The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy

SECOND EDITION

Edited by

NICHOLAS BUNNIN

and

E. P. TSUI-JAMES

Blackwell Publishing

The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy

Blackwell Companions to Philosophy

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For Antonia and Oliver Bunnin and Jamie Perry

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Preface to the Second Edition

We thank readers for their gratifying response to the first edition of the Companion. The second edition provides new chapters on Philosophy of Biology; Bioethics, Genethics and Medical Ethics; Environmental Ethics; Business Ethics; Ethnicity, Culture and Philosophy; Plato and Aristotle; Francis Bacon; Nietzsche; Husserl and Heidegger; and Sartre, Foucault and Derrida. There are significant revisions or extensions to chapters on Metaphysics, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Mind, Political and Social Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy and Feminism, and Hobbes. The discussion of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz is now divided between two chapters, and in a new section Malebranche is considered along with Descartes in the first of these. A longer chapter on Medieval Philosophy replaces the chapter by C. F. J. Martin, who was unavailable to extend his work. We welcome our new contributors and hope that readers will continue to be challenged and delighted by the Companion as a whole.

Nicholas Bunnin
E. P. Tsui-James

Preface to the First Edition

This Companion complements the *Blackwell Companions to Philosophy* series by presenting a new overview of philosophy prepared by thirty-five leading British and American philosophers. Introductory essays by John Searle and Bernard Williams, which assess the changes that have shaped the subject in recent decades, are followed by chapters exploring central problems and debates in the principal subdisciplines of philosophy and in specialized fields, chapters concerning the work of great historical figures and chapters discussing newly developing fields within philosophy. Throughout the course of its chapters, the Companion examines the views of many of the most widely influential figures of contemporary philosophy.

Although wide-ranging, the Companion is not exhaustive, and emphasis is placed on developments in Anglo-American philosophy in the latter part of the twentieth century. A premise underlying the Companion is that major participants in philosophical debate can provide accounts of their own fields that are stimulating, accessible, stylish and authoritative.

In its primary use, the Companion is an innovative textbook for introductory courses in philosophy. Teachers can use the broad coverage to select chapters in a flexible way to support a variety of courses based on contemporary problems or the historical development of the subject. Specialist chapters can be used selectively to augment standard introductory topics or to prepare students individually for term papers or essays. Chapters include initial summaries, boxed features, cross-references, suggestions for further reading, references and discussion questions. In addition, terms are marked for a common glossary. These features and the problem-setting nature of the discussions encourage students to see the subject as a whole and to gain confidence that explorations within philosophy can lead to unexpected and rewarding insights. In this aspect, the Companion reflects the contributors' experience of small group teaching, in which arguments and perspectives are rigorously tested and in which no solution is imposed.

In its secondary use, the Companion will accompany students throughout their undergraduate careers and will also serve the general reader wishing to understand the central concepts and debates within philosophy or its constituent disciplines. Students are unlikely to read the whole volume in their first year of study, but those continuing with philosophy will find their appreciation of the work deepening over time

as they gain insight into the topics of the more advanced chapters. The Companion will help them to formulate questions and to see connections between what they have already studied and new terrain.

In its final use, the Companion bears a special relationship to the *Blackwell Companions to Philosophy* series. Many readers will wish to read the integrated discussions of the chapters of the present Companion for orientation before turning to the detailed, alphabetically arranged articles of the volumes in the Companion series. Although conceived as a separate volume, the Companion to Philosophy will serve as a useful guide to the other excellent Companions in what amounts to a comprehensive encyclopedia of philosophy.

The general reader might begin with the introductory essays and turn to chapters on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics and Political and Social Philosophy, or to historical chapters from Ancient Greek Philosophy to Hume. Cross-references and special interests will lead readers to other chapters.

