering. They are too complex, messy, non-systematic, amorphous, and unstable.

(ii) The process of conceptual engineering is not within our control: No one of us and no sub-group of us has any significant degree of control over how concepts develop.

(iii) Despite (i) and (ii), we will keep trying to engage in conceptual engineering and given the kinds of creatures we are, maybe we must keep trying.[198]

After presenting the austerity framework, Cappelen distinguishes three kinds of conceptual engineering, even though they are intertwined in specific cases: (i) The first type is topic-improving engineering, which starts out with the intention of improving the way we talk about a topic. (ii) The second type is semantic engineering, which aims to tackle the semantic defects generated by metasemantic problems. (iii) Lexical effect-exploiting engineering take care of the lexical effects of the use of certain terms.

2.2 Carnap's Method of Explication (Brun's Version)

In this section, I will discuss Carnap's method of 'explication' through the lens of Georg Brun's reading. According to Brun, Carnap's method of explication can be indeed understood as a form of conceptual re-engineering[199].

[198] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 110.

[199] Brun's using of 're-engineering' is synonymous to Cappelen's using of 'engineering'.

2.2.1 Carnap's Notion of 'Explication'

Carnap's method of explication is one form of conceptual re-engineering. Explication aims to replace the old concept with a new one which has a theoretical or practical advantage over the former version, such as 'being more exact, fruitful, simple or precise'.[200] Brun explains:

> Carnap's basic idea is that explication is a process which replaces an inexact concept (the explicandum) with a more exact concept (the explicatum); this process serves some theoretical purpose and explicitly introduces the explicatum into the system of concepts of a target theory.[201]

So, to put it roughly, explication is a process of replacing *the explicandum* with *the explicatum*. The explicandum is from a pre-theoretical system, while the explicatum is supposed to be explained in terms of the target system of concepts. Unlike Carnap, Brun intends that this method should not be limited to the project of formal philosophy, but can receive a broad application in philosophy. As Brun notes, myriad of examples can be found—Mohs' explication of hardness; economists' explication of poverty; epistemologists' explication of knowledge, etc. A standard case proposed by Carnap is 'fish'. Our ordinary concept 'fish' (the explicandum) serves well in the culinary domain, fishing industry, etc., but when it comes to the biological theory, 'fish' cannot meet the requirement, and therefore should be replaced by 'piscis' (the explicatum) which is characterized as 'cold-blooded aquatic vertebrate'. As noted, Brun intends to show that this method can be generalized in different philosophical domains. To show this point, he adduces a case from moral philosophy, which is Scanlon's replacement of 'blame' (the explicandum) with 'blameworthy' (the explicatum):

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[200] Brun, 2016, p. 1211.

[201] Brun, 2016, p. 1214.

> To claim that a person is blameworthy for an action is to claim that the action shows something about the agent's attitudes toward others that impairs the relations that others can have with him or her. [. . .] To blame a person is to judge him or her to be blameworthy and to take your relationship with him or her to be modified in a way that this judgment of impaired relations holds to be appropriate.[202]

So, what is the process of explication? In the process of explication, first, it is necessary to identify the explicandum, namely to locate the concept that needs to be improved. However, this part does not need to adopt 'the resources of the target system of concepts'.[203] After fixing the explicandum, the next step is to introduce the explicatum, which is supposed to make the explicatum more exact and clearer. This part 'requires explicitly specifying rules for using the explicatum in terms of the target system of concepts'.[204] The explicandum in the pre-theoretic system of concepts is replaced by the explicatum in the target system of concepts. For example, we can replace 'fish' in ordinary language with the explicatum 'piscis', which is characterized by a definition as 'cold-blooded aquatic vertebrate'. However, giving a definition is not the exclusive way of specifying the explicatum[205]:

> So identity of concepts requires identity of the term and identity of the rules for its use. I take a neutral stance on the nature of such rules; they may specify a term's intension or extension; they may be stated explicitly or be given implicitly in usage, fairly clearly or rather turbidly.[206]

Compared with 'transforming' or 'making more exact', Brun states that 'replacing' is

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[202] Scanlon, 2008, pp. 128-9 (cited in Brun, 2016, p. 1215).

[203] Brun, 2016, p. 1215.

[204] Brun, 2016, p. 1215.

[205] I will argue subsequently that this is the *expressive* part of conceptual engineering.

[206] Brun, 2016, p. 1217.

preferable to characterizing the relation between explicatum and explicandum. Firstly, given that the rules of using are different, the explicatum and the explicandum are different concepts. Secondly, the motivation of explication is to use the explicatum instead of the explicandum.

2.2.2 Criteria of Adequacy in Explication

How could we evaluate the adequacy of explication? In what sense can we tell that the explication is adequate? According to Brun's interpretation, Carnap has four criteria: similarity, exactness, fruitfulness, and simplicity.

[1] Similarity

Similarity is one defining feature of the adequacy of explication. Carnap stipulates it as such: 'in most cases in which the explicandum has so far been used, the explicatum can be used; however close similarity is not required, and considerable differences are permitted'.[207] How should we interpret similarity? As Brun states, it is problematic to interpret similarity in terms of extensions. In some cases, the extension of the explicatum is narrower than that of the explicandum. For instance, the explication replacing 'piscis' with 'fish' excludes the whale from its extensions. While in other cases, the explicatum can be wider than the explicandum, such as in 'zero velocity'. Moreover, sometimes we do not even require the extension of the explicandum and the explicatum to overlap[208]. Based on these considerations, Brun claims: 'Carnap appeals to the merits of both narrower and wider explicata. There is thus no general rule and we need to decide on a case-by-case basis what similarity requires'.[209] However, sometimes, it is nevertheless possible to explain similarity in terms of extensional equivalence or synonymy.

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[207] Carnap, 1962, p. 7 (cited in Brun, 2016, pp. 1210-20).

[208] Brun uses Stalnaker's account of 'proposition' as the example to illustrate this point.

[209] Brun, 2016, p. 1221.

[2] Exactness

According to Carnap, the explicatum should be more exact than the explicandum. The rule on how to use the explicatum-term should be made explicit in terms of the target system concepts. Thus, the ambiguity in the original term can be eliminated and the paradoxes or contradictions can be avoided. Formulating rules for using an explicatum-term in terms of the target system concepts is a necessary condition for explication. The feature of 'unambiguous' and 'non-contradictory' are the necessary condition for adequacy.

In contrast with most Carnap interpreters who hold that reducing vagueness is a necessary condition of explication, Brun proposes a milder interpretation: 'the explicatum should be less—or at least not more—vague than the explicandum'.[210] For example, 'piscis' is just as exact as 'fish' (but more fruitful).

[3] Fruitfulness

The explicatum should be fruitful in the sense that abundant rules of characterization should be given. The explication is not only about finding one term for replacing another, but also about specifying the rule for using the explicatum (e.g., piscis) to show the fruitiness of the explication.

[4] Simplicity

Finally, we should abide the principle of 'simplicity' when characterizing the rules for using the explicatum and laws including the explicatum. However, compared with the traditional interpretation of Carnap's notion of explication, Brun argues that a more pragmatic conception of explication can be found in Carnap. This more pragmatic conception makes two points. Firstly, the rules of adequacy cannot be generalized.

[210] Brun, 2016, p. 1222.

Secondly, the job of fixing the explicatum should be done in a case-by-case spirit, relative to the specific purpose of the explication.

Thus, Carnap indeed endorses a more pragmatic version of 'explication'. As this pragmatic version contends, firstly, we don't have a general rule for the adequacy of explication. Secondly, we must consider the role that the explicatum is expected to play when choosing the appropriate explicatum. It's a practical decision. Brun points out that this pragmatic version of Carnap's explication is similar to Quine's account of explication in *Word and Object*:

> explication is a method of supplying theories with concepts that take over certain useful functions of the explicandum without some of its defects. What counts as useful and what as a defect is a pragmatic question insofar as it has to be answered in the context of specific problems and with reference to a target theory.[211]

2.2.3 Brun's Recipe

Based on Carnap's pragmatic version, Brun proposes a general 'recipe' for explicating, which consists of four parts.

[1] Identification of the task.

This part requires understanding the task. Firstly, we need to settle down the explicandum. Secondly, we need a theoretical framework to integrate the explicatum. Thirdly, it is necessary to spell out the specific theoretical purpose that the explicatum is supposed to serve in the target theory.

[2] Specification of conditions of adequacy.

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[211] Brun, 2016, p. 1225.

Firstly, we should make sure that the explicatum and the explicandum meet the conditions of similarity which serve to 'ensure that certain functions of the explicandum are preserved', and 'that the explication does not change the subject'.[212] Secondly, the explication should meet the conditions of theoretical usefulness. Theoretical usefulness refers to unambiguity, consistency, Carnap's exactness, fruitfulness and simplicity, precision, measurability, scope of application, explanatory power and other properties of the target theory, and we also need to consider the functions that the explicatum is supposed to fulfill.

[3] Introduction of the explicatum.

In the process of explication, we must choose a term as explicatum. But a single term is far from enough. With the concepts of the target system, we should articulate this term either by a definition or in other ways.

[4] Assessment of adequacy.

After identifying an explicatum, we need to assess whether it satisfies the conditions specified in [2]. The problem is that this cannot be done by following mechanical rules. Instead it should be evaluated and judged in an informal way.

Furthermore, Brun holds that explication is only one form of conceptual re-engineering. All conceptual re-engineering shares a same basic structure, namely, to replace a pre-theoretical concept with a new one. In other words, the explicandum, identified from a pre-theoretical system, is replaced by the explicatum, which can be characterized by the rules of a target system. Yet, different conceptual re-engineerings may serve different purposes:

> Explication is a specific form of conceptual re-engineering intended as an

[212] Brun, 2016, p. 1227.

element of theory development. Other goals, say didactical simplification, political correctness or making an impression of profoundness, may be better achieved by other forms of conceptual change or reengineering.[213]

2.3 Zagzebski's Exemplarism as Moral Revisionism

In this section, I will argue that Zagzebski's exemplarist moral theory entails the principle of revisionism, which is inspired by semantic externalism (theory of direct reference). Unlike the dominant moral theories, Kantian deontology, Utilitarianism, Perfectionism, etc., the exemplarist approach proposed by Zagzebski is an *a posteriori* one.

Zagzebski attempts to apply the theory of *direct reference* to moral theory. So, what is the theory of direct reference? As Zagzabski summarizes it: 'the basic idea is that a natural kind term such as ''water'' or ''gold'' or ''human'' refers to whatever is the same kind of thing or stuff as some indexically identified instance'.[214] So, as competent speakers, we are capable of using the demonstrative term 'that' to refer to natural kinds.

In philosophy of language, the theory of direct reference (Putnam-Kripke) is deemed to be a contender against the descriptive theory. A competent speaker can refer to natural kinds, like 'gold', 'water', 'human', etc., without having a description of it, or even with a wrong description. Thus, the theory of direct reference claims that it is not necessary for individual speakers to have the capacity to identify natural kinds themselves because they can rely on the judgement of experts. One upshot of this theory is that we would have *a posteriori* truth about a natural kind term. According to Kripke, once the reference of a natural kind term, such as water, is settled, then

[213] Brun, 2016, p. 1234.

[214] Zagzebski, 2010, p. 50.

scientists will try to disclose *a posteriori* necessary truths, such as 'Water is H_2O'.

Drawing inspiration from direct reference theory, Zagzebski contends that this approach is also effective for moral concepts. More specifically, the meaning of a moral concept is constituted by its reference—a moral exemplar. Zagzebski characterizes it as follows:

> I suggest that basic moral concepts are anchored in exemplars of moral goodness, direct reference to which are foundational in the theory. Good persons are persons like that, just as gold is stuff like that. Picking out exemplars can fix the reference of the term "good person" without the use of descriptive concepts.[215]

Similarly, moral concepts can also be considered as natural kinds. For instance, we do not need to understand the meaning of 'good' to recognize a good person. We can pick up the appropriate (real or fictional) moral exemplars from our community, such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mandela, Francis, Confucius, or Christ, people who are the most admired person in our society, and it does not really matter whether they are fictional or real. Once these moral exemplars are fixed, we can then learn 'goodness' by imitation. But how do we pick up the moral exemplar? How do we guarantee this is the right one? The answer lies in the notion of 'admiration'. Our admiration of these moral exemplars is trustworthy, given that 'all we can do is the best we can do by using our faculties as conscientiously as we can, and our disposition to admiration is one of those faculties'.[216]

The defining feature about *a posteriori* truth is that it can be revised and improved. Describing that 'Water is H_2O' does not preclude the possibility that a scientist discovers new facts about water in the future. We all agree that 'Whales are mammals'

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[215] Zagzebski, 2010, p. 51.

[216] Zagzebski, 2010, p. 52.

is the *a posteriori* truth. However, it is possible to imagine that some Zoologists might find some creatures with the same appearance of whales, only that they are not mammals. Given this, we might consider to redefine 'whale'[217].

Peter Railton's discussion of 'seaworthy' can also illustrate this point. During the ancient time, 'seaworthy' was always connected to superstitious elements: only blessed ships are seaworthy, there is a painted symbol on the vessel to ensure its being seaworthy, etc. Yet, a naturalist's account of being seaworthy is 'a set of physically realized dispositional properties of vessels, properties which constitute such features of a vessel as its stability, water-tightness, structural strength, steerability, and so on'.[218] Therefore, the definition of 'seaworthy' has been revised from the superstitious account to the naturalist account; the traditional ways of judgment have been replaced by the naturalistic perspicacity. All these spiritual and inscrutable terms, such as 'unluckiness', 'fickleness', can be explained away by naturalistic accounts.

This is also the case for moral concepts. Indeed, Zagzebski admits that her exemplarism is consistent with revisionism. She indicates that our identification of moral exemplars is revisable, claiming that '[t]his theory is compatible with the possibility that paradigmatically good individuals are only contingently good, and it is also compatible with the theory that our identification of exemplars is revisable[219]'.[220] Moreover, she notes that we cannot ignore the possibility of the wrongness of whole community: 'It is possible that a community of persons is so radically wrong in its identification of exemplars that even its concept of the good is mistaken'.[221] Since the meaning of 'goodness' is determined by its exemplars, and the exemplars are

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[217] Cf. Donnellan 1962.

[218] Railton, 1989, p. 164.

[219] Even if admitting the possibility of revision, she still insists that we should trust in our disposition of admiration.

[220] Zagzebski, 2010, p. 52.

[221] Zagzebski, 2010, p. 52.

revisable, then moral concepts can be improved.

As I have mentioned, one of the significant features of the direct reference theory is that, for natural kinds, scientists can provide *a posteriori* truths open to revision. The same applies to moral concepts. In science, it is the scientists' task to reveal that *a posteriori* truth, while in ethics, it is narrative tellers who perform the truth discovery task according to Zagzebski. In parallel with scientific truths for natural kinds, we have narratives for moral concepts (the exemplars), which would be necessary *a posteriori* truths. As Zagzebski says:

> Since narratives are a form of detailed observations of persons, exemplarism gives narrative an important place within the theory analogous to scientific investigation in the theory of natural kinds. Narratives might even reveal necessary features of value by uncovering the deep properties of a good person. If so, there would be necessary a posteriori truths in ethics that can be discovered in away that parallels the discovery of the nature of water.[222]

The natural results of accepting the symmetry between external semantic theory and moral theory is that moral narratives are also open to revision. Given that the scientific theory of natural kinds is revisable, there is no reason to deny that the narratives for moral exemplars are also revisable. Suppose Sid is a moral exemplar in community *A*. If it turns out that Sid does not justify the reputation he has been given, then we can revise the concept of 'goodness' by picking up a new exemplar. Even if Sid is properly chosen as a moral exemplar, the narratives still can be modified by adding new features to characterize him.

Claiming that moral exemplars are revisable is plausible. For example, given Martin Luther King's great contribution to the civil rights movement, he should be

[222] Zagzebski, 2010, p. 53.

considered as a moral model to a certain extent. But after the FBI's disclosure of his extramarital affairs, his statue of being a moral exemplar is becoming contentious. But how can we revise the narratives? To answer this question, I will introduce a case from Lex Luthor, the despicable figure from *Superman* comic series[223].

As we know, Luthor is always known as a super-villain in the *Superman* comic series. So, the narratives about him are usually negative. Assuming superman is a typical moral exemplar, his enemy must be the opposite. But in 'Superman Must be Destroyed! Lex Luthor as Existentialist Anti-Hero', Sarah K. Donovan and Nicholas Richardson (D&R) reveal a new narrative, a revisionary one, where Lex Luthor is enacted as an *existentialist*. As existentialists,

> we should concern ourselves with living *authentically*, and this requires facing some hard truths about the world we live in. These truths can include admitting that there is no God, that there is no greater purpose to our lives—except what we make of it—and that many of the people around us are leading shallow and silly lives because they fail to take true responsibility for their own actions.[224]

According to D&R, Lex Luthor arguably meets these conditions. They compare Lex Luthor with three great existentialists, namely Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre and Søren Kierkegaard.

Nietzsche is famous for his anti-metaphysical claim. Appealing to reject metaphysics, Nietzsche envisages a broad notion of metaphysics that includes the concept of God. Instead of following the supreme order without question, Nietzsche asks us to believe in ourselves. As D&R writes, Nietzsche 'rejects metaphysical explanation of life', and asks us 'to understand the world in terms of power relationships', and this is what

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[223] As Zagzebski claims, her theory applies to both the fictional and non-fictional.

[224] Donovan and Richardson, 2013, p. 121.

make him an existentialist because 'he believes your fate is your own'.[225] We can also find this feature in Luthor. It is always stressed by Luthor that humans should depend on themselves, instead of being inspired by some God-like figure such as Superman. As D&R put it: '[l]ike Nietzsche, Luthor is focused on who gains power when someone or something is set up as a god'.[226]

They also provide comparisons with Jean-Paul Sartre, another quintessential representative of existentialism, and suggest that we can also find the same existentialist spirit in Luthor. Holding that 'existence precedes essence', Sartre highlights our own role in the sense that we should take full responsibility for our own choices. The thought of grasping our own fate prompts the idea of 'Authenticity', which means 'living in the face of that belief [you choose] and embracing the challenge of giving one's own life meaning at every moment'.[227] Bearing this in mind, D&R indicate that what Luthor says is consistent with this spirit. They quote some words from Luthor as evidence:

> More often than not, when choosing a path, it's the easy road that's taken. The reasons are obvious, understandable [. . .] but ultimately, undefendable. Because we were created to create ourselves [. . .] it's the greatest gift our creator gave to us [. . .] Destiny is something we hold in our hands.[228]

According to D&R, Luthor has been always wary that Superman, as a God-like hero, would take over all the responsibilities which are supposed to be taken by human beings themselves. He believes that human beings should face their choices directly, and accept their own responsibilities rather than defer them to Superman.

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[225] Donovan and Richardson, 2013, p. 124.

[226] Donovan and Richardson, 2013, p. 124.

[227] Donovan and Richardson, 2013, p. 125.

[228] Cf. Lex Luthor: Man of Steel #3 (July 2005) (cited in Donovan and Richardson 2013, p. 125).

As D&R articulate, Kierkegaard draws a distinction between 'the moral norms of society and those of God'.[229] Kierkegaard discusses the case of Abraham in *Fear and Trembling*. On the ground of obeying the will of God, Abraham is ready to kill his own beloved son without asking for reasons. This is in stark contrast with human ethics, given that murdering one's own son is totally against our moral intuition. Kierkegaard describes Abraham's feeling as a mixed emotion of anxiety and true faith. This discussion leads to the notion of 'teleological suspension of the ethical': 'For Abraham to do what God is asking him to do, he must step outside of the realm of human morality, and believe that he is nonetheless doing the right thing'.[230] Abraham's case highlights a dilemma between *the paramount purpose* and *human ethics*. Luthor also faces such a moment. His primary concern is the possibility that Superman would deprive humans of individual choice, which makes it his pressing task to control Superman, even at the price of contravening human moral principles. As D&R say it: '[l]ike Abraham, Luthor is alone in his belief about what must be done'.[231]

Lex Luthor is usually considered to be a devil in the context of the comic. However, as we have discussed, D&R present a new narrative about him, by proposing that he is an existentialist. Even with D&R's characterizing of Luthor as an existentialist, it's not plausible to make Luther a moral exemplar. The moral is that the original narratives are reversible. D&R make a good case to excavate the existential aspect of Luthor, despite his prevailing super-villain face. Therefore, moral concepts and the narratives of the moral concepts are both open to revision.

[229] Donovan and Richardson, 2013, p. 127.

[230] Donovan and Richardson, 2013, p. 127.

[231] Donovan and Richardson, 2013, p. 128.

2.4 Ludlow's Lexical Warfare

In this section, I will discuss Ludlow's version of conceptual engineering. His version is premised on his view of language—the dynamic view. Section 2.4.1 spells out the tension between the static view of language and the dynamic view. The assumption of a dynamic lexicon applies not only to the terms within a conversation, but also from conversation to conversation (section 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). Section 2.4.4 explains the core ideas of Ludlow's dynamic lexicon. Section 2.4.5 and 2.4.6 show why Ludlow's project is a form of conceptual engineering, despite its difference from Cappelen's and Carnap's versions.

2.4.1 Against the Static View

The general view proposed by Peter Ludlow in his work *Living Words*[232] is that the meaning of our words is *underdetermined*, or that words are *dynamic*. According to this dynamic picture, the meaning of words is always *open-ended*. For example, is 'Ring Around the Rosie' a game? And what about wrestling? The meaning (extension) of 'game' might not be as stable as we expect.[233] It's not hard to accept that the meaning of concepts, such as 'computer'[234], or 'liberty', varies across eras. However, by claiming that the meaning of our words shifts between conversations or within a conversation, Ludlow's project is even more radical. I find out that there is one conversation in the TV series *MacGyver*[235] that can somehow manifest meaning shift within a conversation. A special force team (MacGyver, Jack and Riley)'s vehicle is stuck in a ditch because enemy pushes its vehicle into the ditch with a bulldozer, and three members of this team have the following conversation:

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[232] Ludlow, 2014.

[233] Cf. Wittgenstein, 2009.

[234] Originally, before the invention of the computer as a machine, the term computer refers to the person who computes.

[235] This conversation among them can be found in *McGyver*, Season 1, episode 6.

Riley: Next time you say, "I know how to get away from 'em," let's all take a vote before you decide to drive us into a ditch.

Jack: You saw it. You were right there. And second of all, next time we're fleeing some-some tin pot dictator with his computer thingy that controls his air defense system, I'll put our escape route to a *quorum*, all right? Is that fine with you?

Riley: You're not using the word "*quorum*" right.

Jack: Help me out here, Mac.

Mac: A *quorum* doesn't mean a *vote*, Jack; it means you have the right amount of people present to vote.

Jack: I stand by the spirit of my words. Anybody want to *quorum* our escape?

In this conversation, there is an negotiation on 'quorum'. Jack intends to modulate the meaning of 'quorum', asking his partners to follow his use. Another similar example can be found in the TV series *Supergirl*[236]:

Barry: This is my *friend*, Cisco.

Cisco: Well, *friend* is a loose term; we work together.

Apparently, in this conversation, Cisco tries to modify the meaning of 'friend' by including working partner into the extension of 'friend'. In fact, in most occasions, the adaptation or modulation of word meaning is not noticed by the interlocutors, a fact I will discuss later.

According to Ludlow, the traditional static lexicon view stands in stark contrast with his dynamic lexicon view. What is the static lexicon view? Under this traditional assumption, our language is mostly fixed, thus static. A metaphor will be helpful: in the static framework, our language can be regarded as a whole toolkit, with each term

[236] See *Supergirl*, season 2, episode 8.

being a tool whose function is fixed. Ludlow describes this view as follows:

> Languages like Urdu, German, Polish, and Portuguese are fairly stable abstract systems of communication that are learned (with varying degrees of success) by human beings. Those humans in turn use the languages that they have learned to communicate ideas, perform certain tasks (by giving orders, instructions, etc.), and in some cases as media for artistic expression. It is often supposed that the better one learns a language the better equipped one is to successfully communicate, accomplish complex tasks, etc.[237]

If we accept this view, knowledge of language would be like the knowledge of history, which is not supposed to fluctuate but to remain stable. Although bearing the name 'static', this view does not fully reject the shifting of language's meaning. Yet, according to this view, the process of changing is *glacial*, therefore it won't breach the overall static status.

Ludlow indicates that the static view brings several negative upshots. For instance, with this static view of language, we are not likely to solve the thorny issues of the human-machine conversation. Also, some political consequences can be foreseen. If our language functions as a static communicative tool, then it is possible for politicians, based on this assumption, to enact their own standard of political language, supporting their political idea. Fascists' language purification is a radical form of this situation. Last but not least, Ludlow posits that some philosophical conundrum is caused by this view of language: when the dynamic view is taken, problems such as 'skepticism in epistemology', 'vagueness', 'sense/reference distinction' can be dissolved.

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[237] Ludlow, 2014, p. 2.

2.4.2 Unreflective Entrainment

As I have mentioned, Ludlow's dynamic picture is not only about meaning changes across times. Ludlow endorses the view that the meaning of our words changes from conversation to conversation; or happens within a conversation. He calls this idea *microlanguages*:

> This alternative theory will reject the idea that languages are stable abstract objects that we learn and then use; instead, human languages are things that we build on a conversation-by-conversation basis. We can call these one-off fleeting things *microlanguages*.[238]

One distinction is worth mentioning: sometimes the interlocutors are aware of the meaning shift, while sometimes they are not. According to Ludlow, in numerous situations we modulate a word's meaning in a conversation without even noticing[239]. So, in the conscious situation, we negotiate or discuss the meaning explicitly. On the other hand, in the nonconscious situation, the meaning shifting is automatic and unreflective, which Ludlow calls 'unreflective entrainment'.

Entrainment is a natural phenomenon. Ludlow tells us that this notion was first introduced by Dutch scientist Huygens. Huygens made two clocks, and he found out a unique phenomenon:

> It is that these two clocks hanging next to one another separated by one or two feet keep an agreement so exact that the pendulums always oscillate together without variation. After admiring this for a while, I finally figured out that it occurs through a kind of sympathy: mixing up the swings of the pendulums, I have found that within a half hour they always return to consonance and remain

[238] Ludlow, 2014, pp. 2-3.

[239] However, conceptual engineering should be pursued at the reflective level.

so constantly afterwards for as long as I let them go [. . .][240]

What Huygen discovered is a typical example of entrainment as it happens in inanimate systems. Strogatz's observation of a similar phenomenon happening to the fireflies is also mentioned by Ludlow. Based on these data, Ludlow suggests that this kind of phenomenon can be generalized. As he quotes Strogatz: 'the tendency to synchronize is one of the most pervasive drives in the universe, extending from atoms to animals, from people to planets'.[241] Hence, he states that this kind of phenomenon also happens in linguistic practice. Put into other words, we can expect a lexical synchronization within a conversation. He offers several examples. Here's one about 'dressed up':

Kathy: You got all dressed up? just to see us?
Reuben: Are you kidding?
(pause)
Frieda: I'm all ripped.
Kathy: Oh yeah
Frieda: Yeah
Kathy: I can see the hole
Frieda: all over
Reuben: Don't you recognize my uniform?
Kathy: Yes. No, I meant Frieda was wearing a fancy dress.[242]

Obviously, Frieda intends to modulate the meaning of 'dressed up' in this conversation. In the end, all the interlocutors appear to agree with Frieda's that the meaning of 'dressed up' does not include the meaning of 'rigged', though without making it explicit. A similar example from *Pride and Prejudice* illustrates this point:

[240] Strogatz, 2013, (cited in Ludlow, 2014, 25-6).

[241] Ludlow, 2014, p. 27.

[242] Ludlow, 2014, p. 34.

Mrs. Bennet: Don't keep coughing so, Kitty, for heaven's sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves. You tear them to pieces.

Mr. Bennet: Kitty has no discretion in her coughs, she times them ill.

Kitty: I do not cough for my own amusement [. . .][243]

In the above conversation, it seems that Mr. Bennet together with her daughter successfully modulate the meaning of 'coughing' used by Mrs. Bennet, whose use entails that coughing can be controlled by a subject, while Mr. Bennet and Kitty refuse to see coughing as under voluntary control.

The cases of 'dressed up' and 'coughing' are both unreflective modulation within a conversation. But this is not always the case, sometimes we negotiate about the modulation of meaning, here's an example from Bernard Suits (2014):

The cheat: Checkmate.

The spoilsport: Nonsense. Checkmate is the condition when you have immobilized my king. But you have *not* immobilized my king. Behold; I am moving it about in the air.

The cheat: That isn't a move in *chess*, you idiot!

The spoilsport: What rubbish. A move is a move.

The cheat: Don't be absurd. How could I possibly counter such a "move"?

The spoilsport: Why don't you try to grab me by the wrist?

The cheat: How can you be so stupid? Do you want to play chess or do you want to arm wrestle?[244]

In the above conversation, the cheat and the spoilsport quibble with the meaning of

[243] Rogers and Austin, 2016, p. 6.

[244] Suits, 2014, p. 50.

'move'. The spoilsport attempts to distort the meaning of move in chess in order to avoid losing the game. I find another interesting case in an NBA basketball match between Golden State Warriors and Cleveland Cavaliers. During the first quarter, Warriors' player Draymond Green tried to defend Cavaliers' player DeAndre Liggins, and the referee called Green a foul. Green was quite annoyed by this call. He kept shouting and waving his arms. Thus, a technical foul was added. According to the replay, Green is innocent. So here's the dialogue between the two sports commentators:

A: Clearly not a foul. Clearly straight up.

B: He has every right to be upset about the call. But once again *just went too far*.

A: Hold on, so when a guy blows a call on you and it's gonna in fact impact the game, he *went too far*? Why aren't we talking more about the bad call and his reaction to the bad call?

B: Because his reaction to the bad call can affect the game even more, if he got two technicals, he got be thrown out. [. . .]

Commentator A and B do not agree with the meaning of 'go too far' in this very specific context, debating whether Green's behavior went too far. Unlike unreflective entrainment, meaning modulation of this kind must be made explicit by interlocutors. It is this mode of modulation that is adopted by the philosophical conceptual engineering project.

To conclude, in some conversations, we just follow the other interlocutor's modulation. As Ludlow says: '[w]hen words are modulated we generally play along' (Ludlow 2014, 35). But on other occasions, such as pursuing conceptual engineering, the reflective intension is *sine qua non*.

2.4.3 Modulation Crossing Contexts

In the previous section, I provided several examples of the dynamic nature of the lexicon within a conversation. Meaning modulation also happens across conversations. Numerous examples can be given. For example, the notion of 'liberal' in ancient times must be different from that of modern times; in the context of the graphic novel, the meaning of 'hero' refers to those with super power, which aren't shared by other contexts, such as 'war hero' or 'Wittgenstein is one of Rorty's heroes'; etc.

One important benefit of this dynamic understanding of language is that it is helpful in dissolving some philosophical problems, such as skepticism in epistemology, about which philosophers are continually debating.

Cartesian radical skepticism is notorious for its doubts about perception, reality, and external world. Skeptics are prone to pose questions such as 'Do we really know that we have two hands?'. Given that we cannot obviate the possibility that our minds might be manipulated by a demon who makes us believe that we possess two hands when we do not, skepticism cannot be easily rejected. A contemporary version of skepticism would be Putnam's 'brain in a vat', proclaiming that our perception of the world is fabricated by a supercomputer, just as in *Matrix*. So far, philosophers have not reached a consensus on how to answer this skeptical challenge. Putting aside Cartesian skepticism, philosophers cannot even reach an agreement on whether a justified true belief amounts to knowledge. Ludlow, apparently, has a good explanation for this puzzle, which is based on his dynamic lexicon. This epistemological conundrum emerges due to a false assumption, shared by many philosophers, that the meaning of 'knowledge' is fixed by a single standard. Endorsing that meaning is underdetermined, Ludlow suggests that the dynamic view also applies to 'knowledge'. Embracing the dynamic view, a natural corollary would be that there are different standards for ascribing knowledge. It is possible that *P* can

be considered as knowledge in context *x*, but not in context *y*. In ordinary discourses, the threshold of knowledge ascription is lower than in the philosophical context. For example, it is legitimate to say something such as 'I know she is a good person', even though I do not have a justified belief in the philosophical sense. It is not absurd to claim 'She knows they will win', even though there is no such thing as clairvoyance in this world. So the standard changes with the context. When in a courtroom or a classroom of epistemology, the standard of knowledge ascription is higher than under ordinary conditions. Based on this, Ludlow proposes a contextualist theory:

> C1'. [context-sensitive semantic values]: A given sentence form, say 'Chesner knows that he has feet' has different sharpenings and modulations and hence different semantic values relative to different contexts of utterance. In brief, the contextualist claims that the epistemic standards required for someone to count as meriting a positive knowledge ascription varies from ascriber to ascriber, with the result that one ascriber may truly utter the form 'He knows that he will be in Syracuse', referring to a given person at a given time, and a different ascriber may truly utter the form 'He doesn't know that he will be in Syracuse', speaking of the same person at the same time.
>
> C2**'. According to cheap contextualist semantics, the ascriber's context of utterance calls the shots, so to speak: Sharpenings and modulations and hence the standards of application for the verb form 'know' are either explicitly stated or are determined by the context in which the ascription is made and not by the context in which the subject appears (unless the subject happens to be identical to the ascriber).[245]

Ludlow's contextualism dovetails with his idea of dynamic semantics which claims that word meaning shifts from context to context. Some might discredit his view by

[245] Ludlow, 2014, pp. 137-8.

arguing that if he is right, then this is also applicable to the notion of meaning itself. In other words, the upshot would be that we do not have reason to assume that Ludlow's theory of meaning can shy away from the modulation, which means that his theory of meaning could be wrong. As the expression goes: Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Does this type of argument posit a challenge to Ludlow's view? Probably not. In some situations, the lexical entrainment happens automatically, while in most philosophically significant occasions, it involves rational negotiations to pick up the appropriate ones. The real contribution of Ludlow's project to metaphilosophy is on the level of reflective modulation rather than the automatic entrainment, and it can only be understood as *conceptual engineering* at the reflective level. As Ludlow says: 'the process by which we become entrained often involves argumentation, and argumentation is a normative activity. That is, norms govern the way we negotiate (litigate) word meanings'.[246]

2.4.4 Core Ideas of Dynamic Lexicon

In this section, I will briefly introduce the staples of Ludlow's dynamic lexicon which is comprised of six tenets.

[1] Meaning Underdetermination

Suppose that someone asks me 'How many philosophical works have you read?'. There is no way to answer this question without modulating the meaning of 'philosophical works'. Does a graphic novel such as *Logicomic* count as a philosophical work? When counting philosophical works, do we include journal papers? Do philosophical works only refer to academic philosophy? Concerning word meanings, Ludlow indicates that '[t[hey are all underdetermined to some extent or

[246] Ludlow, 2014, p. 144.

another'.[247]

Several distinctions are worth noting. Meaning underdetermination is different from meaning indeterminacy. For example, Sid goes to a French restaurant named *Brasserie George*. Since Sid does not know French, he asks the waiter what's the meaning of 'Joue de Porc' (Pig's cheek) written on the menu. Unfortunately, being a poor English speaker, the waiter tells him that 'Joue de Porc' means the pig's face, which confuses Sid. The face? Does that means the head, the ear, or the cheek, etc.[248] Well, this is a typical case of meaning indeterminacy which should be distinguished from meaning underdetermination. In the case of meaning indeterminacy, a native French speaker (the French waiter) can always know the meaning of the 'Joue de Porc'. However, under a meaning underdetermination condition, it is in the native language that the meaning requires negotiation.

Meaning underdetermination is also not as same as meaning underspecification. Suppose Sid says 'I am a Doctor'. If we don't know him well, then it's necessary to ask him to specify the meaning of 'Doctor'. Its meaning could either be that he is a medical doctor or that he has a Ph.D. in another domain. This is a typical case of meaning underspecification.

[2] Representational Neutrality

According to Ludlow, we need a distinction between word meanings and the way that meanings are represented. Some argue that the word meanings cannot be exhausted by the way those word meanings are represented. Based on this view, Ludlow writes: '[l]et's call the view that representations of meaning underspecify meanings *Representational Austerity*'.[249]

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[247] Ludlow, 2014, p. 80.

[248] The similar example used by Ludlow is Quine's famous 'gavagai' case.

[249] Ludlow, 2014, p. 80.

Ludlow does not embrace representational austerity. For him, the notion of 'representation' and how it works remains unclear. In contrast, he advocates the principle of *Representational Neutrality*, claiming 'that the theory of the dynamic lexicon is neutral on the matter'.[250]

[3] Meaning Egalitarianism

It is tempting to think that each term has a primary or privileged meaning. The primary meaning of 'dark' would be absolute dark; the primary meaning of 3.2 meters would be 3.2 meters exactly (on-the-nose). But according to the dynamic lexicon view, the so called primary meaning does not have any privileges, even if it exists. In the process of meaning modulation, it weighs the same as other non-primary meanings.

[4] Meaning Imperfection

Asserting that there is no primary meaning at all, the doctrine of meaning imperfection pushes meaning egalitarianism a step further. According to this view, the notion of primary meaning is defective, and is consequently not needed at all.

[5] Meaning Control

Word meaning is not decided simply by our conversations. As a matter of fact, we are able to control this process. It is us, the interlocutors, who should take control of the modulation. Ludlow says: 'we can modulate word meanings as we see fit'.[251]

[6] Concepts as Linguistic Meanings

In the dynamic lexicon framework, concepts are not permanent residents of Plato's idea heaven. Rather, concepts are just words meanings. As Ludlow puts: '[c]oncepts

[250] Ludlow, 2014, p. 81.

[251] Ludlow, 2014, p. 83.

are underdetermined, modulable, and often the product of collaborative effort'.[252]

2.4.5 Lexical Warfare as Conceptual Engineering

Lexical Warfare is an interesting neologism coined by Ludlow meaning the fight on how to modulate words meaning. Lexical warfare is not only about which definition to apply, but also about the purpose of definition. As Ludlow's characterization goes:

> Lexical warfare is not exclusively concerned with how terms are to be defined—it can also work to attach either a negative or positive aspect to a term. So, famously, Ronald Reagan successfully attached a negative patina to 'liberal', while a term like 'patriot' has a positive affect (few today reject the label 'patriotic', they rather argue for why they are entitled to it).[253]

This can also be read as a form of *conceptual engineering*. But in lexical warfare, the tension between the old concept and the new concept has been diluted. Instead, Ludlow pays more attention to the question of which concept is the proper option. There might be several rival concepts, among which philosophers are supposed to pick the appropriate one, and this is where Ludlow's version is different from Cappelen and Carnap (Brun)'s. Lexical warfare stresses the competition among several options, while Cappelen and Carnap's conceptual engineering emphasizes the process of conceptual development—from the defective one to the target one, despite the fact that they all endeavor to pinpoint the most appropriate concept for the current purpose.

In Lexical Warfare, we will face several candidates. For example, the original concept W, the candidate concept W_1, the target concept W_2, etc. In contrast with Cappelen's conceptual engineering, it is not necessary to assume that the original concept W is

[252] Ludlow, 2014, p. 84.

[253] Ludlow, 2014, p. 8.

defective. Only through negotiation will we find the result. And I think this is the important factor that Cappelen's approach leaves out, namely it is possible that the concept assumed to be defective will turn out to be the proper one. Their version of conceptual engineering misses this point because they don't take 'negotiation' as an important part of conceptual engineering.

To illustrate lexical warfare, Ludlow picks several cases (such as 'brute force', 'doll', 'sandwich', 'hacktivist', 'journalist', 'organic', 'relevant', 'marriage') to discuss.

Hacktivist, in its original sense, is a term that does not bear so many negative elements. Ludlow indicates that there is a dispute over whether 'hacktivist' is positive or negative. On the negative side, for example, we could find the proposition such as: 'Anonymous: Hactivists Steal Most Data in 2011'.[254] With the negative influence, 'the meaning of "hacktivist" was being narrowed from people who use technology in support of social causes to meaning individuals principally concerned with infiltrating and releasing the data of almost anyone'.[255] On the positive side, the notion of 'hacktivist' is much broader: 'It is about *understanding* the technology and acquiring the power to repurpose it to our individual needs. *Hacktivist*, on their view, was about taking this understanding and power and using it for the good of the many—i.e. to make the world a better place'.[256] So, to pick up the appropriate meaning, meaning negotiation or conceptual engineering is necessary.

Another example is 'organic'. There is a standard definition of 'organic': 'a food product is organic if it is grown without the help of pesticides'.[257] Ludlow's quotation from New York Times will help us to understand the modulation of 'organic':

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[254] Ludlow, 2014, p. 14.

[255] Ludlow, 2014, p. 15.

[256] Ludlow, 2014, p. 16.

[257] Ludlow, 2014, p. 24.

> Some organic standard setters are beginning to refine their criteria so that organic products better match their natural ideals. Krav, a major Swedish organic certification program, allows produce grown in greenhouses to carry its "organic" label only if the buildings use at least 80% renewable fuel, for example. And last year the Agriculture Department's National Organic Standards Board revised its rules to require that for an "organic milk" label, cows had to be at least partly fed by grazing in open pastures rather than standing full time in feedlots.
>
> But each decision to narrow the definition of "organic" involves an inevitable tug-of-war among farmers, food producers, supermarkets and environmentalists. While the United States' regulations for organic certification require that growers use practices that protect water resources, it is hard to define a specific sustainable level of water use for a single farm "because aquifer depletion is the result of many farmers' overutilizing the resource," said Miles McEvoy, head of the National Organic Program at the Agriculture Department.[258]

'Doll' is another interesting example. As Ludlow explains, recently, the meaning of 'doll' bears certain practical significance given that the import tax rates of doll are higher than other toys. Hence, the meaning of doll is becoming critical for the toy companies. The Harmonized Tariff schedule specifies dolls as 'representing only human beings and parts and accessories thereof'.[259] Even with this definition, the problem remains. Are action figures such as Superman, the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, etc., dolls or not? Obviously, some would argue that they aren't dolls, because they aren't really human. Yet, Ludlow claims that this view reflects a misunderstanding of the comic book character: 'Spider-Man and Hulk, despite their mutant ways, are still fundamentally human'.[260]

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[258] Ludlow, 2014, pp. 24-5.

[259] Ludlow, 2014, p. 9.

[260] Ludlow, 2014, p. 10.

2.4.6 Norms Behind the Lexical Warfare

In the previous section, we have seen that there are disputes between word meanings when pursuing lexical warfare or conceptual engineering. In fact, word meaning is governed by *norms*. Therefore, disputes between word meanings are in effect polemics between the norms of applying them. Ludlow elaborates on this point by using several cases. Two moral-related concepts—'rape' and 'person'—are central in his analysis.

Initially, according to the meaning of 'rape', there is no such thing as 'marital rape'. Ludlow quotes Lord Matthew Hale's declaration in 1600: 'the husband cannot be guilty of a rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto her husband, which she cannot retract'.[261] The notion of 'marital rape' appears to be an oxymoron, given that rape in marriage is impossible. This view might be popular even now in some areas. However, many people have little patience for those who hold 'rape' in this sense. Obviously, it's not a well supported concept, and many reasons can be given to rebuke it. Besides that, the victims of marital rape experience physical harm, loss of freedom and dignity, and also suffer psychologically, as empirical data disclose. Lexical warfare is indeed a dispute between the different norms (such as moral rules) lying behind the use of the concept.

Now, let us turn to the case of 'person'. Should we count the fetus as a person? This question bears not only a theoretical significance, but also a practical one. Holding that a fetus has a 'pulse' or measurable 'brain waves', it might be plausible to count the fetus as a person from a biological perspective. But this concept of 'person' will beget some troubles. For example, in a juridical context, by holding that a fetus is a person, all abortions would be tantamount to murder. As Ludlow says, quoting

[261] Ludlow, 2014, p. 52.

Chereminsky: ‘once it is assumed that the fetus is a person, then there is no legal basis for punishing abortion differently than homicide [. . .] birth control methods such as the intrauterine device and the “morning after pill” would also be homicide since they act after fertilization and thus kill human lives’.[262] Again, lexical warfare or conceptual engineering is not only about words, terms or concepts, but about the norms behind their applications.

Besides Ludlow’s examples[263], I will introduce one more case: ‘sugar’. In his article ‘Sugar’s Transition From Nice to Nasty’[264], Alva Noë outlines the modulation of the concept ‘sugar’. In the ordinary sense, Noë says, sugar usually means good and sweet ($sugar_1$). Yet, scientific research now suggests that sugar is responsible for a lot of obesity-related diseases. Therefore, the prevailing view holds that sugar is as addictive as cocaine ($sugar_2$), which is a modulation of ‘$sugar_1$’. However, individual addicts’ understanding of sugar is also misleading, according to Noë. Sugar is food which can supply us the needed calories in a cheap way. Historical research reveals that there is mass consumption of sugar ranging from the royal to ordinary citizens in England by no later than 1800. Rejecting the individual addiction view, Noë argues that it is ‘we’ that are addicted to the sugar. The story traces back to the rise of wage labor and capitalism in northern Europe. Since labor is going to work the whole day, they have little time to bake bread, and therefore sugar would be a convenient choice to supply their calorie needs. After that, all sugar-related food products developed. Here comes Noë’s modulation of ‘sugar’ ($sugar_3$):

> The abuse of sugar may be a medical disaster. But it isn't really individual consumers who are the true addicts here. Rather, we are. That is, the victim here is the very socio-economic collective that has itself conspired — over the last 500

[262] Ludlow, 2014, p. 60.