Cross-references in the text are marked in small capitals followed by a chapter number or page numbers in parentheses: ETHICS (chapter 6) or PROBABILITY (pp. 308–11). We have used our judgement in marking terms appearing many times in the text for cross-references, and hope that we have supplied guidance without distracting readers. The Companion also provides a glossary of 210 terms and a comprehensive index. Both appear at the end of the volume, and readers are advised to use them regularly for help in reading the chapters. When an author does not refer to a book by its first edition, a recent publication is cited in the text, and the original date of publication (or in some cases of composition) will appear in square brackets in the references.

As editors, we are fully aware of our good fortune in attracting superb contributors. The complexity of their insights and the clarity of their presentations are the chief attractions of the Companion. We appreciate their care in making the difficult not only accessible but delightful as well. We also wish to thank the Departments of Philosophy at the University of Essex and the University of Hong Kong for their support throughout the preparation of this volume. We are especially grateful to Laurence Goldstein, Tim Moore and Frank Cioffi for their comments and advice. A version of the Companion is published in Chinese by the Shandong Academy of Social Sciences, and we appreciate the friendly co-operation of our Chinese co-editors.

Our cover illustration, R. B. Kitaj's philosophically resonant *If Not, Not*, is a work by an American artist working in London during the period that provides the main focus of our volume.

Nicholas Bunnin
E. P. Tsui-James

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Contemporary Philosophy in the United States

JOHN R. SEARLE

Philosophy as an academic discipline in America has considerably fewer practitioners than do several other subjects in the humanities and the social sciences, such as sociology, history, English, or economics; but it still shows enormous diversity. This variety is made manifest in the original research published by professional philosophers, whose differing points of view are expressed in the large number of books published each year, as well as in the many professional philosophy journals. There are over two thousand colleges and universities in the United States, of which nearly all have philosophy departments, and the number of professional philosophers is correspondingly large.

Because of this diversity, any generalizations about the discipline as a whole, which I am about to make, are bound to be misleading. The subject is too vast and complex to be describable in a single essay. Furthermore, anyone who is an active participant in the current controversies, as I am, necessarily has a perspective conditioned by his or her own interests, commitments and convictions. It would be impossible for me to give an 'objective' account. I am not therefore in what follows trying to give a neutral or disinterested account of the contemporary philosophical scene; rather I am trying to say what in the current developments seems to me important.

In spite of its enormous variety, there are certain central themes in contemporary American philosophy. The dominant mode of philosophizing in the United States is called 'analytic philosophy'. Without exception, the best philosophy departments in the United States are dominated by analytic philosophy, and among the leading philosophers in the United States, all but a tiny handful would be classified as analytic philosophers. Practitioners of types of philosophizing that are not in the analytic tradition – such as phenomenology, classical pragmatism, existentialism, or Marxism – feel it necessary to define their position in relation to analytic philosophy. Indeed, analytic philosophy is the dominant mode of philosophizing not only in the United States, but throughout the entire English-speaking world, including Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It is also the dominant mode of philosophizing in Scandinavia, and it is also becoming more widespread in Germany, France, Italy and throughout Latin America. I personally have found that I can go to all of these parts of the world and lecture on subjects in contemporary analytic philosophy before audiences who are both knowledgeable and well trained in the techniques of the discipline.