[263] Ludlow discusses three typical examples: ‘planet’, ‘rape’ and ‘person’.

[264] Cf. NPR Cosmos & Culture, October 30, 2016.

> years—to make sugary snacks and drinks, like low-cost gasoline, so indispensable to our way of life.[265]

The amelioration of 'sugar'—from sweet to I-addiction to We-addiction—can be detected in this case. In this case, we have the folk concept of $sugar_1$, candidate concept $sugar_2$ (I-addiction) and candidate concept $sugar_3$ (We-addiction). The moral is that in lexical warfare or conceptual engineering, negotiation, which is based on disputes of norms behind the application of different concepts, plays a crucial role.

2.5 Plunkett on Metalinguistic Negotiation

In this section, I will present Plunkett's project of metalinguistic negotiations, another form of conceptual engineering, which is closer to Ludlow's approach than Cappelen's. Plunkett states that metalinguistic negotiation matters because it contributes to the enterprise of 'reflexive philosophy': 'it matters for the contribution it makes to develop a reflective self-understanding of what we are doing when we are doing philosophy'.[266] Section 2.5.1 will introduce the idea of conceptual ethics conceived by Burgess and Plunkett. Plunkett develops the idea of conceptual ethics into metalinguistic negotiations, which will be discussed in section 2.5.2.

2.5.1 Conceptual Ethics Coined by Burgess and Plunkett

Alexis Burgess and David Plunkett (2013) (B&P) attempt to outline a new metaphilosophical project under the title of 'conceptual ethics'. Conceptual ethics, simply put, is about which concept we should use. In contrast to conceptual analysis or semantic studies which is descriptive investigation, conceptual ethics is normative:

> As we underscore in the present paper, however, claims about how one ought (or

[265] Noë, 2016.

[266] Plunkett, 2015, p. 865.

> would do well) to think and talk are nearly as ubiquitous in philosophy as their descriptive counterparts, not to mention their prevalence in ordinary discourse. For reasons to be elaborated shortly, we might call such normative and evaluative issues about representation 'conceptual ethics'.[267]

B&P's conceptual ethics also can be read as conceptual engineering. Like Ludlow's lexical warfare, the key concern of conceptual ethics is which concept we should adopt. However, unlike Cappelen and Carnap's project, conceptual ethics does not necessarily presuppose that the new concept must replace the existing one.

Consider 'begging the question'. In a rigid argumentative context, 'begging the question' means 'the procedure of assuming what is at issue in an argument'.[268] In other words, the premise has already entailed the conclusion. But in ordinary conversations, people tend to understand this term to mean 'inviting a question'. So, which meaning of this concept *should* we use? B&P caution that the ordinary sense of 'begging the question' might cause us to ignore this fallacy in arguments. So, we need a resolution between the colloquial concept and the philosophical one (regarding fallacious reasoning).

Why do B&P adopt the name 'conceptual ethics'? The notion of 'ethics' employed by B&P is not used in a narrow sense, which means it is not restricted to the domain of moral philosophy. Rather, it is used in the sense of 'what we should do', which aims to stress the normative perspective of this method. Why 'conceptual' and not 'representational'? In B&G's mind, their approach cannot be exhausted by the representational feature of the 'concept', because using concepts is also about making plans, promising, lying, talking bullshit, etc.

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[267] Burgess and Plunkett, 2013, p. 1091.

[268] Blackburn, 2005, p. 39.

Their major concern is 'what should we do with concepts?'. This general inquiry can be divided into two sub-questions. (i) Should we use a given concept at all? As B&P suggest, we might simply refuse to use some pejorative terms such as 'nigger', 'Boche'[269]. (ii) How should we use a given concept? Consider 'cheat'. In a swimming competition, if an athlete wears a polyurethane costume, should we call her a cheat? To pursue conceptual ethics or conceptual engineering, philosophers need to choose the proper concepts, 'carving reality at its joints, promoting social justice, or whatever else'.[270] B&P hold that conceptual ethics has percolated widely into our ordinary life, although most people are unaware of it. It is the philosopher's job to 'make these disagreements explicit, addressing them wittingly, and adjudicate them with greater care'.[271]

2.5.2 Metalinguistic Negotiation

Plunkett develops conceptual ethics in terms of metalinguistic negotiation. In this section, we will consider the notion of metalinguistic negotiation.

In previous sections, I have noted that for Cappelen, conceptual engineering is in opposition with the descriptive approach in philosophy; for Ludlow, his dynamic view is in contrast with the static view. Plunkett's target is the objective-oriented philosophy, contra his metalinguistic negotiation (conceptual ethics).

What is objective-oriented philosophy? Plunkett uses three key words to characterize its features: 'ground', 'supervene', and 'real definition'. Plunkett writes:

> (a) 'ground' refers to a constitutive (rather than causal) explanatory relation between facts, (b) 'supervenience' can be defined in terms of the following: the A

[269] This feature will be highlighted in Brandomian conceptual engineering.

[270] Burgess and Plunkett, 2013, p. 1097.

[271] Burgess and Plunkett, 2013, p. 1097.

> facts supervene on the B facts when there cannot be a difference in the A facts without a difference in B facts, and (c) 'real definition' concerns a definition of what something really is (which, on some views, might centrally involve giving an account of its essence).[272]

These three elements contribute to objective-oriented philosophy respectively. Objective-oriented inquiry is 'about the things themselves—e.g. what they are grounded in, what they supervene on, or about what they really are'.[273] When focusing on objective-level philosophy, philosophers care less about the representational-level, because they focus on the reality itself, rather than the representations of reality.

Metalinguistic negotiation (conceptual ethics), in contrast, pays much more heed to the representational-level. The disputes which appear to be disputes about 'things', according to Plunkett, are in fact disputes about the ways of representing reality. Plunkett has a brief characterization of metalinguistic negotiation:

> In basic terms, a metalinguistic negotiation (or, equivalently, a *normative metalinguistic dispute*) is a dispute in which speakers each use (rather than mention) a term to advocate for a normative view about how that term should be used.[274]

For starters, what is metalinguistic usage? Plunkett borrows the definition from Barker: 'one where a speaker uses a term (rather than mentions it) to express a view about the meaning of that term, or relatedly, how to correctly use that term'.[275] Then, concerning metalinguistic dispute, a clarification of 'dispute' is needed: '(a) it is a linguistic exchange and (b) [. . .] this linguistic exchange appears to express a

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[272] Plunkett, 2015, p. 829.

[273] Plunkett, 2015, p. 828.

[274] Plunkett, 2015, p. 832.

[275] Plunkett, 2015, p. 834.

disagreement'.[276]

Plunkett draws a distinction between *canonical dispute* and *non-canonical dispute*. Canonical dispute focuses on the literal meaning. As Plunkett and Sundell note, '[c]all any dispute that centers on the truth or correctness of the content literally expressed by the speaker a *canonical dispute*'.[277] Non-canonical disputes happen at the level of pragmatics rather than semantics: '[t]here are many instances of non-canonical disputes—disputes that do not center on literally expressed content'.[278] Or to put it another way, canonical dispute is situated in the domain of semantics, while non-canonical dispute happens at the level of pragmatics.

Metalinguistic dispute is not verbal dispute such as:

[1] Sid: The bank is close to the cinema.

Nancy: No, it's not.

Suppose Sid's using of bank means a financial organization, while Nancy's refers to the space along the sides of a river. If so, [1] is a typical verbal dispute. In this case, Sid and Nancy merely talk past each other.

A preferable example of non-canonical dispute would be context-sensitive terms such as 'tall', 'salty', 'cold', which are gradable. Consider Sid and Nancy at a party, discussing about what counts as *fat* in their town. Sid looks around and finds that Bob meets the criterion. Nancy disagrees with him. So, they have a conversation:

[2] Sid: Bob is fat.

Nancy: No way, he's not fat.

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[276] Plunkett, 2015, p. 835.

[277] Plunkett and Sundell, 2013, p. 6.

[278] Plunkett and Sundell, 2013, p. 7.

Here, Sid and Nancy are having a *metalinguistic dispute* about how to use the word 'fat' properly in this specific context. In this case, they both agree that the meaning of 'fat' is having a body mass greater than a contextually supplied standard. An important distinction drawn by David Kaplan is helpful here. Kaplan distinguishes two senses of 'meaning': an expression's *character* and its *content*. Put roughly, an expression's character is 'its linguistically encoded, contextually invariant meaning, and its reference or denotation, relative to that context', while the expression's content is fixed and not relative to contexts.[279] So, based on this distinction, Sid and Nancy agree with the character of 'fatness' in case [2]. Their disputes are descriptive metalinguistic disputes: 'it is about a descriptive issue about word usage or meaning'.[280]

In contrast to descriptive metalinguistic dispute, metalinguistic negotiation is not only focused on the descriptive issues. Rather, its real concern is the appropriate choice of concept, i.e., it is a normative problem. Let us consider an example. Suppose Sid and Nancy are designing a video game together. Sid thinks that one task of the game designed by Nancy is too hard for the potential players:

> [3] Sid: The task you designed is hard.
>
> Nancy: No way, that's not hard at all.

In fact, in Nancy's mind, this game is designed for some staunch fans of this game series. So, she sets the bar high enough to make it more challenging and intriguing. But Sid, unlike Nancy, intends to attract newer players by reducing the difficulty. In this case, they are debating how we should use the term 'hard', which is a normative issue.

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[279] Plunkett and Sundell, 2013, p. 8.

[280] Plunkett, 2015, p. 838.

So far, our cases of metalinguistic disputes are disputes related to the content of an expression, rather than its character (context-invariant meaning). Metalinguistic negotiation is usually negotiation about the character of a term. Peter Ludlow provides the quintessential example of 'athlete'. One issue of the magazine *Sports illustrated* listed fifty greatest athletes of the twentieth-century. Surprisingly, a racehorse named Secretariat is among them, which is quite controversial. Suppose Sid and Nancy have a disagreement with this case:

[4] Sid: Secretariat is an athlete.

Nancy: Secretariat is not an athlete.

Again, this is a typical metalinguistic negotiation. Unlike the previous cases, the metalinguistic negotiation on 'athlete' concerns the character of this term rather than the content. As Plunkett puts it: 'The disagreement that is being expressed in the exchange, then, concerns a normative issue about word and concept choice: one of them holds a view about how the term "athlete" should be used that the other denies'.[281] This dispute matters because 'athlete' is a term with an emotional effect which is related to honor, fame, and praiseworthiness. Metalinguistic negotiation is a development of B&P's conceptual ethics: 'There are arguments in what we can dub conceptual ethics. We can use this term to cover normative and evaluative issues about thought and talk, including, centrally, normative issues about which concepts one should use in a given context'.[282]

It seems that the real issue in the Secretariat case is one about what kinds of creatures should be honored. Plunkett notes, on the one hand, that there are reasons why we have disagreements, and on the other hand, that there is the immediate topic of disagreement. Suppose Sid and Nancy are in a bookstore. Nancy plans to buy some

[281] Plunkett, 2015, p. 841-2.

[282] Plunkett, 2015, p. 843.

philosophy books and she picks one book by Wittgenstein. Sid complains that Wittgenstein is a bad philosopher (and therefore she is wasting her money and time) but Nancy disagrees. At first glance, their immediate topic of disagreement is whether Wittgenstein is a good philosopher or not. But the real issue is whether Nancy should buy the book. Likewise, in the Secretariat case, it may appear that the issue is what kinds of creatures are worthy of the honor when in fact they are arguing about how to apply the concept 'athlete'.

Just as in Lexical Warfare, the real disagreement is indeed about the normative judgments behind the concept application: 'there can be many different kinds of norms that are appealed to in the course of a metalinguistic negotiation, and, correspondingly, many different kinds of normative judgments that these speakers make'.[283]

How does one therefore detect a metalinguistic negotiation (not a mere talking past or descriptive metalinguistic dispute)? Plunkett (2015) outlines four types of evidence: [A] The linguistic exchange between two parties should be a dispute. [B] This dispute does express a disagreement (e.g., mere verbal dispute does not express disagreement). [C] The two parties must mean at least one different thing by a term in that dispute. [D] And the dispute should not be restricted to the descriptive information or use of that term (otherwise, it is just a descriptive metalinguistic dispute rather than a normative metalinguistic negotiation). So, if we can find features [A]-[D] in a dispute, then it is metalinguistic negotiation.

Plunkett claims that many philosophical debates can be reframed as metalinguistic negotiation. More specifically, disputes which appear to be over objective issues (ground, supervenience or real definition) can be understood in terms of metalinguistic disputes. So, even if we believe that we are engaging in an objectively

[283] Plunkett, 2015, p. 845.

oriented debate, when in fact we are having a metalinguistic dispute, we can use objectively oriented terminology (ground, supervenience or real definition) to rephrase the debates into a metalinguistic negotiation. Take 'free will' as an example:

> (a) It is part of the essence of free will that only agents that are capable of fully causing their own actions have free will. This means that their actions cannot be fully determined by events over which they have no control, such as the events of the past.
>
> (b) No, that is wrong. The nature of free will is such that agents can have free will even if they are not capable of that kind of self-determination. What matters is that they we can hold them morally responsible in the right way, which we can do even if they don't have that kind of capacity for self-determination that you just described. And that is a good thing, given that we in fact don't have that kind of self-determination.[284]

According to Plunkett, after careful scrutinizing, it is plausible to say that this dispute fully conforms to the evidence [A]-[D]. Therefore, this is a typical metalinguistic negotiation. Most of the philosophical disputes can be paraphrased into this form, as he states: 'I suggest that, in many such cases, the disagreement that is expressed in the dispute is actually one about which concepts should be employed'.[285]

2.6 Haslanger's Ameliorative Approach

In this section, I will focus on Haslanger's version of conceptual engineering which is known as the ameliorative approach. In section 2.6.1, I will introduce Haslanger's account of four approaches to philosophical analysis which are considered complementary. In section 2.6.2, three key notions of Haslanger's ameliorative

[284] Plunkett, 2015, p. 855.

[285] Plunkett, 2015, p. 831.

approach, namely manifest concept, operative concept and target concept, are discussed. Section 2.6.3 addresses the relation between semantic externalism and the ameliorative approach. Section 2.6.4 briefly introduces Haslanger's ameliorative definition of gender.

2.6.1 Four Ways of Analyses

In Haslanger's view, philosophers usually have different approaches concerning the question of 'What is *X*', in which *X* could be 'race', 'gender', 'knowledge', 'justice', 'truth', etc. She outlines four different approaches that attempt to address this kind of question: the conceptual, the descriptive, the ameliorative, and the genealogical approach. Before moving forward, two things are worth noting. Firstly, in Haslanger (2000), she calls the ameliorative approach an analytical approach (which corresponds to the ameliorative approach in Haslanger (2006). It is just a verbal difference). Therefore, the analytical approach in Haslanger (2000) should not be identified as conceptual analysis. Secondly, in Haslanger (2000) and Haslanger (2006), she only sketches three approaches, viz., the conceptual, the descriptive, and the ameliorative approach. In Haslanger (2005), she provides an additional one—the genealogical approach. She later argues that the genealogical approach can be subsumed under the conceptual and the descriptive ones.

According to Haslanger, the conceptual approach is also known as the internalist approach, in the sense that it usually appeals to the intuition of the individual, or *a priori* reflection of the individuals[286]: 'Taking into account intuitions about cases and principles, one hopes eventually to reach a reflective equilibrium'.[287] Given the prevalence of anti-armchair climate in the current philosophical community, the

[286] In fact, this is a very narrow understanding of conceptual analysis, which might not be accepted by those proponents of conceptual analysis.

[287] Haslanger, 2005, p. 12.

internalist approach has met with scorn.

The descriptive approach has a naturalistic spirit. Usually, this method begins with observing various pertinent phenomena—the extension of the concept. This is how Haslanger characterizes it:

> In contrast to the conceptual project, a descriptive project is not concerned with exploring the nuances of our concepts (or anyone else's for that matter); it focuses instead on their extension. Here, the task is to develop potentially more accurate concepts through careful consideration of the phenomena, usually relying on empirical or quasi-empirical methods.[288]

Haslanger emphasizes that the application of this approach is not only restricted to *natural kinds*, and that it also applies to *social kinds*, such as 'human rights' and 'democracy'. In the same way as scientists can enrich our understanding of folk concepts, philosophers can play a similar role concerning social kinds.

Additionally, there is a genealogical approach. The notion of genealogy is derived from Nietzsche and Foucault. By tracing back the history of a concept, the genealogy attempts to figure out how the concept being investigated is anchored in our society. As Haslanger describes it,

> Very roughly, a genealogy of a concept explores its history, not in order to determine its true meaning by reference to origins, and not for sheer historicist fascination, but in order to understand how the concept is embedded in evolving social practices.[289]

Concerning this approach, two points needs to be noted. Firstly, concepts and our

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[288] Haslanger, 2000, p. 33.

[289] Haslanger, 2005, p. 13.

social practice are mutually influencing and interacting. On the one hand, a concept does not only serve to describe the reality, but also contributes to the construction of reality. On the other hand, our practice can affect our concept forming. Secondly, we can always detect a gap between concept and practice. Haslanger uses a case of 'being tardy' to elaborate this point. Presumably, each school has norms that stipulate the notion of 'being tardy'. Suppose in school *A*, according to their official rules, whoever arrives at school later than 8:30 counts as being tardy. However, as a matter of fact, each Wednesday, the person who tracks tardiness does not show up until 9:00. So, as long as the student arrives at school before 9:00, she will not be recorded as being tardy. Therefore, there is a gap between the institutional meaning and the practical meaning of 'being tardy'. And the aim of a genealogical approach is 'to find a story about how various conceptions of "tardy" are embedded in the evolution of multiple and interacting social practices'.[290] For a genealogist, a bunch of elements needs to be taken into consideration, and this is called 'matrix' by Haslanger:

> Within a genealogical inquiry our subject matter is a set of historically specific social practices. To give an account of what tardiness really is, is to describe a broad matrix of practices, procedures, rules, rationales, punishments, institutions, equipment (bells, clipboards, forms), to demonstrate how power circulates within it, and how certain subject positions (the walkers, the bus-riders, the habitually tardy) are formed. On the genealogical approach, this matrix is what tardiness really is.[291]

In fact, Haslanger holds that both the conceptual approach and the descriptive approach can be combined with the genealogical approach, and that we can therefore have *conceptual genealogy* and *descriptive genealogy*.

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[290] Haslanger, 2005, p. 14.

[291] Haslanger, 2005, p. 6.

What is conceptual genealogy? As aforementioned, the conceptual approach is based on individual intuitions. According to this specification, it is sufficient to check the intuition of competent English speakers when pursuing the conceptual approach. However, conceptual genealogy is supposed to consider a much broader range of speakers, which includes not only competent English speakers, but also 'differently situated speakers over time'.[292] As Haslanger describes:

> *Conceptual analyses* elucidate "our" (manifest) concept of F-ness by exploring what "we" take F-ness to be.
>
> *Conceptual genealogy*: elucidate the variety of understandings and uses of F-ness over time and across individuals differently positioned with respect to practices that employ the notion.[293]

What is descriptive genealogy? This approach focuses on the social context where the concept being analyzed plays a role. Enough cases in different practices should be collected and a sophisticated social theory is needed to find out what unites a genuine type which is constituted by these cases:

> *Descriptive analyses* elucidate the empirical kinds (the operative concept) into which "our" paradigm cases of F-ness fall.
>
> *Descriptive naturalism:* elucidate, where possible, the natural (chemical, biological, neurological) kinds that capture "our" paradigm cases of F-ness.
>
> *Descriptive genealogy*: elucidate the social matrix (history, practices, power relations) within which "we" discriminate between things that are F and those that aren't.[294]

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[292] Haslanger, 2005, p. 16.

[293] Haslanger, 2005, p. 19.

[294] Haslanger, 2005, p. 19-20.

However, both the conceptual approach (including conceptual genealogy) and the descriptive approach (including descriptive genealogy) only serve as a means to a further end. What is the real goal of Haslanger? Is it the ameliorative approach that Haslanger is in favor of? The main concern of this approach is to ask 'What is the point of having the concept in question?'. The ameliorative approach is more purpose-oriented than the other two approaches:

> [. . .] those pursuing an ameliorative approach might reasonably represent themselves as providing an account of our concept—or perhaps the concept we are reaching for—by enhancing our conceptual resources to serve our (critically examined) purposes.[295]

Instead of concentrating on the nature of the concepts or the description of the concepts, a proponent of the ameliorative approach needs to be alert to our current conceptual devices: 'Are they effective tools to accomplish our (legitimate) purposes; if not, what concepts would serve these purposes better?'.[296] She provides a definition of ameliorative analyses:

> **Ameliorative analyses** elucidate "our" legitimate purposes and what concept of F-ness (if any) would serve them best (the target concept). Normative input is needed.[297]

2.6.2 Manifest, Operative, and Target Concepts

To better understand Haslanger's ameliorative project, we need to introduce three kinds of concepts: *manifest concept*, *operative concept*, and *target concept*. The aim of the conceptual approach (including conceptual genealogy) is to track the manifest

[295] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 96.

[296] Haslanger, 2000, p. 33.

[297] Haslanger, 2005, p. 19-20.

concept; the aim of the descriptive approach (including descriptive genealogy) is to track the operative concept; the aim of the ameliorative approach is to track the target concept.

Suppose Sid tells me that he has been doing philosophy recently. Afterwards, I find out that what Sid meant by doing philosophy is living a Stoical life. In other words, he becomes a Stoic and exercises his doctrines. Being a Stoic, Sid insists on doing some routine Stoic practices, such as Stoic mediation, every day. However, according to Nancy's understanding of 'philosophizing', practicing Stoicism does not count. To her, the concept of 'philosophizing' is constituted by theoretical practices, such as 'building arguments', 'debate', 'critical thinking', 'theory producing', 'conceptual analysis', 'conceptual inventing', 'writing books on philosophy', not doing spiritual exercises. Therefore, Nancy responds to Sid by saying that he should stop asserting that he is doing philosophy. In this case, Nancy's understanding of 'philosophizing' can be regarded as the 'manifest concept'. Haslanger explains the notion of manifest concept as follows: 'Let's call the concept I thought I was guided by and saw myself as attempting to apply, the *manifest concept'*. [298] In this case, the manifest concept is the theoretical-oriented conception of philosophy which guides Nancy's response to Sid. However, Nancy may finally realize that it is not the theoretical-oriented conception of philosophy that leads to her interventions, even though Nancy attempts to use it to guide her intervention with Sid. Instead, it turns out that Stoicism represents a prototype of bad philosophy in Nancy's mind, and she also holds that bad philosophy cannot be taken as real philosophy. Hence, it is indeed this notion of philosophy based on what she takes to be good quality philosophy that causes her reaction to Sid's claim. Here, the evaluative notion of philosophy is the *operative concept*. Haslanger explains 'operative concept' as follows: 'Let's call the concept that best captures the distinction that I in practice draw the operative concept'. But it is

[298] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 98.

still possible to transform an operative concept into a manifest concept: 'In such a case, I allow the operative concept to have priority over the (original) manifest concept in guiding my behavior; in doing so the operative concept becomes manifest'.[299]

'Parent' is another case. Even if Clark Kent (Superman) is adopted and raised by Jonathan and Martha Kent, Jonathan Kent can still claim that he does not know who Clark's parents are, because normally we understand parent as immediate progenitor. However, as Haslanger indicates, 'in practice the term "parent" in these contexts is meant to include the primary caregivers of the student, whether they be biological parents, step-parents, legal guardians, grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, informal substitute parents, etc.'. Given this observation, the manifest concept in this case is 'immediate progenitor', while 'parent as primary caregiver' is the operative concept. The former refers to 'the concept speakers generally associate with the term', while the latter refers to 'how the term works in practice'. The conceptual approach aims to uncover the manifest concept, while the descriptive approach seeks to disclose the operative concept.

In addition to the manifest-operative distinction, we also have the 'target concept': 'Let's call the target concept the concept that, all things considered (my purposes, the facts, etc.), I should be employing. In the ideal case, I adjust my practice and my self-understanding to conform to the target concept'.[300] In a nutshell, the target concept is supposed to be the result of the ameliorative approach.

Usually the manifest concept is at odds with the operative concept. Based on this consideration, Haslanger provides three constructive strategies to tackle this distinction. Firstly, there is the descriptive strategy, according to which one simply

[299] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 98.

[300] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 99.

replaces the manifest concept with the operative one without throwing away the old term (like 'parent'). This approach is trying to adjust our current understanding of the concept in order to conform to how we actually use it. Secondly, the ameliorative strategy puts our practical needs and purpose in the primary place. Accordingly, the primary goal of this strategy is to figure out which concept could best serve our practical purpose, or as Haslanger puts it, the concept 'that best suits our needs and legitimate purposes'.[301] The target concept is the result of this strategy. The third strategy is 'to argue for an ambiguity in the term, with one meaning tracking a social kind; the question then is whether a new term should be introduced, or whether there are other ways of resolving the ambiguity'.[302]

In the above discussion, it is likely that in most cases, manifest concepts, operative concepts, and target concepts come apart. However, Haslanger holds that there are various ways to bond them together. Sometimes, the manifest concepts dovetail with the target ones. When this happens, our operative concepts fail, which means we need to modulate our practice. In other cases, as I have discussed before, our operative concept should replace the manifest concept that is misguiding and defective.

Haslanger, as a social constructionist, indicates that whenever there is a gap between manifest concepts, operative concepts and target concepts, philosophers can play an ameliorative (revisionary) role: 'This sort of revisionary analysis is surely in keeping with the philosophical goal of talking about what we should be talking about, and being fully aware of what that is'.[303]

Imagine a scenario: A large population in a specific society considers whales as a subcategory of fish. With descriptive analysis, it is easy to detect the problem of

[301] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 103.

[302] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 103.

[303] Haslanger, 2005, p. 20.

classifying whales as fish, given the fact that whales belong to the class of mammals. In this case, there is a gap between the manifest concept and the operative concept, and the manifest one is mistaken. Let us consider another scenario: Imagine that in University *A*, according to the institutional rules, each graduate student is required to publish at least one academic journal paper in order to get a PhD and qualify as a well-trained student. Yet, some professors stipulate in their own rules that their students must have at least three journal publications to reach the minimal requirement. In this case, the official requirement for getting the PhD degree requires only 'one journal publication', while the practical rule made by certain professors requires 'three journal publications'. In other words, in the 'standard of graduation', there is a lacuna between the manifest concept and the operative concept. Yet, it is not an easy task to decide which one is right. The proponents of the manifest concept could argue that one publication is enough to prove a student's academic competence, plus it will not cause overloaded pressure. On the other hand, the proponents of the operative concept could reply that given the current competitive situation in the academic job market, having only one publication will be a disadvantage. The moral is that in this case, there is no obvious answer as to which concept we should adopt.[304]

2.6.3 Haslanger on Semantic Externalism

According to Haslanger, the goal of the conceptualist approach is to provide a manifest concept, while the descriptive and the ameliorative strategies intend to adjust our manifest concept (both of them are constructivist approaches). As we have noted,in certain occasions, the operative concept can serve the role of the target concept. The operative concept is usually fixed by the descriptive approach which is closely related to semantic externalism.

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[304] Hanslanger introduces a case of 'incomplete for a course'. At MIT, to get an incomplete for a course requires finishing at least 80 percent of the work. But in practice, incompletes are often granted to students even they submit less than 80 percent of the work.

[1] Semantic Externalism

Semantic internalism, on which the conceptualist approach is based, is not so prevalent in contemporary philosophy of language since its assumption that meaning is determined by what is in our heads is quite controversial. In contrast, semantic externalism is widely accepted. Here is the brief rationale of semantic externalism made by Haslanger: 'Externalists maintain that the content of what we think and mean is determined not simply by intrinsic facts about us but at least in part by facts about our environment'.[305] Usually, semantic externalism applies to natural kind terms, such as 'water'. Yet, Haslanger states that semantic externalism also applies to social kinds:

> [. . .] whatever it is that determines the extension of our social kind terms, it isn't something to which we have privileged access through introspection. If the extension of the term changes over time, it is legitimate to postulate a change in what determines the extension.[306]

It takes efforts for scientists to crack the code of natural kinds. Likewise, the meaning of social kinds does not float to the surface and philosophers devote their lives to undercover it. Unlike natural kinds, analyzing social kinds is not fully empirical research: 'the investigation of social kinds will need to draw on empirical social/historical inquiry, not just natural science'.[307] According to Haslanger, both natural kinds externalism and social kinds externalism can be explained in terms of objective type externalism[308]:

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[305] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 107.

[306] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 106.

[307] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 108.

[308] Most conceptual engineering projects have a friendly attitude to semantic externalism. We have already seem that in Cappelen and Zagzebski. But I don't think that conceptual engineering needs to preside on a theory of meaning.

> Objective type externalism: Terms/concepts pick out an objective type, whether or not we can state conditions for membership in the type, by virtue of the fact that their meaning is determined by ostension of paradigms (or other means of reference-fixing) together with an implicit extension to things of the same type as the paradigms.[309]

Accordingly, social constructivists endeavor to 'determine the (an?) objective type, if any, into which the paradigms of a particular concept fall'.[310] As we have noted, the manifest concept could be defective or it could not best serve our practical purpose, and the operative concept should be taken as the target concept. When the operative concept is the target concept, we are in fact just disclosing the real use of the concept, because '[t]his is not to propose a new meaning, but to reveal an existing one'.[311]

[2] Meaning Holism

Even those who do not place too much weight on the notion of 'analyticity' would usually admit a proposition such as 'Bachelors are unmarried men' is analytical[312]. Haslanger cautions us that it is not always the case. Let us take a look at the statement '*x* is a bachelor iff_{df} *x* is an unmarried adult male (UAM)'. Haslanger argues that the validity of this claim is premised on a universally accepted view of heterosexuality and a formalized notion of marriage based on lifelong commitment. But doesn't that lead to a misleading understanding, if, for example, we consider a gay man in a stable and monogamous relationship? She reminds us: 'It seems plausible to say that an unmarried gay man who has made a lifelong commitment to another—perhaps even formalized it as a "union"—is not a bachelor'.[313] The moral is that the analyticity of

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[309] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 110.

[310] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 110.

[311] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 110.

[312] In Putnam, H. (2001). ''Two Dogmas' revisited. Philosophy of Quine: General, reviews, and analytic, 1, 292., Putnam argues that 'bachelor are unmarried man' is analytical, albeit in a trivial sense.

[313] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 113.

this proposition is not obviously tenable.

The difference between 'Bachelors are unmarried men' and scientific propositions, according to Hilary Putnam, is that the former almost amounts to a pure stipulation, while the latter keeps having 'systematic import'. In contrast to Putnam's statement, Haslanger shows us that it is not plausible to simply define bachelor as an 'unmarried man' as analytical. In effect, 'Bachelors are unmarried men' also has systematic importance, because 'the concepts, in particular, of marriage, adult, and male, although familiar from common parlance, can also be the subject of social and political theory and of social contestation'.[314] Following in the steps of Quine, we should also apply meaning holism to social kinds.

2.6.4 Haslanger on Gender

Haslanger is not only proposing this metaphilosophical approach, she is also putting it into practice. She focuses on two case studies (gender and race) in her paper 'Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?'

In contrast to our biological based manifest concept of women, Haslanger offers her revisionary one:

> S *functions as a* woman in context C iff$_{df}$:
>
> (i) S is observed or imagined in C to have certain bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction;
>
> (ii) that S has these features marks S within the background ideology of C as someone who ought to occupy certain kinds of social positions that are in fact subordinate (and so motivates and justifies S's occupying such a position); and

[314] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 114.

(iii) the fact that S satisfies (i) and (ii) plays a role in S's systematic subordination in C, that is, *along some dimension*, S's social position in C is oppressive, and S satisfying (i) and (ii) plays a role in that dimension of subordination.[315]

The purpose of Haslanger's definition is not merely a conceptual or a descriptive one. Instead, her definition 'intends to offer a negative ideal that challenges male dominance'.[316] The ameliorative project is always not just about the name of the term in use, in fact, it is the norms behind the term that matters.

[315] Haslanger, 2000, pp. 42-3.

[316] Haslanger, 2000, p. 46.

Chapter 3 From Conceptual Engineering to Conceptual Tuning

> [. . .] *techne* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. — Martin Heidegger

In this chapter, I provide an analysis of all six approaches introduced in the previous sections, in an attempt to identify their common assumptions and differences to establish the idea of conceptual tuning. I propose to dub my project 'conceptual tuning' instead of 'conceptual engineering' and will provide the reasons in section 3.1. Section 3.2 presents the detailed framework of my conceptual tuning project. Section 3.3 aims to clarify the relationship between verbal disputes and conceptual tuning.

3.1 Engineering or Tuning

As I have shown in the previous chapter, most philosophers proposing the ameliorative approach prefer to call it 'conceptual engineering'. For example, Cappelen claims: 'I will use the term "*conceptual engineering*" for this critical/constructive enterprise of assessing and improving our representational devices'.[317] Also, in a footnote, he claims that this is just a label which can be identified with other terms such as 'ameliorative', 'revisionary' or 'explication. I also noted that Brun states that Carnap's method of explication can be generalized as conceptual re-engineering. In 'Revisionary Epistemology', Davide Fassio & Robin McKenna (F&M) attempt to label their task as conceptual engineering as well: 'the revisionary project fundamentally differs from more traditional approaches with respect to its aim. Put somewhat metaphorically, our approach is a sort of *conceptual*

[317] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p.13.

engineering'.[318] And they claim that they are inspired by Haslanger's project.

What do we mean by 'engineer'? In *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, we find two definitions for the term 'engineer' as a noun. Firstly, it refers to 'a person whose job is to design or build machines, engines, or electrical equipment, or things such as roads, railways, or bridges, using scientific principles'; Secondly, it refers to 'a person whose job is to repair or control machines, engines, or electrical equipment'. Let us recall, one of the core tenets of most conceptual engineering approaches is to tackle defective concepts and replace them with new ones. So, it seems that the term 'engineer' does capture the main features (repairing and building) of this project. The term 'conceptual engineering' suggests that the task of philosophy is to examine and repair our current linguistic devices or concepts.

Before establishing my own label (conceptual tuning), I will spell out one important merit of the term 'conceptual engineering', which is related to the notion of *know-how*. It is agreed that 'engineering' should be understood in terms of *know-how* rather than *know-that*, which means it is a practical knowledge. Engineering has cognates such as technology, ability, competence, skill, and intelligence. Usually, we think engineering is a tag suitable to scientists rather than artists. D. H. Mellor mentions that for Heidegger, 'techne is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts'.[319] ('techne' and 'engineering' is interchangeable in this context) Considering this, Mellor articulates that the title of engineer is not only used to name people working in the domain of natural science, but also to those within the domain of liberal arts: 'In this sense painters, composers, actors and novelists are engineers, just as builders of power stations are, as are mathematicians and practitioners of Heidegger's other "arts of the mind"'.[320]

[318] Fassio and McKenna, 2015, p. 16.

[319] Heidegger, 1954, p. 318 (cited in Mellor, 2015, p. 395).

[320] Mellor, 2015, p. 395.

Assuming Mellor is right, then this title is also applicable to philosophers. On Mellor's understanding, it is reasonable then to equate philosophers with engineers.

The idea is that philosophers possess certain skills or know-how. But what is the distinctive philosophical know-how? As a competent linguistic user, we *know how* to apply everyday concepts. For example, when we are presented with something red, it is natural for us to use the concept 'RED' to describe this item. Or when someone makes us feel bad, we might call him a scoundrel because we know how to apply this concept. Knowing how to use concepts is the basic ability of a rational being. Or borrowing Harry Collins and Robert Evans's (C&E) terminology, linguistic ability is an 'ubiquitous expertise':

> *ubiquitous expertises* are those, such as natural language-speaking, which every member of a society must possess in order to live in it; when one has a ubiquitous expertise one has, by definition, a huge body of tacit knowledge—things you just know how to do without being able to explain the rules for how you do them.[321]

However, philosophical know-how is supposed to be beyond ubiquitous expertise. Knowing how to apply folk concepts is not sufficient for philosophical practice. For example, being able to analyze concepts means one knows how to excavate the hidden assumptions of the concept which require more than simply knowing how to use concepts. Thus, Colin McGinn points out that performing conceptual analysis requires knowing how to make explicit what is implicit in our use of folk concepts: 'I know the analysis of my concepts (and words) implicitly but the analyst makes this knowledge explicit'.[322] Frank Jackson expresses a similar idea: 'The role of intuitions about possible cases in conceptual analysis is not to be part of a mysterious

[321] Collins and Evans, 2007, p. 13.

[322] McGinn, 2012, p. 52.

investigation of a mental museum, but to make explicit what is implicitly guiding the divisions we make using language'.[323] Peter Hacker, as a staunch follower of Wittgenstein, indicates that the philosopher should have an overview of the use of our concepts[324]: 'For mastery of their use does not require an overview of use. But that is precisely what is needed for the solution and dissolution of philosophical problems'.[325] All of them agree that philosophical ability is more than simply applying folk concepts: it requires the ability to articulate hidden assumptions or identify connections among concepts. Performing conceptual engineering requires more than ubiquitous expertise. It requires not only a general linguistic ability, but also other skills. For example, philosophers need to be capable of detecting the defective concept, which requires the ability to make explicit the assumption entailed in the use of such concept. It also requires the ability to make judgments to decide whether we should abandon it or not. If we decide to revise it, then it requires us to know how to improve it. In a nutshell, conceptual engineering should be understood in terms of know-how, which is one advantage of the term conceptual engineering for naming this project.

However, as we have seen, not all ameliorative approaches are coined as engineering[326]. For instance, Burgess and Plunkett prefer the term 'conceptual ethics'. Why would they prefer this term instead of 'conceptual engineering'? It is not their intention to relate their approach to moral issues inclusively. The reason why they

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[323] Jackson, 2001, p. 618.

[324] This idea is inherited from Wittgenstein. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein says: 'A main source of our failure to understand is that we don't have an *overview* of the use of our words. Our grammar is deficient in surveyability. A surveyable representation produces precisely that kind of understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate links*' (Wittgenstein 2009, 54e).

[325] Hacker, 2009, p. 146.

[326] There is also one more approach that I haven't discussed in this dissertation, which is Nicholas Rescher's 'concept audits'. The aim of this approach is 'to determine if the treatment of a given philosophical issue has made appropriate use of the conceptual resources afforded by the pre-systematically established employment of the relevant concepts' (Rescher 2016, 3).

choose ‘ethics’ is to stress the normative or prescriptive aspects of their approach: ‘This conception of ethics is obviously quite broad, covering both the study of what one should or ought to do (dually, what can permissibly be done) as well as the study of which actions and outcomes are good or bad, better or worse’.[327] In some contexts, Plunkett prefers the term ‘metalinguistic negotiation’ to describe his project. Ludlow does not employ the term ‘conceptual engineering’ either; in contrast, he prefers terms such as ‘word meaning litigation’ ‘meaning modulation’ or ‘lexical warfare’.

Concerning these differences between different conceptual engineering approaches, I propose a distinction between *meaning-repairing centered* conceptual engineering and *meaning-negotiating centered* conceptual engineering. Most projects coined with ‘conceptual engineering’endeavor to provide a revisionary plan without placing too much attention on the descriptive or expressive part of this project. To illustrate this difference, let us recall Haslanger’s discussion. She draws a distinction between manifest concept, operative concept, and target concept. In most occasions, the manifest concept is defective and should therefore be repaired. Yet, as we have seen, that is not always the case. It is still possible (though it rarely happens) that sometimes our manifest concept serves as the target concept, which needs serious negotiation (or the practice of giving and asking for reasons). Or in other cases, it might just turn out that the operative concept could better serve our purpose, and then the operative concept is the target concept. In practice, we are usually provided with a range of competing candidates for the possible target concept provided by different philosophers, and we need to decide which one could aptly serve our current purpose. Besides this, in certain cases, we might simply abandon the defective concept, and in other cases the philosopher should invent a completely new concept to capture a previously overlooked idea or phenomenon[328]. Therefore, by using Haslanger’s term

[327] Burgess and Plunkett, 2013, p. 1094.

[328] This approach is frequently adopted by contemporary French philosophers, for example, Deleuze argues that the task of philosophy is to invent or create new concepts. Derrida invent the concept ‘différance’, which means

we could envisage several possible situations in conceptual engineering or conceptual ethics:

[1] The manifest concept can serve as the target concept.

[2] The operative concept can serve as the target concept.

[3] We detect a defective concept, and simply abandon it.

[4] We create a new target concept to explain or capture a phenomenon that can not be covered by existing concepts.

As we can see, the meaning-repairing idea cannot cover all these situations, while all of them do presuppose the notion of negotiation, since it is only through negotiation that we can pick a final target concept among several candidates. For example, situations [1] and [4] do not presuppose a defective concept. The goal of the meaning-repairing centered approach is to replace or improve the old concept, which entails that the old concept must be defective. According to Haslanger, sometimes the manifest concept can be taken as the target one, which means that our folk concept is not always defective. As the meaning-negotiating centered approach shows, the point of their ameliorative approach is to find out which concept we should use through rational conversation or negotiation. Based on these thoughts, it is plausible to claim that the extension of the meaning-negotiating centered approach is broader than the meaning-repairing centered approach, because the former can cover the extension of the latter, while the converse does not hold.

With this distinction in mind, the six approaches discussed in chapter 2 can be categorized as follows:

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both 'to differ' and 'to defer'.

Meaning-repairing	**Meaning-negotiating**
Cappelen's conceptual engineering	Ludlow's lexical warfare
Carnap's method of explication	Plunkett's metalinguistic negotiation
Zagzebski's moral revisionism	Haslanger's ameliorative approach

The point is that the approaches belonging to the first column can also be put into the second one, because the notion of meaning-negotiating is broader than the notion of meaning-repairing (both intension and extension). If we accept this, doesn't that mean that 'conceptual ethics' would be a better label than 'conceptual engineering'? It seems so, since ethic can capture the feature of negotiation, which engineering cannot. Nevertheless, the term 'conceptual ethics' does not express the know-how perspective of the philosophical method, which can be unveiled by the term conceptual engineering. Hence, we need a label which can have the merits of both 'conceptual engineering' and 'conceptual ethics'. I propose a new label—'conceptual tuning' which can satisfy our requirements. I quote three related definitions of 'tune' (verb) from the Merriam-Webster online dictionary:

> [1] to adjust in musical pitch or cause to be in tune.
>
> [2] to adjust for precise functioning.
>
> [3] to make more precise, intense, or effective.

Tuning is a figurative expression. The process of tuning intends to characterize the process of negotiation. Just like the term 'conceptual ethics', 'conceptual tuning' can express the normative aspect of my project, showing that this project also focuses on the meaning adjusting or negotiation. Moreover, it does not leave out the know-how aspect of philosophical practice, since tuning, like engineering, is also a know-how

practice.

3.2 Core Ideas of Conceptual Tuning

In the previous sections, I have discussed six forms of conceptual tuning (or conceptual ethics, conceptual engineering, conceptual development, metalinguistic negotiation, conceptual amelioration, lexical warfare, conceptual revision, etc.): Cappelen's conceptual engineering, Carnap's method of explication, Zagzebski's moral revisionism, Ludlow's lexical warfare, Plunkett's metalinguistic negotiations and Haslanger's ameliorative approach. Now, in this section, I endeavor to put all these approaches under one name, namely conceptual tuning. And I will stipulate seven core ideas for the project of conceptual tuning.

[1] Concepts could be defective

The legitimacy of conceptual tuning is premised on the assumption that our concepts could be defective, flawed, or deficient. The plumber comes to work only when there are problems with the plumbing. It is only if our current concepts can be defective that there will there be a need for us to improve them. As noted, Cappelen draws a distinction between the representationally complacent and the representationally skeptics. Only the latter possesses a critical attitude to our current conceptual devices. Conceptual skeptics insist that our conceptual devices are not be immune to revision. A proponent of conceptual tuning must be a conceptual skeptic. Consider an analogy: a captain and his crew would not ignore the malfunction of their ship because the ship is the *sine qua non* for sailing. Likely, it's scarcely possible that a conceptual skeptic can live with defective concepts, because concepts are the vehicle of our communication and understanding.

An example might be helpful. 'Mental toughness' is a prevailing evaluative concept in

sport[329]. Ryall (2016) states that 'mental toughness' is used to prize the valuable mental attributes manifested in sport which are supposed to be above the value of physical attributes. These mental attributes include: 'self-confidence; concentration and focus; stress/anxiety-management; motivation and desire; resilience; and control'.[330] Accordingly, mental toughness becomes the decisive factor in evaluating success in sport. Ryall introduces a common definition of mental toughness:

> Mental toughness is having the natural or developed psychological edge that enables you to: generally, cope better than your opponents with the many demands (competition, training, lifestyle) that sport places upon the performer; specifically, be more consistent and better than your opponents in remaining determined, focused, confident, and in control under pressure. (Jones 2002, 209)[331]

However, as Ryall points out, this prevailing understanding is defective. One charge levelled against it is that it commits the fallacy of circularity. This definition of 'mental toughness' appeals to successful sporting performance, while at the same time it holds that success in sports is decided by mental toughness. Another criticism is that this concept is pseudo-scientific: 'it appears to be a scientific and measurable concept when it is not. It is characterized by romantic notions of sporting idealism, elitist values, and metaphorical images of triumph and victory' (Ryall 2016, 75).[332] And Ryall provides a suggestion for improving the defective concept: 'Shifting the focus back on to the development of a virtuous soul and the internal goods associated with sport is a way of valuing sporting excellence without idolising elitism and those external goods that are available to a limited few'.[333]

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[329] Cf. Ryall 2016.

[330] Ryall, 2016, p. 73

[331] Jones, 2002, p. 209 (cited in Ryall, 2016, pp. 73-4).

[332] Ryall, 2016, p. 75.

[333] Ryall, 2016, p. 77.

[2] Conceptual development without subject-changing

Cappelen spills much ink on how his project of conceptual engineering can evade the challenge of topic-change. He gives two replies. One appeals to the coarseness of same-saying and topic, while the other appeals to lexical effects. Most conceptual ameliorative projects take the view that conceptual development does not lead to subject-changing. For example, Brun declares that as long as the principle of similarity is observed, the worry of subject-change can be warded off. My conceptual tuning framework also embraces this point.

[3] Case-oriented method

In the previous sections, I have discussed a variety of cases—there are natural kinds concepts, social kinds concepts, moral concepts, metaphysical concepts, ordinary concepts, etc. However, we do not have a one-size-fits-all solution for all these different cases. There is no manual to follow when engaging in conceptual tuning. Different cases need different tuning strategies. Therefore, a case-oriented strategy is recommended.

[4] Being neutral regarding any meaning theory

The conceptual tuning approach does not intend to presuppose any theory of meaning or thought. Most of the conceptual engineering projects do not want to drag themselves into the complex, thorny and contestable problem of the nature of concepts. The nature of concepts is an independent domain in philosophy. Contemporary philosophers have various answers to the question of what the concepts are. Some hold that a concept is mental representation; some take concepts as know-how; some claim that concepts are Fregean senses; etc. However, most conceptual engineering projects tend to shy away from this deep mire. For example,

Cappelen's project is in favor of semantic externalism, because the change in reality will bring a change in our words. But he still claims that his project does not presuppose a theory of concepts: 'I don't think a theory of Conceptual Engineering is hostage to a theory of what concepts are. [. . .] My version of Conceptual Engineering bypasses this cluster of problems because it doesn't require an appeal to concepts at all'.[334] However, conceptual tuning does not hold that extension shifting is the only reason for meaning modulation. Therefore, I do not need to be premised on semantic externalism. Still, extension is one crucial factor to consider when tuning concepts. For example, it is necessary to consider extension when we discuss moral concepts in terms of moral exemplars. Haslanger suggests that semantic externalism be helpful in explaining her theory, while Brun uses 'concept' to 'refer to an elementary linguistic entity' without appealing to any version of a theory of concepts.[335] And Ludlow's attitude is similar:

> I haven't offered a definition (explicification) of 'meaning' and I don't intend to. Suffice it to say that there are numerous theories of what 'meaning' means. My view is that the meaning of 'meaning' is underdetermined and the goal of this book is not to sharpen that meaning but rather to offer a theory of how word meanings are modulated while at the same time being as neutral as possible on what one's theory of meaning should look like.[336]

Plunkett shares a similar idea. He not only claims that his project does not need a specific theory of meaning, but also that it is compatible with various meaning theories:

> The views that I develop here in this paper do not depend on a specific, fully

[334] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 66.

[335] Brun, 2016, p. 1216-7.

[336] Ludlow, 2014, p. 89-90.

> developed view of concepts, and, indeed, are compatible with a wide range of leading theories from the philosophy of mind and philosophy of cognitive science of what concepts are.[337]

Therefore, the moral should be plain: endorsing conceptual tuning does not impose delving into issues of the ontology (or structure) of 'concept'.

[5] Instrumental value oriented

It is no doubt that philosophy possesses intrinsic value[338]. However, the method of conceptual tuning appears not to be solely satisfied with having intrinsic value, as is generally the case in philosophy. It is also supposed to have instrumental value. Conceptual tuning should lead to consequences. For instance, for the purpose of biological classification, we must replace 'fish' with 'piscis' which does not include whale in its extension, and this tuning will be helpful to scientific research. This feature is more conspicuous in Haslanger's work, concerning social kinds. After rejecting the manifest concept of gender (or race), she discloses the operative concept of gender (or race), and her approach aims to achieve a specific practical purpose: 'A consequence of my view is that when justice is achieved, there will no longer be white women (there will no longer be men or women, whites or members of any other race). At that point, we—or more realistically, our descendants—won't need the concepts of race and gender to describe our current situation'[339]. Thinking of moral concepts, the instrumental value is more obvious. Setting an appropriate moral exemplar will bring positive climate to our society.

[6] The essential role of the conceptual tuner (philosopher)

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[337] Plunkett, 2015, p. 846.

[338] Some would compare 'philosophy' with 'game' because we stress the intrinsic value of these practice. I will discuss this issue further in Chapter 7.

[339] Haslanger, 2005, p. 11.

In Cappelen's austerity framework of conceptual engineering, one of the ingredients is 'Incomprehensible - Out of Control - Will Keep Trying'. According to this ingredient, we do not have control over conceptual development. In other words, conceptual engineering is not under our control. In contrast, one of the core ideas of Ludlow's dynamic lexicon is that we have control over the meaning of our words. This disagreement highlights the problem: can we have control over conceptual development? My answer is affirmative.

To deny Ludlow's meaning control principle, Cappelen offers three reasons. Firstly, we might control the words meanings in one single conversation, but there are infinite possible conversations and we cannot control each conversation happening at different times and places. Secondly, detached from the notion of 'conversation partners', meaning control cannot be understood. Meaning modulation needs a conversation partner to coordinate with. But it is impossible to coordinate with people in the past or in the future. Thirdly, it is plausible to say that the semantic features could supervene on facts about the speakers and their mental states but it still does not lead to the conclusion that the speakers are in control.

As Cappelen indicates, 'meaning in control' seems to be a too extreme claim, which could invite many problems. However, there is another way of understanding Ludlow's meaning control doctrine. Though enunciating that '[i]f our conversational partners are willing to go with us, we can modulate word meanings as we see fit', Ludlow does stress that his view is not tantamount to the 'Humpty Dumpty theory of word meaning'. In *Alice in Wonderland*, Humpty is the dominator of word meaning, hence Alice has no choice but play along with him. But this does not happen in the real world. In everyday life, there are norms that govern the process of word meaning modulation. As Ludlow writes: 'It does not follow, however, that there isn't a right

way and a wrong way to modulate word meanings'.[340] Therefore, I suggest that instead of adopting an extreme or radical interpretation of meaning control—that we can be fully in control of the meaning of our word—, we should embrace a broader one: meaning control in the sense that we (conceptual-engineers) are in charge of the decision over which concept should we use. According to this interpretation, the process of modulation is in effect a process of negotiation. We do not want to insist that a word's meaning can be fully or arbitrarily decided by us. Conceptual tuning is a normative practice which means that the result of conceptual tuning is governed by the norms of use. There are right ways of using concepts, and there are wrong ways. The task of conceptual tuning is to find the most appropriate way, to adjudicate as to what the proper way of using concepts is. Only in this sense is conceptual tuning supposed to have control over our word's meaning. Meaning control does not mean that we can decide a word's meaning arbitrarily. In fact, we must have a contest over which concepts we should adopt. It is a practice of giving and asking for reasons. If no one denigrates the role of the machinist in machinery fixing, then we should not belittle the role of the tuner in conceptual tuning.

Cappelen would not accept even this broad notion of 'in control', because it presupposes the speaker intentions in the modulation process. Instead, he proposes two ways of understanding Ludlow's meaning negotiation:

> *Reading 1:* This reading uses Ludlow's terminology to describe the activity ordinary speakers (allegedly) intend to engage in. In other words, speakers are described as caring (battling over, etc) about the temporary meaning of an expression in a micro-language.[341]

Cappelen's objection to this version is based on the assumption of the unawareness of

[340] Ludlow, 2014, p. 83.

[341] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 132.

the ordinary speakers. As an ordinary speaker, one does not need to believe in micro-languages[342] which entail that meaning is modulated by the interlocutors intentionally. It is a philosophical theory that is useless to the layman. In spite of the fact that Ludlow and a few academic scholars may believe in this theory, the notion of micro-language plays no role in everyday life conversations. In fact, Ludlow admits that in some occasions, interlocutors do not notice the modulation of words:

> […] in certain cases meaning modulation is automatic, and to some degree cooperative. But there are also cases in which we are aware that meaning modulation is taking place—not only aware, but actually engaged in finding ways to litigate for our preferred modulation.[343]

I have already mentioned Ludlow's discussion of this point. And as conceptual tuners, in contrast with ordinary speakers, we should be fully aware of lexical warfare (or metalinguistic negotiation) in order to pursue conceptual tuning.

Now let's turn to Cappelen's second reading:

> *Reading 2*: This reading doesn't use Ludlow's theoretical framework for describing the activity ordinary speakers (allegedly) intend to engage in. Instead, it describes them as being interested in *the meaning of the English word 'hacktivist.'*[344]

Cappelen's criticism against this reading of Ludlow also applies to Plunkett and Sundell's (P&S) notion of metalinguistic negotiation. In Cappelen's mind, P&S's metalinguistic negotiation is 'Ludlow without the heavy theoretical baggage'. As we have discussed in the previous chapter (section 2.5), according to Plunkett, many disputes in philosophy can be paraphrased as metalinguistic negotiations. Thus,

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[342] I have discussed this notion in section 2.4.2.

[343] Ludlow, 2014, p. 7.

[344] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, 132.

conceptual tuning is about which concept we should adopt. The significance of conceptual tuning does not only lie in the expected result (providing a target concept), but also in the process, namely the activity of negotiation or modulation.

Cappelen thinks Ludlow and P&S's ideas are wrongheaded by pointing out that they are only focused on English words. Thus, their accounts don't work for non-English speakers. Consider a metalinguistic negotiation as follows:

> Sid: Secretariat is an athlete.
>
> Nancy: Secretariat is not an athlete.

The English term 'athlete' has different correspondences in other languages. In French, it is 'athlète'; in German, it is 'Athlet', in Russian, it is 'спортсмен', etc. Cappelen's criticism is that the explanatory power of metalinguistic negotiation of non-English languages is limited. Given that Russian is using 'спортсмен' rather than 'athlete', according to metalinguistic negotiation, there should be no disagreement between the Russian interlocutor and the English one, since they are using different terms. And this is exactly where Cappelen disagrees with the metalinguistic negotiation theory. It's obvious that disagreement among speakers of different languages does exists, which is incompatible with the metalinguistic negotiation theory which focuses on a specific language (English), according to Cappelen's reading. However, I do not think this challenge can destroy the metalinguistic negotiation project. After all, the target of the metalinguistic negotiation is not the term but the concept. The concept of 'athlete' can be expressed diversely in different languages. But it does not matter as long as our real concern is the meaning of the concept rather than the physical shape of the concept (morphology).

Furthermore, there are other reasons to support the necessary role of the conceptual tuner in conceptual tuning. Firstly, the role of the conceptual tuner is essential when

we have several competing candidates for the target concept, as it is the conceptual tuner who will decide which one is the right choice. Secondly, as we have mentioned, it is not always the case that the manifest concept is defective: it is the conceptual tuner's task to detect whether or when this is the case.

[7] Expressive/descriptive approach as the means to the ameliorative end

In the conceptual tuning project, fixing an appropriate target concept is the aim, while the expressive or descriptive approach is the means to achieving this ameliorative end. Most conceptual ameliorative approaches express an hostile attitude to the 'descriptive approach'. For example, Cappelen claims that his conceptual engineering and 'descriptive philosophy' are antagonistic. According to Cappelen, many philosophers set out to describe our concepts, which is a totally wrongheaded project, and his *Core Revisionist Argument* (CRA) is incompatible with descriptive philosophy, since the goal of conceptual engineering is to improve our defective concepts rather than to describe them. He endorses an anti-descriptive attitude in philosophy:

> *The Anti-Descriptive Argument*: If your aim is to think about and understand some important philosophical phenomenon, say knowledge, causation or freedom, you have to figure out how best [to] think about those phenomena. But this kind inquiry does not consist in describing the current concept or the current extension. Rather, it is essentially a normative enterprise that asks how best to represent those phenomena and what might be defective about current ways of thinking about them. Assessment and improvement of philosophical concepts is at the core of philosophical practice, no matter what the topic. Your goal cannot be purely descriptive if you accept the CRA - at the core of all philosophical activity is the continuous assessment of representational devices.[345]

[345] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 55.

In fact, Cappelen adopts a radical revisionist attitude, according to which even the concept 'conceptual engineering' is open to revision, therefore there is no room for any descriptive features. He mentions a possible objection to his anti-descriptive argument:

> *Reply to the Anti-Descriptive Argument*: Doesn't it assume that we first engage in important descriptive work: figuring out whether our concepts are defective and how they can be improved. Surely that's a descriptive task, isn't it?[346]

His rejoinder to this objection is based on his radical revisionist attitude by claiming that even those concepts incorporated into conceptual engineering (such as conceptual defect, conceptual amelioration, representational device) should be under assessment or scrutiny. I do not think Cappelen's answer can meet the challenge of the reply to the anti-descriptive arguments. I have two reasons. Firstly, we can draw a lesson from Peter Winch's reply to Strawson as a frame of reference. Peter Winch (1958/1990) discussed P. F. Strawson's objections to Wittgenstein's rejection of private language. Strawson holds that we can conceive as a logical possibility that a community, which is separated from the rest of human society, might devise its own language with a distinctive way of using it from the rest of the world. Suppose that we have an observer *B*, who studies their language by observing the correlation between their uses of language and the speaker's related behaviors. It is possible that he might grasp this language after a long-term observation. However, before figuring out the whole linguistic system of this unique language (private language), there is no reason to deny that it has its own meaning. According to Winch, Strawson's argument begs the question: 'His description is vitiated at the outset as a contribution to the problem under discussion by containing terms the applicability of which is precisely what is in question: terms like "language", "use", "words", "sentences", "meaning" — and all

[346] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 55.

without benefit of quotation marks'.[347] Back to our problem. Similarly, in the current context, Cappelen's discussion of 'conceptual engineering' entails the method of description, because he has to *describe* 'what is conceptual engineering' in order to achieve his own theoretic goal. We can agree with him that even if conceptual engineering itself should be under assessment, so too should other descriptive projects: this is not a sufficient reason to discredit the role of the descriptive approach in philosophical method. Second, a radical attitude always leads to an unsolvable impasse. Radical skepticism is a typical example. Suppose that Sid holds a radical skepticism attitude toward epistemology. With his radical skeptical mind, he has to check each concept he uses, each belief he commits to, without end. In such a scenario, Sid would fail to achieve anything, apart from doubting, checking, inspecting. In daily practice, justification must end somewhere. This also applies to conceptual tuning. We cannot use tools while at the same time keeping checking these tools.

In contrast to Cappelen, Haslanger has a different attitude to the descriptive approach. In fact, descriptive analysis is a crucial part of her ameliorative project. Haslanger classifies four approaches: the conceptual approach, the descriptive approach, the genealogical approach and the ameliorative approach. In her mind, conceptual analysis is usually related to the manifest concept because this method is solely based on our *a priori* judgments. In contrast, the combination of the descriptive approach and the genealogical approach (namely, descriptive genealogy) can help us reveal the operative concepts, which might be proper candidates for the target concepts needed to meet our practical purposes. For example, in displaying the subordinate feature of gender concepts (operative concept), Haslanger suggests that through amelioration, we should be devoted to abandoning this operative concepts in the future for the purpose of social improvement. With these considerations, it is plausible to claim that

[347] Winch, 1990, p. 34.

Haslanger does rely on the descriptive approach.

Conceptual analysis is deemed to be a typically descriptive approach. In 'Intuitions, Conceptual Engineering, and Conceptual Fixed Points', besides the discussion of the merits and shortcomings of conceptual engineering, Matti Eklund makes a case for conceptual analysis, a method which is supposed to rely on intuitions. Eklund makes a distinction between 'competence intuitions' and 'rational intuitions'. Our claims such as 'the H_20 on earth is water' or 'the XYZ on this other planet wouldn't be water' are based on competence intuitions. This kind of intuition is reliable because 'a community's having the intuitions they have is linked to their thinking the contents they do and using sentences with the meaning they do'.[348] On the other hand, rational intuition is different. In a thought experiment, a trolley will crash into five people unless we push a fat man over the bridge to stop the trolley. Will we do it? Suppose that we all agree it would be wrong to push the fat man in the relevant trolley case in our society *A*[349]. Imagine that there is another society *B*, in which their use of 'wrong' is mostly the same as society *A* except that they are all prone to saying that 'pushing the fat man would not be wrong'. In this situation, according to Eklund, the intuition employed here is not based on the knowledge of the words meanings. As he explains: 'Call intuitions pertaining to philosophical matters whose reliability cannot be explained in the way the reliability of competence intuitions can *rational intuitions*'.[350]

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[348] Eklund, 2015, p. 366.

[349] Fat man version of the Trolley thought experiment: 'This time you're on a footbridge overlooking the railway track. You see the trolley hurtling along the track and, ahead of it, five people tied to the rails. Can these five be saved? Again, the moral philosopher has cunningly arranged matters so that they can. There's a very fat man leaning over the railing watching the trolley. If you were to push him over the footbridge he would tumble down and smash on to the track below. He's so obese that his bulk would bring the trolley to a juddering halt. Sadly, the process would kill the fat man. But it would save the other five. Would you kill the fat man? Should you kill the fat man?' (Edmonds 2013, p. 36)

[350] Eklund, 2015, p. 167.

On the side of the critics of intuition/conceptual analysis, Jonathan Weinberg holds that intuition is not reliable, and he offers three reasons:

> (a) We do not know when intuition can be trusted, for example when intuitions about what to say concerning highly unusual situations can be trusted;
> (b) We lack an understanding of how intuitions work, where what Weinberg means by this is we lack an understanding of the psychological processes underlying intuition; and
> (c) We lack means of resolving cases where our intuitions don't agree with each other, and assumptions to the effect that our intuitions converge upon reflection lack justification.[351]

Eklund replies to this line of objection by drawing an analogy from 'funny'. He indicates that some concepts are *response-dependent*: 'that some concepts C are such that something is C iff we would (under suitable conditions) judge that it is C, and that somehow the right-hand sides of these biconditionals are prior in the order of explanation'.[352] 'Funny' is a typical example of a response-dependent concept. We can also apply Weinberg's criticism to 'funny'. (a) Concerning the highly unusual uses of funny, our judgments would differ significantly. (b) We don't know anything about the psychological processes that underlie our judgments about what is funny. (c) We are divided on what is funny, and there is no principle to decide who is right about it. Also, there is no way to prove that our judgments about what is funny will converge after reflection. Yet, Eklund claims the criticism (a)-(c) do not really undermine the response-dependence concepts. Without knowing the psychological processes underlying judgments about what is funny and therefore holding a dispute-settling method, we can still rely on our judgments about what is funny. As Eklund states, we can learn from these analogues: 'These points are of relevance to

[351] Weinberg, 2007, p. 335-8, (cited in Eklund 2015, p. 371).

[352] Eklund, 2015, p. 372.

what Weinberg says about intuition. Weinberg's case against intuitions, including competence intuitions, generalizes to where there is an obvious justification for reliance on our judgments: cases where our judgments are constitutive of the facts we are dealing with. We seem to be able to know the relevant facts, and there is no independent method that would work better'.[353]

Even if intuition-based conceptual analysis can be defended, Eklund acknowledges a problem, because while philosophers are investigating our ordinary concepts most of the time, such as the concepts of 'truth', 'knowledge', 'justice', etc., this study has a navel-gazing propensity, and he proposes that philosophers should also embark on the project of conceptual engineering:

> But I think that already a little reflection shows how – what's the best way to put it? – *navel-gazing* this kind of study is. The concepts we have are the ones we have ended up with due to various biological and cultural factors. By some measure they have proven themselves. But still, why should the concepts we actually have be the best conceptual tools for describing and theorizing about the relevant aspects of reality? Maybe philosophy should rather be seen as *conceptual engineering*: as a study of what concept best plays the theoretical role of our concept of truth and what features this concept has, what concept best plays the theoretical role of our concept of knowledge and what features this concept has, etc.[354]

By encouraging conceptual engineering, Eklund does not reject the role of conceptual analysis (the descriptive approach): 'getting clear on the tools we have come to use to understand the world is *obviously* a worthwhile project'.[355] He proceeds to the following distinction: 'our concern is *the relevant aspect* of reality' versus 'our

[353] Eklund, 2015, p. 372.

[354] Eklund, 2015, p. 376.

[355] Eklund, 2015, p. 377.

concern is *(human) thought about* what our actual concepts are'.[356] The descriptive approach's concern is what our actual concepts are, while the conceptual engineers' concern is the relevant aspect of reality.

My conceptual tuning project is project incorporating a descriptive approach. In my view, the descriptive approach and conceptual tuning/engineering are complementary rather than opposing. To defend this view, we need to distinguish between seeing the 'descriptive approach as an *end*' and the 'descriptive approach as a *means*'. Only the 'descriptive approach as means' is incorporated in the conceptual tuning project. Concerning the terminology, 'expressive approach' would be more preferable than 'descriptive approach' given that we do not only describe the concepts, but also need to articulate the hidden assumptions behind concept application and then negotiate on which concept is the most proper one. Therefore, it is an 'expressive approach as a means'. This idea can also be found in Plunkett's discussion on the objective-oriented approach. He notes that investigating the objective-level issue (conceptual analysis) is important for conceptual ethics, though descriptive investigation alone won't settle the normative issues:

> Presumably we need some kind of grip on what a current concept is in order to judge that it is defective. Similarly, if we don't have a good understanding of what our new concept amounts to, why should we be so confident that the new one will be better? These kinds of thoughts point to an important role that conceptual analysis can play in a metalinguistic negotiation, and, indeed, in thinking about conceptual ethics more generally. But the point I want to make here isn't that such descriptive facts aren't relevant. Rather, it is just that these particular descriptive facts about our words or concepts won't fully settle the normative issues on the table.[357]

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[356] Eklund, 2015, p. 377.

[357] Plunkett, 2015, p. 867.

This feature is also salient in Brun's discussion of the method of explication. Brun notes that explication and definition are strikingly different. As discussed, explication involves two systems of concepts (the explicandum belongs to the old system, the explicatum belongs to the target system). In contrast, the formulation of a definition only uses one conceptual system. Moreover, a definition has only two components: definiendum and definiens, while an explication has three components: explicandum, explicatum and a characterization of the explicatum. The characterization of the explicatum also belongs to 'expressive approach as a means'. According to Brun, there are two kinds of definition: reportive and stipulative definitions. A reportive definition aims to capture how we actually use the definiendum, and can be found in dictionaries. Stipulative definitions are used for coining new terms, establishing an entirely new use. Brun holds that a stipulative definition can be a part of explication:

> This raises the question of what the criteria of adequacy are for a definition that is part of an explication. Such a definition is purely stipulative; it is adequate just in case it is useful for the explication at hand, which in turns is the case iff the resulting explication is adequate. […] In the example of *fish*, a stipulative definition establishes the equivalence of x is *a piscis* with x is *a cold-blooded aquatic vertebrate*. This definition is adequate iff *piscis* is an adequate explicatum for *fish*, which requires *inter alia* that piscis is sufficiently similar to *fish*.[358] (Brun 2016, 1230-1)

Brun counts characterization of explicatum as one part of the method of explication. But for conceptual tuning, the notion of 'expressive approach' is inclusive to many different methods.

'Expressive as a means' in effect includes two ingredients. Firstly, as I have shown above, it is necessary to articulate the hidden assumptions behind the old concept and

[358] Brun, 2016, p. 1230-1.

the target concept before proposing the revisionary plan. Secondly, conceptual tuning is also a process of negotiation. Performing conceptual tuning is also playing the game of giving and asking for reasons[359]. Nevertheless, no matter how important the role the expressive approach plays, it only serves a means to help us reach the ameliorative end.

To conclude, compared with the other conceptual engineering approaches, my version is more inclusive, as it not only contains the repairing aspect, but also the expressive aspect of conceptual engineering. Besides, all the other approaches do not consider the possibility of creating a completely new concept, which is also an option in my project.

3.3 Verbal Disputes and Conceptual Tuning

In this section, I will discuss Chalmers's conception of verbal disputes (section 3.3.1), and argue that verbal disputes in the form of conceptual tuning is not pointless (section 3.3.2).

3.3.1 Verbal Disputes

One of the most famous cases illustrating verbal disputes is the 'going round' case from William James's *Pragmatism*. In this case, a squirrel is clinging to one side of a tree-trunk, while a human being is standing against the tree's opposite side. In order to look at the squirrel, the man keeps walking around the tree. However, the squirrel moves as fast in the same direction, and successfully keeps the tree between himself and the man. Given that the man goes around the tree on which the squirrel is moving, the following question arises: 'Does the man go round the squirrel or not?' James indicates that as long as we can clarify the meaning of 'going round', disputes can be

[359] I will discuss this point in detail in Chapter 4.

dissolved:

> Which party is right depends on what you practically mean by 'going round' the squirrel. If you mean passing from the north of him to the east, then to the south, then to the west, and then to the north of him again, obviously the man does go round him, for he occupies these successive positions. But if on the contrary you mean being first in front of him, then on the right of him then behind him, then on his left, and finally in front again, it is quite as obvious that the man fails to go round him [. . .] Make the distinction, and there is no occasion for any farther dispute.[360]

This is a typical verbal dispute in which the real disagreement is parasitic on the related concept. Once the verbal issue (meaning of the concept) has been clarified, the disagreement evaporates.

Chalmers (2011) holds that the diagnosis of verbal disputes is crucial in philosophical discussion for it 'either dissolv[es] disagreements or boil[s] them down to the fundamental disagreements on which they turn'.[361] In his paper, Chalmers provides a characterization of verbal disputes:

> A dispute over *S* is (broadly) verbal when, for some expression *T* in *S*, the parties disagree about the meaning of *T*, and the dispute over *S* arises wholly in virtue of this disagreement regarding *T*.[362]

According to Chalmers, in verbal disputes, a first-order dispute arises in virtue of a metalinguistic disagreement. Suppose Sid claims that John runs fast, while Nancy holds the opposite opinion. Their disagreement could be verbal. It could be that Sid's

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[360] James, 1907, p. 25 (cited in Chalmers, 2011, p. 516).

[361] Chalmers, 2011, p. 517.

[362] Chalmers, 2011, p. 522.

use of 'fast' expresses 'fast-for-an-amateur' and Nancy's use of 'fast' expresses 'fast-for-an-athlete'.

Chalmers contends that verbal disputes are pointless and he proposes a method of resolving verbal disputes. The solution he offers is called the *method of elimination*. How does this method work? The general idea is to bar the key word in the disputes and then see whether any *substantive dispute* remains. Chalmers explains this method as follows:

> To apply this method to a dispute over a sentence *S* that is potentially verbal with respect to term *T*, one proceeds as follows. First: one bars the use of term *T*. Second: one tries to find a sentence *S'* in the newly restricted vocabulary such that the parties disagree nonverbally over *S'* and such that the disagreement over *S'* is part of the dispute over S. Third: if there is such an *S'*, the dispute over S is not wholly verbal, or at least there is a substantive dispute in the vicinity. If there is no such *S'*, then the dispute over *S* is wholly verbal.[363]

To perform this method, we need to make sure that the dispute over *S*' is part of the dispute over *S*. Once we find a non-verbal dispute over *S*', then the original debate is not a fully verbal dispute. However, one may argue that the dispute over *S*' could still be verbal. Chalmers points out that it won't be a problem since we can perform the method of elimination over *S'* again: 'one can iterate the procedure, barring not just *T* but relevant further expressions *T*' used in *S*"'.[364] Moreover, after eliminating *T*, we should also avoid using the cognates and the synonyms of *T*. According to Chalmers, the method of elimination can be applied to many philosophical debates. Consider the case of 'free will'. In debates over free will, we have two rival camps. The compatibilist holds that 'Free will is compatible with determinism', while the

[363] Chalmers, 2011, p. 526-7.

[364] Chalmers, 2011, p. 529.

incompatibilist contends that 'Free will is not compatible with determinism'. It is possible to tell whether this dispute is verbal or not by employing the method of elimination. According to the procedure stipulated by Chalmers, first we bar the term 'free will' and attempt to find whether there are residual disputes. Chalmers indicates that these two parties might still dispute over claims such as 'Moral responsibility is incompatible with determinism' which is supposed to be part of the original dispute. If so, then the debate over 'free will' is not a verbal one. But if both two parts agree that responsibility is compatible with determinism, then it is a verbal dispute.

A philosophical question is usually formulated in the form of 'What is *X*?', for example: What is knowledge? What is a game? What is justice? What is consciousness? What is art? With this form of question, the two parties could come up with different answers. For instance, party *A* could say that '*X* is such-and-such', while party *B* could insist that '*X* is so-and-so'. We can apply the method of elimination to this kind of dispute. Chalmers proposes a more specific method called *subscript gambit* to deal with disputes in this form. Suppose that *A* claims that '*X* is such-and-such' and *B* claims that '*X* is so-and-so'. After barring the term *X*, we introduce X_1 and X_2 that are supposed to be identified with the two right-hand sides. So the original dispute over *X* is transformed into the dispute over X_1 and X_2: 'do the parties have nonverbal disagreements involving X_1 and X_2, of a sort such that resolving these disagreements will at least partly resolve the original dispute?'.[365] If the answer is yes, then the original dispute is nonverbal, but if it is no, then the original dispute is verbal. Consider free will again. Following Chalmers, suppose that Party *A* holds that 'Freedom is the ability to do what one wants', while Party *B* holds that 'Freedom is the ability to ultimately originate one's choices'. Following the method of subscript gambit, we introduce freedom_1 and freedom_2 for the two right-hand sides. And then the question becomes whether the two parts have

[365] Chalmers, 2011, p. 532.

disagreements over freedom$_1$ and freedom$_2$. It is possible they have disagreements over questions such as 'whether freedom$_2$ requires moral responsibility'. Or they do not have any disagreements, then the original dispute is verbal. Chalmers also believes that this method can be generalized: 'The list of cases can be multiplied. I think that almost all the cases on the "What is *X*?" list above can be usefully subjected to the subscript gambit or to other versions of the method of elimination'.[366]

3.3.2 Is Conceptual Tuning Pointless?

Chalmers's characterization of verbal disputes is in fact similar to Ludlow's description of lexical warfare and Plunkett's description of metalinguistic negotiation. By contrast with Ludlow and Plunkett's attempts to justify this way of doing philosophy, Chalmers intends to reveal the pointlessness of this approach.

Before moving on, let us recap Ludlow and Plunkett's idea. Ludlow says that we might frequently find out that we are using a term differently from the way our communicative partner uses it. These differences can be understood in terms of meaning modulation. For example, Sid might have a broader modulation of 'athlete' than Nancy does, given that Sid thinks that it is plausible to count a racehorse as an athlete. But the point of recognizing the difference is to negotiate which one could serve a better purpose:

> Of course the real point of interest is in what happens once we recognize these differences in meaning and we begin litigating them. [. . .] let's consider cases where all sides want to make their case and persuade the other to follow them.[367]

Plunkett also characterizes metalinguistic negotiation/conceptual ethics as a practice that deals with 'normative and evaluative issues about thought and talk, including,

[366] Chalmers, 2011, p. 534.

[367] Ludlow, 2014, p. 40.

centrally, normative issues about which concepts one should use in a given context'.[368] And as we have discussed, a typical case is whether Secretariat, a race horse, can be counted as an athlete:

> Sid: Secretariat is an athlete.
>
> Nancy: No, Secretariat is not an athlete.

In this case, Sid and Nancy agree on all the descriptive facts about 'Secretariat', and insofar as they do, they dispute over how to use 'athlete'. As Plunkett says: 'each speaker has a preferred concept for using in the context in hand, and they are advocating for that view. The disagreement that is being expressed in the exchange, then, concerns a normative issue about word usage and concept choice: one of them holds a view about how the term 'athlete' should be used that the other denies'.[369] It seems that Ludlow's lexical warfare/meaning litigation and Plunkett's metalinguistic negotiation/conceptual ethics share the same form as Chalmers's verbal disputes, at least on the surface.

Chalmers claims that the role of verbal dispute is limited, and he uses the term 'pointless' to describe it, pointing out that we should not put too much effort to it:

> And the very existence of a merely verbal dispute may have some uses: in helping to make distinctions and in clarifying the important issues at hand, for example. But setting aside these indirect ways in which a verbal dispute might matter, it typically seems to an outside observer that nothing turns on the verdict: the dispute is pointless.[370]

Chalmers admits that it is possible that even though we agree with the properties of X_1

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[368] Plunkett, 2015, p. 843.

[369] Plunkett, 2015, p. 841-2.

[370] Chalmers, 2011, p. 525.

and X_2, we can still have disagreements over whether X is X_1 or X_2. For instance, whether 'athlete' is athlete$_1$ or athete$_2$; whether 'free will' is free will$_1$ or free will$_2$; whether 'physicalism' is physicalism$_1$ or physicalism$_2$. However, Chalmers indicates that this kind of disagreement can be solved by 'sociology, anthropology, linguistics, or experimental philosophy'.[371] Chalmers frames this question into the disagreement over whether X_1 or X_2 best fits the use of X in the given community, and this is why we can solve these issues by appealing to sociology, anthropology, linguistics or experimental philosophy to pin down the first-order feature of X_1 and X_2. The upshot is: 'there is no important *philosophical* dispute left to resolve, at least if we are not directly concerned with language'[372].[373] I will attempt to show why conceptual tuning should not be regarded as pointless below.

Firstly, not all verbal disputes are merely verbal disputes or 'mere talking past'. We admit there are some pointless verbal disputes. For instance:

> Sid: I am a bastard.
>
> Nancy: No, you are not a bastard.

Suppose in this case, Sid means by bastard 'an unpleasant person', while Nancy means by bastard 'a person born to parents who are not married to each other'[374]. If so, this is just a verbal dispute in the sense of 'mere talking past' one another. This kind of verbal dispute can be easily found. For example, two people might dispute over whether Sid went to bank this morning. However, one uses bank by referring to 'an organization where people and businesses can invest or borrow money, change it to foreign money, etc.', while the other refers to 'sloping raised land, especially along

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[371] Chalmers, 2011, p. 535.

[372] It is also possible that in certain cases the two rival parties defer the meaning of X to their own community. If so, we also need to solve the question whether X is X_1 is correct for community A and whether X is X_2 correct for community B. However, Chalmers claims that this is still not a question of significance.

[373] Chalmers, 2011, p. 535.

[374] These definitions are cited in *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*.

the sides of a river'[375]. It is absurd to argue that this sort of verbal dispute is meaningful or philosophically significant. There is no significant polemic left once the meaning of $bank_1$ and $bank_2$ are clarified. Arguably, no philosopher would be interested in dealing with verbal disputes of this sort. As long as the meaning is clarified, no real disagreements are left. As Plunkett says: 'So once that presupposition of shared meaning is defeated, they likely will realize they don't disagree about anything here at all'.[376] Chalmers also talks about cases such as 'tallness', which he takes as typical verbal disputes. However, according to Plunkett, even this form of verbal dispute does not deserve the philosopher's focus. In Plunkett's mind, what matters is not general descriptive metalinguistic disputes, but normative metalinguistic negotiation. As Plunkett explains, in case of 'tallness', 'there is agreement between them about the *character* of "tall" (its contextually invariant meaning) but disagreement about the *content* of "tall" (what the term means, relative to a context). If that is the case, it is natural to read them as arguing about a descriptive issue'.[377] In contrast, metalinguistic negotiation is not concerned with descriptive issues. In Chalmers's discussion of verbal disputes, we do not see these distinctions. He lumps the disputes over 'going around', 'tallness', 'planet', 'free will', 'knowledge', etc., together. However, some of them belong to 'talk passing each other', or disputes over 'content' rather than 'character' of concept, and those disputes do not carry much weight. Therefore, I am not defending mere verbal disputes here, instead, I am justifying the significance of conceptual tuning (or metalinguistic negotiation, conceptual ethics).

Secondly, the aim of conceptual tuning is not a descriptive one, namely figuring out the real meaning of this concept, rather it is a normative one—how should we understand this concept? Chalmers believes that in most cases, once the meaning of

[375] These definitions are cited in *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*.

[376] Plunkett, 2015, p. 837.

[377] Plunkett, 2015, p. 838.

the term *T* causing the verbal dispute over *S* is clarified, then the mission is completed and nothing valuable remains for debate. As a matter of fact, this is not always the case because this situation only happens when the dispute is a merely verbal one. However, disputes in conceptual tuning or metalinguistic negotiations will not be settled even if the meaning of the term has been clarified. Consider the Secretariat case again. Suppose that an expert claims that we do not count non-human animals as an athlete, which might fix the current meaning of 'athlete'. However, the metalinguistic negotiation between Sid, who believes that Secretariat is an athlete and Nancy, who holds the opposite view, will not be resolved. Nancy might still hold that Secretariat is an athlete, because as Plunkett explains: 'She might want the meaning of the term "athlete" to be one that is not human-centric, regardless of whether it currently is or not'.[378] Therefore, the descriptive approach towards meaning cannot resolve the problem. As Plunkett articulates, 'The facts about how she is using her words can't themselves establish how she *should* be using them'.[379]

Thirdly, since what's at stake are the normative issues, as I stated earlier, then the point of conceptual tuning is to provide reasons for supporting one's competing concept. What is at stake is what kind of reason one can provide to justify the choice of concept. The practice of giving and asking for reasons is a crucial part of conceptual tuning. Ludlow also notes this point, claiming that the method of argumentation is crucial in meaning litigation:

> let's consider cases where all sides want to make their case and persuade the other to follow them. [. . .] Roughly speaking, the strategies involve an attempt to find beliefs that the discourse partners share, and then reason from those shared beliefs in an attempt to get their discourse partner to defect.[380]

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[378] Plunkett, 2015, p. 843.

[379] Plunkett, 2015, p. 867.

[380] Ludlow, 2014, pp. 40-1.

Conceptual tuning or metalinguistic negotiation is not only about putting all the cards on the table. Besides laying out all our ideas, we also need to provide reasons to argue for our own concept, to say why our choice is better, to convince other parties to pick our candidate, and that is the point of conceptual tuning. These normative issues are substantive, as Plunkett says, 'It is substantive because not all concepts are equally good for using in a given context, and so we should be using certain concepts rather than others'.[381]

Fourthly, even Chalmers himself admits that the conceptual ameliorative approach or ordinary philosophy is important in certain aspects: 'there are important normative questions about what expressions ought to mean. These questions comprise what Peirce called "the ethics of terminology"'.[382] Consider the Secretariat case. Why would we care about whether Secretariat is an athlete or not? We value the term 'athlete' because it has cultural and emotional significance: 'In the case of the dispute on sports radio, it seems reasonable to think that certain things about praise and fame are at stake'.[383] This is a bunch of concepts that is practically significant. For example, conceptual tuning on sportive concepts is useful in decision, as Emily Ryall explains: 'it provides a clear benchmark for decision-making, which is necessary in relation to policy and funding issues'[384].[385] Another example, under the current overwhelming assault of 'post-truth', is that it is urgent to tune our concept of 'truth', 'fact', 'bullshit' and 'lying'. Many such cases can be found: 'planet', 'marriage', 'rape', 'embryo', 'gender', 'race', 'achievement', etc.

Fifthly, Chalmers draws a distinction between verbal disputes and substantive

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[381] Plunkett, 2015, p. 843.

[382] Chalmers, 2011, p. 542.

[383] Chalmers, 2011, p. 843.

[384] In fact, Ryall talks about 'conceptual analysis' in her context. But I will argue later in Chapter 6 that conceptual analysis by providing a redefinition is also a form of conceptual tuning.

[385] Ryall, 2016, p. 23.

disputes, and he believes that the progress of philosophy is decided by the solutions to substantive disputes. But what does Chalmers mean by substantive issues? In some context, he equates *substantive dispute* with *scientific inquiry*. For example, as he describes:

> By contrast, substantive disputes cannot usually be resolved in this way. For example, the dispute over whether a meteor caused the extinction of the dinosaurs cannot plausibly be resolved by attending to language, whether by settling facts about the meaning of 'meteor' or by distinguishing senses of the term.[386]

In this description, it is clear that the question such as 'whether a meteor caused the extinction of the dinosaurs' is a scientific one, and I wonder how a philosopher can resolve this sort of question. Unless, assuming that philosophy is as same as science, there is no good motivation for a philosopher to attempt to answer an empirical question like this. Moreover, Chalmers cannot deny that in many situations it is impossible to fully separate substantive disputes from verbal disputes:

> [. . .] we will sometimes be able to find substantive disputes that are part of verbal disputes. In the Pluto case, some such disputes might include disputes over 'Astronomical terms should be used in the way that is most useful for science', 'Traditions should be respected', or '*X* is president of the astronomical society' (where the parties agree that the president is the arbiter of meaning and agree about what *X* says). We might say that in these cases, the relation between *S* and *S'* is metalinguistically mediated: the parties disagree over *S* in virtue of disagreeing over a metalinguistic sentence *M* and disagree over *M* in virtue of disagreeing over *S'*. We can then stipulate that for a dispute over *S'* to be part of the dispute over *S*, in the sense relevant for our purposes, the relation must not

[386] Chalmers, 2011, p. 526.

be metalinguistically mediated.[387]

In fact, in most metalinguistic negotiation cases, the verbal dispute and the substantive dispute are interwoven, excluding the mere talking past situation or the descriptive metalinguistic dispute. Plunkett articulates why fact and meaning are always entangled:

> [. . .] when we argue about conceptual ethics (either in a metalinguistic negotiation, or in any other kind of dispute) it is not that this is all that the argument is about, in the sense that the argument turns only on a freestanding issue in conceptual ethics. Rather, we often argue about a part of reality via having a normative argument about our words and concepts.[388]

Sixthly, Chalmers's own *conceptual pluralism* is consistent with my conceptual tuning. Instead of asking 'What is *X*', we should focus on what role *X* can play. Therefore, we do not need to know the semantic content of *X*. Instead, we have X_1, X_2, X_3, etc., and our task is to figure out what their proper roles are. So take 'knowledge' as an example, we can have K_1, K_2, K_3, etc., and each of them possesses a different explanatory power. As Chalmers summarizes: 'I am inclined to think that pluralism should be the default view for most philosophical expressions. Typically, there will be no single privileged role associated with such an expression, and different roles will be played best by different properties'.[389] I do not think we should set an opposition between conceptual pluralism and conceptual tuning. It is possible that in different contexts, we may adopt different concepts for a specific purpose[390]. Even if we accept conceptual pluralism, we still need to adjudicate whether a given concept could play a proper role in a given context. For example, we might need to address whether it is X_1

[387] Chalmers, 2011, p. 528.

[388] Plunkett, 2015, p. 860.

[389] Chalmers, 2011, p. 540.

[390] I will be discussing this point more in Chapter 5 Ordinary Language Philosophy and Conceptual Tuning.

or X_5 that has a suitable explanatory power for $context_3$. Therefore, we still cannot avoid conceptual tuning.

Chapter 4 Brandomian Method and Conceptual Tuning

> What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know. — Saint Augustine

4.1 The Demarcation Question

Brandom raises the question: what's the difference between the observational statement 'this is red' given by a parrot and the same report made by a human being? This question is known as the demarcation question. Brandom states the question as follows:

> What difference makes the difference between a parrot trained to utter "That's red" in the presence of red things and a genuine noninferential reporter of red things who responds to their visible presence by acquiring the perceptual *belief that* there is something red in front of her?[391]

To answer this question is to find out what is so special about human beings. How to make the distinction between human beings and non-human animals or inanimate beings is what concerns Brandom here. As Richard Bernstein says: 'Brandom's larger aim is to clarify what it means to be a rational creature'.[392] Of course, Brandom has offered an answer.

A pair of concepts highlight this distinction between humans and non-human animals: *sapience* and *sentience*. Sapience corresponds to human beings while sentience corresponds to non-human animals. Brandom comments on this distinction:

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[391] Brandom, 2000, p. 106.

[392] Davaney and Frisina, 2006, p. 11.