1 Analytic Philosophy

What, then, is analytic philosophy? The simplest way to describe it is to say that it is primarily concerned with the analysis of meaning. In order to explain this enterprise and its significance, we need first to say a little bit about its history. Though the United States now leads the world in analytic philosophy, the origins of this mode of philosophizing lie in Europe. Specifically, analytic philosophy is based on the work of Gottlob Frege, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, as well as the work done by the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle in the 1920s and 1930s. Going further back in history, one can also see analytic philosophy as a natural descendant of the empiricism of the great British philosophers Locke, Berkeley and Hume, and of the transcendental philosophy of Kant. In the works of philosophers as far back as Plato and Aristotle, one can see many of the themes and presuppositions of the methods of analytic philosophy. We can best summarize the origins of modern analytic philosophy by saying that it arose when the empiricist tradition in epistemology, together with the foundationalist enterprise of Kant, were tied to the methods of logical analysis and the philosophical theories invented by Gottlob Frege in the late nineteenth century. In the course of his work on the foundations of mathematics, Frege invented symbolic logic in its modern form and developed a comprehensive and profound philosophy of language. Though many of the details of his views on language and mathematics have been superseded, Frege's work is crucial for at least two reasons. Firstly, by inventing modern logic, specifically the predicate calculus, he gave us a primary tool of philosophical analysis; and, secondly, he made the philosophy of language central to the entire philosophical enterprise. From the point of view of analytic philosophy, Frege's work is the greatest single philosophical achievement of the nineteenth century. Fregean techniques of logical analysis were later augmented by the ordinary language analysis inspired by the work of Moore and Wittgenstein and are best exemplified by the school of linguistic philosophy that flourished in Oxford in the l950s. In short, analytic philosophy attempts to combine certain traditional philosophical themes with modern techniques.

Analytic philosophy has never been fixed or stable, because it is intrinsically self-critical and its practitioners are always challenging their own presuppositions and conclusions. However, it is possible to locate a central period in analytic philosophy – the period comprising, roughly speaking, the logical positivist phase immediately prior to the 1939–45 war and the postwar phase of linguistic analysis. Both the prehistory and the subsequent history of analytic philosophy can be defined by the main doctrines of that central period.

In the central period, analytic philosophy was defined by a belief in two linguistic distinctions, combined with a research programme. The two distinctions are, firstly, that between analytic and synthetic propositions, and, secondly, that between descriptive and evaluative utterances. The research programme is the traditional philosophical research programme of attempting to find foundations for such philosophically problematic phenomena as language, knowledge, meaning, truth, mathematics and so on.

One way to see the development of analytic philosophy over the past thirty years is to regard it as the gradual rejection of these two distinctions, and a corresponding rejection of foundationalism as the crucial enterprise of philosophy. However, in the central period, these two distinctions served not only to identify the main beliefs of analytic philosophy, but, for those who accepted them and the research programme, they defined the nature of philosophy itself.

1.1 Analytic versus synthetic

The distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions was supposed to be the distinction between those propositions that are true or false as a matter of definition or of the meanings of the terms contained in them (the analytic propositions) and those that are true or false as a matter of fact in the world and not solely in virtue of the meanings of the words (the synthetic propositions). Examples of analytic truths would be such propositions as 'Triangles are three-sided plane figures', 'All bachelors are unmarried', 'Women are female', '2 + 2 = 4' and so on. In each of these, the truth of the proposition is entirely determined by its meaning; they are true by the definitions of the words that they contain. Such propositions can be known to be true or false *a priori*, and in each case they express necessary truths. Indeed, it was a characteristic feature of the analytic philosophy of this central period that terms such as 'analytic', 'necessary', '*a priori*' and 'tautological' were taken to be co-extensive. Contrasted with these were synthetic propositions, which, if they were true, were true as a matter of empirical fact and not as a matter of definition alone. Thus, propositions such as 'There are more women than men in the United States', 'Bachelors tend to die earlier than married men' and 'Bodies attract each other according to the inverse square law' are all said to be synthetic propositions, and, if they are true, they express *a posteriori* empirical truths about the real world that are independent of language. Such empirical truths, according to this view, are never necessary; rather, they are contingent. For philosophers holding these views, the terms '*a posteriori*', 'synthetic', 'contingent' and 'empirical' were taken to be more or less co-extensive.

It was a basic assumption behind the logical positivist movement that all meaningful propositions were either analytic or empirical, as defined by the conceptions that I have just stated. The positivists wished to build a sharp boundary between meaningful propositions of science and everyday life on the one hand, and nonsensical propositions of metaphysics and theology on the other. They claimed that all meaningful propositions are either analytic or synthetic: disciplines such as logic and mathematics fall within the analytic camp; the empirical sciences and much of common sense fall within the synthetic camp. Propositions that were neither analytic nor empirical propositions, and which were therefore in principle not verifiable, were said to be nonsensical or meaningless. The slogan of the positivists was called the verification principle, and, in a simple form, it can be stated as follows: all meaningful propositions are either analytic or synthetic, and those which are synthetic are empirically verifiable. This slogan was sometimes shortened to an even simpler battle cry: the meaning of a proposition is just its method of verification.

1.2 The distinction between evaluative utterances and descriptive utterances

Another distinction, equally important in the positivist scheme of things, is the distinction between those utterances that express propositions that can be literally either true or false and those utterances that are used not to express truths or falsehoods, but rather, to give vent to our feelings and emotions. An example of a descriptive statement would be, 'The incidence of crimes of theft has increased in the past ten years'. An instance of the evaluative class would be 'Theft is wrong'. The positivists claimed that many utterances that had the form of meaningful propositions were used not to state propositions that were verifiable either analytically or synthetically, but to express emotions and feelings. Propositions of ethics look as if they are cognitively meaningful, but they are not; they have only 'emotive' or 'evaluative' meaning. The propositions of science, mathematics, logic and much of common sense fall in the descriptive class; the utterances of aesthetics, ethics and much of religion fall in the evaluative class. It is important to note that on this conception evaluative propositions are not, strictly speaking, either true or false, since they are not verifiable as either analytic or empirical. The two distinctions are crucially related in that all of the statements that fall on one side or the other of the analytic–synthetic distinction also fall within the descriptive class of the descriptive–evaluative distinction.

The importance that these two distinctions had for defining both the character of the philosophical enterprise and the relationships between language and reality is hard to exaggerate. One radical consequence of the distinction between descriptive and evaluative propositions was that certain traditional areas of philosophy, such as ethics, aesthetics and political philosophy, were virtually abolished as realms of cognitive meaningfulness. Propositions in these areas were, for the most part, regarded as nonsensical expressions of feelings and emotions, because they are not utterances that can be, strictly speaking, either true or false. Since the aim of philosophers is to state the truth, and since evaluative utterances cannot be either true or false, it cannot be one of the aims of philosophy to make any evaluative utterances. Philosophers might analyse the meaning of evaluative terms, and they might examine the logical relationships among these terms, but philosophers, *qua* philosophers, can make no first-order evaluations in aesthetics, ethics or politics, as these first-order evaluations are not, strictly speaking, meaningful. They may have a sort of secondary, derivative meaning, called 'emotive meaning', but they lack scientifically acceptable cognitive meaning.

If the task of philosophy is to state the truth and not to provide evaluations, what then is the subject matter of philosophy? Since the methods of philosophers are not those of empirical science – since their methods are *a priori* rather than *a posteriori* – it cannot be their aim to state empirical truths about the world. Such propositions are the propositions of the special sciences. The aim of philosophers, therefore, is to state analytic truths concerning logical relations among the concepts of our language. In this period of philosophy, the task of philosophy was taken to be the task of conceptual analysis. Indeed, for most philosophers who accepted this view, philosophy and conceptual analysis were the same. Where traditional philosophers had taken their task to be the discussion of the nature of the good, the true, the beautiful and the just, the

positivist and post-positivist analytic philosophers took their task to be the analysis of the meaning of concepts such as 'goodness', 'truth', 'beauty' and 'justice'. Ideally the analysis of these and other philosophically interesting concepts, such as 'knowledge', 'certainty' and 'cause', should give necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of these concepts. They saw this as being the legitimate heir of the traditional philosophical enterprise, but an heir purged of the metaphysical nonsense and confusion that had discredited the traditional enterprise.