‘Sentience is what we share with nonverbal animals such as cats—the capacity to be *aware* in the sense of being *awake*. [. . .] Sapience, by contrast, concerns *understanding* or intelligence rather than irritability or arousal’.[393]

The demarcation question has been addressed by Brandom in many different contexts and places. So, there may be different versions of the answer to the demarcation question. However, there is a thread that runs through this set of answers:

> The subject of genuine perceptual beliefs is, as the parrot is not, responding to the visible presence of red things by making a potential move in a game of giving and asking for reasons: applying a concept. The believer is adopting a stance that involves further consequential commitments (for instance, to the object perceived as being green), and that one can show one’s entitlements to in terms of other commitments (for instance, to the object perceived being scarlet). No response that is not a node in a network of such broadly inferential involvements, I claim, is recognizable as the application of *concepts*.[394]

Thus, as Brandom indicates, there is a sharp difference between sapience and sentience. Sapient beings know how to *use* concepts while sentient beings do not. Applying concepts is a move in the game of giving and asking for reasons, which needs the subject to understand its move. According to Brandom, a parrot, the typical sentient being, does not know how to use concepts given that it does not grasp the inferential rules involved in claims containing concepts. Jeremy Wanderer (2008) spells out Brandom’s response to the demarcation question from two perspectives: the social one and the linguistic one. We will explain this in the following sections.

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[393] Brandom, 2000, p. 157.

[394] Brandom, 2000, pp. 108-9.

4.1.1 Social Practice

First, we will demonstrate how to address the demarcation question from the perspective of social practice. In *Making it Explicit*, to answer the demarcation question, Brandom writes:

> What is special about us is the sort of grasp or uptake of normative significance that we are capable of. To be one of us in this sense of "us" is to be the subject of normative attitudes, to be capable of acknowledging proprieties and improprieties of conduct, to be able to treat a performance as correct or incorrect.[395]

As Brandom states, human beings, as concept-appliers, are supposed 'to be capable of acknowledging proprieties and improprieties of conduct, to be able to treat a performance as correct or incorrect'. This claim entails a distinction between two forms of acknowledging: (i) acknowledging a norm by being subject to it, and (ii) acknowledging a norm by being sensitive to it. What is meant by being subject to a norm? Some examples illustrate the idea: 'Chunks of iron rust in wet environments and not in dry ones. Land mines explode when impressed by anything weighing more than a certain amount'.[396] The upshot is that when being subject to a norm, there is no space for committing mistakes. In other word, we don't apply normative concepts (right or wrong) to them. In these situations, the norm refers to the natural law, and no one violates the natural law. Saying that Michael Jordan can exceed gravity is just a figurative usage, given that, in reality, if I drop something on Earth, then it will fall down rather than levitate up. The norm in this sense is what we call *nomological necessity*. In contrast, being sensitive to a norm means that there is a possibility of making mistakes. In other words, the notion of 'right' and 'wrong' is applicable.

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[395] Brandom, 1994, p. 32.

[396] Brandom, 2000, p. 108.

Wanderer summarizes: 'A core difference between acknowledgement by being subject to the norm and acknowledgement by being sensitive to the norm is that only the latter allows for the possibility of error'.[397] And in social practice, the norm we are talking about corresponds to 'acknowledging a norm by being sensitive to it'. Since it is possible to commit mistakes, we can thereby judge or assess another's performance. And from this, we can draw a distinction between *performing* and *assessing the performances*. Assessing the performances is equivalent to 'taking of normative attitudes towards other socially significant performances'.[398] Each person in this society possesses (manifests) some normative status (or deontic status), and these statuses can only be understood in terms of normative attitudes (or deontic attitude), in the sense that normative statuses 'are constituted, maintained and developed by the normative attitudes of practitioners'.[399] Sentient beings can produce the performances, but it is only 'we' who can assess the performances, which is why social practice is normative. Our performances could also lead to the alteration of our normative status, which could arise as a result of some sanction or reward.

A specific case might be useful to explain these notions. In the following, I will discuss Spinoza's case of *Cherem*[400] in order to demonstrate Brandom's thought. Spinoza grew up in a traditional Jewish family in Amsterdam, Holland. Accordingly, he behaved as an Orthodox Jew. For instance, after his father's death, Spinoza 'daily recited Kaddish, the prayer of mourning, for his father'.[401] But on July 27, 1656, in his community, something astonishing happened: Spinoza was pronounced *cherem* by the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam. The punishments include: 'no one should communicate with him, neither in writing, nor accord him any favor nor stay

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[397] Wanderer, 2008, p. 14.

[398] Wanderer, 2008, p. 15.

[399] Wanderer, 2008, p. 19.

[400] *Cherem* is a severe sanction in Jewish community. Those who are pronounced *cherem* would be excommunicated from the Jewish community.

[401] Nadler, 2004, p. 1.

with him under the same roof nor [come] within four cubits in his vicinity; nor shall he read any treatise composed or written by him'.[402] The *cherem* upon him was never rescinded. When he was a member of the Jewish community, Spinoza had some specific deontic statuses (normative statuses), such as: he's committed to respecting the rabbi; he should not mention God's name in everyday discourse; he has right to do business with other community members, etc. As long as he keeps his identity, he should observe these rules. If he crosses the line (violates the rules), which also will lead to the alteration of his deontic status, then sanctions will be imposed upon him. The members of the community are all subjects of normative attitudes. Therefore, they can make an assessment of Spinoza's performances and execute sanctions accordingly.

So, why did the Jewish congregation punish Spinoza? According to Nadler, Spinoza might have expressed views such as: 'God exists only philosophically', 'The Law is not true', 'The soul is not immortal', etc.[403] If this is correct, then the congregation had the right to implement the sanctions. There are, according to Brandom, two ways of understanding sanction: as *internal sanction* and as *external sanction*. The external sanction is defined in terms of specific consequences, while the internal sanction is defined in terms of the alternation of the normative statuses. In the Jewish community, *niddui* is a less harsh punishment than *cherem*. If *niddui* is pronounced, at first, the punished would be under surveillance for thirty days. Has he not mended his way, then another thirty days of surveillance will follow. The detail of punishments includes that: 'he cannot cut his hair, he cannot wash his clothes or even his body, and no one may come within four cubits of his vicinity. If he should die while the *niddui* is still in effect, then it is not permitted to accompany his coffin to burial. If, after the sixty days under *niddui*, the sinner is still unrepentant, he is given a *cherem*'.[404]

[402] Nadler, 2004, p. 2.

[403] Nadler, 2004, p. 31.

[404] Nadler, 2004, pp. 5-6.

Sanctions such as 'he cannot cut his hair', 'he cannot wash his clothes or even his body' are external sanctions, since they are specific consequences. In contrast, being given the *cherem*, Spinoza's normative status is altered. For example, the other members of the community cannot attribute 'the right of engaging in business with community members' to Spinoza, and this is an internal sanction.

Spinoza's case demonstrates the notion of the normative status which is manifested by members in a social group. The notion of normative attitudes are also possessed by each subject in a community such as a Jewish congregation. Following this line, a further distinction can be introduced between *a simple performer* and *an interpreting performer*. Wanderer explains as follows:

> An *interpreting performer* is capable of being the subject of normative attitudes, so that her performances are interpreted as involving both normative attitudes and normative statuses. Such a performer is able to both produce socially significant performances, and to be sensitive, at least implicitly, to the norms governing such a performance. A *simple performer* is one whose performances can be treated as having a normative status, such as being appropriate, but cannot be the subject of normative attitudes, and is thus insensitive to the normative status of her performance.[405]

So, social practice is constituted by both simple performers and interpreting performers. Yet, Wanderer warns us that is not possible for a society to have only simple performers because '[i]f all the performers in a practice were simple performers, there would be no norms in play, and none of the performances would have a normative status such as being appropriate'.[406] only makes sense when the social practice contains both simple performers and interpreting performers. In our

[405] Wanderer, 2008, p. 18.

[406] Wanderer, 2008, p. 19.

social practice, interpreting performers are capable of evaluating the performances of both simple performers and interpreting performers. Though they are not able of being the subject of normative attitudes, the performances of simple performers have normative statues, which can be assessed by interpreting performers.

Now let us turn back to the demarcation question. Obviously, the parrot is just a simple performer who has only normative status, while a human being is an interpreting performer, having both normative status and holding normative attitudes. As Wanderer puts it: 'A parrot is, therefore, a simple performer in a social practice. Its vocal performances are socially significant, although the parrot is not the subject of normative attitudes. The significance of the vocal performance is derived from the acknowledgement of the norms governing the performance by other interpreting practitioners'.[407]

4.1.2 Linguistic Practice

In this section, I will briefly explain the demarcation question from the perspective of linguistic practice. 'A linguistic practice is any social practice whose structure includes the speech act of *asserting*'.[408] Why does 'asserting' matter? According to Wanderer, Brandom claims that what is being asserted 'can stand as a reason for other claims, and (…) stands in need of reasons itself', and according to Brandom's picture, the practice of giving reasons is the defining feature of sapience.[409] For an utterance to be qualified as an act of asserting, the asserter must know how to 'play' that assertion as a move in 'the game of giving and asking for reasons'. Asserting is intimately related to *inferring*.

More specifically, what counts as an act of asserting? The capacity of making an

[407] Wanderer, 2008, p. 20.

[408] Wanderer, 2008, p. 20.

[409] Wanderer, 2008, p. 20.

assertion in the game of giving and asking for reasons 'involves the practical ability of mastering some of the inferential involvements of the claim'.[410] The claim that 'the balloon is red' contains the claim that 'the balloon is colored' as its inferential consequence. Also, the claim itself is the inferential consequence of the claim that 'the balloon is scarlet'. Asserting 'the balloon is red' requires understanding of 'some of the inferential involvements of what is claimed'.[411] And this explains why a parrot's report of 'this is red' cannot be weighted as identical with the same report made by a human being, whose utterance is an act of asserting, in a reasons-giving game. A parrot does not grasp the inferential involvements of the claim it has made, therefore, its utterance cannot be counted as a move in the game of giving and asking for reasons.

So far, we have outlined the Brandomian approach towards the demarcation question from the aspects of social practice and linguistic practice respectively. From the linguistic perspective, a parrot, after training, is capable of distinguishing red things from other colors. But that's not sufficient to say that a parrot grasps the concept 'red', which requires the mastery of the inferential consequences of the application of 'red', and also the claims that such application follows from. From the social perspective, a parrot is only a simple performer manifesting normative status by its performances. However, it is not the subject of the normative attitude which can attribute normative status to other social practitioners.

Furthermore, through the lens of Brandom' s 'two-ply account of observation', we have a clearer vision on how to reply to the demarcation question. What is the 'two-ply account of observation'? Making an observation report involves two distinct abilities: 'The first is the ability to respond differentially to some stimulus, and the

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[410] Wanderer, 2008, p. 21.

[411] Wanderer, 2008, p. 21.

second is the ability to make a move in a linguistic practice'.[412]

To understand the first ply, we need to employ the notion of 'reactive system'. A reactive system refers to the ability of discriminating certain kinds of stimulus as inputs (reading), and also the ability to produce certain types of response as outputs (writing). For example, if I have the ability to discriminate instances of red as inputs, then I have the ability to respond 'this is red' each time I am presented with red things. Brandom calls this stimulus-response ability as the *Reliable Differential Responsive Dispositions* (RDRD).

The second ply requires a lot more than stimulus-response ability. As a matter of fact, it is the ability to make a move in the game of giving and asking for reasons: 'to have mastered enough of the inferential role of the response for that response to be treated as a move in the game'.[413] The ability to report 'the balloon is red' requires (i) the ability to draw inference from this claim to other consequences, such as 'the balloon is colored', and (ii) the ability to reach this claim through other claims such as 'the balloon is scarlet'.

Concerning the demarcation question, a parrot only masters the first ply: 'they have the RDRD abilities to read red stimuli and write "Raawk, that's red" in response', but a parrot does not master the second ply, 'they do not have sufficient mastery over the inferential involvements of what is claimed by that sentence for their vocal response to be treated as an asserting'.[414]

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[412] Wanderer, 2008, p. 23.

[413] Wanderer, 2008, p. 24.

[414] Wanderer, 2008, p. 25.

4.2 Scorekeeping and the Gameplaying Model

4.2.1 The Theory

Brandom presents the bold conjecture that our social practice is *a game of giving and asking for reasons*, known as the gameplaying model. Why is it a game concerning 'reasons'? Brandom explains: 'Assertions are essentially performances that can both serve as and stand in need of reasons. Propositional contents are essentially what can serve as both premises and conclusions of inferences'.[415] Moreover, '[t]o play such a game is to keep *score* on what various interlocutors are committed and entitled to'.[416]

In the previous sections, I have explained the notion of 'normative status'. In the reason-mongering game, there are two pivotal normative statuses: *commitment* and *entitlement*. The notion of 'commitment' is approximately equivalent to 'obligation', and 'entitlement' is roughly equivalent to 'permission'. Each social practitioner possesses a normative status, and they also keep score of each other. The normative statuses (scores) of the game players change from time to time, which will be traced by the other scorekeepers. In the reason-mongering game, the practitioner is both player and scorekeeper. For players (scorekeepers), there are two ways of treating normative statuses: *attributing* and *undertaking* (or *acknowledging*). 'Attributing' only applies to others, such as *a* attributes commitment *P* to *b*. 'Undertaking' and 'acknowledging' apply to oneself, such as *a* undertakes commitment *P*[417]. As Brandom puts it: 'Practitioners take or treat themselves and others as having various commitments and entitlements. They *keep score* on deontic statuses by attributing those statuses to others and undertaking them themselves. The significance of a

[415] Brandom, 2000, p. 189.

[416] Brandom, 2000, p. 165.

[417] It is possible that someone should undertake a commitment but she doesn't acknowledge it, and the same applies to 'entitlement'.

performance is the difference it makes in the deontic score—that is, the way in which it changes what commitments and entitlements the practitioners, including the performer, attribute to each other and acquire, acknowledge, or undertake themselves'.[418]

Brandom draws inspiration from David Lewis's discussion of 'scorekeeping[419]. Lewis investigates the scorekeeping model in baseball. Furthermore, he posits that this notion can be used to make explicit what is implicit in our linguistic activities. Brandom sheds light on this notion by employing it in the discussion of social practice. However, scorekeeping is a metaphor. We don't really record the scores. Instead, we record each other's normative statuses: 'The normative significances of performances and the deontic states of performers are instituted by the practice that consists in keeping score by adopting attitudes of attributing and acknowledging them'. Jürgen Habermas has a concise characterization of Brandom's scorekeeping:

> In the basic case, discursive practice consists in an exchange of assertions, questions and answers that the interlocutors reciprocally attribute to one another and assess with regard to possible reasons; here, everyone keeps track from her own point of view of who was entitled to which speech acts, who accepted which assertions in good faith — and, finally, who overdrew the generally approved assertions in good faith — and, finally, who overdrew the generally approved account of credibility with validity claims that were not vindicated discursively, thereby discrediting themselves in the eyes of their team-mates. Every participant who clocks up 'points' by means of her contributions simultaneously calculates the 'score' reached by the others by means of their contributions.[420]

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[418] Brandom, 1994, p. 166.

[419] Cf. Lewis, 1979.

[420] Habermas, 2000, p. 325.

After presenting a brief sketch of 'scorekeeping', now we turn to the notion of 'score' in scorekeeping, namely, 'commitment' and 'entitlement'. In the reason-mongering game, suppose that each player has numerous counters (infinite), each of which represents one type of assertion. For example 'it's raining', 'il pleut', 'det regner', etc., are different tokens belong to one type. Putting forward a counter means making an assertion (a type of assertion). All these moves will be scored. In this game, a game player, at the same time, is also a scorekeeper who registers the score for both herself and other players. Each new move could alter one's scores. According to Brandom, there are two kinds of counters: *commitment* and *entitlement*.

How does 'commitment' work in this game? 'Commitment' is the first basic move in this game. If *P* puts forward a counter *a*, then it means that she is committed to *a*. Consequently, *a* would be put into her commitment-box. However, this counter can either be attributed by other scorekeepers, or be acknowledged or undertaken by *a*. On some occasions, the alternation of commitments is caused by some socially significant performances. Brandom uses the case of the queen's shilling. In eighteenth-century Britain, taking the queen's shilling from a recruiting officer is tantamount to the commitment of accepting military service. And a series of the alternations to the normative statuses follows.[421] Further, Brandom asserts: 'Making the one move *obliges* one to be prepared to make the other as well'.[422] Suppose that the counter *a* represents the claim that 'the leaf is green'. If *P* is committed to *a*, then *P* is also committed to the claim that 'the leaf is colored' which might be represented by the counter *b*. The counter *b* is the *committive consequence* of the counter *a*. They share the *committive relation*.

'Entitlement' is the second basic move in this game. In order to be entitled to enter into a cinema, what do we need? Obviously, a ticket. So, the ticket issuer is the

[421] Cf. Brandom, 1994.

[422] Brandom, 2000, p. 190.

authorizer. In this game model, on one hand, giving reasons for a claim is justifying such a claim. On the other hand, asking for reasons is to ask for a warrant for such a claim, in other words, asking the bearer for her entitlement to make such a claim. Brandom writes: 'Such a practice presupposes a distinction between assertional commitments to which one is entitled and those to which one is not entitled. Reason-giving practices make sense only if there can be an issue as to whether or not practitioners are entitled to their commitments'.[423] When *P* puts forward a counter *a*, the scorekeepers need to make a judgment on whether counter *a* should be put into the entitlement-box. Putting *a* into the entitlement-box means that *P* gets the license to make such move. As long as *a* stays in *P*'s entitlement-box, we should also put those counters which share the *permissive relation* with *a* into the entitlement-box. Suppose that *a* represents 'the fire is red', and *b* represents 'the rose is also red'. If so, *b* is the permissive consequence of *a*. Therefore, if *a* is in the *P*'s entitlement-box, then so should *b*.

Another move in the game model is 'incompatibility'. What is incompatibility? Brandom gives the following answer: 'We can say that two assertable contents are *incompatible* in case *commitment* to one precludes *entitlement* to the other' (Brandom 2000, 194). The commitment to the counter *a* which represents 'Nixon is American' rules out entitlement to the commitment counter *b* which represents 'Nixon is Chinese'. Wanderer has a more detailed description: 'the addition of a counter-type to the commitment-box requires the removal of certain other types from the entitlement-box. The counter-types that ought to be removed from the entitlement-box as a result of adding other counter-types to the commitment-box are said to be *incompatible* with each other'.[424]

In this gameplaying model, players' moves might engender challenges, so they need

[423] Brandom, 2000, p. 193.

[424] Wanderer, 2008, p. 45.

to justify their move. Accordingly, when counter-claims are put forward, some might hold that each counter requires a further justification (asking for a further reason). But if we endorse this claim, it could spark an infinite regress. Brandom has a simple rejoinder to this challenge: 'If many claims are treated as innocent until proven guilty — taken to be entitled commitments until and unless someone is in a position to raise a legitimate question about them — the global threat of regress dissolve[s]'.[425] In ordinary practice, it is not necessary to ask reasons for every single claim. There must be an end to this inquiry. Therefore, Brandom proposes a 'default and challenge structure of entitlement'. According to this structure, one is entitled to make a claim until this claim is challenged by other scorekeepers, as explained by Wanderer: 'In most cases, at the same time as adding a counter-type to the commitment-box, the scorekeeper will also add that counter-type to the entitlement-box. Such commitments have the default status of being entitled, although it is a status that is open to *challenge* by the scorekeeper, and can be removed if the game player is unable to *answer* the challenge'.[426]

There are several ways to challenge the default structure. The scorekeeper could challenge player *P*'s commitment to *a* by putting forth her own commitment *b* which is incompatible with *a*. Besides this, the scorekeeper can simply point out directly that *a* is already in *P*'s commitment-box or entitlement-box. The player, who is challenged, can either withdraw the commitment to *a* or justify it. Another important feature of our social practice is 'inter*personal* relations', says Brandom, 'Discursive practice, the giving and asking for reasons, however, involves both inter*content* and inter*personal* relations'.[427] If Inter*personal* relations are accepted in this game, the audience can inherit the commitments from the one who makes the assertion: 'Assertion that is communicatively successful in the sense that what is put forward as

[425] Brandom, 1994, p. 177.

[426] Wanderer, 2008, p. 44.

[427] Brandom, 2000, p. 166.

true by a speaker is taken as true by the audience consists in the interpersonal inheritance of commitment'.[428] Bearing this in mind, there is one more way to justify our claim— by deferring to other players. If *a* inherits the commitment *P* from *b*, when *P* is challenged, *a* can defer to *b* to justify *P*.

Wanderer names 'a certain kind of performance by the scorekeeper' in this reason-giving game as A'ing, and the scorekeeper response to A'ing as follows:

> [1] As the undertaking of a commitment and related commitment by the gameplayer (that is, as licensing the attribution to that gameplayer of commitment to that and related counter-types - that is, placing those counter-types in her commitment-box);
>
> [2] as entitling that gameplayer and other gameplayers to that and related commitments (that is, as licensing the attribution to the gameplayer of a default entitlement to that and related counter-types, and licensing other gameplayers to undertake commitments to that and related counter-types – that is, placing those counter-types in all their entitlement-boxes);
>
> [3] as the undertaking, by the gameplayer, of a responsibility to provide, by making another appropriate move, the entitlement to that commitment if appropriately challenged to do so by another gameplayer (that is, as licensing the removal of the entitlement to that counter-type upon failure to appropriately respond to an appropriate challenge, and licensing other to discharge their own responsibility for their commitment to that counter-type by deferring to the gameplayer).[429]

So far, I have discussed Brandom's social practice model (gameplaying model), and in the next section we will see how this model apples to some specific philosophical

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[428] Brandom, 1994, p. 170.

[429] Wanderer, 2008, p. 50.

practices: Kant's invitation to scorekeeping; scorekeeping in philosophical publications; scorekeeping in philosophical dialogue; and scorekeeping in philosophical debates.

4.2.2 The Application

[1] Kant's Invitation of Scorekeeping

The Critique of Pure Reason, written by Kant, is a widely acknowledged masterpiece. It's a milestone in the history of philosophy. On the one hand, one can barely deny the ingenuity and profundity of this magnum opus, while on the other hand, it is also famous for its elusive and obscure argumentations. Thus, many readers are intimidated by its difficulty. In order to make it more accessible, Kant once expressed his wish to rectify this great work. In *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Hannah Arendt cites a letter from Kant to Mendelssohn on August 16, 1783 as follows:

> [Though the Critique is] the outcome of reflections which had occupied me for a period of at least twelve years, I brought it to completion in the greatest haste within some four or five months … with little thought of … rendering it easy of comprehension by the reader, … since otherwise, had I … sought to give it a more popular form, the work would probably never have been completed at all. The *defect* can, however, be gradually removed, now that the work exists in a rough form.[430]

Arendt interprets this as Kant's intention to popularize his work by propounding 'public use of reason': 'What Kant hoped for in his hope for popularization—so strange in a philosopher, a tribe that usually has such strong sectarian tendencies—was that the circle of his examiners would gradually be enlarged. The

[430] Arendt and Beiner, 1989, pp. 38-9.

Age of Enlightenment is the age of "the public use of one's reason"'.[431] Moreover, Arendt indicates that Kant is actually in line with Socrates and Plato, '[c]ritical thinking, according to Kant and according to Socrates, exposes itself to "the test of free and open examination," and this means that the more people participate in it the better'.[432] According to Arendt, Socrates, Plato and Kant are in the same group of supporting the 'public use of one's reason'. In contrast, the Presocratics went in the opposite direction, because they 'never gave an account of their thoughts', and 'when you asked them a question, they remained silent'.[433] This doctrine sits oddly with Kant's idea of 'public use of reason'. Kant believes that 'the very faculty of thinking depends on its public use; without "the test of free and open examination," no thinking and opinion formation are possible. Reason is not made "to isolate itself but to get into community with others'.[434]

It is clear that Kant's intention to invite more people to engage into the discussion can be understood in light of Brandom's notion of 'the game of giving and asking for reasons'. Borrowing Brandom's term, in fact, Kant is inviting the public to participate in scorekeeping. As we mentioned, 'intersubjective' is a key notion in Brandom's gameplaying model. Wanderer interprets this notion as follows:

> Modelling this involves providing an account not only of the *intrapersonal inheritance of commitments and entitlements* (of how the addition of a counter-type to the commitment- and/or entitlement-box of an individual results in the addition or subtraction of other counter-types to those boxes), but also *the interpersonal inheritance of commitments and entitlements* (of how the addition of a counter-type in the commitment- and/or entitlement-box of an individual results in the addition

[431] Arendt and Beiner, 1989, p. 39.

[432] Arendt and Beiner, 1989, p. 39.

[433] Arendt and Beiner, 1989, p. 41.

[434] Arendt and Beiner, 1989, p. 40.

> or subtraction of counter-types to the commitment- and/or entitlement-boxes associated with other gameplayers).[435]

This reason-giving game is not an individual or an I-Thou game, rather, it is an I-We game. Similarly, philosophical practice, as a social practice, is not merely about individual meditation or contemplation. 'Conversation' is a *sine qua non* in philosophy which should not be left out. Kant is well aware of this point, attempting to present his work to public 'scorekeeping'. All the readers are potential scorekeepers, and they can challenge Kant's default structure of entitlement. During his life, Kant was able to justify his claims himself (or he would have dismissed some of his arguments). Even now, those who aim to defend Kant can either do it by themselves, or defer this responsibility to other Kantians. The Presocratics, who refused to reply to any question, should be considered as the adversaries of reason. In Brandom's term, they reject scorekeeping. As Arendt comments: '"to give an account"—not to prove, but to be able to say how one came to an opinion and for what reasons one formed it—is actually what separates Plato from all of his predecessors'.[436]

[2] Scorekeeping in Philosophical Publication

In *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934-1964*, we can find an example for philosophical publications.

Here's the narrative: Strauss, a representative of the journal *Social Research*, invited Voegelin to write a paper for *Social Research*. Voegelin accepted the invitation. Despite Strauss's taking this paper to be commendable, Voegelin's paper was rejected by the journal. As we find in Strauss's correspondence to Voegelin, the reason for rejection is basically technical: (i) the journal does not encourage submitting a chapter

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[435] Wanderer, 2008, p. 47.

[436] Arendt and Beiner, 1989, p. 41.

from a book which Voegelin did; (ii) the paper shouldn't exceed 25 pagers, while Voegelin's paper exceeded 25 pages.

Brandom's concept applies to this publication event. The moment Voegelin agrees to write a paper for the *Social Research*, a promise (commitment) is made by him. Suppose that Voegelin breaks the promise by never submitting a paper, then his normative status would be alternated. For instance, he might be deprived of the right to publishing on *Social Research* in the future. But the fact is that Voegelin submits the paper in time, which entails that he is willing to observe the rules of the *Social Research*. Therefore the scorekeeper puts the commitments such as 'my paper will not exceed 25 pagers', 'my paper is not a chapter from my book' into his commitment-box. Since Voegelin didn't keep his commitments, the consequence is that he is not entitled to publish on *Social Research*.

[3] Scorekeeping in Philosophical Dialogue

When discussing the 'default structure of entitlement', Brandom notes that *Socratic elenchus* does a nice job of exemplifying how to challenge the default structure of entitlement.

Socrates and Theaetetus's dialogue in *Theaetetus* is a good example. Their topic is 'knowledge'. At first, Theaetetus thinks that knowing might be equivalent to perceiving. Socrates refutes this. Theaetetus continues his attempt by suggesting that knowing is having a true belief, which is also rejected by Socrates. At last, Theaetetus asserts that knowing is having a true belief and being able to give an account of it, again, this definition does not withstand Socrates' scrutiny. However, Socrates never provides his own answer. During the conversation, he just keeps challenging Theaetetus's entitlement to his commitments:

SOCRATES: These men, at any rate, persuade by means of their expertise, and they don't teach people, but get them to have whatever beliefs they wish. Or do you think that there are any teachers so clever as to teach the truth about what happened adequately, in the short time allowed, to people who weren't there when others were robbed of their property or violently attacked?

THEAETETUS: No, I don't think they could at all, but I think they could persuade them.

SOCRATES: And by persuading them don't you mean getting them to have a belief?

THEAETETUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Well, when a jury has been persuaded fairly about something about which you could only have knowledge if you were an eyewitness, not otherwise, while they judge from what they've heard and get a true belief, haven't they then judged without knowledge, though they were persuaded of what's correct, since they made a good judgement?

THEAETETUS: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: But look, if true belief and knowledge were the same thing, then an excellent juryman wouldn't have a correct belief without knowledge. As it is, the two appear to be distinct.[437]

Plying Theaetetus with questions, Socrates 'bites' Theaetetus incessantly, acting like a *gadfly*. In this dialogue, Socrates challenges Theaetetus's entitlement to the claim that 'knowledge is a true belief'. Socrates puts forward his own commitments which are

[437] *Theaetetus* 201a1c

incompatible with Theaetetus's claims. So Socrates behaves as a scorekeeper, challenging Theaetetus's default structure of entitlement.

[4] Scorekeeping in Philosophical Debates

As we explained, the 'public use of one's reason' is central to philosophical activity. Philosophical debate is one instantiation of the public use of one's reason. During the 2500 years history of western philosophy, there are millions of debates, that continue back and forth, through which many philosophical problems have been clarified and improved. For instance, nominalism and realism's metaphysical debates on universals; Descartes and Princess Elisabeth's discussion of the mind-body problem; Bernard Williams and J.J.C. Smart's disagreement on utilitarianism; and John McDowell and Hubert Dreyfus's disputes on conceptual content, etc. These are so many classic moments in philosophical history. All these debates can be explained in terms of Brandomian concepts.

Take the debate between William James and William Clifford as an example[438]. William Clifford, in 'The Ethics of Belief', argues that it's wrong to believe anything with insufficient evidence. He holds that such beliefs are immoral. Concerning this commitment as a scorekeeper, it is legitimate to put its commitment consequence 'religious belief is wrong' into Clifford's commitment-box. In 'The Will to Believe', James challenged Clifford's entitlement to this commitment as a scorekeeper. He argued that not all belief requires sufficient evidence. Sometimes, we might face what he called *a genuine option* which is forced, lived, and momentous. When facing a genuine instance, according to James, we should simply accept it, and religious belief is one of these genuine instances. In this case, James puts forward his own counter to challenge Clifford's counter. But this is not the end of the story. The reason-giving game keeps going. On the one hand, there are proponents of James who can justify his

[438] Fabio, 2013, p. 13.

commitments. On the other hand, there are opponents who will challenge him. After all, it is an interpersonal game.

4.3 Brandomian Conceptual Expressive Enterprise

4.3.1 Maher's Interpretation

Maher (2012) distinguishes two stages in Brandom's account of 'meaning': normative pragmatics and inferential semantics. In the previous sections, we primarily focused on the stage of normative pragmatics. But it is the stage of inferential semantics that is at the core of Brandom's metaphilosophy.

Brandom states that the meaning of the assertion is determined by its inferential role. According to Maher, Brandom intends to 'understand meaning in terms of inference, and inference in terms of the game of giving and asking for reasons'.[439] How does this theory of meaning work? As Maher explains, we need to introduce the notion of the 'circumstances and consequences of application': 'The appropriate circumstances of an asserting are those circumstances *sufficient* for producing it. The appropriate consequences of application for asserting are the *necessary* consequences of producing it'.[440] In other words, the asserting should be explained in terms of other assertions that 'it licenses and is licensed by'.[441] Accordingly, the meaning of the claim that 'Brandom is a professor in philosophy' is partly constituted by its licensing acts of saying 'Brandom is a professor' (consequences of application) and by its being licensed by acts of saying 'Brandom is a human' (circumstances of application). Moreover, the meaning of 'Brandom is a professor in philosophy' can be constituted by non-verbal and non-linguistic behaviors. Reading the information about Brandom

[439] Maher, 2012, p. 71.

[440] Maher, 2012, p. 71.

[441] Maher, 2012, p. 71.

on his website can serve as the circumstance of the application (premise). Suppose that Sid is looking for Brandom. Since I know that Brandom is a professor in philosophy, I tell Sid to look for him in the department of philosophy. Thus, my performance is the consequence of the application (conclusion) of 'Brandom is a professor in philosophy'.

However, these inferential roles are restricted by inferential norms, according to Brandom. As Maher puts it: 'Thus, the inferential role of a sentence is not simply the inferences (or "moves") speakers make with it or tend to make with it, but rather the inferences that it would be appropriate for them to make with it'.[442] But in the practice of giving and asking for reasons, the inferential norm is controversial. Different scorekeepers hold different views, which might lead to disagreements. The inferential norm is partly manifested 'when speakers challenge and defend their claims'.[443]

What matters is that these disputes among scorekeepers need to be put on the table. This is what Brandom calls the procedure of explicitation. By using logical locutions, the players/scorekeepers could make explicit what is implicit in the original claims. Therefore, his view is also known as 'logical expressivism'.Maher explains: 'logical expressivism is the claim that logical vocabulary serves to make inferential proprieties explicit in the form of claims'.[444] The notion of 'logical locution' employed by Brandom is used in a broad sense. Any vocabulary that serves this 'explicitating' function is a logical locution. Maher indicates that in Brandom's theory, 'logical vocabulary is distinguished by what it allows us to do: facilitate rational evaluation'.[445] For example, conditionals are the paradigm of the logical locution.

[442] Maher, 2012, p. 72.

[443] Maher, 2012, p. 73.

[444] Maher, 2012, p. 73.

[445] Maher, 2012, p. 73.

The conditional plays a crucial role in making explicit the inference from 'Spinoza is Dutch' to 'Spinoza is European',: 'if Spinoza is Dutch, then he is European'.

As we have seen, Maher outlines a rough structure of the Brandomian conceptual explicitation enterprise. The meaning of the concept is constituted by what it licenses and what it is being licensed by. By using logical vocabulary, we can perform a process of 'explicitation', through which the implicit contents of the claim are revealed. It is only on the basis of 'explicitating' that the assessment is possible. In short, a Brandomian metaphilosophy includes two steps: explicitation and evaluation. As Maher states: 'logical vocabulary facilitates inferential evaluation'.[446]

4.3.2 Blunden's Interpretation

Andy Blunden (2012)'s interpretation of Brandom can also shed light on our understanding of Brandomian metaphilosophy.

Blunden claims that what Brandom is really concerned with is the distinctive feature of the concept-user. There is a remarkable distinction between 'a thermostat which turns on the cooler when the temperature exceeds its set point' and 'the physicist who grasps the concept of critical mass'.[447] What's the difference? A concept-user is supposed to *understand* the concept. A thermostat or a parrot *represents* a concept rather than *understands* a concept. Understanding is a kind of *know-how*. Blunden claims that Brandom 'takes knowing-*how* as prior to knowing-*that*. What a concept is, is to be inferred from what can be done with it'.[448] To understand 'west' is constituted in part in knowing the inference from 'Detroit is to the east of Houston' to 'Houston is to the west of Detroit'. These kinds of inferences are material inferences contra formal inferences:

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[446] Maher, 2012, p. 74.

[447] Blunden, 2012, p. 62.

[448] Blunden, 2012, p. 63.

> There are also what Brandom calls 'material inferences', which are not simply implicit in the formal conditions represented, but flow from the concept's place in a whole network of relations (e.g. military practice), and which can be inferred by someone who truly understands the concept. To understand a concept, therefore, entails more than to understand the formal conditions under which the concept is extant, but in addition, to understand the *whole system* of concepts of which the concept is a part. That is the *content* of the concept, and only a human being who understands the norms of the norms of the language community in which the concept exists can make such inferences, and therefore be said to understand the concept.[449]

Concerning the theory of concepts, by jettisoning the representational view, Brandom endorses an inferential view, according to which the content of a concept is constituted by sets of inferential rules—the premises of using such concepts and the consequences of the application of the concept, which can be made explicit. Blunden says that the concept is 'a possible predicate of a judgment (what can be said of something, to use Aristotle's expression), which can be the conclusion to a process of inference, *and* the premises for a process of inference'.[450] And all these inferences can be expressed in the form of propositions.

Brandom's theory of concept (meaning) is a normative one. He holds that 'a concept is a *norm of judgment*'.[451] The norm is implicit in our social/linguistic practice and can be made explicit through a concept. The upshot is that it is possible to violate the norm. Accordingly, our actual use of concepts can be flawed: 'A concept may be applied erroneously because norms do not determine actions in that mechanical sense, but nonetheless, a concept which is used *not* in accordance with norms is deemed to

[449] Blunden, 2012, p. 64.

[450] Blunden, 2012, p. 65.

[451] Blunden, 2012, p. 65.

be used in *error*'.[452] Based on these considerations, Blunden summarizes:

> The fundamental form of the conceptual is the propositional, and the concept is to be inferred from the proposition. Concepts are the norms or rules for forming judgments, and can be inferred from the use of words in propositions. A concept is a predicate of a possible judgment.[453]

How does this relate to Brandomian metaphilosophy? Blunden states that Brandom's theory entails a notion of 'bad concepts'. Concepts are constituted by their inferential rules: the circumstances of application and their consequences. If we do not accept the inference from the circumstances of application to the consequences of the application, then it is plausible to reject using this concept. A typical case would be 'nigger'. This is a concept of racial prejudice, which involves defective inference, applied to Afro-Americans. The consequence is that '[t]hese "bad concepts" demonstrate that concepts have real content, specifically that concepts embody both the state of affairs they describe and the meaning or significance which could be ascribed to that state of affairs'.[454]

According to this interpretation, a Brandomian metaphilosophy emerges. There are two steps: (i) the implementation of explicitation (the expressive part) and (ii) the process of critics (the conceptual ethics). The function of explicitation is to disclose all the inferences involved in the using of a concept. After all assumptions are made explicit, philosophers can then perform their evaluations and criticism (conceptual tuning).

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[452] Blunden, 2012, p. 65.

[453] Blunden, 2012, p. 66.

[454] Blunden, 2012, p. 66.

4.3.3 Wanderer's Interpretation

In his book on Brandom, Wanderer distinguishes two levels of being a rational being. The higher level of being a rational being is being a logical being. It is the notion of a 'logical being' that leads to a full fledged Brandomian metaphilosophy.

What is a 'logical being'? A logical being is contained in the category of a rational being who is supposed to be a competent concept user and a participant in the practice of giving and asking for reasons. Thus, '[a] logical being is also a rational being, although one can be a rational being but not a logical one'.[455] Consequently, being a logical being requires more than being a rational being.

Wanderer explains that there is an LX relation (relationship of elaboration [L] and explication [X]) in Brandom's thought:

> Logical vocabulary, and the abilities required to deploy it, can be said to stand in a dual relationship to an autonomous discursive practice: a relationship of elaboration and explication (or an LX relation, for short – BSD II: 23). First, the abilities required to deploy a logical vocabulary can be elaborated from the abilities required to deploy a language. Secondly, once acquired, these abilities allow the practitioner to make explicit features of the discursive practice from which it is elaborated.[456]

Our capacity of deploying logical vocabulary, which enables us to make explicit what is implicit in our linguistic practice in terms of propositions, is elaborated from ordinary linguistic competence.

Firstly, I will introduce the relationship of elaboration, which has two forms:

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[455] Wanderer, 2008, p. 58.

[456] Wanderer, 2008, p. 59.

algorithmic elaboration and *elaboration by training*. Let us state the four relevant abilities as follows:

> P1. The ability to do multiplication and subtraction.
>
> P2. The ability to do long division.
>
> P3. The ability to draw a passable picture of a stick-figureman.
>
> P4. The ability to draw a passable picture of a human face.[457]

The relationship between P1 and P2 is an algorithmic elaboration, while the relationship between P3 and P4 is an elaboration by training. What's the difference? As Wanderer suggests: '[t]he difference between the transition from P1 to P2 and from P3 to P4 is that in the former (algorithmic elaboration) one can state precisely all that needs to be done by anyone and everyone to achieve the transition, given certain specifiable idealizations, something that cannot be done for the latter (elaboration by training)'.[458] The upshot is that the transition from P1 to P2 can be made explicit, while that from P3 to P4 cannot. Bearing this distinction in mind, let us have a look at the following two abilities P5 and P6:

> P5. The practical ability that is both necessary and sufficient for deploying a language (the minimal set of abilities needed to be able to make an assertion).
>
> P6. The practical ability sufficient for deploying a logical vocabulary (making claims that incorporate distinctively logical terms).[459]

The question is: to which relationship does the transition from P5 to P6 belong? In other words, can we make explicit the transition from P5 to P6? It is plausible to say that the relationship between P5 and P6 is algorithmic elaboration because 'it is

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[457] Wanderer, 2008, pp. 59-60.

[458] Wanderer, 2008, p. 61.

[459] Wanderer, 2008, p. 61.

possible to specify precisely all that needs to be added to the rational abilities in order that, given certain stateable idealizations, anyone with rational abilities can acquire logical ones'.[460]

Secondly, what is the relationship of explication? Once our ability of deploying logical vocabulary is elaborated from the linguistic ability, those assertions implicit in our linguistic practice can be made explicit by appealing to logical vocabularies. As a logical being, one is able to codify what is implicit in one's conceptual knowing-how by virtue of knowing-that (propositions), as Wanderer states it: 'that explication involves the codification of practical knowing-how in a set of claimable principles'.[461]

The conditional 'if … then' is a typical representative of logical vocabulary. Suppose that the counter *p* is in *X*'s commitment-box. Then *Y*, as a rational being (scorekeeper) puts *q,* which shares a commitive relationship with *p,* into *X*'s commitment-box. After learning how to use the conditional 'if…then' to *Y*, *Y* is able to use it to codify what is implicit in *X*'s assertions. A rational being without the capacity to deal with logical vocabulary can only 'make claims in the context of their discursive practices and alter those claims in light of inferential relations with other claims', while a logical being is able to 'criticize and alter those inferential relations themselves, as this would require the ability to consider, in an explicit form, a particular conditional claim'.[462] So, being equipped with logical locutions, one can 'bring inferential relations into the discursive enterprise in the form of explicit claims, such that they can become the target of critical evaluation'.[463]

Brandom's use of 'logical vocabulary (locution)' in this context is not a narrow one. Any locution that has the function of making explicit what is implicit in our linguistic

[460] Wanderer, 2008, p. 61.

[461] Wanderer, 2008, p. 63.

[462] Wanderer, 2008, p. 65.

[463] Wanderer, 2008, p. 65.

practice qualifies as a logical locution. In linguistic practice, we have (i) the act of asserting (the pragmatic dimension) and (ii) the propositions asserted (the semantic dimension). So two kinds of logical locution are needed: 'Some logical locutions, such as the conditional, serve to make explicit semantic dimensions implicit in rational practice. Others, such as the "is committed to …" locution, serve to make explicit pragmatic features implicit in rational practice'.[464] Suppose that a rational being *P* practically takes *Q* as committed to counter-type *a*. Equipped with the logical locution 'is committed to …', *P* is able to codify this in the form of a proposition '*Q* is committed to *a*'.

There is a crucial question to answer: 'what can logical beings do that rational beings cannot?'.[465] With logical vocabularies, logical beings are able to 'codify aspects of the scorekeeping practice for themselves'.[466] Given that the practice of philosophy is replete with picking up errors hidden in unwarranted assumptions, providing reasons for an assertion, using arguments as weapons to refute others, etc., philosophers are undeniably logical beings. The function of the process of explicitation is to make explicit our linguistic practice in the form of propositions which 'can serve as reasons, and for which reasons can be demanded'.[467] This is why the expressive approach is important to philosophy and to conceptual engineering, because only by doing so, can we criticize our current concepts. Wanderer summarizes three aspects of practice of logical beings:

> The first is *codification*: mastery of logical vocabulary allows codification in the form of explicit principles of otherwise implicit rational practices. The second is *critique*: having codified the norms governing their practices, practitioners can

[464] Wanderer, 2008, p. 66.

[465] Wanderer, 2008, p. 67.

[466] Wanderer, 2008, p. 67.

[467] Wanderer, 2008, p. 67.

> now use these principles as reasons for other claims, and reasons can be asked for them. The third is *self-awareness*: in making such discursive practices explicit, we become self-consciously aware of ourselves and others as rational beings.[468]

Rational beings are able to 'recognize implicitly, the norms governing their discursive practices, and to revise their own commitments on the basis of inferential connections between these'.[469] Logical beings can do all the things which can be done by a rational being. Moreover, they can provide 'discourse about such practices at the same time, and there is no end to such an ongoing process of critique and revision'.[470]

4.3.4 Brandomian Metaphilosophy

Brandom (2009) discusses how his inferentialism can be interpreted as a metaphilosophical view in 'Reason, Expression, and the Philosophic Enterprise'. As he notes at the outset of this paper: 'In this chapter, I want to address the question "What is philosophy?"'.[471] Brandom regards his metaphilosophy as an expressive project. His idea runs as follows:

> I see philosophy as a discipline whose distinctive concern is with a certain kind of *self-consciousness*: awareness of ourselves as specifically *discursive* (that is, concept-mongering) creatures. Its task is understanding the conditions, nature, and consequences of conceptual norms and the activities—starting with the social practices of giving and asking for reasons—that they make possible and that make them possible. As concept users, we are beings who can make explicit how things are and what we are doing—even if always only in relief against a background of implicit circumstances, conditions, skills, and practices. Among

[468] Wanderer, 2008, p. 68.