If we combine the assumption that philosophy is essentially a conceptual, analytic enterprise with the assumption that its task is foundational – that is, its task is to provide secure foundations for such things as knowledge – then the consequence for the positivists is that philosophical analysis tends in large part to be reductive. That is, the aim of the analysis is to show, for example, how empirical knowledge is based on, and ultimately reducible to, the data of our experience, to so-called sense data. (This view is called 'phenomenalism'.) Similarly, statements about the mind are based on, and therefore ultimately reducible to, statements about external behaviour (behaviourism). Necessary truth is similarly based on conventions of language as expressed in definitions (conventionalism); and mathematics is based on logic, especially set theory (logicism). In each case, the more philosophically puzzling phenomenon is shown to have a secure foundation in some less puzzling phenomenon, and indeed, the ideal of such analysis was to show that the puzzling phenomena could be entirely reduced to less puzzling phenomena. 'Phenomenalism' supposedly gave science a secure foundation because science could be shown to be founded on the data of our senses. Since the form of the reduction was analytic or definitional, it had the consequence that statements about empirical reality could be translated into statements about sense data. Similarly, according to behaviourism, statements about mental phenomena could be translated into statements about behaviour.

Within the camp of analytic philosophers who thought the aim of philosophy was conceptual analysis, there were two broad streams. One stream thought ordinary language was in general quite adequate, both as a tool and as a subject matter of philosophical analysis. The other stream thought of ordinary language as hopelessly inadequate for philosophical purposes, and irretrievably confused. The philosophers of this latter stream thought that we should use the tools of modern mathematical logic both for analysing traditional philosophical problems and, more importantly, for creating a logically perfect language, for scientific and philosophical purposes, in which certain traditional confusions could not even arise. There was never a rigid distinction between these two streams, but there were certainly two broad trends: one which emphasized ordinary language philosophy and one which emphasized symbolic logic. Both streams, however, accepted the central view that the aim of philosophy was conceptual analysis, and that in consequence philosophy was fundamentally different from any other discipline; they thought that it was a second-order discipline analysing the logical structure of language in general, but not dealing with first-order truths about the world. Philosophy was universal in subject matter precisely because it had no special subject matter other than the discourse of all other disciplines and the discourse of common sense.

A further consequence of this conception was that philosophy became essentially a linguistic or conceptual enterprise. For that reason, the philosophy of language was

absolutely central to the philosophical task. In a sense, the philosophy of language was not only 'first philosophy'; all of philosophy became a form of philosophy of language. Philosophy was simply the logical investigation of the structure of language as it was used in the various sciences and in common life.

2 The Rejection of These Two Distinctions and the Rejection of Foundationalism

Work done in the 1950s and 1960s led to the overcoming of these two distinctions; and with the rejection of these two distinctions came a new conception of analytic philosophy – a conception that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s and which is still being developed. The rejection of these two distinctions and of the foundationalist research programme led to an enormous upheaval in the conception of the philosophical enterprise and in the practice of analytic philosophers. The most obvious problem with traditional analytic philosophy was that the reductionist enterprise failed. In every case, the attempts to provide reductionist analyses of the sort proposed by the phenomenalists and behaviourists were unsuccessful, and by 1960 the lack of success was obvious. A series of important theoretical developments also took place at this time, but for the sake of simplicity I shall concentrate on only five of these: Quine's rejection of the analytic–synthetic distinction, Austin's theory of speech acts, Wittgenstein's criticism of foundationalism, Rawls's work in political philosophy and the changes in the philosophy of science due to Kuhn and others.