[469] Wanderer, 2008, p. 68.

[470] Wanderer, 2008, p. 68.

[471] Brandom, 2009, p. 111.

> the things on which we can bring our explicitating capacities to bear are those very concept-using capacities that make it possible to make anything at all explicit. Doing that, I am saying, is philosophizing.[472]

As a logical being, a philosopher should engage in what Brandom calls the expressive enterprise of philosophy.

Brandom's expressive story begins with Kant. The lesson we draw from Kant is that a 'concept is a *normative* concept'.[473] So, what is a 'concept' for Kant? According to Kant (Brandomian Kant), concepts are norms. By making judgments and performing actions, we undertake commitments which are determined by the norms (concepts). Brandom says: 'Concepts by themselves don't express commitments; they only determine what commitments would be undertaken if they were applied'.[474] It is possible that we are not entitled to our commitments. So we can always raise the question of whether our judgments are correct or not. Yet, Kant thinks that 'judgment' is the fundamental unit of our experience (awareness) in the sense that it is the smallest unit for which we are responsible. For Kant, 'judgment' can be understood in terms of applying concepts. Furthermore, judgments also play a 'role as a unit of responsibility'.[475] Put in a nutshell, Kant's core idea is that 'judgment and action are things we are in a distinctive way *responsible* for'.[476] How does this lead to a metaphilosophical view? Brandom argues that 'philosophy is the study of us as creatures who judge and act, that is, as discursive, concept-using creatures'.[477] The contribution of Kant is that he 'emphasize[s] that understanding what we do in these terms is attributing to us various kinds of normative status, taking us to be subject to

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[472] Brandom, 2009, pp. 126-7.

[473] Brandom, 2009, p. 114.

[474] Brandom, 2009, p. 116.

[475] Brandom, 2009, p. 116.

[476] Brandom, 2009, p. 117.

[477] Brandom, 2009, p. 116.

distinctive sorts of normative appraisal', therefore, 'a central philosophical task is understanding this fundamental normative dimension within which we dwell'.[478]

As I have noted, 'judgment' is related to 'responsibility'. But, how? It is the notion of the 'game of giving and asking for reasons' that connects 'judgment' and 'responsibility'. We bear responsibility to offer reasons for our judging and acting in order to prove our entitlements. As Brandom puts, '[s]howing that we are entitled by the rules to apply the concept in a particular case is *justifying* the commitment we undertake thereby, offering *reasons* for it'.[479] Thus, it is the 'space of reasons' that distinguishes discursive beings from others. We, as concepts-users, know how 'to tell what is a reason for what'.[480] Our assertion 'That is red', which can serve as a reason and is in need of other reasons, plays a role in social practice. In contrast, a parrot's report 'That is red' is 'merely responsively sounding off', which cannot be understood as 'making a move in a game of giving and asking for reasons'.[481]

So far, we have reached a clear understanding of a 'rational being'. Yet, the Brandomian expressive approach is based on the notion of a 'logical being', which is a step further from that of 'rational being'. A rational being without the ability to deal with logical locutions is *rationalism* without *intellectualism.* As Brandom explains: '"Rationalism" in this sense does not entail intellectualism, the doctrine that every *implicit* mastery of a propriety of practice is ultimately to be explained by appeal to a prior *explicit* grasp of a principle'.[482]

Dummett's notion of 'circumstance' and 'consequence' is useful in explaining Brandom's expressive approach. Dummett suggests that the use for any expression

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[478] Brandom, 2009, pp. 116-7.

[479] Brandom, 2009, p. 117.

[480] Brandom, 2009, p. 118.

[481] Brandom, 2009, p. 119.

[482] Brandom, 2009, p. 120.

consists of two components: 'the circumstances in which it is appropriately used and the appropriate consequences of such use'.[483] For example, 'This is scarlet' is an appropriate circumstance for using the concept 'red', while 'This is colored' is an appropriate consequence for the application of the concept 'red'. The circumstances and the consequences of the application of concepts are not restricted to propositional assertions, but also apply to non-inferential situations: 'concepts like red also have *non*-inferential circumstances of applicability, such as the visible presence of red things. And concepts such as unjust have non-inferential consequences of application —that is, they can make it appropriate to *do* (or not do) something, to make another claim true, not just to *say* or judge that it is true'.[484] Accordingly, the norms governing the use of a concept have three components: 'circumstances of appropriate application, appropriate consequences of application, and the propriety of an inference from the circumstances to the consequences' (Brandom 2009, 121).[485] Though claiming that philosophy is an expressive enterprise, Brandom also asserts that the task of philosophy is the criticism of concepts, given that some concepts might involve defective inferences. Brandom uses Dummett's discussion of 'Boche' as a paradigm case to make this point:

> A simple case would be that of a pejorative term, e.g. 'Boche'. The conditions for applying the term to someone is that he is of German nationality; the consequences of its application are that he is barbarous and more prone to cruelty than other Europeans. We should envisage the connections in both directions as sufficiently tight as to be involved in the very meaning of the word: neither could be severed without altering its meaning. Someone who rejects the word does so because he does not want to permit a transition from the grounds

[483] Brandom, 2009, p. 120.

[484] Brandom, 2009, pp. 120-1.

[485] Brandom, 2009, p. 121.

for applying the term to the consequences of doing so.[486]

The inferential rules involved in applying 'Boche' are not accepted by many people. We can also use the idea of conceptual tuning by saying that the concept Boche is defective.

Brandomian metaphilosophy includes in fact two parts, an expressive part and a critical part, albeit he names this project as an expressive enterprise which does not give justice to its critical feature. Concerning the expressive part, it is the philosopher's task to make explicit the hidden inferences behind our concept-applying activities. To assemble a machine, one needs to prepare all the parts and tools. To enable a critical project, we need to excavate all the detailed assumptions, whether valid or not, which are entailed by our use of concepts, and to lay all our cards on the table. It is only when a philosopher can encounter and examine these claims directly that she is able to decide whether they are true or not. If the inference is defective, then we might simply reject the concept. This is also what we do in conceptual tuning. For example, the inference from German nationality to barbarity does remain hidden until it is unravelled by philosophers with logical tools. Only after is it 'subject to rational challenge and assessment; it can, for instance, be confronted with such counterexamples as Bach and Goethe'.[487] Another example discussed by Brandom is the notion of 'same person'. Due to disagreement on the circumstances of the application of 'same person' (physical continuity, psychological continuity, memory continuity) to the ascription of responsibility, philosophical disputes arise. Hence, the main concern is always 'about which inferences to endorse'.[488]

So far, the framework of Brandomian metaphilosophy has emerged. It is the

[486] Cited in (Brandom, 2000, p. 69).

[487] Brandom, 2009, p. 125.

[488] Brandom, 2009, p. 123.

combination of an expressive approach and a critical approach, and a critical project without an expressive project is just like a blind person who tries to comment on a painting. Philosophers need to prepare their toolkit for criticizing concepts or ideas, given that within the application of our concepts lurks the possibility of defectiveness. Yet, philosophers can employ logical weapons to make explicit hidden assumptions, and only then can the assessment begin:

> Criticism of concepts is always criticism of the inferential connections. For criticizing whether all the individually sufficient conditions (circumstances) "go together," i.e. are circumstances of application of one concept, just is wondering whether they all have the same consequences of application (and similarly for wondering whether the consequences of application all "go together").[489]

The critical part is premised on the expressive part, while the conjunction of these two parts contributes to a complete Brandomian metaphilosophy:

> One of philosophy's defining obligations is to supply and deploy an expressive toolbox, filled with concepts that help us make explicit various aspects of *rationality* and *normativity* in general. **The topic of philosophy is normativity in all its guises, and inference in all its forms.** And its task is an *expressive*, *explicative* one. So it is the job of practitioners of the various philosophical subfields to design and produce specialized expressive tools, and to hone and shape them with use.[490]

4.4 Expressive Project and Conceptual Tuning

I have spent much ink on the details of Brandom's idea of human linguistic practice and how his model contributes to a Brandomian metaphilosophy. I will demonstrate

[489] Brandom, 2009, p. 124.

[490] Brandom, 2009, p. 126.

how Brandomian metaphilosophy is a form of conceptual tuning below.

4.4.1 Brandomian Conceptual Tuning

In what sense, can we understand Brandomian metaphilosophy in terms of conceptual tuning/engineering? My position is that Brandomian metaphilosophy is one kind of conceptual tuning. In fact, Plunkett also notes that Brandom can be his ally: 'these broad ideas show up, in one form or another, in Charles Stevenson's classic paper "Persuasive Definitions", Peter Ludlow's recent work, and parts of Robert Brandom's work'.[491] As explained previously, Brandomian metaphilosophy includes two parts, the expressive part and the critical part. Holding that the task of philosophy is the criticism of concepts, Brandom shares the same view as conceptual tuning. However, for Brandom, the meaning of a concept is constituted by the inferential rules of applying this concept. So, in order to proceed the critical aspect of the project, philosophers must disclose the hidden assumptions of the concepts that are being applied. Before operating surgery, the doctor needs to know all the symptoms of the patient. Likewise, before deciding whether to jettison a concept (e.g. Boche) or not, we need to codify the inferential rules involved in its use. In short, Brandomian conceptual tuning is also an expressive approach[492].

Brandomian conceptual tuning is based on his accounts of inferential role semantics, which has both merits and drawbacks. The shortcoming is that his project is theory laden by presupposing his theory of concept which might invite challenges. But the advantage is that we can explain how our concepts could be defective with the Brandomian theory of meaning.

One virtue of the Brandomian theory of meaning is that meaning is normative.

[491] Plunkett, 2015, p. 865.

[492] As I discussed in Chapter 3, in my conceptual tuning project the expressive/descriptive approach is a means to the ameliorative end.

Peregrin (2012) articulates this feature of the Brandomian theory in his paper 'Inferentialism and the Normativity of Meaning'. Peregrin indicates that inferentialism is about inferential rules rather than inferences. Our linguistic practice presupposes that each practitioner has normative attitudes towards others. In other words, if we can assess others' assertions, then 'sanctioning' or 'rewarding' follows. Our normative attitude is decided by the 'rules' (norms). However, normative attitudes are open to revision. In the previous section, I have explained that in the game of giving and asking for reasons, scorekeepers can always challenge the default structure of entitlements of others. Moreover, the normative attitudes themselves can be challenged. As Peregrin says:

> As for the normative attitudes, they cannot be seen as something static, furnishing human actions, once and for all, with clear-cut labels "correct" and "incorrect". These attitudes, upon being made explicit, themselves become subject to our "game of giving and asking for reasons" (Brandom's 1994, term) and thus are continually subject to possible amendments in the light of reasons. Hence, though each of such attitudes is *authoritative* insofar as the (*in*)*correctness* that it intends to bestow on some actions is construed as something permanent and unconditional, it nevertheless includes, as its integral component, an openness towards the possibility of its re-evaluation. And due to the permanence integral to the concept of correctness, any such *re-evaluation* comes to be understood as *the discovery of an error*—hence any correctness judgment, however authoritative, is itself subject to future evaluation with respect to *its own correctness* and is thus, in this sense, never definite.[493]

In claiming that normative attitudes are subject to criticism, we are actually referring to those rules of our linguistic practice or to rules in human communities. As Peregrin

[493] Peregrin, 2012, p. 77.

explains: '[t]hey are both open to revisions and also insofar open as a rule can never settle everything w.r.t. [with reference to] the kind of behavior that is its target. Both the range of cases it applies to and the way it applies to them are subject to negotiation—and a true normative, which involves an application of a rule, always either reinforces the rule as it stands, or provides for its modification, extension or specification'.[494] Don't these words sound familiar? Yes, 'subject to negotiation', 'provides for its modification, extension or specification', etc., these expressions are akin to terms used in conceptual tuning. This is also the spirit of my inclusive notion of conceptual engineering. In the process of engineering, we need to negotiate, laying out all the underlying assumptions, hidden provisos, undisclosed entailments, etc., and then figure out how to improve it or simply abandon it. Peregrin states that normative attitudes must be situated in our existing practice. But that does not mean that there is no possibility for revision. Setting the aim of conceptual tuning as improving our defective concepts (the existing practices), we should also comply with the Brandomian criterion—'a proposal, which can be taken as established only if it survives any occurring criticism and if it comes to be generally accepted'.[495]

One concept discussed frequently by Brandom is 'Boche'. For current purposes, Brandom's discussion of 'Boche' can also be understood in terms of conceptual tuning. 'Boche' is defective, and it needs conceptual tuning. In conceptual tuning, there are two ways of tackling the defective concepts. (i) Firstly, we can improve/repair the defective concepts (either keep the lexical item or change the lexical item). (ii) Secondly, we can simply abandon the defective concept. Chalmers and Clark's engineering on 'belief' belongs to the former, while Brandom's discussion of 'Boche' belongs to the latter. As Brandom writes: 'If one does not believe that the inference from German nationality to cruelty is a good one, one must eschew the

[494] Peregrin, 2012, p. 93.

[495] Peregrin, 2012, pp. 93-4.

concept or expression "Boche" [. . .] One can only refuse to employ the concept, on the grounds that it embodies an inference one does not endorse'.[496] He also mentions an interesting story about Oscar Wilde's rejection of the term 'blasphemy'. The prosecutor accused Wilde of being blasphemous in *The Importance of Being Earnest* by claiming: 'I put it to you, Mr. Wilde, that this is blasphemy. Is it or is it not?'. And Wilde replied: 'Sir, "blasphemy" is not one of my words.'[497] Brandom points out that concepts such as 'nigger', 'whore', 'faggot', 'lady', 'Communist', or 'Republican' might all need revision (conceptual tuning), because they share a common feature: 'they couple "descriptive" circumstances of application to "evaluative" consequences'.[498] This revisionist spirit can be generalized.

In fact, Brandomian conceptual tuning highlights the seventh aspect of the conceptual tuning project—the expressive feature of conceptual tuning. This is demonstrated in Brandom's attention to negotiation:

> In Reason's fight against thought debased by prejudice and propaganda, the first rule is that potentially controversial material inferential commitments should be made explicit as claims, exposing them both as vulnerable to reasoned challenge and as in need of reasoned defense. They must not be allowed to remain curled up inside loaded phrases such as 'enemy of the people' or 'law and order'.[499]

For Brandom, the logical locutions play an important explicating role in metaphilosophy. It is logical locutions that make it possible for us to challenge or justify our use of concepts by displaying all the relevant grounds and consequences.

In conceptual tuning, on certain occasions, we simply abandon the defective concept

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[496] Brandom, 2000, pp. 69-70.

[497] Brandom, 2000, p. 70.

[498] Brandom, 2000, p. 70.

[499] Brandom, 2000, p. 70.

(such as ‘Boche”), while in other occasions, we can improve it. Brandom shares this view, claiming that in certain contexts, we should embrace conceptual progress, instead of simply abandoning the defective concept. He uses ‘temperature’ as an example:

> Conceptual progress in science often consists in introducing just such novel contents. The concept of temperature was introduced with certain criteria or circumstances of appropriate application, and certain consequences of application. As new ways of measuring temperature are introduced, and new theoretical and practical consequences of temperature measurements adopted, the complex inferential commitment that determines the significance of using the concept of temperature evolves.[500]

Based on these considerations, I think it is appropriate to count Brandomian metaphilosophy as conceptual tuning, in which the expressive approach plays an indispensable role.4.4.2 Rejecting ‘Woman’

In the previous section, I have mentioned some highly charged concepts such as ‘nigger’, ‘whore’, ‘faggot’, ‘lady’, ‘Communist’, ‘Republican’. In this section, I will take ‘woman’ as a case study, from which we shall see that the expressive approach is crucial to conceptual tuning, especially when there is more than one amelioration candidate.

In chapter 2, I mentioned Haslanger’s ameliorative approach on the gender concept ‘woman’. Denying the biological understanding of gender, Haslanger offers her ameliorative definition, indicating the subordinate feature contained in ‘woman’, with a purpose of abandoning the defective concept ‘woman’ in the future. Besides Haslanger’s plan, what would another ameliorative plan for ‘woman’ be? Then, which

[500] Brandom, 2000, p. 71.

one should we adopt? In fact, Katharine Jenkins (2016) proposes an ameliorative plan alternative to Haslanger's, albeit they share the ameliorative method (conceptual tuning). With two ameliorative analyses of the same concept, what should we do? I propose to deal with such a situation by appealing to negotiation, which is the natural solution, given that the expressive approach is a crucial part of conceptual tuning.

Following on Jenkins's steps, let us first recall Haslanger's ameliorative inquiry:

> According to Haslanger, an ameliorative inquiry into a concept *F* is the project of arriving at the concept of *F*-ness that a particular group should aim to get people to use, given a particular set of goals that the group holds. Ameliorative inquiries thus make use of normative inputs. The concept of *F*-ness that is generated by an ameliorative inquiry is the *target* concept of *F*. Ameliorative analysis is not bound to comply with our ordinary understanding or use of a concept: the target concept may be revisionary, provided that it furthers the goals guiding the analysis.[501]

Jenkins also endorses this method. However, Jenkins has a different *F*-ness in mind compared with Haslanger's. Both Jenkins and Haslanger argue that the target concept 'woman' should be eliminated due to its subordinate feature. They try to reach this end by providing an operative definition of woman. On certain occasions, conceptual tuning terminates when we replace a defective concept with a target concept. For instance, we replace fish with piscis, and this is the end of the story. But Haslanger's ameliorative analysis of gender is a little different. For her, replacing the manifest concept with the target concept is to abandon it. So, for Haslanger's analysis of gender, in the first phase, we need to replace the manifest concept with the target concept (in this case the operative concept) by uncovering the real definition of the gender concept. In other words, the first step is to provide reasons why our current concept is

[501] Jenkins, 2016, p. 395.

defective, and the second step is to abandon the defective concept to achieve social progress (such as combatting gender injustice).

Now let us turn to the divergence between Jenkins and Haslanger. Jenkins indicates that there is an *inclusion problem* which appears very worrisome to the ameliorative inquiry of 'woman'. What is the inclusion problem? Put roughly, it is whether the revisionary analysis of 'woman' marginalizes some women. As Jenkins explains:

> This task is rendered difficult by the fact that since there seems to be no single property that all women have in common, attempts to define *woman* risk excluding or marginalizing some women. Typically, it is women who are also members of other oppressed social groups, such as women of color and working-class women, who are at risk of exclusion or marginalization.[502]

Jenkins argues that Haslanger's inquiry cannot solve the inclusion problem. More specifically, her definition does not cover people who identify as 'trans*'. Before moving on, we need to specify what this is. According to Jenkins, 'trans' refers to all those people whose gender identity changed from the one they were assigned at birth. And she uses 'cis' to describe anyone who is not trans.

I have already mentioned Haslanger's ameliorative definition of 'woman', which serves to unpack the subordinated feature of 'woman':

> S *functions as a* woman in context C iff$_{df}$:
>
> (i) S is observed or imagined in C to have certain bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction;
>
> (ii) that S has these features marks S within the background ideology of C as someone who ought to occupy certain kinds of social positions that are in fact subordinate (and so motivates and justifies S's occupying such a

[502] Jenkins, 2016, p. 394.

position); and

(iii) the fact that S satisfies (i) and (ii) plays a role in S's systematic subordination in C, that is, *along some dimension*, S's social position in C is oppressive, and S's satisfying (i) and (ii) plays a role in that dimension of subordination.[503]

Concerning the inclusion problem, Jenkins mentions that Haslanger writes in a footnote that her definition entails that 'a female functioning socially as a man or a male functioning socially as woman' belongs to the category of that gender.[504] Jenkins, however, argues that this specification does not work. She asks us to consider four scenarios:

> *Scenario 1*: A trans woman does not publicly present as a woman and is perceived as a man by people around her. [. . .]
>
> *Scenario 2*: A trans woman publicly presents as a woman, but her gender presentation is not respected: she is seen by those around her as a man 'pretending' to be a woman. [. . .]
>
> *Scenario 3*: A trans woman publicly presents as a woman, and her gender presentation is respected by those around her (they use her correct pronouns, etc., and think of her as a woman). [. . .]
>
> *Scenario 4*: A trans woman publicly presents as a woman, and her gender presentation is respected, but, unlike in scenario 3, this is not because she is perceived as having bodily features associated with a female's role in biological reproduction. [. . .][505]

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503 Haslanger, 2000, pp. 42-3.

504 Haslanger, 2000, p. 237.

505 Jenkins, 2016, pp. 399-400.

The reason Jenkins lays out these four scenarios is that only in scenario 3 does Haslanger's specification include trans-women. If so, Haslanger's ameliorative analysis does not solve the inclusion problem.

After indicating the drawback of Haslanger's proposal, Jenkins provides her own solution. She admits that there are still a grain of truth in Haslanger's target concept, for it captures 'gender as class'. But it does not capture what Jenkins call 'gender as identity'. With 'gender as identity', we can include trans-women. For Jenkins, the concept 'woman' has two equally important parts, namely 'gender as class' and 'gender as identity'. So, the first part of her concept is 'gender as class', which is basically the same as Haslanger's concept:

> S is classed as a woman within a context C iff S is marked in C as a target for subordination on the basis of actual or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's role in biological reproduction.[506]

Then, what is 'gender as class'? William E. Cross's analogy of a map is helpful here: 'In a generic sense, one's identity is a maze or map that functions in a multitude of ways to guide and direct exchanges with one's social and material realities'[507]. Likely, to have the identity of a woman, then, is to have a map of this kind, as Jenkins' definition goes:

> S has a gender identity of X iff S's internal 'map' is formed to guide someone classed as a member of X gender through the social or material realities that are, in that context, characteristic of Xs as a class.[508]

With 'gender as class' and 'gender as identity', Jenkins provides her target concept of

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[506] Jenkins, 2016, p. 408.

[507] Cross Jr, 1991 (cited in Jenkins, 2016, p. 409).

[508] Jenkins, 2016, p. 410.

'woman', which is different from Haslanger's. She names her ameliorative approach a pluralist approach:

> I propose to maintain the basic idea of an ameliorative inquiry while making it more pluralist. This means revising the definition so that the inquiry is understood as asking: "what concept *or combination of concepts* of F-ness (if any) best serves our legitimate purposes?" This revised definition allows for the possibility that it may turn out to be the case that no single concept can, by itself, meet all of the legitimate purposes. An ameliorative inquiry may, on this understanding, arrive at two (or more) distinct but equally important concepts. Such an inquiry can be thought of as taking a 'branching' route, starting with one set of goals but arriving at multiple target concepts.[509]

More importantly, Jenkins believes that her definition can include trans-women without committing the fallacy of marginalization.

Haslanger's and Jenkins' concept 'woman' both serve the purpose to suggest that this target concept should be abandoned in the future. As Haslanger notes: '[a] consequence of my view is that when justice is achieved, there will no longer be white women'.[510]

The framework of Brandomian conceptual tuning matches their ameliorative analyses. Concerning Haslanger's definition, the condition for applying 'woman' to someone is that she is classified as woman (gender as class); the consequences of its application is that she is subordinated to man. Concerning Jenkins' definition, the condition for applying 'woman' to someone is that she is classified as woman (gender as class) and she is identified as woman (gender as identity); the consequences of its application are

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[509] Jenkins, 2016, p. 415.

[510] Haslanger, 2005, p. 11.

that she is subordinated to man. Both of these inferences are defective and unacceptable. Therefore, we should reject the concept ‘woman’.

Unlike ‘Nigger’, ‘Boche’, etc., the defective inference hidden in the application of ‘Woman’ is surreptitious. In other words, it is not so obvious that we could detect the defectiveness of this concept. In ordinary life, people would not be aware of the defective inference harbored in the application of ‘woman’, no matter whether it is the manifest one or the operative one. Therefore, we need philosophers to provide the plausible reasons, helping us perceive the defectiveness. Again, this also explains why the expressive part plays an indispensable role in conceptual tuning. Firstly, usually the defective concept has a camouflage which is deceitful, and it is the philosopher’s task to tear away its mask, disclose and lay out the defective inference involved in the concept application. Only after the procedure of explication, can we judge whether to abandon the defective concept. Secondly, it is possible that we might have more than one ameliorative plan, and they might be in opposition to each other, just like in the case of gender concept above. On such occasions, we also need to appeal to the expressive approach, through negotiation, to decide which plan should be adopted, where ‘reason’ would play a key role. After all, philosophy is a practice of giving and asking for reasons. This is why the expressive part is the core feature of conceptual tuning.

4.4.3 Rejecting Folk Psychology

In the previous section, we have considered the role of the expressive approach, when faced with more than one ameliorative plan. In this section, I will discuss a case which shows that even the ameliorative plan could be misleading.

Paul Churchland is notorious for his ‘eliminativism’. According to his eliminativism, our folk concepts of mind (such as ‘belief’, ‘desire’, or ‘pain’) are all defective, and

they should all be jettisoned and replaced by scientific concepts. My purpose is to show that even a revisionary analysis is falsifiable, by discussing Churchland's eliminativism. There are many forms of objecting to Churchland's eliminativism. I will use Nathalie Stoljar (1988)'s objections.

Churchland has three arguments for his eliminativism, according to Stoljar. The first argument appeals to the insufficient explanatory power of folk psychology. The thrust of this argument is that folk theory fails to account various human behavior patterns including sleep, mental illness, memory, learning processes, perception, etc., and it is therefore natural to infer that folk psychology cannot fulfill the explanatory task. But even Churchland himself admits that human behavior can be partially explained by folk theory. So, this argument is weak.

Churchland's second argument is based on inductive inference. It is possible to infer inductively from history that most folk theory is doomed to fail—lessons can be learnt from Ptolemaic cosmology or mediaeval alchemy. Yet, Stoljar points out that, '[a]lthough this argument is emotionally persuasive, ultimately it is inconclusive'.[511] It is inconclusive because the merit of folk psychology is independent from that of other folk theories.

Churchland's third argument is the claim that 'folk psychology is "systematically isolated" from the scientific conception of the world'.[512] This argument comprises two stages. In the first stage, Churchland claims that there is a parallel structure between folk psychology and scientific theory, and that therefore folk psychology counts as a theory too. Like any other theory, folk psychology is vulnerable. Stoljar indicates that this similarity between folk psychology and scientific theory, stated by Churchland, is illusory. In the second stage, Churchland puts forward his 'ontological

[511] Stoljar, 1988, p. 490.

[512] Stoljar, 1988, p. 490.

isolation' argument. There are two established grounds for this argument. First, for Churchland, all scientific theories are Pythagorean. Since folk psychology is a non-Pythagorean theory, then it is reasonable to say that we should abandon it. In reply, Stoljar argues that not all scientific theories are Pythagorean, and she adduces computer science as a counterexample. The second assumption of the 'ontological isolation' argument is that folk psychology entails an ontological commitment, namely proposition-like entities. Proposition-like ontology is incompatible with physicalist ontology. Therefore, folk psychology should be rejected. Stoljar points out that folk psychology does not need to be committed to propositions. Instead, it can be explained in terms of sentential attitudes, which is compatible with the physicalist world-view.

The point here is not to defend Stoljar's objection to Churchland's eliminativism, but to show that each ameliorative or revisionary plan is open to challenge and criticism in the practice of giving and asking for reasons. It is not the case that conceptual tuning is always on the right track.

4.4.4 How to Use a Rejected Concept

One burden of Brandomian conceptual tuning is that it is premised on his own theory of meaning, which would make it carry the theoretical burden, since he needs to make sure his theory of meaning is right. For example, Timothy Williamson (2003) raises an objection to the inferential role account of concept possession. The general ideal of Williamson's argument is that even if someone rejects the inferences (Boche), she can still understand a person who uses the concept. Therefore, Williamson holds that accepting the inferences is not a necessary condition for concept possession. In this section we shall see how to reply to this challenge.

Mark McCullagh (2011) attempts to solve this problem. What does it mean to be an

inferential role theorist (IR theorist)? Basically, an IR theorist proposes that in order to possess a concept, one must grasp the inferences linked to the concept. And this specific concept is the component of the inference. For instance, to possess 'east', one must be able to form thoughts or beliefs such as the 'Sun rises in the east' or 'East Germany approves reform-minded Cabinet'. And Brandom combines his inferential role account of conceptual possession with the criticism of concepts—if you don't accept the inference from German nationality to cruelty, then you should refuse to use 'Boche'. McCullagh mentions that Paul Boghossian (2003) holds a similar view. He proposes that one can use the term 'Boche' if and only if one is 'willing to infer' according to 'the B rules':

> If x is German, then x is Boche.
>
> If x is Boche, then x is cruel.

Like Brandom, he also proposes that such a concept should be rejected given that it is 'epistemically defective'.

Now let us turn to Williamson's Objection to the IR theorist. Williamson denies that accepting of the B rules is a necessary condition for accepting the term 'Boche'. He says:

> I think that I am one counterexample, and that Boghossian is another. Unlike someone who thinks that the word 'Boche' means *master*, we both fully understand the word, for we understand the sentences in which it occurs that racists utter; we know that it means *Boche*. We find racist and xenophobic abuse offensive because we understand it, not because we fail to do so. Presumably, therefore, we have the concept *Boche*. Yet neither of us is willing to infer according to [the B rules].[513]

[513] Williamson, 2003, p. 257.

So, the consequence is that we can understand what 'Boche' means, even without accepting the B rules. McCullagh frames Williamson's arguments into a detailed structure with four steps:

> [1] Some people who do not accept the B rules understand some BOCHE statements (i.e., statements containing a word which expresses that concept)
>
> [2] If one understands a BOCHE statement, then one can have thoughts or beliefs whose contents have BOCHE as a component
>
> [3] If one can have thoughts or beliefs whose contents have BOCHE as a component, then one possesses that concept
>
> [4] Therefore some people who do not accept the B rules possess the concept BOCHE.[514]

With this reconstruction of Williamson's argument, McCullagh admits the truism of [1] and [3] but he thinks that [2] needs further diagnosis. Williamson claims that non-racists can understand what racists mean when they apply the term 'Boche'. Suppose Sid says that 'Klaus is a Boche'. When Nancy, as a non-racist, hears this claim, she believes that Sid said that Klaus is a Boche and that Sid thinks that Klaus is a Boche, even though she does not accept the term 'Boche' herself. As McCullagh writes: 'All these are cases in which someone who does not accept the B rules nevertheless judges or believes a content which at least appears to have the concept BOCHE as a component'.[515] However, according to McCullagh, when Nancy believes that Sid holds that Klaus is a Boche, her application of 'Boche' is a 'content-specifying' use of a concept. And the judgment made by Nancy is 'content-specifying' judgment, which is not a direct use of the concept 'Boche'. Accordingly, he suggests that we draw a distinction between the content-specifying use of the concept and the direct use of the concept, which could help us dissolve

[514] McCullagh, 2011, p. 297.

[515] McCullagh, 2011, p. 297.

Williamson's objection.

McCullagh thinks that Williamson's arguments stand as long as they only refer to a content-specifying use of the concept. But even so, it will not undermine the IR theorists, given that their theory is based on the direct use of the concept. As McGullagh explains: 'The B rules specify inferences according to the forms of the contents that occur in them. The only BOCHE-involving form occurring in the B rules is the form "*x* is a Boche"'. Accordingly, the B rules 'do not tell you what to infer from, or from what to infer, your belief that *[Sid] thinks that Germans are Boches*'.[516] To illustrate this point, McCullagh asks us to consider three claims as follows:

> A. Thoughts of the form '*x* is a Boche' are governed by the B rules
> B. To be able to have any thought or belief of the form '*x* is a Boche' one must accept the B rules.
> C. To be able to have any BOCHE thoughts or beliefs, one must accept the B rules.[517]

He contends that according to IR theorists, the reasoning from (A) to (B) is a good one, while (A) to (C) is not acceptable. In other words, IR theorists do not hold that one needs to grasp the B rules in order to have thoughts such as 'Sid believe Klaus is a Boche'. According to Williamson, the non-racists only understand 'Boche' used in the form of '*x* is Boche'. Therefore, people, who do not accept the B rules, can still accept 'Boche', but only in the sense of content-specifying use of the concept, while IR theories insist that accepting the B rules is a necessary condition for the direct use of 'Boche'. As McCullagh concludes:

> The upshot is that there are some inferences acceptance of which is necessary for using a concept directly but not for using it in a content-specifying way.

[516] McCullagh, 2011, p. 301.

[517] McCullagh, 2011, p. 302.

> Accordingly, you can 'possess' a concept enough to be able to use it in ascriptions of thoughts and beliefs, while not 'possessing' it enough to be able to apply it yourself – say on the basis of observation, or by inference from contents in which it does not occur.[518]

If McGullagh is right, then we do not need to worry about the situation in which conceptual tuning has proposed to abandon a defective concept when still accepting the use of this concept at the same time.

[518] McCullagh, 2011, p. 303.

Chapter 5 Ordinary Language Philosophy and Conceptual Tuning

> I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again 'I know that that's a tree', pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell him: 'This fellow isn't insane. We are only doing philosophy.' — Wittgenstein

Ordinary language philosophy (OLP) is both known as a philosophical movement and a philosophical method. My concern in this chapter is not about OLP in the philosophical method sense. Section 5.1 presents a general understanding of the method of OLP. In section 5.2, I will sketch a tension between OLP and conceptual tuning. Yet, I will argue that this tension is based on a false picture of OLP in section 5.3. Section 5.4 will focus on Alver Baz's systemic illustration of a proper understanding of OLP. Section 5.5 will offer a way to understand OLP as conceptual tuning.

5.1 What is OLP?

A little historical retrospection is useful in illuminating ordinary language philosophy (OLP). The most thriving and glamorous moments of OLP is 'Post-War Oxford' (mid-twentieth-century Oxford), which is the heyday of OLP. Many great names are passed through generations: Gilbert Ryle, Peter Strawson, J. L. Austin, Paul Grice, R. M. Hare, Herbert Hart, David Pears, Geoffrey Warnock, etc.[519] Of course, Wittgenstein's contribution should not be forgotten. Paul Snowdon (2008) says that the post war period was also a thriving time for 'metaphilosophy' because many of those who began their career as philosophers during that period in the UK were

[519] But contemporary OLPers don't - Paul Grice is one of them. Rather, they usually treat him as a target.

devoted to grappling with the problem of what philosophy is. Among them, Wittgenstein and Austin are two leading figures. Though there are differences, Wittgenstein and Austin's conceptions of philosophy share much common ground. Snowdon writes:

> These two conceptions had some degree of overlap at a certain level, agreeing that good philosophy must concern itself with ordinary language to make progress, and so the title 'Ordinary Language Philosophy' emerged, as a name, probably intended to be somewhat deprecatory, that covered both approaches.[520]

Oxford School philosophy is not merely a geographic categorization. Oxford philosophers are gathered together by their common philosophical style—'a new style of philosophy was going to "solve" many of the old problems'.[521] More specifically, it is their methodology that puts them under the same label. Siobhan Chapman notes that, 'a suitably rigorous attention to the facts of language was going to be a sufficient, indeed the only suitable, philosophical tool'.[522]

Chapman mentions that Ryle, as the editor of *Mind*, used this academic journal as a means to develop and facilitate this approach to philosophy:

> He drew together some of the more promising young Oxford philosophers and 'by galvanising them into writing, especially about each other, in the pages of *Mind*, he gave English academic philosophy in the fifties an energy and sense of purpose such as it has never seen before or since.'[523]

Ensuring similar minds are engaged in the same conversation is always an effective

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[520] Snowdon, 2008, p. 168.

[521] Chapman, 2005, p. 31.

[522] Chapman, 2005, p. 31.

[523] Chapman, 2005, p. 32.

way to propel ideas. Besides Ryle's efforts, Austin also made his efforts by organizing a philosophical reading group at Oxford. In the late 1940s, Austin mustered several like-minded Oxford philosophers to have a series of 'Saturday Morning' meetings, which is called 'The Play Group' by Grice. In these meetings, they practiced 'linguistic botanising' frequently:

> The members would, in effect, pool their linguistic resources in order to draw up lists of words related to the particular subject under discussion. They would then analyse the uses and nuances of these words, deciding which were suitable, and which unsuitable, in various different contexts.[524] (Chapman 2005, 43)

Putting aside the fact that Grice is not accepted as an ordinary language philosopher by many contemporary progenies of OLP, it's still helpful to see Grice's characterization of OLP:

> [1] It is, in my view, an important part, though by no means the whole, of the philosopher's task to analyze, describe, or characterize (in as general terms as possible) the ordinary use or uses of certain expressions or classes of expressions.
>
> [2] [I]t is almost certainly (perhaps quite certainly) wrong to reject as false, absurd, or linguistically incorrect some class of ordinary statements if this rejection is based merely on philosophical grounds.[525]

As far as we can tell, OLP concentrated on the use of daily concepts. Yet, its emphasis on daily discourse ignited many criticisms. Chapman describes:

> The practitioners of ordinary language philosophy saw it as an exciting new

[524] Chapman, 2005, p. 43.

[525] Grice, 1989, p. 172.

> approach capable of overthrowing past orthodoxies and offering solutions to age-old problems, but its critics saw it as sterile and complacent, valuing lexicographical pedantry over real philosophical argument.[526]

For example, Bertrand Russell is known as an opponent of OLP. He belittled the value of OLP, claiming that OLP was simply obsessed with layman's silly words without any philosophical significance. Following this train of thought, in 1959, the Czech anthropologist Ernest Gellner published a book *Words and Things*, arguing that OLP is a wrongheaded project. Ryle was offended by Gellner. As the editor of *Mind*, he refused to publish a review of this book written by Russell. Ryle wrote:

> You recently sent me a review copy of Words and Things by Ernest Gellner. I am returning it to you (separately) since I shall not have a review of the book in *Mind*. Abusiveness may make a book saleable, but it disqualifies it from being treated as a contribution to an academic subject.[527]

In *Words and Things*, Gellner outlines four pillars of OLP, which OLPers themselves probably would not accept since this is not how OLPers would describe themselves. Let us look at what OLP is through the lens of its opponent, while keeping in mind that this view would be rejected by OLPers themselves:

> [1] *The Argument from the Paradigm Case* (which I shall sometimes refer to simply as the APC). This is the argument from the actual use of words to the answer to philosophical problems, or from a conflict between the actual use of words to the falsity of a philosophical theory. (For instance, the 'proof' of the existence of material objects from the fact that material-object-words are employed in our language, or the 'disproof' of the theory that we never know what others feel,

[526] Chapman, 2005, p. 44.

[527] Russell, 1997, p. 607.

from the fact that we customarily employ language which conveys that indeed we do.)

[2] The habit of inferring the answer to normative, evaluative problems from the actual use of words. This has been called the *generalised version of the Naturalistic Fallacy*.

[3] *The Contrast theory of meaning*, to the effect that any term to be meaningful must allow at least for the possibility of something *not* being covered by it.

[4] The doctrine I shall call *Polymorphism*. This doctrine stresses that there is very great variety in the kinds of use that words have, and that with regard to any given word, there can be great variety in its particular use. From this correct insistence on the variety of uses, both between and within concepts, it is concluded, incorrectly, that general assertions about the use of words are impossible.[528]

After sketching classic OLP, we can see its contemporary development through the lens of Nat Hansen's characterization. Concerning contemporary OLP, Hansen (2014) draws an important distinction between two kinds of OLP: *constructive* OLP and *critical* OLP. These two approaches are independent, which means we can have a constructive OLP without pursuing a critical one, while the converse is also true.

Hansen claims that the constructive project contains two stages: the semantic stage and the metaphysical stage. He writes:

Semantic Stage

1. An expression 'X' is ordinarily used in way Y.
2. The best explanation of the fact that 'X' is ordinarily used in way Y requires

[528] Gellner, 2005, pp. 61-2.

the semantics ('linguistic meaning') of 'X' to have feature(s) F.

Metaphysical Stage

3. Semantics constrains metaphysics: If the semantics of 'X' has feature(s) F, then the nature of what 'X' refers to – X – will have feature(s) G.[529]

However, this constructive project is regarded as a departure from the traditional OLP. According to Hansen, traditional OLP has a vulnerable assumption: the meaning of a concept follows directly from observations about the ordinary use of that concept. For example, according to the skeptical argument, if we cannot prove that we are not in a dream, then we don't really *know* that there is a dog standing in the yard. But in ordinary language, the bar of knowledge attribution is not as high as that set by the skeptics. My assertion that I know there is a dog in the yard won't be discredited by the possibility that my belief might be manipulated by a demon controlling my thoughts. However, it can be argued that the parity between the expression's meaning and the way it is used in everyday language needs more explanation. Hansen says: 'There needs to be some additional reason to think that facts about ordinary use should be explained by facts about the meaning of an expression rather than facts of some other type, such as facts about when the expression can be appropriately asserted'.[530]

Concerning this challenge, the constructive project needs a solution. The proponents of constructive OLP accept that we cannot make a direct inference from how a concept is used in a colloquial way to the meaning of this concept. Rather than rejecting this inference, they endeavor to provide some further reasons to support it. For example, Keith DeRose's contextualism, according to Hansen, is a promising attempt of the constructive project. DeRose thinks that the semantic content of 'S

[529] Hansen, 2014, p. 557.

[530] Hansen, 2014, p. 558.

knows that p' is decided by its context. For example, it might be true to claim that I know Simpson is a murderer when I talk with my friends, but it might not be true when this claim is uttered in the court. Based on this consideration, DeRose maintains that it is appropriate to appeal to ordinary use, since it can be supported by his semantic version of epistemic contextualism.

Another striking feature of the constructive project is that the semantics should constrain the metaphysics. As Hansen explains:

> The tight connection that exists between truth conditional semantics and metaphysics means that if there are reasons to reject a particular metaphysical theory of, e.g., knowledge, then those are also reasons to reject the corresponding semantics of 'knows'. If on the correct theory of knowledge, we turn out not to know many of the things we ordinarily take ourselves to know, then the meaning of 'knows' will be different from what we ordinarily take it to be, for example. That is, metaphysics constrains semantics just as much as semantics constrains metaphysics.[531]

Let us now turn to the critical project. The critical approach tries to dissolve the traditional philosophical conundrums by pointing out that their use of words is aberrant from that of our normal use. Avner Baz provides a contemporary version of critical OLP. For example, he casts doubt on the philosopher's concept of 'know' as reached through various thought experiments. He points out that the question posed by the philosopher in an imaginary thought experiment is usually nonsensical in ordinary life. He calls this type of question 'the theorist's question'. In contrast, Timothy Williamson thinks that we just use our normal cognitive capacities when we face the question whether a concept (such as 'know') can be applied to some imagined or real situations. In opposition to Williamson, Baz holds that the theorist's

[531] Hansen, 2014, p. 562.

question is totally different from our ordinary inquiries because in ordinary situations our question is always asked with a certain purpose, while the theorist's question lacks this. As Hanson quotes Baz:

> 1. The capacity to understand and competently answer everyday questions is essentially the capacity to see and properly respond to what may be called 'their point' – the particular human interest of which they are expressive.
> 2. 'The [philosopher's] question has no point, in the relevant sense; it invites us to apply our words to some given case apart from any non-purely-theoretical interest that anyone might have in that case'.[532]

According to Baz, in everyday life we will never meet the situation that philosophers invent in thought experiments. So, laypeople might not even really understand the theorist's question when they are asked to answer it.

5.2 The Tension Between OLP and Conceptual Tuning

In fact, instead of OLP being a staunch ally of conceptual tuning/engineering, it is usually believed that they are in opposition to each other.

The tension between OLP and conceptual tuning/engineering can be spotted in many places. For example, Kauppinen (2007) presents the tension between the ordinary use of words and the philosophical revised concept as follows:

> Moral responsibility, for example, is not a technical notion, though some terms that philosophers use in explicating it may be. Indeed, why should anybody care about what philosophers do if they just argued about their own inventions? People want to know if they have moral responsibility or knowledge of other minds in the very sense in which they ordinarily talk about responsibility or

[532] Baz, 2012, p. 105.

> knowledge, and to get at that sense one must work with the folk's own concepts. By and large, philosophers oblige; revisionism is a last resort, to be used only when one is convinced that the folk concept is hopelessly confused or too imprecise for one's purposes.[533]

Oswald Hanfling, as a leading contemporary OLPer, also endeavors to defend OLP while rejecting the *revisionism* view. He characterizes the revisionist approach as follows:

> what is needed is a *better* language — one that would avoid the deficiencies of common speech. This improvement might be conceived in more than one way: a systematic replacement of ordinary language by a better one; or the redefinition of particular words to remove their 'vagueness'.[534]

Hanfling insists that the revisionist approach in philosophy be misleading. Firstly, he rejects the idea of a 'logically perfect language'. According to him, both Descartes and Russell endorsed this view. Descartes believed that human thought can be fully reduced to a mathematical form. With precise mathematical language, it's hard for us to make mistakes when making judgments or representing reality. This logically perfect language is built upon many clear simple ideas. Russell's view is similar. To avoid the vagueness of ordinary language, Russell endeavors to build a logically perfect language. For expository ease, I will temporarily set aside the question of whether endorsing a logically perfect language is a form of a conceptual tuning/engineering[535]. Hanfling makes two responses to the ideal language building project: (i) ideal language is more a chimera than an upcoming reality. As Hanfling (2002) notes, even the supporters themselves admit that this project is difficult to

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[533] Kauppinen, 2007, p. 96.

[534] Hanfling, 2002, p. 150.

[535] In fact, I don't think that building a logically perfect language can be regarded as conceptual tuning/engineering.

accomplish. For example, Descartes took it as belonging to 'fairyland' and Russell described it in *counterfactual terms*. (ii) The role of existing language cannot be left out. Proposing the project of an ideal language presupposes the use of the existing language. Without the existing language, we cannot even start to defend this revisionary project.

The second revisionary approach criticized by Hanfling is Frege's idea of 'pure thought'. Holding that 'the defects of language could be remedied by inventing a more adequate language or notation', Frege attempts to establish 'a formalized language of pure thought'.[536] Many cases of defective common parlance can be found. For example, 'the tiger' in ordinary language is equivocal. In 'the tiger is in the cage', 'the tiger' denotes a single creature, while in 'the tiger is a member of the cat family', it denotes a species. According to Frege, to avoid these problems, we need a more rigorous language that can lead us to pure thought, and only in 'pure thought' is 'logic's ruler' located. On the other hand, ordinary language is only a defective vehicle for expressing our thoughts. Hanfling refutes this view with several reasons. (i) Those defective examples of language adduced by Frege do not really undermine the function of ordinary language. Normally, a competent English speaker can easily understand that 'the tiger', in 'the tiger is a member of the cat family', does not denote a single animal. (ii) Embracing pure thought makes the notion of critical evaluation meaningless, since we don't need it. (iii) Given that the only standard of language is the language-transcendent 'pure thought', we are unable to decide which language is better.

Thirdly, Hanfling comments on the idea that ordinary expression should be improved with logical tools. Some believe that the fact that ordinary language is defective could be a barrier for some logical purposes. For example, think about the sentence 'I don't

[536] Hanfling, 2002, pp. 154-8.

know every poem'. This sentence could either mean that I don't know any of the poems or I don't know all of them. Quine claims that we can clarify this kind of sentence by using modern logical notation. Hanfling, in contrast, indicates that it's not likely that a competent English speaker could fail to understand that 'I do not know every poem' means I don't know all the poems, which is obviously a more rational understanding than I don't know any of the poems. And he also points out that the English sentences picked up by logic textbooks are usually absurd in ordinary language, such as 'Some whom none dislike do not appreciate themselves' introduced by Quine.

Fourthly, Hanfling contends that most attempts of redefining our words fail. For instance, Nelson Goodman argues that the performance of Beethoven's Fifth counts as a real performance only when no mistake is made during the performance. Even if with a single missed note, a performance cannot be qualified as a performance of Beethoven's Fifth. Goodman's claim is counter to our ordinary intuition. Later, Goodman admits that his claim does not target 'everyday speech', instead, it is about 'the exigencies of technical discourse'.[537] Nonetheless, Hanfling indicates that claiming a flawed performance of Beethoven is not really a performance of Beethoven is different from claiming that a whale is not really a fish or that earth is not really spherical, because scientifically based evidence can be provided for the latter claims, while we have no evidence to support the former claim.

C. L. Stevenson (1938) shed light on understanding 'redefinition'[538]. He mentions that in the nineteenth century, some critics argued that Alexander Pope was not regarded as a poet according to their definition of 'poet'. Stevenson indicates that the new definition formulated by those critics is motivated by a derogatory view of Pope's works—that he does not deserve the title of poet. Those critics warn that we shouldn't

[537] Hanfling, 2006, p. 164.

[538] I will discuss the detail in the next Chapter.

ignore the fundamental difference between Pope's work and Shakespeare's. Disagreeing with Stevenson, Hanfling holds that it's unnecessary to redefine 'poet' in order to argue that Pope does not deserve the title of poet, since '[i]f we were persuaded that Pope's work was lacking in qualities essential for poetry, then we would have reason to deprive him of this title'.[539]

5.3 The Misleading Understanding of OLP

In the previous section, I have outlined the tension between OLP and conceptual tuning/engineering. With the depiction given by Hanfling, it seems natural to take OLP and conceptual tuning/engineering as antagonistic. I will try to show that this idea is based on a faulty understanding of both conceptual tuning/engineering and OLP.

5.3.1 Rejoinders to Hanfling

At first glance, the ambition of constructing an ideal language or logically perfect language is consistent with the project of conceptual tuning/engineering. At least, both approaches maintain that our existing language (ordinary language) is defective, and therefore needs fixing. For example, Frege proposes a formalized language, which is supposed to be the best tool to articulate pure thought. Similarly, in conceptual tuning/engineering, many improved ways of talking about our concepts are proposed, such as Haslanger's 'women', Chalmers and Clark's 'belief', Scanlon's 'blameworthy' and so on.

So, is that the end of the story? Let us hold on a second. Recall Cappelen's accounts which I mentioned in the previous chapter. According to him, conceptual engineering is complex, messy, intricate, amorphous, and unstable. Therefore, pinpointing its

[539] Hanfling, 2002, p. 169.

mechanism does not seem possible. In other words, we don't have canonical rules to guide us regarding how to fix defective concepts. Cappelen does not imply that we can reach a perfect language to serve our purpose; he only suggests that the current defective concepts can be detected and fixed, while the improved result is also open to further revision. The moral is that we don't need to presuppose an ideal language to pursue conceptual engineering. Therefore, conceptual tuning/engineering doesn't fit Hanfling's target. As I said, conceptual tuning/engineering and the ideal language project share only one assumption: our current language can be defective. However, a striking difference remains, i.e., conceptual tuning/engineering does not aim at building a logically perfect language. So, the ambition of constructing a logically perfect language cannot be identified as conceptual tuning/engineering.

Let us now turn to Hanfling's remark on logical locutions used in philosophy. Of course, logical notations can be employed to avoid the ambiguity of ordinary language. But, again, clarifying ordinary language with logical tools is not the aim of conceptual tuning/engineering. The aim of conceptual engineering is to improve the way that we talk about concepts. Sometimes we could replace a defective concept with a new one, which is independent from whether the concept can be clarified with logical locutions.

It is only the approach of redefining, mentioned by Hanfling, that resonates with conceptual tuning/engineering. If this is the case, is it true, as Hanfling says, that redefining is unnecessary? Think of the case of the Beethoven's Fifth. In everyday life, a performance of Beethoven's Fifth with a missed note still counts as a performance of Beethoven's Fifth. If so, then Goodman's redefinition seems absurd. We have to admit that Goodman's redefinition does not make sense in most instances. Yet, the purpose of Goodman's redefinition is for the sake of philosophical theory, say, to deal with metaphysical issues. Similarly, in most daily situations, no one would cast doubt on whether a hand-drawn circle is really a circle. However, the criterion of application

would be different in the context of metaphysical discussions. When addressing the notion of the Platonist form, a hand-drawn circle would not meet the criterion. Therefore, at least it's fair to claim that the redefinition of Beethoven's Fifth serves a theoretical purpose, if not a practical one.

Another case of redefining mentioned by Hanfling is 'poet'. He argues that redefining 'poet' is unnecessary, given that we can be persuaded as to why Pope does not deserve the title. But doesn't this account beg the question? Admitting that people can be persuaded that Pope does not deserve the title 'poet', we still need to explain why this is so. That we are persuaded by reasons would be a plausible answer. And there is no reason to deny that a better definition of 'poet' could serve as a persuasive reason to argue for the conclusion that Pope does not qualify.

5.3.2 Empirically-Oriented OLP

The idea that OLP is inimical to conceptual tuning/engineering is based on a faulty understanding of its ideas. In the previous section, I have pointed out some false views regarding conceptual tuning/engineering. In this section, I will diagnose the false image of OLP—the empirically-oriented OLP.

In 'On the Verification of Statements about Ordinary Language', Benson Mates attempts to describe a factually-based OLP. Mates writes:

> I am reluctant to believe that the expression 'ordinary use' is really a normative term for the ordinary-language philosophers. The way in which they use it seems better explained on the hypothesis that it is a rough descriptive term, employed with little definiteness of intention, and that there is in addition a *belief*, not part of the meaning of 'ordinary use', to the effect that it is somehow wrong or inadvisable, or at least dangerous, to use ordinary words in ways different from

> those in which the ordinary man uses them.[540]

So, according to Mates, OLP endeavors to provide empirical reports on how people talk by observing their use of language. Assuming this is what OLP meant, then OLP is a descriptive method rather than a normative one. However, this assumption will naturally raise the question: 'how to verify an assertion that a given person uses a word in a given way or with a given sense?'. In other words, how could OLPers nail down the real ordinary use of our words?

Mates says that there are two options available for OLP: the extensional approach and the intensional approach. Adopting the extensional approach, we set out to observe a group of ordinary language cases where the word being investigated occurs, and then we attempt to grasp the meaning of the target word by abstracting the common feature of this word from these cases. Adopting the intensional approach, we should question a subject on how she uses a specified word, and push her to fix the meaning of the word by employing the Socratic elenchus. Mates finds both of these approaches problematic.

Besides Mates, according to Avner Baz, Baker and Hacker (B&H) and Hanfling also provide a misleading picture of OPL. Unlike Mates who is a detractor of OLP, B&H and Hanfling aim to rejuvenate OLP, but their version of OLP is not accepted by Baz. Baz (2012) expresses his view in a long footnote:

> Herein lies the most fundamental difference between the present book and Oswald Hanfling's (2000) admirable defense of OLP as he understands it. [. . .] The most important disagreement, however, is due to the fact that Hanfling follows Baker's and Hacker's (1992) influential reading of Wittgenstein—a reading from which Baker himself later distanced himself in Baker (2004). He

[540] Mates, 1958, p. 165.

> therefore presents the appeal to ordinary language as, essentially, an *empirical* appeal to 'what we say', as opposed to an appeal to what it would *make sense* for us to say, and under what conditions; and he takes what we ordinarily say to provide a standard of 'correctness' (ibid., 109, 117).[541]

So, if Baz is right, Hanfling and B&H's OLP projects are still empirically-oriented ones, though Hanfling and B&H might not accept this reading. In fact, Hanfling (2000) tries to distinguish his version of OLP from empirical linguistics. First of all, he does not regard Mates as his ally. Instead, he criticizes Mates's characterization of OLP. Rejecting the idea that OLP aims at *finding out* what ordinary people say, Hanfling holds that OPL is devoted to articulating what is already known by us. As he explains:

> The answer he seeks is one that – in a sense – he knows already. What he is trying to find out – or rather, to find is – a formulation of his knowledge: a statement of the conditions under which the word is used by those, including himself, who know how to use it.[542]

Hanfling holds that Mates's characterization of OLP is a distortion. According to him, the empirically-driven spirit of the extensional approach is inconsistent with OLP. The intentional approach is also not a proper understanding of OLP. OLP does not only care about 'the use of an expression by someone or some group', says Hanfling; instead, OLP should consider the proper use of the expressions shared by the whole linguistic practice.[543] Moreover, he highlights the 'participatory' feature of ordinary language: 'I do observe other people using the words as they do, but I also participate with them in that activity. [. . .] If I use words in abnormal ways, I shall be under pressure to normalize my usage'.[544] We can use an analogy. Knowing how to use

[541] Baz, 2012, pp. 2-3.

[542] Hanfling, 2002, pp. 57-8.

[543] Hanfling, 2002, p. 60.

[544] Hanfling, 2002, p. 54.

words can be compared with knowing how to play chess: 'one's knowledge is constantly being confirmed by interaction with others'.[545] However, dancing could serve as a better analogy: 'When the dance reaches the disputed point, one movement is accepted as correct while others are rejected as incorrect'.[546]

With these considerations, Hanfling distinguishes his OLP from Mates's empirically-oriented characterization, emphasizing the significantly normative aspect of OLP. So, it's clear that Hanfling won't count his OLP as an empirically-oriented approach. But why does Baz still criticize Hanfling's OLP? I think that we can get some clues from Hanfling's discussion of 'The Paradigm Case Argument' (PCA). The PCA is considered as an important method of OLP. As Hanfling describes:

> The PCA is an argument from ordinary language. The idea is to describe cases which would clearly be regarded as having property P in accordance with the ordinary meaning of 'P', thus refuting the claims of philosophers that nothing has (or that, for all we know, nothing has) property P'.[547]

According to this description, the standard for the proper use of a given word is decided by its ordinary use (or its paradigm use). However, we have to admit that sometimes ordinary meanings do not work for some specific purpose and that ordinary meanings should be open to revision.

5.4 Baz's Proper Picture of OLP

In this section, I will present Avner Baz's version of OLP, which I take to cohere with conceptual tuning. Baz makes a systematic case for OLP in his 2012 book *When Words Are Called For*. Most contemporary OLPers (ordinary language philosophers)

[545] Hanfling, 2002, p. 54.

[546] Hanfling, 2002, p. 55.

[547] Hanfling, 2002, p. 89.

don't have patience with their detractors—mainstream analytic philosophy, because they believe that 'mainstream analytic philosophy [is] either too foreign to engage with fruitfully, or too obviously wrongheaded to be worth engaging with'.[548] Baz, as an OLPer, however tries to establish conversation with those adversaries from mainstream analytic philosophy.

5.4.1 The Prevailing Picture of Meaning

According to Baz, one of the main criticisms of OLP is its confusion of 'meaning' with 'use'. This line of objection can be found in Grice (1989), Searle (1999), Soames (2003), and Stanley (2008), etc. Take Scott Soames's objection as an example. According to him, the procedure of doing OLP comprises two parts: 'taking a given sentence' and attempting to 'determine in what circumstances the sentence would ordinarily be used, as a more or less complete utterance'.[549] He continues, if such circumstances could not be found, then the given sentence would be taken as *non-sense* or *meaningless* according to the criterion of OLP. Yet, if such proper circumstances are found, then OLPers should try to figure out the meaning of the given sentence in these specific circumstances. After characterizing how OPL works, Soames argues that figuring out the proper circumstances of a given sentence does not suffice to fix the meaning of this sentence. Therefore OLP misses out other factors for fixing the meaning such as 'what speakers and hearers take to be obviously true, and hence not worth saying, or obviously false, and hence incorrect to say, as well as things that are obviously irrelevant to the conversation.[550]

However, Baz contends that Soames's characterization of OLP is flawed. The real question concerning OLP is not under what circumstances the philosophically

[548] Baz, 2015, p. 895.

[549] Soams, 2009, p. 129.

[550] Soams, 2009, p. 129.

troublesome word or sentence is used, which is an empirical fact. Rather, the real question is a normative one. Baz articulates the real question of OLP as follows:

> 'What are the ordinary and normal *uses* of this word (or combination of words), and what are their conditions?' The question, in other words, is when or under what ordinary circumstances utterances of this word would constitute genuine *uses* of it, and what uses those would be.[551]

From this stipulation, we can see that the question posed by OLP is a normative one rather than a factual one. The issue that concerns OLP is the genuine and proper use of words rather than the empirical fact of how our words are used. Moreover, OLP endeavors to disclose that the prevailing idea that a sentence is meaningful as long as it is composed of words in a syntactical correct way is mistaken. And Baz indicates that the accusation that ordinary language philosophers confuse the meaning of a word with its use entails a contentious assumption of *the prevailing picture of meaning*. As Baz says, 'the accusation that ordinary language philosophers confuse meaning and use is that it presupposes one version or another of the very conception of (word) meaning that OLP, as I understand it, questions'.[552] What is the prevailing picture of meaning? According to Baz, it has three defining features.

The first feature of the prevailing picture is that word meaning can be separated from its normal use. As Baz puts it, 'for every word there is something that may be referred to as "its meaning", which is theoretically separable from, and makes the word fit for, its ordinary and normal use(s)'.[553] This feature has also been detected by Wittgenstein in Augustine's discussion of human language:

> In [Augustine's] words we get, it seems to me, a particular picture of the essence

[551] Baz, 2012, p. 11.

[552] Baz, 2012, p. 13.

[553] Baz, 2012, p. 13.

> of human language. It is this: the individual words in language name objects—sentences are combinations of such names.—In this picture of Language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.[554]

The second feature of the prevailing picture is that it's possible to understand sentence meaning without a context: 'the meaning of a sentence is thought of as what one would have to know in order to understand the sentence as it is in itself—that is, apart from any context of significant employment'.[555] With this understanding, like the meaning of a word stipulated by the first feature, the meaning of a sentence also can be separable from its normal use. Kent Bach espouses this view of sentence meaning:

> [T]he meaning of a sentence [is] determined compositionally by the meanings of its constituents in a way that is predictable from how its constituents fit together syntactically.[556]

The third feature of the prevailing picture is that it identifies the meaning of a word with what this word refers to; it identifies the meaning of a sentence with the truth condition of this sentence. Williamson adopts this view:

> [E]xpressions refer to items in the [. . .] world, the reference of a complex expression is a function of the reference of its constituents, and the reference of a sentence determines its truth value.[557]

In a strong contrast to the prevailing picture of meaning, Baz argues that OLP does

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[554] Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 5e (cited in Baz, 2012, p. 13).

[555] Baz, 2012, pp. 13-4.

[556] Bach, 2005, p. 16 (cited in Baz, 2012, p. 14).

[557] Williamson, 2008, p. 281 (cited in Baz, 2012, p. 16).

not take the main function of language to *describe* or *represent* reality. Instead, word meaning should be understood in terms of the purpose it is supposed to serve, otherwise, it will be disconnected from our practice:

> No less importantly, in disengaging the words of his theorizing from any of the needs, interests, and concerns that have given those words whatever powers they currently have, the philosopher risks having his theory lose contact with the world it is supposed to help us illuminate. OLP's unique value, and the main reason why I have found devoting a book to its defense worthwhile, is the way in which it enables us to bring our words back into contact with our world, while yet—and indeed *by way of*—acknowledging the philosophical pressures that have brought them apart.[558]

In fact, ordinary language philosophers think that the prevailing picture of meaning is the cause of philosophical troubles. According to the prevailing picture, the meaning of a philosophically troublesome word is decided by what this word refers to. On the other hand, OLP reverses the explanatory order by asking us to start with considering the normal use of a word, and then to employ its normal use as a guide to pick up whatever it refers to. In addition, OLP does not propose to establish a *theory of meaning*[559].

5.4.2 Three Main Objections

OLP is dismissed or rejected by contemporary mainstream analytic philosophy. Baz argues that OLP isn't imperiled, and he offers a forceful reply to these OPL objectors. He introduces three forms of objections against OLP, which are from John Searle, Peter Geach and Scott Soames respectively. According to Baz, these objections,

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[558] Baz, 2012, p. 4.

[559] So, to endorse this method, we don't need presuppose any theory of meaning.

unlike the ordinary language philosopher who focuses on the normal use of the particular philosophical troublesome words, share a common interest of providing a general solution to the inquiry of meaning.

The first objection comes from Searle. Searle describes OLP's task as providing an *analysis* of *words*. Accordingly, OLP is supposed to elucidate the meaning of words. But Searle stresses that the meaning provided by OLP on different occasions should be consistent. In other words, the word meaning in different contexts should be the same. As Baz explains: 'Searle rather revealingly puts it, *the thing it means*—remains the same, or at least can remain the same, in different speech-acts, it follows, according to Searle, that what is ordinarily and normally done with the word can at best only indirectly reveal something about its meaning'.[560] According to Baz, Searle's charge cannot jeopardize OLP. When posing the question in the form of 'What does *x* mean?', each question must have a point or purpose, otherwise the question would be pointless. A question without a specific purpose would make no sense. We don't need a theory of *x* to answer 'What does *x* mean' in various contexts. Understanding what *x* means is to be competent in responding to 'What does *x* mean?' in different occasions and contexts. Therefore, a consistent theory of the meaning of *x* as proposed by Searle is unnecessary.

The second objection comes from Peter Geach. Geach cites Austin, who argues that claims such as 'I know that such and such' usually do not serve to predicate the relation between the speaker and such and such, as his target. According to Austin, 'I know that such and such' never functions *descriptively* (or *propositionally*). Usually, when we say 'I know that such and such', it functions as an assurance. However, Geach does not buy Austin's account. According to Geach, an utterance that 'I know that such and such' can perfectly serve as a premise, and a premise can only function

[560] Baz, 2012, p. 50.

descriptively or *propositionally*. Therefore, Austin is wrong. Let us consider an argument as follows:

> I know Sid's Caravaggio is a forgery.
>
> I am no art expert.
>
> If I know Sid's Caravaggio is a forgery, and I am no art expert, then Sid's Caravaggio is a very clumsy forgery.
>
> Therefore, Sid's Caravaggio is a very clumsy forgery.

Suppose we use *p* to represent 'I know Sid's Caravaggio is a forgery'. In this valid argument, both '*p*' and 'If *p*, then *q*' serve as premises. If so, then Austin's account fails to explain such situation. Nonetheless, Baz thinks that the first premise in this argument is not necessarily descriptive. In fact, it's possible that with *p* I just want to *express* a strong conviction, rather than to report a fact. It's also possible that Sid told me that his Caravaggio is a forgery himself. If so, then this argument does not make any sense. The upshot is that this kind of imaginary argument does not make sense in many ordinary contexts. Consequently, Geach's imaginary argument cannot undermine OLP: 'It does nothing to show that "(I) know" has something that may be referred to as "its meaning", which is theoretically separable from how it functions in discourse'.[561]

The last challenge is from Soames, and it is based on the idea of 'compositionality'. As we know, 'systematicity' is one defining feature of human language. Linguistic meaning is understood in terms of more basic elements. For instance, the meaning of a sentence consists of word meaning. The idea is that linguistic meaning can be broken down into parts. And this explains why new sentences can emerge; why we can understand a sentence we have never come across before. Soames has a theory of meaning to explain this linguistic phenomenon, and he states that OLP cannot explain

[561] Baz, 2012, p. 71.

it. Again, Baz thinks that Soames's challenge can be met. Soames attempts to provide an empirical explanation of our language, which is not the task of OLP. The purpose of OLP is to elucidate the normal use of those philosophically troublesome words, rather than constructing a scientific theory of meaning. As Bas articulates:

> But since it is precisely our humble 'meaning' that Wittgenstein suggests may in many cases be explained by saying that the meaning of a word is its use in the language, and since what he and other ordinary language philosophers wish to elucidate in their appeals to the ordinary and normal use(s) of the word or expression under consideration may in many cases usefully and aptly be called 'its meaning', it is not clear how arguments from 'compositionality' such as Soames's are supposed to engage with, let alone undermine, the ordinary language philosopher's general approach.[562]

5.4.3 Baz on Intuition

In this section, I will expose Baz's application of OLP in the discussion of 'intuition'. Recently, much attention has been focused on the role of *intuition* in philosophy. And Gettier-style cases lie at the heart of this debate. Baz rephrases Gettier-style cases as follows:

> Bob has a friend, Jill, who has driven a Buick for many years. Bob therefore thinks that Jill drives an American car. He is not aware, however, that her Buick has recently been stolen, and he is also not aware that Jill has replaced it with a Pontiac, which is a different kind of American car. Does Bob really know that Jill drives an American car, or does he only believe it?[563]

This is a typical Gettier-style case formulated by Baz. These cases, usually, wind up

[562] Baz, 2012, p. 77.

[563] Baz, 2012, pp. 106-7.

with a *theorist's question* in the form of 'Does *X* really *know* that *p*?' Presumably, we answer these questions by appealing to our *intuition*. It is this assumption that leads to many philosophical debates.

There are two main objections to the assumption that philosophers merely rely on intuition when answering the theorist's question. The first line of objection is 'the cognitive diversity objection'. The main idea of this objection is that different people have different intuitions which can be corroborated by empirical inquiry. The second line of objection is called 'the calibration objection'. This form of objection states that there is no way to certify our intuitions. In other words, we do not know whether our intuition successfully tracks the concepts it is supposed to track.

Timothy Williamson proposes a different approach to this problem. He denies that philosophers rely on any *sui generis* intuitions. In fact, when making a philosophical judgment, philosophers use the same cognitive competence as others. Concerning the Gettier-style case, Williamson proposes two steps. Firstly, we invite ordinary people to apply their concept *X* to the imagined cases. Secondly, Williamson assumes that there is no difference between our capacity to answer the question in these imagined cases and our capacity to judge whether someone knows something in real life situations. Therefore, we just use our everyday capacity to answer the theorist's questions.

Baz finds Williamson's account problematic. Baz admits that it's possible to encounter situations which are similar to the Gettier case in real life. However, it's not necessary that the theorist's question can fit all the everyday situations. As Baz points out, the inference from the fact that it's possible to encounter Gettier-style cases in everyday life to the conclusion that theorist's question asked by philosophers is no different from the questions we address and answer in a non-philosophical context is invalid. The reason why Williamson endorses this inference without giving a

justification is due to his acceptance of the prevailing conception of language. According to this prevailing conception, in everyday speech and thinking, we have 'pure judgment—the sheer "application" of terms, or concepts, to cases'.[564] The upshot is that philosophical thinking is continuous with everyday thinking; the theorist's question is continuous with everyday inquiry. As Baz describes it:

> The widespread assumption that our understanding and employment of each of our generally 'referring' expressions has a semantic component that can be isolated and identified in terms of reference and truth-conditions.[565]

On most occasions, when arguing about whether someone knows something, we disagree about the facts rather than about the meaning of 'know that'. Therefore, the theorist's question works only if we agree with all the facts, and then the only genuine question left is about word meaning.

More importantly, in everyday conversations, our question should bear on a particular point (non-purely-theoretical interest). The theorist's question is discontinuous with everyday questions: 'What answering the everyday question would normally involve and require, in each of the different cases, is nothing like what answering the theorist's question involve and requires'.[566] The everyday question, which shares a similar structure with the theorist's question, cannot be understood without a specific point.

According to Baz's OLP, if we can competently use the concept *x* in different situations and competently respond to another's use of *x*, then it's plausible to say that we possess the concept *x*. The aim of OLP is to elucidate the philosophically troublesome concepts. As we have stressed, Baz's OLP is not an empirical one:

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[564] Baz, 2012, p. 94.

[565] Baz, 2012, p. 119.

[566] Baz, 2012, pp. 116-7.

> The question that I take to be relevant for the clarification of our concepts is not the empirical question of what words we tend to utter, generally or statistically speaking, in different types of circumstances. Rather, the relevant question is which utterance(s) would make sense in some particular type of situation, what sense exactly that would be, and what would need to be in place, in the background as it were, for the utterance to have or make that sense.[567]

Baz's OLP is quite different from Mates's characterization of OLP in the sense that it does not endeavor to collect the data of our ordinary use of words.

5.4.4 A Case: Know

In the last section, I introduced the Gettier-style cases and the theorist's question. Contemporary contextualism is a philosophical project setting out to solve the philosophical conundrum of 'knowledge'. Unlike the traditionalist account of 'knowledge', according to contextualism, the truth condition of a sentence, in which the philosophically troublesome word is a part, is dependent on the particular context in which it appears. Therefore, the claim '*X* (person) knows that such and such (fact)' can be true in context *A*, while false in context *B*, according to contextualism. On the other side, the traditionalist ('invariantist', 'anti-contextualist') insists that the theorist's question will not cause any trouble of understanding in any context.

Despite the apparent tension between contextualism and the invariantist approach, Baz asserts that they share more common features than differences. He tries to illustrate how short the distance between the invariantist and the contextualist can be. Or, to put it in his words, 'the contextualist question constitutes only an amendment to the traditionalist's question, not a rejection of it'.[568] The invariantist takes it that the

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[567] Baz, 2012, pp. 128-9.

[568] Baz, 2012, p. 141.

truth-conditions of '*X* knows that such and such' is dependent on the *meaning* of 'know'. For the invariantist, the correct answer to the theorist's question is effective for all people and at all times—a panacea. For the contextualist, the theorist's question can be rephrased as: 'Would it be true for so and so, situated as he or she is, to say of S, "She knows that such and such (at t)"?'.[569] However, from the perspective of OLP, these two approaches are not very different, as they share the same basic idea:

> *The basic thing we do with 'know that' and its cognates is to 'apply' the concept of* knowing that, *or 'ascribe' the relation of* knowing that to pairs of person and fact (or proposition). *Put otherwise, the basic role of 'know that' and its cognates is to enable us to represent, 'describe', people as knowing this or that.*[570]

Both the invariantist and the contextualist share the assumption that the meaning of 'know that' in different cases can be fixed once and for all. But unlike the invariantist, the contextualist thinks that the truth condition of the claim that '*X* knows that such and such' is decided by the specific context, which does not seem to be a deep distinction from the perspective of OLP. According to Baz, this shared assumption is mistaken because it leaves out the normal or ordinary context. Instead, Baz proposes that we should pay more attention to how these words actually function in imagined cases. Moreover, without a specific point, the theorist's question plays zero role in the normal functioning of words. Baz expresses his own view—the OLP view, as follows:

> words are natural and in place ('appropriate') when we do some work with them that is called for under the circumstances and for which their history has fitted them; and there is no better way of gaining clarity with respect to the concepts embodied by our words than to consider the (different sorts of) work these words are fitted to do under various circumstances. A major source of

[569] Baz, 2012, p. 141.

[570] Baz, 2012, p. 142.

> philosophical difficulty is the idea that it ought to be possible for us to get at and grasp the meanings of our words, or the concepts they express, apart from a consideration of the work they are fitted to do and of the conditions under which they can do it. A related source of difficulty is the idea that it ought to be possible for us just to 'apply' any of our 'referring' words to cases, even apart from doing any specific work with it, and that the application would then always be felicitously assessable in terms of truth and falsity, irrespective of what specific point, if any, it had.[571]

The moral, according to OLP, is that judging whether we could apply some concepts to certain imagined cases is pointless. This is because we usually cannot really comprehend the theorist's question in daily life.

Here's my own example. One day, I meet a high school student – let us call him Sid - at the gate of École Normale Supérieure de Lyon (ENS de Lyon), who wants to acquire some useful information about a different University before making his final choice on which one to attend. ENS de Lyon is one of Sid's candidates. Since I am a student there, I suggest to Sid that he looks around the campus. It is a Sunday during the French spring break and therefore the campus is almost empty. 'It's a holiday today, why are you still on campus?', asks Sid. Without hesitation, I reply: 'I am writing my thesis so there is no holiday for me'. Sid seems confused. After a while, I realized the *point* of his question, and said: 'Ah, the reason I am here is that I live on campus—in the student apartments'. My original belief is that the purpose of Sid's question was to find out why I was still on campus when all the other students were on holiday. It turns out that Sid's question was to discover how I could still be on campus when it was a holiday, since he assumed that the campus was closed. This case also shows that the motivation and background assumptions of the questioner are

[571] Baz, 2012, p. 139.

relevant. Understanding the meaning of each word in a question does not ensure our understanding of this question.

Travis's milk case serves the same purpose to show Baz's point:

> Hugo, engrossed in the paper, says, 'I need some milk for my coffee'. Odile replies, 'You know where the milk is'. Suddenly defensive, Hugo replies: 'Well, I don't really know that, do I? Perhaps the cat broke into the refrigerator, or there was just now a very stealthy milk thief, or it evaporated or suddenly congealed'.[572]

Travis contends that in order to make '*X* know (s) that such and such' to be true, *X* need(s) to discharge all of the real doubts which against the verity of such and such. There's a theorist's question for this case: 'Does Hugo, as he stands (or sits), *know* that the milk is in the refrigerator?'.[573] Yet, even if contextualism contends that the truth condition of the answer to the theorist's question is dependent on the context, Baz still insists that there is no deep difference between the invariantist and the contextualist. For the contextualist, the theorist's question is just framed in the form of 'Would it be *true* to say with reference to Hugo, as he stands, "He knows that the milk is in the refrigerator"?'.[574]

Baz points out that the most natural way of understanding Odile's reply in that situation is to assume that she is trying to *rebuke* Hugo for his laziness. If that's what Odile meant, Hugo's response then would seem to be absurd, or at least to miss the point. In this case, knowledge should be understood as 'a kind of liability, sometimes even a burden, and is the basis not for deference and respect, but for reproach, accusation, and blame'.[575]

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[572] Travis, 1989, p, 156 (cited in Baz, 2012, p. 147).

[573] Baz, 2012, p. 148.

[574] Baz, 2012, p. 148.

[575] Baz, 2012, p. 150.

5.4.5 Disputes Between Baz and Deutsch

As I have discussed, Baz thinks that the method of case is problematic. In contrast, Max Deutsch tries to defend the method of cases, and he proposes a rejoinder to Baz.

Baz accuses the method of cases of separating the theorist's question from the everyday question. Deutsch, in contrast, thinks that it's plausible to ask the theorist's question and that it can be understood, as long as it's asked in the philosophical context, just like the lawyer's question should be understood in the context of jurisprudence or the doctor's question should be understood in the context of medicine. It's not absurd to assume that the theorist's question is understandable in the context of epistemology, since we don't have trouble in understanding the legal questions or medical question when provided with the proper context. So, why should the theorist's question be called specifically problematic? I presented the Gettier-style case (Bob's case) in the previous section. According to Deutsch, Baz's worry is that in ordinary life, we barely pose questions such as: '[o]n what occasion, other than philosophical theorizing, might we actually (need to) attend to the above question as the theorist thinks of it?'.[576] However, Deutsch does not hold that the 'theoretical question' is at odds with our ordinary inquiry.

Compared with Gettier's Bob case, Deutsch crafts another scenario named 'Healthy Fred':

> Fred eats lots of green vegetables but he also eats a cheeseburger at every meal. He gets a fair amount of exercise but lives in a fairly polluted city.[577]

Encountering such situation, according to Deutsch, questions such as 'Is Fred healthy?' would naturally arise. Deutsch claims that some people might just be

[576] Deutsch, 2015, p. 879.

[577] Deutsch, 2015, p. 880.

curious about fact whether Fred is healthy or not. If so, then 'the demand for some further or better reason seems misplaced'.[578] Deutsch tries to prove that the theorist's question is not that absurd.

Deutsch does not think that Baz's claim that questions with different purposes are different questions is tenable. Suppose Sid asks Nancy: 'Do you have the book *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature* written by Richard Rorty?'. We can imagine different purposes behind this question. Sid might want to borrow this book from Nancy; he might intend to recommend this book to Nancy; he might simply want to know whether Nancy has it or not, etc. According to Deutsch, 'Baz thinks that where there are two purposes, there are two different (though perhaps same-worded) questions, or at least one question that comes to two different things'.[579] It seems to Deutsch that the question, even if asked with a different purpose, stays the same one. Therefore, Baz is wrong: 'questions asked for different purposes need not be different questions and do not necessarily require fundamentally different ways of answering'.[580]

Another problem indicated by Baz is that we have various different answers to the same theorist's question. Experimental philosophy states that people from different cultures, when presented with the same Gettier's case, will respond differently to the same theorist's question. Baz takes it as a critical challenge to *the method of case*. Deutsch quotes Baz's claim at a length:

> Normally, if you say of someone (a politician, for example) that he knows something and I say he does not, what we disagree about are the facts or their significance, not the meaning of 'know(s) that'. We disagree about the case, but

[578] Deutsch, 2015, p. 880.

[579] Deutsch, 2015, p. 883.

[580] Deutsch, 2015, p. 883.

> we are still in agreement in our use of 'know that' and cognates, and in our understanding of these words. In fact, it is precisely this underlying agreement that makes it possible for us to disagree on particular cases and to go about trying to settle our disagreements. This is precisely what does not happen when, in the context of theorizing about knowledge, you say in the face of some example 'knows' and I say 'does not know' (or, if I am a contextualist, 'It would be false for so and so to say "knows"'), where nothing but a philosophical theory of knowledge hangs on our answers. If the example is to do its intended theoretical work, there should be no disagreement among the respondents about the facts—we all are supposed to know all that any normal person would know about the case, once she has read its author's description of it. If there is genuine disagreement between us here, it seems that it would have to be about the meaning of our words. Therefore, there is an important sense in which we do no work with our words—we are not using them—when we pronounce on the theorist's question.[581]

Based on this consideration, the theorist's question makes sense only with the proviso that there are no disputes on the facts of 'such and such'. When facts are settled, the only divergence left would be disagreement of word meaning. Deutsch has two remarks concerning this view. Firstly, even if we admit that in a such case, 'nothing but a philosophical theory hangs on the answers', it is not sufficient to claim that the disagreement is merely verbal. Secondly, it is not obviously right that we could reach a consensus to the given facts.

Deutsch also responds to Baz's critique of the prevailing conception of language. Firstly, according to the prevailing conception of language, there is a purely semantic understanding of each philosophical case. As we have noted, Baz argues that this

[581] Baz, 2012, p. 104.

prevailing conception is misleading, and it is the source of philosophical conundrums. However, Deutsch indicates that Baz's critique sidesteps the original question, namely 'whether philosophers ask the same questions as the questions that would be asked by the same words outside of philosophy'.[582] Secondly, according to Baz, this prevailing conception of language entails that each competent language speaker could understand each word in the given case apart from particular interests. Deutsch points out that these cases are not dealt with apart from the philosophical context, at least.

In the same issue of the journal *Inquiry*, Baz replies to Deutsch's challenge. Baz's rejoinder can be divided into two points. Firstly, he is still at pains to stress that the prevailing method of cases is grounded on a false assumption:

> I call them 'the theorist's questions'—are in order, in the simple sense that, as raised in the theorist's context, they each have a clear enough sense and a correct answer; and they have further assumed that as competent speakers (of English in this case) and masters of the relevant words we should, at least in principle, be able to understand the questions and answer them correctly.[583]

For Baz, it's the wrong picture. With varied contexts, different senses would arise from the combination of the same words. In other words, the meaning of the theorist's question is not fixed. Moreover, it's not likely that we would encounter the theorist's question in everyday situations. With this in mind, the immediate implication would be that competent linguistic speakers who 'by every reasonable criterion mean the word(s) in question in the same way and share the relevant concepts' may still disagree with the answer to the theoretical question.[584] Upon these reflections, Baz reaches his first conclusion:

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[582] Deutsch, 2015, p. 892.

[583] Baz, 2015, pp. 896-7.

[584] Baz, 2015, p. 899.

> whatever the theorist's questions invite us to do, it is not something that we regularly have to do as part of our everyday employment of our words.[585]

Baz's second rejoinder focuses on the bifurcation between 'purpose' and 'point'. He denies that 'purpose' and 'point' are interchangeable in his context. And it is underscored by him that he never enacts the meaning of point as purpose. Instead, the point of a question is more intimately related to the value of such a question which is much broader than the purpose of the question.

5.5 OLP as Conceptual Tuning

In what sense can we take OLP as conceptual tuning? Indeed, some philosophers have already pointed out that OLP is continuous with conceptual tuning/engineering. For example, Cappelen declares that the OLP movement is consistent with his conceptual engineering project. He quotes Austin to support his idea: '[. . .] ordinary language is not the last word: in principle it can everywhere be supplemented and improved upon and superseded'.[586] Hanson also claims that OLP and conceptual ethics are in the same vein. Conceptual ethics is a normative project, addressing how we should use our words. And there are many ways of pursuing it: 'resolving ambiguity, prescisifying a vague term, setting a contextual parameter, or in any other way determining how some antecedently indeterminate matter of meaning should be settled'.[587] With this depiction of conceptual ethics, he claims that conceptual ethics and OLP are on the same philosophical track:

> If the statements made by ordinary language philosophers are understood not as attempts to give an empirically adequate description of some antecedently settled meaning of an expression but as attempts to fix or push a particular

[585] Baz, 2015, p. 900.

[586] Austin, 1956, p. 11.

[587] Plunkett and Sundell, 2013, p. 3.

> precisification or expansion of a meaning for some purpose, then the standard charge that their methods of empirical verification are not up to professional standards in linguistics is missing the point. For example, it might be worthwhile to see Austin's (1966) discussion of subtle distinctions between the meaning of 'intentionally' and 'deliberately' not as a recording of pre-existing distinctions between the ordinary use of those expressions but as an attempt to fix those expressions to subtly different concepts with the aim of providing us with more precise linguistic tools to work with in discussions of action and responsibility.[588]

In sum, some philosophers who have already noticed that there is a theoretical link between OLP and conceptual tuning/engineering/ethics. I will try to spell out this connection from three aspects below by using Baz's OLP.

Firstly, Baz's OLP and conceptual tuning all entail an anti-static view of language. Conceptual tuning is premised on the assumption that our language is dynamic. This dynamic view, as we have mentioned, has been spelled out by Ludlow in his book *Living Words*. According to Ludlow, word meanings 'are open-ended and can change on the fly as we engage different conversational partners'.[589] In contrast, the traditional static picture of language denies that language is transitory and in flux. According to the static view, our language is a stagnating system. Even if this system goes through some changes, the pace of change is glacial (really slow): 'On the standard view word meanings change slowly, and the change is largely uniform across the population of language users'.[590] Ludlow reckons that denying the static view will resolve some philosophical conundrums. For example, if we accept that the meaning of 'know' could be different in varied conversational context, then we don't need to apply the criterion in epistemology to daily conversation. As he summarizes the

[588] Hansen, 2014, p. 560.

[589] Ludlow, 2014, p. 2.

[590] Ludlow, 2014, p. 2.

dynamic view: 'when I say that the meaning of a term is *dynamic* I mean that the meaning of the term can shift between conversation and even within a conversation'.[591]

Baz expresses a similar idea, by demurring against the prevailing conception of language. According to the prevailing view, words have fixed meaning without appealing to the everyday context; sentence's meaning can also be understood apart from the particular context; meaning is explained in terms of reference and truth. Baz insists that this prevailing conception is misleading, and the source of philosophical troubles. For example, concerning Gettier-style cases, Baz indicates that it's barely possible that we would encounter the theorist's question invented by philosophers in daily life. In fact, word meaning is dependent on the context within which they are uttered. Therefore, 'pace the shared assumption, the words (and case) by themselves do not suffice for fixing the theorist's question with a determinate sense, and a correct answer'.[592]

Secondly, both Baz's OLP and conceptual tuning endeavor to address the question of which concepts we *should* use. With this task, both projects are normative, rather than descriptive. Most conceptual tuning/engineering approaches set up the opposition between themselves and the descriptive approach. Cappelen indicates that large chunks of contemporary epistemology are striving to *describe* our concept of knowledge or to describe the extensions of it, which is a descriptive project. This descriptive approach is in striking contrast with his revisionary approach, which aims to ask a normative question 'what should our concept of knowledge be?'. Cappelen claims that the goal of the descriptive approach and that of conceptual engineering are different. For an exponent of the descriptive approach, the task of philosophy is to understand the current phenomena by depicting the related concepts. On the other

[591] Ludlow, 2014, p. 3.

[592] Cappelen, Gendler, and Hawthorne, 2016, p. 118.

hand, for an exponent of conceptual tuning/engineering, the primary philosophical duty is to figure out the best way of thinking about important philosophical phenomena (knowledge, free will, or justice). In order to find the best way of talking about our concepts (talking about our world), our philosophical method does not consist in describing the current concept and its extensions. Instead, we need to pursue the normative enterprise, assessing which concepts are capable of talking about those phenomena in the best way. Besides Cappelen, as we noted, Plunkett also compares his metalinguistic negotiation with the objective-oriented philosophy.

Baz's OLP, as we have discussed, is not an empirically-oriented approach as Mates presents. An OLPer does not simply collect data of our everyday conversations and then calculate the statistics. That's not how OLP works. OLP is supposed to be a normative approach, which helps us find the appropriate meanings of words. The descriptive approach suggests that the primary role of language is its representational function. In contrast, OLP proposes to take the normal use of our words as primary.

Thirdly, both conceptual tuning/engineering and Baz's OLP emphasize the significance of the particular purpose/point in understanding word meaning. For conceptual tuning, the concept is usually improved for a particular purpose. For example, as Cappelen states it: 'Consider the thought that when "rape" excludes same-sex couples it is defective because it has negative effects on society and that a change would be an improvement'.[593] As we discussed, Haslanger proposes an ameliorative approach for a particular practical purpose. As she states: 'Ameliorative projects, in contrast, begin by asking: What is the point of having the concept in question; for example, why do we have a concept of knowledge or a concept of belief? What concept (if any) would do the work best?'.[594] Therefore, when pursuing conceptual tuning/engineering, it's necessary to grasp the point of employing these

[593] Cappelen, forthcoming-a, p. 62.

[594] Haslanger and Saul, 2006, p. 95.

concepts and in what sense they could serve our purposes better.

Similarly, Baz also stresses that our normal use(s) of words cannot be separated from its 'purposes':

> In both philosophy and ordinary life, a consideration of the ordinary and normal use(s) of someone's words serves to make clearer what, if anything, she *could* reasonably be taken to say with her words, and whether what she could reasonably be taken to say is what she apparently has wanted to say, or needs to (be able to) say given her situation and purposes.[595]

[595] Baz, 2012, p. 38.

Chapter 6 Conceptual Analysis and Conceptual Tuning

> A definition is an account (*logos*) that signifies an essence — Aristotle

In this chapter, I will firstly characterize the method of conceptual analysis through the lens of Colin McGinn's constructive work. After that, I will focus on the relation between conceptual analysis and conceptual tuning, and propose that conceptual analysis can be understood as a form of conceptual tuning.