2.1 Quine's attack on the analytic–synthetic distinction

Perhaps the most important criticism of the analytic–synthetic distinction was made by W. V. O. Quine in a famous article entitled 'Two dogmas of empiricism' (Quine 1953). In this article, Quine claimed that no adequate, non-circular definition of analyticity had ever been given. Any attempt to define analyticity had always been made using notions that were in the same family as analyticity, such as synonymy and definition, and consequently, the attempts to define analyticity were invariably circular. However, an even more important objection that emerged in Quine's article was this: the notion of an analytic proposition is supposed to be a notion of a proposition that is immune to revision, that is irrefutable. Quine claimed that there were no propositions that were immune to revision, that any proposition could be revised in the face of recalcitrant evidence, and that any proposition could be held in the face of recalcitrant evidence, provided that one was willing to make adjustments in other propositions originally held to be true. Quine argued that we should think of the language of science as being like a complex network that was impinged upon by empirical verification only at the edges. Recalcitrant experiences at the edges of science can produce changes anywhere along the line, but the changes are not forced on us by purely logical considerations; rather, we make various pragmatic or practical adjustments in the network of our sentences or beliefs to accommodate the ongoing character of our experiences. Language, on this view, is not atomistic. It does not consist of a set of propositions, each of which can be assessed in isolation. Rather, it consists of a holistic network, and, in this network,

propositions as groups confront experience; propositions individually are not simply assessed as true or false. (This holism of scientific discourse was influenced by the French philosopher of science, Duhem, and the view is frequently referred to as 'the Duhem–Quine thesis'.)

Most philosophers today accept some version or other of Quine's rejection of the analytic–synthetic distinction. Not everybody agrees with his actual argument (I, for one, do not), but now there is general scepticism about our ability to make a strict distinction between those propositions that are true by definition and those that are true as a matter of fact. The rejection of the analytic–synthetic distinction has profound consequences for analytic philosophy, as we shall see in more detail later.

At this point it is important to state that if there is no well-defined class of analytic propositions, then the philosopher's propositions cannot themselves be clearly identified as analytic. The results of philosophical analysis cannot be sharply distinguished from the results of scientific investigation. On the positivist picture, philosophy was not one among other sciences; rather, it stood outside the frame of scientific discourse and analysed the logical relations between, on the one hand, that discourse and its vocabulary and, on the other, experience and reality. Philosophers, so to speak, analysed the relation between language and reality, but only from the side. If we accept Quine's rejection of the analytic–synthetic distinction, then philosophy is not something that can be clearly demarcated from the special sciences. It is, rather, adjacent to, and overlaps with, other disciplines. Although philosophy is more general than other disciplines, its propositions do not have any special logical status or special logical priority with regard to the other disciplines.

2.2 Austin's theory of speech acts

The British philosopher J. L. Austin was suspicious of both the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions, and the distinction between evaluative and descriptive utterances. During the 1950s he developed an alternative conception of language (Austin 1962). His first observation was that there is a class of utterances that are obviously perfectly meaningful, but which do not even set out to be either true or false. A man who says, for example, 'I promise to come and see you' or a qualified authority who says to a couple, 'I pronounce you man and wife' is neither reporting on nor describing a promise or a marriage respectively. Such utterances should be thought not as cases of describing or stating, but rather as doing, as acting. Austin baptized these utterances 'performatives' and contrasted them with 'constatives'. The distinction between constatives and performatives was supposed to contain three features: constatives, but not performatives, could be true or false; performatives, on the other hand, though they could not be true or false, could be felicitous or infelicitous, depending on whether or not they were correctly, completely and successfully performed; and finally, performatives were supposed to be actions, doings or performances, as opposed to mere sayings or statings. But, as Austin himself saw, the distinctions so drawn did not work. Many so-called performatives turned out to be capable of being true or false; for example, warnings could be either true or false. And statements, as well as performatives, could be infelicitous. For example, if one made a statement for which one had insufficient evidence, one would have made an infelicitous statement. And finally,

stating is as much performing an action as promising or ordering or apologizing. The abandonment of the performative–constative distinction led Austin to a general theory of speech acts. Communicative utterances in general are actions of a type he called 'illocutionary acts'.