6.1 What is Conceptual Analysis

Conceptual analysis is a widely acknowledged philosophical method. Though under siege by naturalism, it never entirely losed its aura in the philosophical community. The notion 'conceptual analysis', in fact, has been compiled into the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and the entry was written by Robert Hanna. He defines it as follows:

> The theory of conceptual analysis holds that concepts - general meanings of linguistic predicates - are the fundamental objects of philosophical inquiry, and that insights into conceptual contents are expressed in necessary 'conceptual truths' (analytic propositions).[596]

According to this characterization, conceptual analysis is supposed to provide us with a result, a product, that is known as a conceptual truth or a definition. Therefore, this characterization underlies the result of conceptual analysis.

However, one must wonder about how to reach a definition by conceptual analysis.

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[596] Craig, 1998, p. 1660.

What would the components of this definition be? According to Chris Daly, G. E. Moore points out that conceptual analysis is decompositional:

> Meaning analysis consists in giving the complex meaning of a term by stating its simpler component meanings. The meaning of a term is often called a concept. Hence Moore talks of analysing complex concepts into simpler ones. Such an analysis is a kind of explicit definition. The concept being analysed is called "the *analysandum*," and the concepts providing the analysis are collectively called "the *analysans*." [. . .] By avoiding circularity, the analysis can be informative.[597]

Moore reveals the 'discompositional' aspect of conceptual analysis, its process. We can break a concept down into several parts, and they jointly constitute the sufficient condition of applying this concept. For example, 'knowledge' can be dismantled into 'justified', 'true', and 'belief'.

With the conceptual truth or the analysans, we still need to make sure that this definition works. Paul Grice offers a description of conceptual analysis as follows:

> To be looking for a conceptual analysis of a given expression E is to be in a position to apply or withhold E in particular cases, but to be looking for a general characterization of the types of cases in which one would apply E rather than withhold it [. . .] the characteristic procedure is to think up a possible general characterization of one's use of E and then to test it by trying to find or imagine a particular situation which fits the suggested characterization and yet would *not* be a situation in which one would apply E.[598]

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[597] Daly, 2010, pp. 42-3.

[598] Grice, 1989, p. 174. Though Grice is always known as an Oxford philosopher, ordinary language philosophers usually don't count him as one of them, as Baz says: 'Grice could have thought of himself as an ordinary language philosopher who was explicating in his proposed "analyses" the ordinary "use" of philosophically troublesome words, and equally the reason why I would question Grice's self-characterization, is that these two expressions, as *he* means them, *are* interchangeable' (Baz, 2012, p. 21).

Compared with the previous two characterizations, Grice's characterization is more detailed, given that he also considers the process of testing the result of conceptual analysis. However, as Overgaard et al. point out, Grice's characterization might not be well accepted by contemporary philosophers for two reasons. First, they caution that Grice's version carries too much weight on the linguistic level. Philosophers are not supposed to be solely concerned with 'expression' or the 'term' *per se*. Second, Overgaard et al. point out that Grice's expression 'one would (or wouldn't) apply E' is problematic. For example, I would rarely say 'I know my name' but that does not mean it would be false to apply 'know' in this case. Overgaard et al. think that Grice's emphasis is too much on 'whether we *would* or *wouldn't* apply a particular concept in a particular case'; instead, he 'should have paid more attention to the question of whether or not such an application would result in a statement that was *true*'.[599] Based on these considerations, they attempt to revise Grice's characterization as follows:

> The characteristic procedure is to think up a possible general characterisation of the cases falling under some concept C and then to test it by trying to find or imagine a particular situation which fits the suggested characterisation and yet would *not* be a situation to which C could be truthfull applied.[600]

The characterization offered by Overgaard et al. puts the procedure of testing into account. In order to test the result of conceptual analysis, we can build some imaginary scenarios[601], and see whether the concept in the discussion can be applied to them. If not, then note them as a counterexample.

However, Overgaard et al. do not say enough about the structure of the conceptual

[599] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 85.

[600] Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 85.

[601] We usually provide extreme cases for testing the result, such as borderline cases.

analysis. Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence (M&L) also offer a balanced characterization that not only considers the structure of conceptual analysis but also mentions the testing part:

> For many, philosophy is essentially the a priori analysis of concepts, which can and should be done without leaving the proverbial armchair. We've already seen that in the paradigm case, an analysis embodies a definition; it specifies a set of conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the application of the concept. When all goes well, the intuitions are supposed to match the correct analysis perfectly (though generally speaking it's understood that there may be a trade off, where most intuitions have to match an analysis but where an otherwise successful analysis may lead to the discrediting of a few intuitions).[602]

M&L's account covers two main parts of conceptual analysis: the structural part and the testing part. First, philosophers need to work hard to excavate all necessary conditions of the analysandum. This is the structural part. The necessary conditions of the concept can be jointly constituted as the definition of this concept. Yet, M&L don't put too much attention to the decompositional process aforementioned. Once the definition is achieved, many possible scenarios should be conceived to test whether we can apply the concept in these cases. And this is the testing part. The British philosopher Colin McGinn wrote a whole book on this specific philosophical method.

6.2 McGinn's Account of Conceptual Analysis

Section 6.2 will present a full-fledged account of Colin McGinn's project of conceptual analysis.

[602] Margolis and Laurence, 2014.

6.2.1 McGinn's General Idea

Conceptual analysis, according to McGinn, is not all about the words *per se*, but aims at the essence of things,: 'the goal of philosophical activity is to discover the essences of things by means of a priori investigation', and 'we seek the essence of things or beings, not the essence of concepts or ideas or words'.[603] Acquiring the definition is not the final goal of philosophy; it serves the path to a further end, the Aristotelian 'essence'. As McGinn explains:

> As Aristotle says, "a definition is an account (*logos*) that signifies an essence." To spell it out: a definition is a piece of discourse that expresses or articulates the essence of a thing or a kind of thing—so definition is relation between language (or possibly just thought) and something beyond language (or thought), namely, reality, being, existence, the objective.[604]

Most critics of conceptual analysis believe that this enterprise is trivial because it's only focused on concepts. However, if McGinn is right, then conceptual analysis is consistent with Aristotle's essence searching enterprise. Disclosing the essence of things is the vital motivation behind the method of conceptual analysis.

McGinn distinguishes between the result and the process of conceptual analysis: the result of conceptual analysis is the 'the provision of necessary and sufficient conditions', and the process is 'the operation of decomposition or dismantling, or breaking down into parts'.[605] Moreover, he also includes the intuition test part of conceptual analysis. McGinn's characterization of conceptual analysis is as follows:

> An analysis (at least one central kind of analysis) consists in breaking a concept

[603] McGinn, 2012, pp. 3-4.

[604] McGinn, 2012, p. 4.

[605] McGinn, 2012, p. 4.

> down into its conceptual components and showing how they are severally necessary and jointly sufficient for the original concept to apply. The *analysandum* is a complex concept, consisting of a cluster of sub-concepts, and the analysans is a specification of its conceptual parts that provide necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept analyzed. The analysans is a specification of its conceptual parts that provide necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept analyzed. The analysis is both known a priori and a necessary truth. We arrive at the analysis by considering possible cases and asking ourselves whether the concept applies or not in these cases—that is, b consulting our "intuitions."[606]

The merit of McGinn's characterization is that it includes all the three crucial aspects of conceptual analysis, namely, its result as providing a definition, its decompositional process, and its theory testing part. All the other characterizations mentioned previously miss out on one or two aspects. In addition, combining the Aristotelian enterprise of essence seeking with the method of conceptual analysis, McGinn places a high premium on the role of conceptual analysis. As he says: 'The *essence* of philosophy is the search for essences carried out by means of conceptual analysis'.[607]

With these characterizations of conceptual analysis, it seems that conceptual analysis and conceptual tuning proceed on the opposite tracks. Given that conceptual tuning contends that any concept should be open to revision, no universal meaning should be expected, while conceptual analysis seeks to find an ultimate final definition for the given concept. Before addressing these tensions, I shall provide a thorough picture of conceptual analysis.

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[606] McGinn, 2012, p. 5.

[607] McGinn, 2012, p. 5.

6.2.2 Historical Review

The methods and technologies employed in science keep progressing and are updated regularly, whilst in philosophy, the situation is not the same: contemporary philosophers can share the same method as ancient philosophers. Conceptual analysis could be one case to the point. McGinn shows that the method of conceptual analysis is well rooted in the history of Western philosophy, though with miscellaneous forms.

In history of philosophy, this method is adopted by almost every eminent philosopher. McGinn's survey begins with the ancient philosophers. Euclid's *Elements* is replete with definitions. And the pre-Socratics were concerned with the *essence* of reality. Following them, Plato provides many conceptual analysis cases, such as 'Man is a rational animal' and 'knowledge is 'true belief with an account''. In modern philosophy, Locke's discussion of simple and complex ideas is related to the operation of decomposition in conceptual analysis. In addition, we have Hume's definition of 'causation', Descartes' analysis of matter and mind, Leibniz's concern with 'possible worlds', Berkeley's characterization of 'physical objects', etc. Moreover, Kant's analytic-synthetic distinction is deemed as the theoretical foundation of conceptual analysis.

Neither the ancient philosophers, nor the modern ones use this method self-consciously. In other words, when doing philosophy, they naturally adopt this method without even noticing it. With the rise of analytic philosophy, philosophers became more and more aware of their own methodology. For example, both Russell and Moore endorse the view that propositions are analyzable. On the side of continental philosophy: Husserl was devoted to the analysis of the essence of 'consciousness', Sartre put many efforts on analyzing 'consciousness' and 'being'[608].

[608] I mentioned in Introduction that Amie L. Thomasson thinks that the phenomenological method can be regarded as conceptual analysis.

McGinn's historical iteration presents several classic cases, while Hanna traces the theoretical foundation of conceptual analysis. He finds out that the most crucial aspect of conceptual analysis has already been stated by John Locke in his theory of ideas—breaking complex ideas down into simple ideas. In addition, some distinctions drawn by Kant contribute significantly to the theoretical grounding of this method: (i) the distinction between 'analytic' and 'synthetic' propositions, (ii) the distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* truth, and (iii) the distinction between empirical proof, 'constructive' proof in mathematics, and 'transcendental' proof. And Kant's main idea is that conceptual truth can be either analytic *a priori* or synthetic *a priori*. This idea is questioned by Frege, who only accepts the analytic *a priori* truth.

According to Hanna, G. E. Moore is the leading figure of the first phase of conceptual analysis. Later, this method spread to Oxford from Cambridge. J. L. Austin and Gilbert Ryle, as the pillar of the second phase, are focused on the analysis of ordinary language[609]. The method was introduced to America by H. P. Grice and P. F. Strawson in the 1950s and the early 1960s. However, in 1951, Quine's renowned paper 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' posed a serious challenge to the foundation of conceptual analysis.

6.2.3 The Challenges

In this part, I will go through some possible objections to the legitimate use of conceptual analysis. Three challenges will be examined in this section: The problem of sufficiency and circularity, the collapse of the analytic-synthetic distinction, and the world-detached challenge.

[609] Like Fodor and McGinn, Hanna also doesn't distinguish conceptual analysis from the ordinary language philosophy. I articulated their tension in Chapter 5.

6.2.3.1 Sufficiency and Circularity

For conceptual analysis to work, it is not only necessary that we achieve a definition (or the conceptual truth): we also need to achieve a non-circular definition. A definition, in a philosophical sense, serves as the sufficient condition for applying a concept, butthe concept being analyzed must not appear in its definition. But some might argue that there is no convincing case of conceptual analysis in the history of philosophy. Or that there is no single successful case of conceptual analysis where there is a consensus. The reason for this failure is that each case of conceptual analysis cannot avoid the fate of being circular. As McGinn formulates it, the problem of conceptual analysis is

> whether *C* has an analysis in which *C* does not occur as a necessary condition: that is, does *C* have a *non-trivial* sufficient condition? Can we, in other words, give a noncircular sufficient condition for *C*?[610]

McGinn illustrates three related cases (seeing an object, intentional action, knowledge), all of which fail to provide a noncircular sufficient condition for the given concept. Based on these cases, it seems plausible to extrapolate that no noncircular sufficient condition can be found for a given concept. Let's have a cursory look at these three cases.

The first case: *seeing an object*. Two necessary conditions would immediately emerge: '(1) the subject must have a visual sense experience of a certain kind; (2) there must be an object of a certain kind there'.[611] So far, the concept 'seeing' has been decomposed into two components, but they are not jointly sufficient, since possible counterexample of *veridical hallucination* can be provided. The following

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[610] McGinn, 2012, p. 34.

[611] McGinn, 2012, p. 35.

counterexample is proposed by P. G. Grice. Suppose that a subject *A* has the experience of an object *B*, and the object *B* lies in front of *A*. However, in this counterexample, *A*'s sense experience is created by a scientist who stimulates *A*'s brain to produce the sense experience. If so, in this case, *A*'s experience isn't really caused by the object *B*, even though there is a match between her experience of *B* and *B*. To solve this, Grice suggests a further condition: 'that the object *causes* the sense experience'.[612] Unfortunately, another 'deviant causal chains' counterexample can be found. This time, the scientist sees the object *B* herself, and then she finds a way to cause *A* to have the same sense experience as her, which fits that of object *B*. Maybe we need a further condition to regulate the causal chain? McGinn indicates that if so then this leaves us only to embrace circularity: 'but many philosophers began to worry that no specification of the type of causal chain needed could avoid circularity—it is the type of causal chain that *produces genuine seeing*'.[613]

What about the second case of 'intentional action'? Similarly, two necessary conditions jump in immediately: '(1) the agent must have an intention, and (2) his body must move appropriately (it must "fit" the intention)'.[614] Again, the counterexample of the 'weird causal chain' can be made. Here's the scenario: Both *A* and *B* are mountaineers. While climbing the mountain, *A* suddenly slips. Yet, *B* is able to catch him just in time. But if *B* keeps holding *A*, a serious consequence can be expected, they might both fall off the mountain. By considering the situation, *B* forms an intention to loosen her hand and let *A* go, and this intention makes her feel nervous, which causes her to drop *A* inadvertently. In this situation, it is *B*'s intention that cause her movement, only it's via her nervousness. Based on this, it does not seem right to claim that *B* intentionally causes *A*'s falling, even it satisfies the two necessary conditions we mentioned before. A further condition? It could be 'The intention must

[612] McGinn, 2012, p. 36.

[613] McGinn, 2012, p. 36.

[614] McGinn, 2012, p. 36.

cause the action "in the right way"'.[615] However, here comes the circularity, as McGinn says, 'many philosophers were inclined to conclude that no specification of the "right way" could be given that avoided circularity'.[616]

The last one is also the most notorious one—the analysis of 'knowledge'. A widely circulated definition of 'knowledge' is 'justified true belief'. But Gettier's cases pose a great challenge to this definition. Many attempts to save it fall into circularity. Thus, one will be inclined to reach a conclusion that conceptual analysis is a futile project:

> So perhaps analysis is a misguided enterprise, despite its initial promise. A concept could be partially dismantled, its underlying structure partially revealed, but it could not be completely broken down—there was always an indefinable residue. The concept itself always had to be wheeled in as a primitive in the end.[617]

If this were true, then the project of definition seeking would be otiose, since we might never get one. McGinn, an adamant supporter of conceptual analysis, apparently does not think so. He offers five reasons to reject this challenge.

First, the current failure does not imply the necessity of the future failure. We don't need to embrace the pessimistic stance. McGinn believes that Suits's definition of 'game' sets a good example[618]. Before Suits provided the definition, the skeptical view of defining 'game' was prevailing. But now, Suit's definition of game is quite influential. No matter how many failures we might have, McGinn suggests that 'we should keep trying'.[619]

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[615] McGinn, 2012, p. 36.

[616] McGinn, 2012, p. 36.

[617] McGinn, 2012, p. 37.

[618] This definition will be discussed in Chapter 7.

[619] McGinn, 2012, p. 37.

Second, there is no necessary link between 'we haven't produced a satisfactory analysis of a concept so far' and the 'concept has no analysis'. McGinn argues that we'd better 'separate the question of whether a concept *has* an analysis from the question of whether we can *provide* such an analysis'.[620]

Third, given the existence of the definition elsewhere, it's not sensible to assert that the definition of 'seeing', 'intentional action', and 'knowledge' cannot be reached. On the one hand, some concepts have obvious definitions, such as 'husband', while on the other hand, some concepts have non obvious definitions, such as 'game'. With these in mind, McGinn poses the question, 'Why should some complex concepts have analyses and some not? Shouldn't there be a general rule—a kind of law of analysis? Every complex concept has a noncircular analysis—something along those lines'.[621]

Fourth, McGinn suggests a distinction between *primitive concept* and *complex concept*. It is widely agreed that primitive concepts cannot be broken down into further parts, such as 'red', 'pain', and 'not'. But 'know', 'see', and 'truth' have 'palpable complexity' or 'analytical depth'.[622] Therefore, according to McGinn, the primitive concept and complex concept should not be treated as the same.

Fifth, if we accept that a concept can have non-trivial necessary conditions, then we should also embrace the idea that a concept can have non-trivial sufficient conditions. Otherwise, there would be an inconsistency. The basic idea is that a concept 'cannot have both non-trivial necessary conditions *and* trivial sufficient conditions'.[623] Why not? Take 'knowledge' as an example. It is agreed that 'belief' and 'truth', at least, are the two non-trivial necessary conditions of 'knowledge'. Suppose that the sufficient condition of 'knowledge' is trivial, the third necessary condition must contain the

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[620] McGinn, 2012, p. 38.

[621] McGinn, 2012, p. 38.

[622] McGinn, 2012, pp. 39-40.

[623] McGinn, 2012, p. 41.

notion of knowledge itself, thus making the other two necessary conditions redundant. Hence, as McGinn puts it, 'how can those conditions be necessary if they are made redundant by the final conjunct?'.[624] He believes that if a concept is indefinable, then it's impossible to find any necessary conditions for it.

McGinn has a firm belief in this project and a steady faith in the task of finding the sufficient condition for a given concept. However, if achieving the final definition[625] (the sufficient condition for applying the concept), or as McGinn says, reaching the essence of things, is the only goal of conceptual analysis, then it is incompatible with conceptual tuning. Given that a concept is context-susceptible and might evolve through time, a timeless perennial definition does not seem to be very likely. For example, there is an interesting conversation between Trevor Noah and Chelsea Handler in *The Daily Show*[626]:

> Chelsea: [. . .] we went to Scotland, which nobody really understands whether that's a country or not, even the people, even the people in Scotland [. . .] It seems like an easily defined term—'country', like I'm a woman, you're a man, maybe.
>
> Trevor: Maybe country is on a spectrum, just like gender.
>
> Chelsea: Just like trans, like trans country, maybe, but people really don't seem to know if it's a country or part of another 'kingdom' [. . .]

This case shows us that even the meaning of the most frequently used terms will be

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[624] McGinn, 2012, p. 41.

[625] However, strictly speaking, the notion 'definition' is not fully identified with the result of conceptual analysis. Robert Audi says, 'It may seem that the right sort of definition might yet be the goal of conceptual analysis. I think not. While an analysis can yield a definition, it is common for a good analysis of a concept simply to yield a set of conditions that (a) are necessary and sufficient for its application and (b) provide a good understanding of its content. Perhaps this might loosely be called a definition, but its adequacy, unlike that of a definition, does not require providing a synonym for the term expressing the concept being analyzed' (Audi 1983, 89).

[626] *The Daily Show*, 2017/04/04.

changed due to the alternation of the reality, such as political events. But does that mean conceptual analysis should be undermined? Probably not. We could set the bar a little bit lower. As Robert Audi suggests, even partial analysis can be valuable and useful:

> Conceptual analysis may yield only a partial account or only partial understanding of the concept under investigation, and it can be of much value even then. One might discover just some necessary conditions or just some sufficient conditions. The former may help one to rule out certain apparent cases of, say, knowledge. The latter may enable one to devise a test that allows one to make a positive judgment. If, e.g., believing is necessary for knowing, then a person who does not believe a proposition does not know it, no matter how good his evidence. This makes the connection between knowledge and belief of considerable practical importance.[627]

If we accept this account, then conceptual analysis will not necessarily be contradictory with conceptual tuning. This mundane understanding does not demand a one-size-fits-all definition. Rather, a partial account is sometimes just good enough for practical use. A more modest claim would be that even those partial accounts of the concept under investigation should be open to revision.

6.2.3.2 Analytic-Synthetic Distinction

The distinction between 'definition' and 'empirical facts' has been widely accepted. Take 'Queen' as an example. The statement 'the Queen is a female' is based on the definition of 'Queen', while 'the Queen likes playing cricket' is an empirical fact. This distinction is also known as the analytic-synthetic distinction.

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[627] Audi, 1983, p. 90.

The analytic-synthetic distinction sat well in the philosophical community until Quine posed his challenge in his momentous paper 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism'. He argued that the analytic-synthetic distinction, one dogma of empiricism, doesn't stand at all. Assume that he's right, the natural corollary would be: 'there are no analyses: no concept breaks down into constituents, with the accompanying necessary and sufficient conditions'.[628] As we mentioned, the analytic-synthetic distinction is supposed to be the theoretical foundation of conceptual analysis. If so, then where does this leave us? According to McGinn, two options are left: either we admit that all concepts are primitive, or we deny that analytic truth exists. It seems that the whole project of conceptual analysis can be undermined by Quine's argument.

McGinn thinks that to reply to the challenge, it would be helpful to revisit Kant's original account. Here is Kant's account of this distinction in *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> In all judgments wherein the relation of a subject to the predicate is cogitated (I mention affirmative judgments only here; the application to the negative will be very easy), this relation is possible in two different ways. Either the predicate B belongs to the subject A, as somewhat which is contained (though covertly) in the conception of A; or the predicate B lies completely out of the conception A, although it stands in connection with it. In the first instance, I term the judgment analytical, in the second, synthetical. Analytical judgments (affirmative) are therefore those in which the connection of the predicate with the subject is cogitated through identity; those in which this connection is cogitated without identity are called synthetical judgments. The former may be called *explicative*, the latter *augmentative* judgments; because the former add in the predicate nothing to the conception of the subject, but only analyze it into its constituent conceptions, which were thought already in the subject, although in a confused manner; the

[628] McGinn, 2012, p. 77.

> latter add to our conceptions of the subject a predicate which was not contained in it, and which no analysis could have discovered therein. For example, when I say, "all bodies are extended," this is an analytical judgment. For I need not go beyond the conception of *body* in order to find the extension of body connected with it, but merely analyze the conception, that is, become conscious of the manifold properties which I think in that conception, in order to discover the predicate in it: it is therefore an analytical judgment. On the other hand, when I say, "all bodes are heavy," the predicate is something totally different from that which I think in the mere conception of a body. By the addition of such a predicate, therefore, it becomes a synthetical judgment.

Concerning Kant's account, McGinn has three remarks. First, according to Kant's explanation, analytic truth is defined in terms of *conceptual containment*, rather than sentences and synonyms. Second, Kant's terminology 'analytic judgment' could be misleading. McGinn indicates that conceptual analysis is in effect a synthetic process: 'the bringing together of concepts into a unified whole'.[629] So, conceptual analysis can also be called 'synthetic judgment'. And we might say that 'the concept of knowledge is a synthesis of the concepts of belief, truth and justified'.[630] Accepting this, the notion of 'analysis' and that of 'synthesis' are mutually complementary rather than being antithetical. Based on this consideration, McGinn suggests that the 'explicative-augmentative' distinction be preferable to the 'analytic-synthetic' distinction, in extent of terminology. Third, Kant's example of synthetic judgment, such as 'bodies are heavy', is misleading, because 'heaviness is close to mass and mass arguably *is* definitive of body'.[631] A better example would be 'some bodies are painted blue'.

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[629] McGinn, 2012, p. 78.

[630] McGinn, 2012, p. 78.

[631] McGinn, 2012, p. 79.

The analytic-synthetic distinction would not step into the murky water noted by Quine, if it is counted for in terms of Kant's original ideas, namely that an analytic judgment is a part-whole judgment, while a synthetic judgment is not. McGinn explains:

> An analytic judgment is one that merely articulates the parts of a concept; a synthetic judgment is one that does not merely articulate the parts but adds something from outside—properties and relations of a non-mereological kind. So an analytic judgment is a part-whole judgment, while a synthetic judgment is not a part-whole judgment [. . .] Concepts have parts and so there is a distinction between saying what these parts are and saying other kinds of things. And given that concepts have parts, there *must* be such a distinction.[632]

The point is that if we embrace the 'analytic-synthetic' distinction explained according to Kant's original sense, then it is immune to Quine's attack. In fact, this distinction is applicable in many different areas. For example, 'Water is H_2O' is chemically analytic[633], while 'There is no water on the Mars' is chemically synthetic. This principle can be generalized to other domains, as McGinn asserts: 'obviously the same kind of distinction crops up in anatomy, geography, physics, and linguistics, since there is, in all these areas, a clear distinction between mereological facts and non-merelogical facts. [. . .] there are two kinds of facts in the world: part-whole facts and other kinds of facts'.[634] Therefore, as long as the concepts have parts, the distinction exists.

Quine's rejection of the analytic-synthetic distinction is based on the assumption that analyticity is defined in terms of synonymy, which is not in Kant's original account. McGinn indicates that this misidentification is pernicious as it incorporates an

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[632] McGinn, 2012, p. 79.

[633] Though it's not analytical in philosophical sense.

[634] McGinn, 2012, p. 80.

erroneous assumption. This false assumption can be expressed as '"A is B" is analytic iff "A" and "B" are synonymous.[635] However, McGinn claims that '[s]ynonymy is neither necessary nor sufficient for analyticity'.[636] Suppose in 1994 Sid said: 'Today, I believe that Simpson is innocent'. And several years later, Nancy asserted: 'In 1994, Sid believed that Simpson was innocent'. Though Nancy's assertion is not synonymous with Sid's, what Nancy said is a report of Sid's assertion. Therefore, synonymy is not necessary for analyticity. Synonymy is also not sufficient for analyticity. For example, we won't count 'x has fair hair iff x has blond hair' as a successful conceptual analysis. Searching for synonymy is not the same as conceptual analysis (searching for essence): 'The aim of the conceptual analyst is not to substitute one word with another that people use with the same meaning—words that they use interchangeably'.[637] To conclude, Quine's account of analyticity in terms of synonymy is a distortion of Kant's original idea, and by embracing Kant's account, Quine's charge loses its power.

6.3 How to Define

McGinn has a detailed account of the theoretical aspect of what is conceptual analysis, and he makes rejoinders to various challenges to this method. In this section, following Sven Ove Hansson, I will elaborate how to put this method into practice.

Roughly, there are two sorts of definition, the lexical (descriptive) definition and the stipulative definition. The lexical definition aims to describe our actual linguistic usage, while the stipulative definition is a definition suggested by the definer. But the line between these two kinds of definition is not extremely clear.

Hansson notes that a definition is usually constituted by three parts: 'the definiendum

[635] McGinn, 2012, p. 82.

[636] McGinn, 2012, p. 82.

[637] McGinn, 2012, p. 83.

(that which is to be defined), the definiens (that which defines), and a defining connective'.[638] Bernard Suits defines 'game playing' as follows: 'playing a game is the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles'. In this case, 'playing a game' is the definiendum, while 'the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles' is the definiens, and 'is' is the defining connective.

For a proper definition, three formal congruence requirements are essential, namely *linguistic congruence*, *categorical congruence*, and *congruence in variables*. Linguistic congruence is understood as linguistic symmetry between definiendum and definiens in the sense that 'a noun should not be defined by a verb phrase, or a plural noun by a singular noun, etc.'.[639] Categorical congruence requires that the definiendum and the definiens fall into the same category. Hence, we are not supposed to define an evaluative concept as a descriptive one. Finally, congruence in variables mandates that the same variables should appear in the definiendum and the definiens.

In conceptual analysis, a lot of attention will usually be paid to the part of the definiens (or analysans), whilst less attention will be given to the definiendum (or analysandum). Hansson stresses that the choice of the definiendum is also important. Take 'stability' as the example. To define 'stability', Hansson suggests that it's better to begin with defining the property of being stable. Hansson says: 'In serious definition work it is essential to identify the cluster to which the term that we began with belongs'.[640] Therefore, a cluster of related concepts will be taken as candidates, such as 'safety', 'safe', 'safer', 'safest', 'safely', and 'safeness'. After arraying the candidates, we then should analyze the interrelations among them. More precisely, our task is to find out whether they can be defined in terms of each other. In this case,

[638] Hansson, 2010, p. 9.

[639] Hansson, 2010, p. 10.

[640] Hansson, 2010, pp. 12-3.

'safety' is definable in terms of 'safe', but not vice-versa. So we should choose 'safe' over 'safety' as the definiendum. Yet, we also need to choose between 'safe' and its comparative forms, 'safer' and 'safest'. According to Hansson, we should not adopt the definition of the comparative in terms of the superlative, because it's quite awkward. So, it leaves us with 'safe' and 'safer'. To define 'safe', it's necessary to account for both the quality and the quantity of its property, while to define 'safer', the account of the quantity of its property is enough. Based on this consideration, it would be wise to choose 'safer' as the definiendum. Hansson says: 'Therefore, it is expedient to begin with the relative concept, and define it as precisely as we can before we proceed to deal with the absolute concept'.[641]

And how should the variables be selected? Hansson points out that the function of the variables is to make the definition more precise and clear-cut. It's necessary to make sure that we use the same variables in the definiens and the definiendum. We might choose the variables on the grounds of our philosophical position. Take the example of the choice of the variables for 'free'. The use of the variable in 'A is *free from* the obstacle *X* if and only if…' entails a negative notion of freedom, while the use of the variable in 'A is *free to* perform the action *Y* if and only if…' is premised on a positive notion of freedom.

After all the preliminary issues have been fixed, we have two main methods for seeking the definitions, according to Hansson, *the case-list method* and *the method of successive improvements*. The case-list method is more suitable for formulating a lexical definition. According to this approach, the first step is to consult the dictionary in order to get a preliminary definition. With the dictionary definition in hand we should assemble two piles of cases, one of which contains cases covered by this definition, while the other is constituted by cases that cannot be covered by the

[641] Hansson, 2010, p. 15.

dictionary definition. However, both piles will include borderline cases. The next step is to modify and adjust the preliminary definition by scrutinizing these cases closely. This modulation lasts until we reach a final definition that conforms completely to the two lists.

The method of successive improvements aims at stipulative definition. Similar to the case-list method, we should get a preliminary definition from the dictionary at the start. We should then try to ascertain the deficiency of this definition. After that, we need to consider how to avoid this deficiency, and to improve the definition based on these considerations. And this process lasts until we get the proper definition, as Hansson describes, 'The process is halted when a definition has been obtained that we do not manage to improve without overweighing drawbacks, typically in terms of complexity'.[642]

In the previous chapter (Chapter 3), I mentioned that definition stipulation can be incorporated into conceptual tuning, playing the role of characterizing the target concept. In fact, I think as long as we reject the assumption that the the goal is acquiring a one-size-fits-all definition, conceptual analysis can be compatible with conceptual tuning.

6.4 A Case Study: 'Lying'

In this section, I will sketch Thomas L. Carson's conceptual analysis of *Lying*, as a case study. His work is a typical of conceptual analysis.

The first thing to note is that lying is not synonymous with a false statement. What's the difference? Following Carson, let us take a look at two dictionary definitions of 'lying': (i) *Oxford English Dictionary*: 'a false statement made with the intent to

[642] Hansson, 2010, p. 20.

deceive'; (ii) *Webster's International Dictionary of the English Language*: 'to utter a falsehood with the intent to deceive'.[643] However, these two preliminary definitions are defective[644], because of their overlooking a crucial feature of lying, namely that, 'If a statement is a lie, then the person who makes it cannot believe that it is true'.[645] Both of these two dictionary definitions allow the possible situation in which one lies whilst believing that their statement is true. For example, suppose Sid tells Nancy that John is not at home today, so as to deceive Nancy who wishes to steal John's painting collection. But in fact, Sid knows that John's apartment is equipped with an advanced security system, so Nancy's attempt to steal would be doomed. However, unbeknownst to Sid, John actually stays at home today. In this case, Sid's statement is false, and Sid uses this false statement to deceive Nancy. Yet, Sid does not lie, since he believes in what he says. So we need to revise the dictionary definition. According to Carson, a modified version of dictionary definition could be:

> L1. A person S tells a lie iff: 1. S makes a false statement x, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or, alternatively, S doesn't believe that x is true) and 3. S intends to deceive another person by means of stating x (by stating, S intends to cause another person to have false belief).[646]

Let us put L1 aside for the moment. According to the absolutist view, many instances of lying are morally wrong. With the aim of conforming to this moral principle, the definition of 'lying' should be narrowed down to preclude the morally permissible cases. To achieve this goal, a further condition should be added: the person to whom you tell a lie must have the right to know the truth. Therefore, an adapted definition could be:

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643 Carson, 2006, p. 286.

644 As Hansson noted, dictionary definition is usually problematic.

645 Carson, 2006, p. 286.

646 Carson, 2006, p. 287.

> L2. A person S tells a lie iff: 1. S makes a false statement x, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or alternatively, S doesn't believe that x is true), 3. S intends to deceive another person by means of stating x (S intends his statement to cause another person to have false beliefs), and 4. the person(s) to whom he makes the statement has (have) the right to know the truth about the matter in question.[647]

Think about the following case. Suppose Sid comes to Nancy, and asks her where John is. It turns out that Sid will murder John if he finds him given that John is Sid's personal enemy. With this information in mind, Nancy intentionally tells Sid a falsehood relative to where John is. If we embrace L2, then this case won't be counted as lying. However, Carson points out that L2 carries too much theoretical and practical burden, as he says, 'Using the term ''lying'' in accordance with this definition is likely to engender confusion. Defenders of L2 face a very strong burden of proof. Pragmatic considerations also seem to weigh against this definition of lying. L2 makes it impossible for us to determine whether or not certain acts are lies until we have first resolved difficult and controversial moral questions'.[648] Hence, L2 might not be an ideal choice.

As we mentioned previously, L1 entails that lying must contain the intent to deceive. Chisholm and Feehan provide a similar definition which also includes the feature of 'intent to deceive':

> [Person] *L lies to* [Person] *D* = df There is a proposition *p* such that (i) either *L* believe that *p* is not true or *L* believes that *p* is false and (ii) L asserts *p* to *D*.
>
> *L asserts p to D* = df *L* states *p* to *D* and does so under conditions which, he

[647] Carson, 2006, pp. 287-8.

[648] Carson, 2006, p. 288.

> believes, justify *D* in believing that he, *L*, not only accepts *p*, but also intends to contribute causally to *D*'s believing that he, *L*, accepts *p*.[649]

This definition is similar to L1 to some extent, namely, 'the intent to deceive' is a key component in the definition of 'lying'. Concerning this condition, Carson offers a counterexample. Suppose that Sid witnesses a crime scene and that he can identify the criminal. Later, Sid is required to attend in court as a witness. Before attending the court, Sid is threatened with death by the criminal, forcing him not to report the truth. Due to the fear of retaliation, Sid lies in court. In this case, according to Carson, Sid lies, not for the sake of deceiving anyone but due to his fear. Sid's primary concern is his own safety and that is why he lies. Hence, instead of intending to deceive the jury, Sid just makes a false statement in order to assure his own safety. Still, one could argue that, at least, Sid intends to make the jury believe that he believes his words are true. A little modification of the imaginary scenario can avoid this objection. We can add some specifications to this case: (i) A camera records Sid's presence at the crime scene. Therefore, there is no chance that the jury will believe that Sid believes his own testimony. (ii) Sid is promised that he will not be charged with perjury. (iii) Sid does not care about how others judge his character. With these three further conditions, in this case, we can preclude the possibility of Sid's intent to deceive anyone, since it would be absurd for you to form the intention to deceive someone when the person who you are trying to deceive knows whether you know the truth or not.

Discarding 'intent to deceive' as the necessary condition, Carson adds another feature to the definition—warrant. A preliminary version of this new definition is:

> L3. A person S tells a lie iff: 1. S makes a false statement x, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or, alternatively, S doesn't believe that x is true), and 3. S

[649] Carson, 2006, p. 291.

states in a context in which S thereby warrants the truth of x.[650]

Adopting L3, the witness case can be covered given that Sid warrants his testimony by swearing under oath. Whether or not some statements are warranted is highly sensitive to the context. Two points need to be clarified. First, (i) the speaker's intention is independent of her warrant of truth. Suppose that Sid will give two lectures at two different places. At place *A*, he is supposed to give a serious speech, while at place *B*, he is expected to give a hilarious talk. Unfortunately, Sid makes a mistake by giving a serious talk at *B* and a funny talk at *A*. On the one hand, even if he intends to offer a serious talk (with the intention to warrant), it doesn't count as a warrant when this happens in the occasion where a humorous talk is expected. On the other hand, giving a humorous talk when a serious one is expected does not mean that his words are not warranted. (ii) Whether or not a statement is warranted is not decided by whether or not the members of the audience believe the speaker warrants its truth to them. Suppose that Sid plans to attend a fiction sharing meeting. Unbeknownst to him, he goes into the wrong room where a real story sharing meeting is taking place. Sid's believing that the story is fabricated does not make these statements unwarranted.

According to L3, if Sid unintentionally tells a joke to the audience who expect the truth, then Sid lies. However, it would be absurd to take this situation as lying. So we should stipulate that the speaker should have awareness of the context that she warrants:

> L4. A person S tells a lie iff: 1. S makes a false statement x, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or, alternatively, S doesn't believe that x is true), 3. S states x in a context in which S thereby warrants the truth of x, and 4. S does not take

[650] Carson, 2006, p. 292.

herself to be not warranting the truth of what she says.[651]

There is one more thing that needs to be dealt with. Suppose S1 and S2 have different cultural backgrounds. It is possible that S's statements seem to be warranted to S1, but not to S2, concerning various culture differences. So we need to consider this problem. A final version is:

> L5. A person S tells a lie to another person S1 iff: 1. S makes a false statement x to S1, 2. S believes that x is false or probably false (or, alternatively, S doesn't believe that x is true), 3. S states x in a context in which S thereby warrants the truth of x to S1, and 4. S does not take herself to be not warranting the truth of what she says to S1.[652]

6.5 The Tension

As we shall see, it seems that conceptual analysis and conceptual tuning are contradictory. Accepting conceptual tuning entails rejecting craving for the universal. According to the tenet of conceptual tuning, all concepts are open to revision, and no exception is allowed. Therefore, the meanings of concepts cannot be perennial. In contrast, the aim of traditional conceptual analysis is to find a one-size-fits-all solution to understand the concept by providing a formula of definition consisting of jointly combined necessary conditions.

Conceptual tuning holds that the meaning of concepts does not sit still. The meaning of concepts is evolving. This feature of concepts is famously underscored by Wittgenstein. Hjalmar Wennerberg notes that, according to Wittgenstein, 'the classification of objects, or the subsuming of them under different terms, is an historical process, a process which has both a backward-looking and a

[651] Carson, 2006, p. 298.

[652] Carson, 2006, p. 298.

forward-looking aspect'.[653] Suppose that *X* is subsumed under the term *P* now. It is possible that *X* might not belong to *P* in the past or it might be excluded from *P* in the future. According to Wennerberg, the boundaries of concepts are vague. For instance, the concept 'western city' is usually defined in terms of geography. Thus, we can distinguish western cities from the eastern ones. But suppose that in the future, a city named 'Atlantis', though situated in the east, share many characteristic features with other western cities. How should we categorize it? The moral is that concepts are open-ended, and a fixed definition cannot be reached.

This problem is also highlighted in the philosophy of art. Arthur Danto endeavors to provide a real definition of 'art' by laying out necessary and sufficient conditions, and thereby settle down the boundary of art. However, as Danto notes, there are always some troublesome cases: 'My favorite example was Andy Warhol's Brillo Box, which looked sufficiently like actual Brillo cartons that one could not tell, from a photograph, which of them was which nor which was art and which was not'.[654] Danto expresses the tension between conceptual analysis and the new emerging phenomena as follows:

> When Judy Chicago first showed her Dinner Party in New York, "But is it art?" was the question of the day. Such controversies have unquestionably extended and deepened the concept of art, and except with reference to such work as Chicago's, it is difficult to imagine how the vaguely grasped concept can have been made more explicit.[655]

Similar thoughts can be found in other philosophers' works. For example, Richard Miller says that philosophical concepts evolve during times. We do not share exactly the same concepts with ancient philosophers:

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[653] Wennerberg, 1967, p. 115.

[654] Danto, 1998, p. 129.

[655] Danto, 1998, p. 136.

> As Nietzsche pointed out, the Homeric concept of a goodman (Achilles) is quite different from the Judeo-Christian concept of a good man. Nor is the Judeo-Christian tradition simple and uniform in itself. Nor have our notions of knowledge and opinion remained immutable from Plato's time to the present. The slow and continuing development of a legal system with elaborate norms for the justification of claims and the more rapid but also continuing development of epistemic norms within the scientific community complicate our intuitions about justification today.[656]

According to Miller, traditional analytic philosophy is a descriptive project, of which conceptual analysis is a quintessential method, in which intuition plays an important role. In the descriptive project, intuition is used when we need to choose a certain word to describe a situation. In this sense, intuition is our linguistic habits. We, as members of society, express our linguistic conventions through linguistic habits. If so, then intuition can be understood as the shadow of the linguistic convention. Miller is in favor of the *revisionary approach*. As a revisionary philosopher, Miller does not intend to describe the proper intuition. Rather, he criticizes the linguistic conventions which underlie our intuitions. The right way is to compare our linguistic convention with different rival conventions. A revisionary philosopher does not believe that interchangeable grounding concepts could exist. The concept of 'person' is one of the assumed grounding concepts. Yet, it can be understood in different ways: 'as essentially members of the species *Homo sapiens*, or as essential rational self-determining agents, or as beings capable of a self-concept, or as beings who have the potential to develop higher-order cognitive capacities'.[657] Therefore, it is mistaken to claim that concepts can be immune to revision.

Proposing a revisionary crusade, Miller faces the problem of fixing the criteria for

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[656] Millier, 2000, pp. 235-6.

[657] Millier, 2000, pp. 237-8.

how to choose among rival concepts[658]. The answer, as Miller states, is that concepts should be evaluated by their *utility*: 'How well do these concepts serve us in the attainment of our ends? Would other concepts serve us better?'.[659] The most obvious utility of concepts is to provide distinctions. However, some distinctions are useful, while others are useless. For example, the concept 'black' serves to distinguish black things from non-black things. So this distinction is useful. However, there are some useless concepts such as 'people whose grandfather is myopic'. Moreover, from the revisionary point of view, the problem of skepticism can be explained. According to radical skepticism, no belief can actually be justified. If we embrace this idea, it will turn out that the skeptic's distinction between justified belief and unjustified belief would be useless in practice. There are other examples in ethics. One prominent task of ethics is to distinguish right actions from wrong actions. Some rival options can be found, from which we can select the most *useful* one. Presumably, we should avoid doing what would harm others. For example, on the surface, white lies (telling a lie out of a benevolent motivation) don't cause harm to individuals. However, we must notice that the prevailing of white lies could endanger the foundation of our society. And according to utilitarianism, we should discourage white lies. Based on this consideration, utilitarianism seems to be a useful concept to distinguish the right from the wrong. A proper challenge to utilitarianism, from the revisionary perspective, is to point out the harmful results of utilitarian principles, and to tell us why Kantian ethics is more useful in distinguishing right actions from wrong actions.

Similarly, David Fassio and Robin Mckaenna (F&M) urge a revisionary epistemology. The descriptive approach to epistemology, which focuses on what knowledge is, is fiercely criticized by them. Conceptual analysis is deemed as a typical example of this descriptive approach. Instead of sticking to this old method, they propose to embrace

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[658] Obviously, it's a version of conceptual tuning.

[659] Millier, 2000, p. 238.

conceptual engineering:

> Much (though not all) philosophy is concerned with how we think about the world around us, and with 'analysing' concepts—figuring out their intensions, extensions and so on. But concepts are tools for making sense of the world and expressing truths about what is going on it. If it turns out that we are better able to talk about the world by changing our concepts—by modifying and improving our tools—then we have reason to do so.[660]

The motivation of F&M's revisionary project is that they think that the current criteria of knowledge are inconsistent: 'in a revisionary project we revise a concept we actually have *because* it is messy, or even incoherent'.[661] To replace the old concept of knowledge, they present their 'revisionary sensitive invariantism' version of knowledge, which arguably functions better than the traditional understanding of knowledge.

6.6 Conceptual Analysis as Conceptual Tuning

Conceptual analysis, on the one hand, is assumed to be the paradigm of the descriptive approach. On the other hand, conceptual tuning is a revisionary project. Thus, it seems that these two approaches are incompatible. By embracing conceptual tuning, should we fully reject the role of conceptual analysis? My answer is negative.