One great merit of Austin's theory of speech acts is that it enabled subsequent philosophers to construe the philosophy of language as a branch of the philosophy of action. Since speech acts are as much actions as any other actions, the philosophical analysis of language is part of the general analysis of human behaviour. And since intentional human behaviour is an expression of mental phenomena, it turns out that the philosophy of language and the philosophy of action are really just different aspects of one larger area, namely, the philosophy of mind. On this view, the philosophy of language is not 'first philosophy'; it is a branch of the philosophy of mind. Though Austin did not live to carry out the research programme implicit in his initial discoveries, subsequent work, including my own, has carried this research further.

By treating speaking as a species of intentional action we can give a new sense to a lot of old questions. For example, the old question, 'How many kinds of utterances are there?' is too vague to be answered. But if we ask 'How many kinds of illocutionary acts are there?', we can give a precise answer, since the question asks, 'How many possible ways are there for speakers to relate propositional contents to reality in the performance of actions that express illocutionary intentions?' An analysis of the structure of those intentions reveals five basic types of illocutionary act: we tell people how things are (Assertives), we try to get them to do things (Directives), we commit ourselves to doing things (Commissives), we express our feelings and attitudes (Expressives) and we bring about changes in the world through our utterances, so that the world is changed to match the propositional content of the utterance (Declarations). (For details see Searle 1979 and 1983.)

2.3 Wittgenstein's rejection of foundationalism

The single most influential analytic philosopher of the twentieth century, and indeed, the philosopher whom most analytic philosophers would regard as the greatest philosopher of the century, is Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein published only one short book during his lifetime, which represents his early work, but with the posthumous publication of his *Philosophical Investigations* in 1953, a series of his later writings began to become available. Now, we have a sizeable corpus of the work he did in the last twenty years of his life. Through painstaking analysis of the use of language, particularly through analysis of psychological concepts, Wittgenstein attempted to undermine the idea that philosophy is a foundational enterprise. He asserted, on the contrary, that philosophy is a purely descriptive enterprise, that the task of philosophy is neither to reform language nor to try to place the various uses of language on a secure foundation. Rather, philosophical problems are removed by having a correct understanding of how language actually functions.

A key notion in Wittgenstein's conception of language is the notion of a language game. We should think of the words in language as being like the pieces in a game. They are not to be understood by looking for some associated idea in the mind, or by following some procedure of verification, or even by looking at the object for which they stand.

Rather, we should think of words in terms of their use, and referring to objects in the world is only one of many uses that words have. The meaning of a word is given by its use, and the family of uses that a group of words has constitutes a language game. Examples include the language game we play in describing our own sensations, or the language game we play in identifying the causes of events. This conception of language leads Wittgenstein to the rejection of the conception that the task of philosophical analysis is reductionist or foundationalist. That is, Wittgenstein rejects the idea that language games either have or need a foundation in something else, and he rejects the idea that certain language games can be reduced to certain other kinds of language games. The effect, Wittgenstein says, of philosophical analysis is not to alter our existing linguistic practices or to challenge their validity; it is simply to describe them. Language neither has nor needs a foundation in the traditional sense.

I said that Wittgenstein was the single most influential philosopher in the analytic tradition, but there is a sense in which it seems to me he has still not been properly understood, nor had his lessons been fully assimilated by analytic philosophers. I will have more to say about his influence later.

2.4 Rawls's theory of justice

The conception of moral philosophy in the positivist and post-positivist phases of analytic philosophy was extremely narrow. Strictly speaking, according to the positivists, moral utterances could not be either true or false, so there was nothing that the philosopher could say, *qua* philosopher, by way of making moral judgements. The task for the moral philosopher was to analyse moral discourse, to analyse the meaning and use of moral terms such as 'good', 'ought', 'right', 'obligation', etc. It is important to see that this conception of moral philosophy was a strict logical consequence of the acceptance of the distinction between evaluative and descriptive utterances. For if evaluative utterances cannot be either true or false, and if first-order moral discourse consists in evaluative utterances, and if the task of the philosopher is to state the truth, it follows that the philosopher, *qua* philosopher, cannot make any first-order moral judgements. As a philosopher, all he or she can do is the second-order task of analysing moral concepts.