How can conceptual analysis be incorporated into conceptual tuning? An obvious answer is that the descriptive approach cannot be fully separated from the ameliorative approach, though the two approaches share divergent goals. F&M have made this point clearly:

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[660] Fassio and McKenna, 2015, p. 6.

[661] Fassio and McKenna, 2015, p. 7.

> One can't entirely separate the ameliorative aim from the descriptive. It is hard to improve something, such as language, without first finding out how it works. But, for someone like Carnap, finding out how language works is the start of the task, not the goal.[662]

To recap: according to Brun (2016), definition can play a role in the method of explication. The structure of explications and definitions are different. Definition has two parts: definiendum and definiens. Yet, explication has three parts: explicandum, explicatum and a characterization of the explicatum. And the characterization of the explicatum could be a definition[663]. We can draw a distinction between reportive definitions and stipulative definitions. Reportive definitions are supposed to capture the actual usage of the definiendum. In the method of explication, we usually adopt stipulative definitions, establishing a new use for the definiendum. The definitions that are integrated with the method of explication are named 'explicative definitions' by Brun. From this perspective, conceptual analysis and conceptual tuning can be seen as complementary rather than opposing.

Plunkett (2015) also acknowledges the role of conceptual analysis in his conceptual ethics, though he believes that conceptual analysis alone would not nail down the problem:

> Presumably we need some kind of grip on what a current concept is in order to judge that it is defective. Similarly, if we don't have a good understanding of what our new concept amounts to, why should we be so confident that the new one will be better? These kinds of thoughts point to an important role that conceptual analysis can play in a metalinguistic negotiation, and, indeed, in

[662] Fassio and McKenna, 2015, p. 6.

[663] But it's not necessary be a definition, since other ways of characterization are also allowed.

> thinking about conceptual ethics more generally.[664]

With these claims, it is plausible to claim that we can view conceptual analysis at least as a part of the method of conceptual tuning.

As I have argued, the first way to dissolve the tension is to make conceptual analysis one part of conceptual tuning. The second is to take the method of redefinition as a form of conceptual tuning. For example, Peter Railton advocates devising reforming definition as a philosophical method. Railton claims:

> [T]he drawing up of definitions is part of theory-construction, and so is to be assessed by asking (1) whether the analyses given satisfy appropriate constraints of intelligibility and function, and (2) whether the terms as analyzed contribute to the formulation and testing of worthwhile theories.[665].

What Railton means by definition is a definition in the sense of improving our current concepts. As Plunkett interprets it, 'Railton's reforming definitions aren't meant to be analyses of our current concepts. Rather, they are meant to be ways of *improving* on our current concepts for the purposes of doing serious explanatory work'.[666] In section 6.4, I discussed the case of 'lying'. In fact, in this case, we don't need to assume that a perfect ever-lasting definition is achievable. All we need is a currently useful definition. For example, L1 is more useful than a dictionary definition in explaining why we shouldn't count cases in which a person makes a false statement while at the same time believing this statement as lying. And L3 is more useful than L2, because it can explain the case in which the subject lies, even if she does not intend to deceive anyone. However, according to Carson, L5 would be the most preferable option, given that it is the most practical one to tackle a variety of

[664] Plunkett, 2015, p. 867.

[665] Railton, 1986, p. 204 (cited in Plunkett, 2015, p. 863).

[666] Plunkett, 2015, p. 863.

situations. This process of improvement, from L1 to L5, can be understood as a revisionary process. By rejecting our desire for generality, we can even expect more useful definitions, L6, L7, . . . , in the future.

Following this train of thought, the tension between conceptual analysis and OLP can be dissolved too. Consider the following case.

[a]

Sid: John says there are already millions of people there, we need to hurry up.

Nancy: Yeah, he's lying, why doesn't he say trillions?

[b]

Sid: My father is a business man.

Nancy: Your father is a gangster.

Sid: That's a lie!

As we have learnt from OLP, in colloquial words, a one-size-fits-all definition is a chimera. For example, suppose L5 is a widely accepted definition of 'lying'. However, in case [a], it's not necessarily the case that Nancy's application of 'lying' conforms to this definition. In fact, in context [a], it's more plausible to understand 'lying' in terms of 'exaggerate' or 'bluff'. It makes more sense to understand Nancy's words as an exclamation, rather than a description. Not every conversation in everyday life can be judged in terms of truth conditions. Similar to case [b], it would be more sensible to understand Sid's claim as 'that's impossible!'. Let us now consider the case [c].

[c]

Sid: John says that Philadelphia's murder rate is increasing terribly.

Nancy: That's a lie.

Sid: No, that's not a lie because we should never take John's words literally.

Even if we admit that it's not necessary to have a definition to understand word meanings in everyday conversations, a definition can be useful in many situations. Suppose in case [c], John is a president. Then it would be critical to judge whether John lies or not. Usually, a simple fact-check could solve the problem, However, not all cases are so straightforward, which means that sometimes we need a more advanced and sophisticated tool to make the judgment—a well-conceived purpose can serve the purpose. In other cases, it's not obviously easy to distinguish 'lie' from 'bullshit'[667]. A definition can be useful to some extent. Nevertheless, as a proposer of conceptual tuning, the bottom line is that I don't require that the definition be a fixed one. In other words, the definition should be always open to revision in order to serve a better purpose.

Charles Leslie Stevenson's 'persuasive definition' is also a way of making conceptual analysis and conceptual tuning compatible. Basically, his approach is an attempt to change the direction of people's interests by giving a new conceptual meaning to a concept while keeping its emotive meaning. The definition is *persuasive* because it is supposed to dissuade people from accepting one conceptual meaning and induce them to embrace another one.

Stevenson discusses an example, 'cultured'. Suppose that 'cultured' means 'widely read and acquainted with the arts' in society *A*, and such definition is widely accepted. Moreover, 'culture' is always used in a commendable sense, which means that 'culture' has a positive emotive meaning in society *A*. Suppose Sid, in contrast to the other members in society *A*, thinks that the conceptual meaning of 'culture' is

[667] For instance, as Harry G. Frankfurt says: 'For most people, the fact that a statement is false constitutes in itself a reason, however weak and easily overridden, not to make the statement. For Saint Augustine's pure liar it is, on the contrary, a reason in favor of making it. For the bullshitter it is in itself neither a reason in favor nor a reason against. Both in lying and in telling the truth people are guided by their beliefs concerning the way things are. These guide them as they endeavor either to describe the world correctly or to describe it deceitfully. For this reason, telling lies does not tend to unfit a person for telling the truth in the same way that bullshitting tends to' (Frankfurt 2009, 59-60).

‘imaginative sensitivity’, albeit ‘culture’ has never been used in this way in their society. However, the purpose of Sid’s new conceptual meaning of ‘culture’ is to redirect people’s interests, urging people not to apply ‘cultured’ only to those who are well read and have good taste in art, but to use it to compliment those who possess imaginative sensitivity.

According to Stevenson, persuasive definition is also pervasively applied in philosophy. For example, Spinoza attempted to give ‘God’ a new conceptual meaning, shifting people’s attention from the old anthropomorphic fictitious understanding of God to the new one in which God should be understood in terms of substance. Another typical example is the term ‘meaning’. Positivism is notorious for defining ‘meaning’ as either verifiable or analytic. The consequence of this definition is that metaphysical propositions are meaningless, since they cannot be verified and they are not analytic truth. However, this persuasive definition is contentious. With this narrow definition, the upshot is that ‘science alone will receive this laudatory title, and metaphysics the correspondingly derogatory one of “nonsense”’.[668] Depriving metaphysics of meaning needs more justification: ‘If metaphysics is wholly to give place to science in our esteem, this can come only from a closer scrutiny of both metaphysics and science’.[669] A similar case would be ‘poet’. Nineteenth-century critics intended to deprive Alexander Pope of the title of ‘poet’ because they didn’t believe his works were sufficiently qualified for such a title, compared with the works of Shakespeare or Milton, for instance. The persuasive definition could be polemic, and if so, we need to negotiate whether to adopt it or not. That’s exactly what we do when engaging in conceptual tuning.

One last thing I want to propose is that definition reforming does not necessary lead to a new definition. For example, in his paper ‘The Semantic Definition of Literature’,

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[668] Stevenson, 1938, p. 339.

[669] Stevenson, 1938, p. 341.

Colin A. Lyas proposes to reform a definition of 'literature' formulated by Monroe C. Beardsley. Beardsley defines it as follows:

> A literary work is a discourse in which an important part of the meaning is implicit. Tentatively, therefore, we may say that literature is well defined as discourse with important implicit meaning.[670]

Lyas argues that this definition is problematic. For instance, suppose Sid says 'I will meet thee at ten' in a conversation with Nancy. Obviously, the primary meaning of 'thee' in this claim is to refer the person who is being addressed, while it also has the implicit meaning that Sid must belong to some religious group. As Lyas points out, if we grasp this implicit meaning of Sid's 'thee', then we would not say things such as 'Like hell you will' to Sid, to avoid possible religious offense. Therefore, it seems that Beardsley's definition also applies to everyday conversations. Beardsley's definition suggests that multiple meaning (primary meaning and implicit meaning) be the defining feature of 'literature', but, in fact, multiple meaning is not a distinctive feature possessed by literature. It is also important in everyday discourse. To justify his definition, Lyas needs to explain in what he means by 'importance'. Or, to refute this definition, we can simply give a counterexample—a piece of work that has literary qualities whilst lacking implicit meaning. Moreover, literature should be in terms of merit qualities, while, as Lyas indicates, 'Multiple meaning may give rise to merits or defects. If this is the case, however, mere multiple meaning is not sufficient to guarantee that we have a case of literature'.[671]

Instead of offering a revised definition, Lyas proposes a new way of understanding literature. According to Lyas, literature is supposed to be an approval term. Calling something literature is usually to compliment it for its various merit features, and

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[670] Beardsley, 1958, pp. 126-7 (cited in Lyas, 1969, p. 84).

[671] Lyas, 1969, p. 93.

these features could be 'compact, rich, enchanting, sophisticated, simple, charming, somber, elegant, thrilling, witty, moving, well-constructed, well proportioned, measured, vivacious, perceptive, and sensitive'.[672] Lyas says:

> But the mere fact that it has implicit meaning does not of itself constitute a merit of the work, and for that reason it is not possible to take the presence of implicit meaning as a mark of the literary character of a work. Instead we have to fall back onto giving an account of literature in terms of the numerous qualities for which we praise discourses, some of which may depend on the fact that a work has multiple meaning.[673]

In sum, conceptual analysis should be complementary to conceptual tuning. There are primarily two ways of breaking this tension. First, to incorporate conceptual analysis as a part of conceptual tuning since it can play a role in this method. Second, the process of definition reforming itself can be understood as conceptual tuning. Moreover, definition reforming should not be limited to the form of providing a new definition.

[672] Lyas, 1969, p. 82.

[673] Lyas, 1969, p. 94.

Chapter 7 The Value of Philosophy

> Play, as we see it, is any activity which takes place entirely for its own sake, independently of its effects and consequences. — Moritz Schlick

The title of this chapter is drawn from the title of the last chapter of Bertrand Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy*. In the Introduction, I noted that *philosophy as game* is one of the answers to the question of 'what philosophy is'. I will be focusing on this view in the present chapter. Most of the previous chapters are devoted to answer the question of 'how to do philosophy'. In this chapter, I will address the question of 'what philosophy is' and 'what the value of philosophy is' by proposing the view of *philosophy as game* as one which links these two metaphilosophical questions.

Some might believe, according to Russell, that philosophy only concerns 'useless trifling, hair-splitting distinctions, and controversies on matters concerning which knowledge is impossible'.[674] Against this view, Russell holds that philosophy is valuable:

> Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.[675]

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[674] Russell, 2001, p. 89.

[675] Russell, 2001, pp. 93-4.

However, Russell's description is focused on the intrinsic value of philosophy, while many still would question whether philosophy has any instrumental value. A prevailing view is that philosophy is useless, compared with say, natural science. Or some might argue that academic philosophy is alienated from the outside world; it is not connected with our daily practice. Therefore, it bears zero practical significance. I will attempt to address these issues through analyzing the relationship between 'philosophy' and 'game playing' in this chapter.

This chapter focuses on the relation between 'philosophy' and 'games' and argues that most of philosophy is a form of game-playing. Two approaches are considered: Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance and Suits' analytic definition of a game. Both approaches support the assertion that the relationship is a close, if not categorical, one but it is the ludic attitude that is the ultimate determinant.

Suits took up Wittgenstein's challenge that the concept of a game could not be analytically defined. He attempted to demonstrate otherwise and therefore both approaches are used in our analysis.

7.1 The Family Resemblance

Wittgenstein's concept of 'family resemblance' contends that entities that belong to a particular concept may not share any common feature (thus defeating an analytic definition) but instead share a resemblance. In identifying which entities belong to which concept, Wittgenstein advises us: 'don't think, but look' and continues: 'the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail'[676]. He concludes:

[676] Wittgenstein, 2009, § 66.

> I can think of no better expression to characterise these similarities than 'family resemblance'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way, And I shall say: 'games form a family'.[677]

Wittgenstein's paradigm case of family resemblance is that of 'game'. While it may not appear that there are any features common to all games, it is the case that all activities that can be called games share a set of features between them. Following Wittgenstein's advice, we will look at whether there are any family resemblances between philosophical activities and games; does the act of philosophizing resemble that of game-playing?

At first glance, it appears not to be the case. Philosophy is a serious enterprise that aims to discover truth. Playing games in contrast is frivolous and non-serious, and the rules of play are often informal and change over time. Even when the rules of games are more strictly enforced, they are often bent and manipulated in order to provide the player with an advantage. And whilst gamesmanship is generally ethically frowned upon, it is arguably a skill in sport and considered part of the game (Ryall 2016). It is recognized as such because of the non-serious and trivial nature of game-playing. Playing games is not a matter of truth-seeking, and the rules merely exist to enable the game to be played. They have no other purpose. In this sense, the acceptance of gamesmanship can be seen as a form of sophistry which is the antithesis of philosophy as the search for wisdom. And yet, there are similarities between the two. Sophistry is a form of (albeit bad) philosophy, and has been used frequently in the history of philosophy, as Johan Huizinga (1949) noted in his analysis of play. Historically, the Sophists' purpose was to both demonstrate a wealth of knowledge and to defeat rivals in public contest. Renowned Sophists were treated in the same

[677] Wittgenstein, 2009, §67.

manner as athletic heroes: 'It was pure play, catching your opponent in a net of argument or giving him a knock-out blow. It was a point of honor to put nothing but twisters, to which every answer must be wrong'.[678] The Sophists were well aware that they were playing-games with their foes, and held the same ludic attitude in their game-playing that wrestlers held when facing each other on the dirt arena. Even Socrates and Plato, who rejected the rationale of philosophy as game-playing for its own sake, used their game-playing methods in order to highlight their errors. As Huizinga notes, 'Plato was not above borrowing their loose, easy manner of dialogue. For, much as he deepened philosophy, he still saw it as a noble game'.[679]

This competitive game-playing feature of philosophical argument is also salient in scholasticism and the mediaeval university, which Huizinga argued as 'profoundly agonistic and ludic'[680], and the resemblance can be traced through modern times too, perhaps most obviously with the twentieth century 'linguistic turn' and the preoccupations of those in the Vienna Circle on what are often derided as trivial philosophical problems.

Similar comparisons have been made between philosophy and games of riddles. Dilthey asserts that 'philosophers are chiefly and directly addressed to the riddle of the world and of life'[681] whilst Kuhn[682]identifies philosophy as riddle solving in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. He argues: 'It is, I think, particularly in periods of acknowledged crisis that scientists have turned to philosophical analysis as a device for unlocking the riddles of their field'.[683] Riddles by their nature are problems that are approached with a particular playful attitude; an attitude which resembles much of

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678 Huizinga, 1949, p. 171.

679 Huizinga, 1949, p. 180.

680 Huizinga, 1949, p. 180.

681 Dilthey, 1954, p. 8.

682 Cf, Kuhn, 1996.

683 Kuhn, 1996, p. 88.

philosophy, as noted by Peter Baufu:

> if there is seriousness (e.g., the serious business of those in analytic philosophy to understand the central topics and problems in regard to language aforecited), there is playfulness (e.g., the playful part of those in analytic philosophy, when different philosophers play around with different positions, often conflicting and even contradictory, so as to test and see which ones resolve the issue and problem in question).[684]

Wittgenstein's consideration of games included those that can be categorized as 'language-games'. Philosophy is in some respects an exemplar of such a game since it is conducted through the means of language. Wittgenstein argued that understanding language-games enables us to get past the temptation of being mesmerized by language and leading us into philosophical confusion. He claimed it is language that leads us to perceive philosophical problems where there are none, merely because of the way we isolate language from its context and then wonder why it has such odd consequences.

The resemblance between philosophy and game-playing can also be seen in the way in which skills are developed through practice. John Wilson[685]describes this 'skill polishing' aspect of philosophy and uses the analogy of playing a good game of football and engaging in philosophical argument. The ability to analyze concepts is an essential skill of philosophy that is developed through practice and good coaching. Wilson argues that knowing how to think with concepts resembles learning to play a game. It requires an understanding of the object or purpose, plenty of practice, and the ability to listen to, and heed, good advice. Ryall[686]and Thomson[687]also indicate the

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[684] Baofu, 2012, p. 221.

[685] Cf. Wilson, 2013.

[686] Cf. Ryall, 2010.

[687] Cf. Thomson, 2003.

similarity between critical thinking and game playing, in the sense that one can only become better and more successful if one spends time and effort in understanding the rules and practicing one's skills.

The aforementioned are a few 'first-look' resemblances between philosophy and game-playing. Arguably, if we keep looking, more common features could be found, such as: the appreciation of honor, being rule-governed, and so on. If Wittgenstein is right about family resemblance, given all these similarities, it is legitimate to identify philosophy as a game. However, the notion of family resemblance is controversial. Colin McGinn[688]has provided several challenges to this approach. He specifies that providing one necessary condition of game playing is enough to falsify Wittgenstein's claim that games cannot be defined because Wittgenstein claims that no single commonality can be found for all games. McGinn illustrates some possible candidates: to be a game is to resemble other games along some dimension or other; they are all intentional activities and as such goal-directed. Moreover, he argues that family resemblance is neither sufficient nor necessary. Though many similarities can be observed between philosophy and games as aforementioned, we can still reject the notion of philosophy as a game since the family resemblance account is not strict enough. McGinn comments on Wittgenstein: 'He wanted to account for the vagueness and open-endedness of the concept (as he saw it), so he kept the conditions for membership loose; but the danger is that the conditions are *so* loose that virtually anything will end up counting as a game—including things that are palpably not games'.[689] We will return to this point later in our consideration of the ludic attitude. But for McGinn, the problem with the notion of resemblance is that any number of resemblances can be identified between two or more objects depending on how the phenomenon is being viewed. As such, the family resemblance approach might not be

[688] Cf. McGinn, 2012.

[689] McGinn, 2012, p. 29.

strong enough to vindicate the claim that philosophy is a game. In rejecting Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance, McGinn turns to the definition supplied by Bernard Suits.

7.2 Suits' Definition

Suits rejected Wittgenstein's belief that nothing could be found in common with all games and attempted to come up with a definition of game-playing to prove him wrong. The short version of Suits' analytic definition is: 'Playing a game is the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles'[690], while the longer version specifies the *prelusory goal*, the *lusory means,* the *constitutive rules*, and the *lusory attitude*.

The prelusory goal is the goal that designates the aim of that particular game, and therefore does not include supplementary or auxiliary goals such as winning, enjoyment, or making friends So the goal of football is to get the ball in the net; in chess, to checkmate; in running races, to cross the finish line. The means, in contrast, specify how the goal can be attained and must be inherently inefficient, hence 'unnecessary obstacles'. In this, game playing is contrasted with working which, as Suits denotes, is a technical activity 'in which an agent seeks to employ the most efficient available means for reaching a desired goal'.[691] The means are governed by rules which specify how the game is to be played, whilst the lusory attitude requires players to recognize and accept the rules of the game merely to allow the game to exist:

> To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs [prelusory goal], using only means permitted by rules [lusory means], where the rules

[690] Suits, 2014, p. 43.

[691] Suits, 2014, p. 24.

> prohibit use of more efficient in favour of less efficient means [constitutive rules], and where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity [lusory attitude].[692]

The question then is: does the activity of philosophy meet these conditions?

First, does philosophy have a prelusory goal? This question may be difficult to answer convincingly since the general socio-cultural conception of philosophy is that it is not a game, at least not in the same way that football is. A goal is only a prelusory goal if it is self-contained – that is, if it is recognised as the purpose of the game to start with. This may then point to a problem with Suits' notion of prelusory goal, since it is only designated as such if the activity in question is already determined to be a game. In which case, it puts the cart before the horse. A counter-argument to this is whether a greater purpose to the prelusory goal can be identified. In the game of golf, the prelusory goal is to get the ball into the hole and this event seems to be sufficiently trivial and pointless outside of the activity itself: getting a ball into a hole serves no purpose and has no context outside the game of golf. In philosophy however, the goal is generally considered much more important and worthy. It is seen (at least by serious philosophers) as a search for truth or the gaining of knowledge. For a prelusory goal to be identified, its fundamental purpose would need to be self-referential. This might be the case if one thought the concepts of truth or knowledge were interminable and merely dependent on rhetoric, i.e. that philosophy had no other point than participating in the activity itself - but such a position may undermine itself since it would need defending philosophically to begin with. But for those who are willing to accept a bit of leniency here, we might say that the prelusory goal in the game of philosophy is the successful defence of a claim. That is, to convince others of the merits of a particular argument. In analytic circles, this would

[692] Suits, 2014, p. 43.

be the production of a sound conclusion via truthful premises. Nevertheless, the question of whether philosophy can be said to have a prelusory goal is perhaps more dependent on the intrinsic or instrumental value that it is given. This is a point to which we will return in more detail later.

Putting the clear identification of a prelusory goal to one side for the moment, we next turn to the rules and means. Suits argued that the ends and the means of a game are inseparable. That is, the end (the prelusory goal) only makes sense when viewed in accordance with the means to achieve it. For it to be a game, the means must be inefficient. In the game of golf, the way to achieve the prelusory goal of getting the ball into the hole is via the use of designated clubs. If the prelusory goal of the 'game of philosophy' is the successful defence of a claim, there must be more or less efficient ways to reach that goal. More efficient ways may be via the use of rhetorical devices, threats of violence, appeal to charisma, or asserting a claim whilst preventing any further discussion. In contrast, a less efficient way is via the construction of logical argument and considered thought that takes into account criticism and counter-argument. The rules are the way in which the means can be correctly applied, i.e. through non-fallacious reasoning such as denying the consequent or affirming the antecedent, the use of *ad hominen*, and appeal to authority, amongst others.

The last element of Suits' definition to be considered in relation to philosophy is that of the lusory attitude. Could it be argued that philosophers accept that they are engaged in the activity of philosophy merely for its own sake? The vast majority of professional philosophers are academics working in universities or educational institutions. The activity of philosophy is part of their daily employment. Suits distinguishes between the amateur who plays the game for the love of it and the professional who plays for money: 'by amateurs I mean those for whom playing the game is an end in itself, and by professionals I mean those who have in view some

further purpose which is achievable by playing the game'.[693] The question then becomes whether one is really game-playing if one is doing it for an end other than itself? Despite this distinction, Suits stated that 'game playing' is not exclusive to amateurs. In a game, the player accepts the rules *just because* such acceptance makes game playing possible. There are two ways of interpreting this: 'A just because of R' - (1) 'R is always a reason for doing A, and there *can* be no other reason for doing A', or (2) 'R is always a reason for doing A, and there *need* be no other reason for doing A'.[694] It is the latter interpretation of the lusory attitude that Suits is in favour of. So on this account, the professional is still playing a game despite being paid to play it. The fact that one is paid can be considered alongside other auxiliary goals or motivations for engaging in games, such as being sociable, getting fit, or raising money for charity. As such, just because philosophers might philosophize for a number of reasons, such as earning money or gaining a reputation, it does not necessarily preclude them being game-players.

7.3 The Challenge

As noted at the outset, philosophy at 'first look' does not appear to be a game. It is a serious enterprise that aims at (re)solving problems and searching for truth. Yet, one of the perennial criticisms of philosophy and of the work of philosophers is that it is insignificant and without practical application. Indeed, this forms the basis of Daniel Dennett's criticism in his article 'Higher-order truths about chmess'. In it, he argues that most philosophy is akin to chmess. Chmess is a game similar to chess but with one rule difference: the king can move two squares in one direction, rather than one (the actual rule difference is immaterial). Both chess and chmess contain an infinite number of *a priori* truths about the way in which the game can legally be played and the outcomes that will result. Since chess is well established, aficionados and

[693] Suits, 2014, p. 154.

[694] Suits, 2014, p. 156.

proponents of the game have spent considerable time identifying and describing these truths to allow a greater enjoyment of the game and to develop their skills in playing it. On the other hand, since chmess is a recent invention, our knowledge is limited and considerable time and effort would be required to understand the game and how it can be played. In this sense, philosophy does resemble that of game-playing. Training in chmess, as in philosophy, is a matter of 'learning the moves that have been tried and tested'.[695] Dennett provides the example of Professor Goofmaker to illustrate. Goofmaker is an eminent and successful figure in this game who provides the inspiration for others to follow. Students of the game both learn how to emulate Professor Goofmaker but also to avoid her mistakes. And through this teaching and learning, a young player becomes proficient in claim/move, counter claim/move, counter-counter claim/move, and so on. But this training and the process of argument and counter-argument merely serves to allow the game to exist and to continue existing. It serves no purpose other than the playing of the game itself.

The reason that Dennett argues that philosophy is akin to the game of chmess is that we have a habit of developing new versions of similar, older problems that are equally infinite and interminable. And many of these only engage a handful of earnest and enthusiastic minds. As such, philosophy has a tendency of appealing to the few who are engaged and knowledgeable enough about the problem to be able to take part in the discussion. Dennett does not explicitly argue that philosophy is a game – merely that students ought to be careful which problems they choose to focus upon – but the case that philosophers are (merely!) playing games can still be made.

Mulligan et al., in 'What's Wrong with Contemporary Philosophy', supports Dennett's criticism. They point to the range of puzzles in the recent history of analytic philosophy, such as 'gavagai', 'rigid designation', and 'possible worlds', that leaves

[695] Dennett, 2006, p. 40.

us with 'a trail of unresolved problems'.[696] Such puzzle forming and solving practice is like an ever-lasting game and arguably a form of Sophistry:

> The quickest way to a career in the competitive world of modern [analytic philosophy] is to pick a puzzle in a trendy area– be it vagueness, modal counterparts, rigid designation, 'the hard problem' or the elimination of truth – and come up with hitherto unsuspected twist in the dialectic, earning a few more citations in one or another of the on-going games of fashionable philosophical ping-pong.[697]

Such a view is shared by Kitcher who notes that the problem for philosophy can be seen in the different methods (and outcomes) between it and the natural sciences. Whilst scientific claims and evidence are initially contested, the methods scientists use appear to allow for steady progress and general consensus, something which is rarely achieved in philosophy. In contrast, philosophical methods result in a diluting and dispersal of key problems:

> as philosophical questions diminish in size, disagreement and controversy persist, new distinctions are drawn, and yet tinier issues are generated. Decomposition continues downwards, until the interested community becomes too exhausted, too small, or too tired to play the game any further.[698]

This leads to one of the more obvious challenges against the claim that philosophy fulfills Suits' definition of a game. A game, according to Suits, has a clearly defined pre-lusory goal which we initially suggested was the formulating of a conclusion by recourse to linguistic and logical argument. And yet, it seems that there is no way to 'win' in philosophy. The game is interminable.

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[696] Mulligan et al., 2006, p. 64.

[697] Mulligan et al., 2006, p. 65.

[698] Kitcher, 2011, p. 251.

There are two ways that this challenge could be counteracted. The first response is to argue that philosophical debate is a series of games in which each instance of debate produces a winner. In this sense, it resembles a league table with the most eminent and successful philosophers (or philosophical arguments) at the top with less credible philosophers (or arguments) languishing at the bottom. Yet this seems unconvincing since the conclusion of a single 'game' of philosophy is unclear. In chess, the end is clear when checkmate is achieved, in football, when the final whistle blows after 90 minutes (or after penalties), and in running, when the first competitor has passed the finish line. In contrast, philosophy has no clear way to determine the winner.

The second response then is to compare the game of philosophy to open-ended (or infinite) games such as 'cops and robbers' or 'cowboys and indians'. Suits allowed for the genus of open games in his definition since he argued that the pre-lusory goal of these types of games is to keep the game going in the attempt to achieve a particular state of affairs. For instance, in the game of ping-pong rally, the pre-lusory goal is to maintain the rally for as long as possible. In theory, this could be days, weeks, or years. Similarly, in the game of 'cops and robbers' the aim is to maintain the characters and story-line. Whilst Suits' classification of open-games has been rejected by many of his supporters as conceptually mistaken, it nevertheless provides a defense to the criticism of philosophy as having no pre-lusory goal. As such, the pre-lusory goal of philosophy- to reach a conclusion- does not prescribe a set number of moves in which they must get there. The game can go on for as long as the players want it to do so. This necessitates the lusory attitude.

7.4 The Problem of Value

The lusory attitude is the willing acceptance of unnecessary and inefficient means. Yet it also highlights the paradoxical aspect of game-playing: the issue of value. As noted, people who engage in game-playing are criticized for wasting time that could (or

should) be spent on more worthy pursuits such as discovering the cure for cancer, feeding starving children and ending war. Games are an indulgence that gets in the way of more important tasks.

And yet Suits (or his main protagonist, Grasshopper) argues that this misunderstands the value of game-playing. In utopia, all instrumental activities would become obsolete – there would be no need to earn money for food as whatever food we wanted would be freely available; there would be no need for medicine since all illness would be eliminated – and the only activities left would be those that are done for their own sake. According to Suits, game-playing is the only activity that fulfills this condition.

The problem with this conception of utopia however is that intrinsic activities leave us dissatisfied. This is exemplified by Suits through the cases of John Seeker and William Striver both of whom become bored at having all desires immediately fulfilled and never having to work for anything. As a result, John Seeker becomes a scientist in the attempt to discover truths for himself and William Striver becomes a craftsman who sets out to build himself a house. Both of these endeavors are unnecessary (since the former could be 'Googled' – to put a modern-day spin on it – and the latter would appear at the press of a button), but both provide these men with meaning in their lives. And so Grasshopper is forced to conceide a psychological fact:

> most people will not want to spend their lives playing games. Life for most people will not be worth living if they cannot believe that they are doing *something* useful, whether it is providing for their families or formulating a theory of relativity.[699]

Meaning is found in life not through playing-games but in doing things that people

[699] Suits, 2014, p. 196.

believe will lead to something more worthwhile. In other words, through instrumental activities that lead to an outcome.

Yet this highlights a paradox. Instrumental activities are only valued since they lead to something which is purportedly more valued, which suggests that there is a final end that is being aspired to. And yet this final intrinsic end is dissatisfying since it lacks any further instrumental value.

Hurka stresses this point by asking us to compare 'political activity that liberates an entire nation from oppression' with 'winning a high-level chess tournament'.[700] The former is judged as more worthy 'because game-playing has a trivial end result, it cannot have the additional intrinsic value that derives from instrumental value. This implies that excellence in games, though admirable, is less [admirable] than success in equally challenging activities that produce a great good or prevent a great evil'.[701]

Suits agrees by providing his case of George the dedicated golfer: George is so obsessed with golf that he neglects his wife and family. His wife complains that George has his priorities wrong. For George's wife, a game is something that should not be valued above other things in life, such as spending time with and supporting his family. As Suits says, there seems to be something particularly problematic about games in that they are trivial and unproductive. Had George's life been taken over by doing good works or finding the cure for cancer, his wife may have been more sympathetic.

Suits' definition is arguably insightful yet the lusory attitude seems to be a double edged sword. As it has been defined so far, every activity could be defined as a game if the subjective agent views it as such. For example, 'avoiding plagiarism' is an

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[700] Hurka, 2006, p. 233.

[701] Hurka, 2006, pp. 233-4.

essential rule of philosophical writing. Abiding by this rule is generally accepted because it is considered morally wrong to plagiarize. But under Suits' condition, the 'game player' would not accept this rule because it is morally wrong but because it is a rule of the game and therefore must be followed in order to play it. In this sense, the lusory attitude is acceptable as long as the game being played is acceptable. Or in other words, play is only acceptable when all our (important) work has been done. Treating something as a game when it is considered a moral (or more serious) matter suggests that it is not given the due respect that it deserves.

The problem of seriousness is further explored by Suits' case of Mario, the dedicated racing driver who takes the game of racing so seriously that he will always abide by its rules so that the integrity of the game is not compromised. Mario knows the rules (in getting from point A to point B before other the drivers) are unnecessary but holds the (lusory) attitude that to play the game, the rules must be followed. However, in the next race a child runs out in front of his car. Since Mario is a serious game-player and is determined to abide by the rules of the game, including the rule that states that all players must remain on the track, the child is killed - to the horror of spectators and other 'game players' alike who believe that whilst it is right to follow rules in games, these rules do not override other moral rules, such as the rule that states that we should not kill innocent children. As such, it is acceptable to play a game only when there are no more important matters to attend to.

Similarly, philosophers are often accused of being self-indulgent and of engaging in debates that have no real purpose other than to continue the discussion despite the fact that most of them would maintain that they were doing very serious and important work. Indeed, the point of Dennett's paper is to warn students against being lured into 'artifactual puzzles of no abiding significance'.[702] Wittgenstein too, recognised the

[702] Dennett, 2006, p. 39.

bewitching power of philosophical problems, and encouraged his students to avoid it. And yet, seeing philosophy in this way seems to devalue what is generally considered the highest form of enquiry. It would be much better to argue that philosophy is useful in that it aims to (re)solve problems in the same way as science and medicine do: it has an instrumental and therefore worthy purpose. A response to this may suggest a domain-specific approach in relation to the value of philosophy. Some domains might not have instrumental value, and these are the areas that Dennett warns against. On the other hand, areas such as applied ethics do seem to have practical significance in relation to other aspects of our daily lives and to other disciplines, such as medicine, business and education. The appropriateness of treating philosophy as a game might depend on the philosophical domain that is being engaged with. This may then help to explain why the identification of a prelusory goal in the game of philosophy was problematic. For an activity to be culturally valued, it must be seen as holding an instrumental purpose. It is unsurprising that professional philosophers are reluctant to admit that they are not doing serious work that holds equal value to a scientist researching the cure for cancer.

There is a further response to the problem of value in game-playing which focuses on the appreciation of difficulty. Suits captures two distinctive features of games, noted by Hurka: the value of difficulty and our willingness to appreciate (accept) it. First, the constitutive factors that entail a *good* game, rather than just a game, need to ensure that the level of difficulty in attaining the voluntary goal is sufficient to both motivate one to attempt it, but also to acknowledge that without effort one may fail. An impossible game is not worth playing, whilst a goal that is too easy becomes boring. The best games are those that test our mettle to the full but at which we can eventually succeed. This leads Hurka to modify Suits' concept of the lusory attitude to 'accepting the rules not just because they make the game possible, but also because they make it

difficult'.[703] As such, Suits' first three conditions – the rules, means and prelusory goal - make games an intrinsic activity, whilst the lusory attitude makes it an intrinsically *good* activity. As Hurka puts it: 'if something is intrinsically good, the positive attitude of loving it for the property that makes it good, that is, desiring, pursuing and taking pleasure in it for that property, is also, and separately, intrinsically good'.[704]

These two distinctive features are shared by playing a game of philosophy. Reading and understanding great philosophers, avoiding plagiarism, formulating complicated arguments, employing technical terms, etc., make philosophy difficult. In ordinary life, there is no need to do such things – and indeed, most people don't. Accepting that our environment is as we perceive it (rather than a form of the Matrix) or having faith in the existence of God is more 'efficient' than providing a logical and coherent argument through reading, thinking and arguing. Philosophers voluntarily accept these rules because they appreciate this value of difficulty in philosophy. It is doubtful that the construction of reality is as much of a persistent problem for philosophers as they would have us believe. When they are on their holidays, having their dinner, dealing with their teenage children, or checking their pay-slip, matters of ontology and metaphysics are not pressing concerns. As Walker Percy quipped in reference to deconstructionists who argue that words do not relate to anything in the world, 'a deconstructionist is an academic who claims that texts have no referents and then leaves a message on his wife's answering machine asking her to order a pepperoni pizza for dinner'.[705]

One way of resolving this conundrum is to employ Hurka's conception of 'modern value'. This rejects the Aristotelian or teleological version of kinēsis with its focus

[703] Hurka, 2006, p. 227.

[704] Hurka, 2006, pp. 227-8.

[705] Percy (cited in Pinker, 2002, p. 209).

upon ends, and argues it is the means of reaching the end rather than the end in itself which is of importance: 'the value of a kinēsis must derive from that of its goal, so its value is subordinate, and even just instrumental to that of the goal'.[706] For Hurka, game playing is the clearest expression of this:

> Game-playing must have some external goal one aims at, but the specific features of this goal are irrelevant to the activity's value, which is entirely one of process rather than product, journey rather than destination. This is why playing in games gives the clearest expression of a modern as against a classical view of value - because the modern view centres on the value of process.[707]

This is arguably also the value of philosophy, and is supported by McGinn when he argues that in philosophy, 'the journey matters as much as the destination'.[708] Perhaps surprisingly Dennett accepts this too when he states 'chess is a deep and important human artifact, about which much of value has been written'.[709] This highlights the paradox over the question which is, and has always been, a central concern of philosophy, that of the meaning of life. Utopia, as Suits' Grasshopper realized, is logically incoherent. Meaning in life is founded on the belief that there is something worth striving for, and yet psychologically, humans struggle to find meaning in striving for ends which are intrinsic in themselves.

In Suits' case of William Seeker and John Striver, they needed to believe that they were doing something instrumentally worthwhile. We might say they are guilty of 'bad faith' or cognitive dissonance but that this is necessary for them to feel that their lives are worth living. Philosophy, too, may be an activity whereby we need to believe that we are doing something useful, even if ultimately we know we are not.

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[706] Hurka, 2006, p. 230.

[707] Suits, 2014, p. 17.

[708] McGinn, 2012, p. 148.

[709] Dennett, 2006, p. 40.

This returns us to Suits' final criterion, the lusory attitude, and perhaps this is where the notion of philosophy as a game is most likely to fail. To play a game, one must accept that one is playing a game. One cannot play a game accidentally. This is the key element in it being an intrinsic activity and not an instrumental one. Despite the criticisms leveled at philosophers for navel-gazing, there are many good arguments to demonstrate that philosophy can have instrumental use in making us feel as if we are solving important problems. As Mellor notes, there is no doubt that science is useful in improving agriculture, public health and medicine. But other social goods 'like the end of slavery, the protection of children, the spread of education, democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights, fair and honest trade, and so on' are mostly owing to philosophy.[710]

It is perhaps therefore the lusory attitude which is the most important consideration in answering the question as to whether philosophy is a game. As in Wittgenstein's comments on the duck-rabbit illusion, whether we see a duck or rabbit depends on our perspective. Equally, seeing philosophy as a game is dependent on our (lusory) attitude towards it. Those involved in the pursuit of philosophy generally do not see themselves as engaging in a game. In the same way that Grasshopper was forced to concede that for the Strivers and Seekers, life was only meaningful if they believed that they were not playing games, we too, are forced to accept that this is also true for many in the philosophical community. Yet there are some, ourselves included, who accept the absurdity of looking for meaning in life and note the paradox within our conceptions of intrinsic and instrumental value, and who treat philosophy as a game to be played. And arguably as soon as an activity is treated as such, it becomes one. Check (mate)!

[710] Mellor, 2015, p. 401.

Concluding Remarks

> The object of wisdom is the 'Way.' The Way cannot *not* exist. If someone were to ask what words were the most basic and most final, our answer would be that 'the Way exists.'. — FENG Qi

In this dissertation, my aim was to outline a framework of a philosophical method—conceptual tuning, sketching how other conceptually grounded methods can be subsumed under the common denominator of conceptual tuning.

Based on my delineation, there are three trains of philosophical method in contemporary analytic philosophy—the naturalistic method, the formal method, and the conceptual method. Conceptual tuning, the one I propose in this thesis, belongs to the domain of conceptual method.

Philosophy, during its 2500 years history, has always been understood as the enterprise of the pursuit of *wisdom*. As Pierre Hador indicates: 'If we now speak about "philosophy," it is because the Greeks coined the word *philosophia*, which means "love of wisdom"'.[711] Prima facie, conceptual tuning is supposed to be a theoretical method, which does not contribute much to practical issues. Some philosophers might think that contemporary philosophy, a theoretically based philosophy, is degenerated, because it has deviated from the track of the pursuit of wisdom. William Barrett characterizes:

> In ancient Greece it had the very opposite: instead of a specialized theoretical discipline philosophy there was a concrete way of life, a total vision of man and the cosmos in the light of which the individual's whole life was to be lived.[712]

[711] Hadot, 2002, p. 2.

[712] Barrett, 1958, p. 5.

Therefore, it seems that there is a gap between contemporary philosophy and ancient philosophy, or—the tension between theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy. However, Hadot points out that this is a false dichotomy. Hadot explains:

> Nor should we oppose discourse and way of life, as though they corresponded to theory and practice, respectively. Discourse can have a practical aspect, to the extent that it tends to produce an effect on the listener or reader. Insofar as way of life is concerned, it cannot, of course, be theoretic, but it can be theoretical-that is to say, contemplative.[713]

As we know, in fact, there are two types of wisdom: theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom. Presumably, pursuing conceptual tuning falls into the category of theoretical wisdom rather than practical wisdom. Jason Baehr has discussed the relationship between theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom in his paper 'Two Types of Wisdom'. According to Baehr, there are many ways of distinguishing theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom[714]:

Theoretical Wisdom	**Practical Wisdom**
concerns *necessary* features of reality	concerns matters that are *contingent*
a priori	*a posteriori*
aimed at *truth*	aimed at the *good*
concerned with *epistemic* norms and	concerned with *moral* norms and values

[713] Hadot, 2002, p. 4.

[714] Cf. Baehr (2012).

values	
concerned with *believing* well or correctly	concerned with *deliberating* and *acting* well or correctly
concerned with believing well or correctly *as such*	concerned with deliberating and acting well or correctly *as such*

Baehr claims that these distinctions do not stand close scrutiny. In contrast, he proposes: 'Indeed, why not think of theoretical and practical wisdom as conceptually intertwined such that marking a very clear or definite distinction between them is impossible?'.[715]

According to Baehr, there are two prevailing conceptions of theoretical wisdom. One of them takes theoretical wisdom as 'a kind of personal intellectual *ability* or *competence* that is *aimed* at the sort of cognitive end just described'.[716] Baehr named this view 'the competence conception' of theoretical wisdom, according to which theoretical wisdom is '*a component* or *mode* of practical wisdom'.[717] He further explains: 'it does not seem at all problematic or counterintuitive to think that when a theoretically wise person skillfully deliberates about and pursues an epistemic goal, he is also exercising (an aspect or dimension of) practical wisdom'.[718] Therefore, according to Baehr, the line between theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom becomes blurry. The second conception of theoretical wisdom, which is named the 'epistemic state conception', takes it as 'a kind of ideal cognitive *end* or *goal*—as a more or less settled cognitive *state* that is to be desired, pursued, and enjoyed'.[719]

[715] Baehr, 2012, p. 89.

[716] Baehr, 2012, p. 89.

[717] Baehr, 2012, p. 90.

[718] Baehr, 2012, p. 90.

[719] Baehr, 2012, p. 89.

With this conception, theoretical wisdom 'falls within the purview of practical wisdom', says Baehr.[720] The point is that there is a continuity between theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom. Accepting one is not refusing the other. So, adopting conceptual tuning does not entail dismissing practical wisdom.

However, I do accept that conceptual reasoning is not sufficient for good philosophy, and really good philosophy should go beyond it. As Barrett says, Henri Bergson was the first person to reveal 'the insufficiency of the abstract intelligence to grasp the richness of experience' (Barrett 1958, 15).[721]

Finally, while embracing the fact that conceptual tuning requires theoretical wisdom, some might still argue that conceptual tuning is not distinctive of philosophy. Or alternatively, how is conceptual tuning a philosophical method? After all we also find similar cases in natural science (such as replacing 'fish' with 'piscis'). I do not deny that conceptual tuning can be generalized, since it can be applied in varied areas. But the philosopher's interest lies in concepts of philosophical significance, including metaphysical concepts (free will, causation, etc.), epistemological concepts (knowledge, disagreement, etc.), social kinds (gender, race, etc.), moral concepts (good, wellbeing, etc.). Scientists, on the other hand, contribute more to the development of natural kinds. Besides, this method is not only about producing an original concept, which might be the result, but also to emphasize the expressive approach, giving and asking for reasons, which is at the core of the philosophical practice.

[720] Baehr, 2012, p. 92.

[721] Barrett, 1958, p. 15.

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