Some philosophers of the positivist and post-positivist periods rejected this narrow conception of moral philosophy, and there were a series of attacks mounted on the distinction between evaluative and descriptive utterances, including some attacks by myself in the mid-1960s (Searle 1964). It remained, however, for John Rawls to reopen the traditional conception of political and moral philosophy with the publication of his book *A Theory of Justice* in 1971. For the purposes of the present discussion, the important thing about Rawls's work was not that he refuted the traditional dichotomy of descriptive and evaluative utterances, but that he simply ignored it and proceeded to develop a theory of political institutions of a sort that has a long philosophical tradition and which the positivists thought they had overcome. Rawls, in effect, revived the social contract theory, which had long been assumed to be completely defunct; but he did it by an ingenious device: he did not attempt, as some traditional theorists had done, to show that there might have been an original social contract, nor did he try to show that the participation of individuals in society involved a tacit contract. Rather, he used the following thought experiment as an analytic tool: think of the sort of society that

rational beings would agree to if they did not know what sort of position they themselves would occupy in that society. If we imagine rational beings, hidden behind a veil of ignorance, who are asked to select and agree on forms of social institutions that would be fair for all, then we can develop criteria for appraising social institutions on purely rational grounds.

The importance of Rawls for our present discussion is not whether he succeeded in developing new foundations for political theory, but the fact that his work gave rise to a renewed interest in political philosophy, which was soon accompanied by a renewed interest in the traditional questions of moral philosophy. Moral and political philosophy had been confined to a very small realm by the positivist philosophers, and for that reason seemed sterile and uninteresting. Very little work was done in that area, but since the 1970s it has grown enormously, and is now a flourishing branch of analytic philosophy.

2.5 Post-positivist philosophy of science

Throughout the positivist period the model of empirical knowledge was provided by the physical sciences, and the general conception was that the empirical sciences proceeded by the gradual but cumulative growth of empirical knowledge through the systematic application of scientific method. There were different versions of scientific method, according to the philosophers of that period, but they all shared the idea that scientific, empirical propositions are essentially 'testable'. Initially a proposition was thought testable if it could be confirmed, but the most influential version of this idea is Popper's claim that empirical propositions are testable if they are falsifiable in principle. That is, in order for a proposition to tell us how the world is as opposed to how it might be or might have been, there must be some conceivable state of affairs that would render that proposition false. Propositions of science are, strictly speaking, never verifiable – they simply survive repeated attempts at falsification. Science is in this sense fallible, but it is at the same time rational and cumulative.

This picture of the history of science was very dramatically challenged in Thomas Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientifi Revolutions* (1962). According to Kuhn, the history of science shows not a gradual and steady accumulation of knowledge but periodic revolutionary overthrows of previous conceptions of reality. The shift from Aristotelian physics to Newtonian physics, and the shift from Newtonian physics to relativistic physics are both illustrations of how one 'paradigm' is replaced by another. When the burden of puzzling cases within one paradigm becomes unbearable, a new paradigm emerges, which provides not just a new set of truths but a whole new way of looking at the subject matter. 'Normal sciences' always proceed by puzzle-solving within a paradigm, but revolutionary breakthroughs, rather than puzzle-solving within a paradigm, are matters of overthrowing one paradigm and replacing it with another.

Just as Kuhn challenged the picture of science as essentially a matter of a steady accumulation of knowledge, so Paul Feyerabend challenged the conception of there being a unitary rational 'scientific method' (Feyerabend 1975). Feyerabend tried to show that the history of science reveals not a single rational method but rather a series of opportunistic, chaotic, desperate (and sometimes even dishonest) attempts to cope