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WHAT IS A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS?*

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It is common for philosophers to offer philosophical accounts or analyses, as they are sometimes called, of knowledge, autonomy, representation, (moral) goodness, reference, and even modesty.¹ These philosophical analyses raise deep questions. What is it that is being analyzed (i.e. what sorts of things are the objects of analysis)? What sort of thing is the analysis itself (a proposition? sentence)? Under what conditions is an analysis correct? How can a correct analysis be informative? How, if at all, does the production of philosophical analyses differ from what scientists do? The purpose of the present paper is to provide answers to these questions.

The traditional answers to the first and last of these questions are that *concepts* are the objects of philosophical analysis and that philosophical analyses differ from the results of scientific investigation in being conceptual analyses. Like many philosophers I am suspicious of the notions of concept and conceptual analysis as traditionally understood. Though the critique of these notions is beyond the scope of the present work, the answers I shall give to the questions raised above shall not invoke concepts (understood as things distinct from properties).² I count it as a virtue of my account that it is able to provide answers to the questions raised above without an appeal to concepts. And to the extent that it has been felt that concepts are needed to answer these questions, the present account weakens the case for positing concepts.

Before addressing these questions, however, we shall make the simplifying assumption that analyses are given in a “canonical form”. In particular, we shall assume that they are stated as universally quantified biconditionals. An analysis of voluntary action, for example, will be given in the following canonical form:

For all x , x is a voluntary action iff $C(x)$

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where ‘C(x)’ is some syntactically complex expression containing only the variable ‘x’ free.³ In fact, of course, though philosophers often give analyses in this form, they are often given in other forms as well. For example, there is the “to be” formulation: ‘To be a voluntary action is to be an action that . . .’. However, the idealization resulting from supposing that all analyses are given in the form mentioned above does not, I think, affect any substantive issues. Indeed, we could have chosen the ‘to be’ formulations as the canonical forms for statements of analyses. However, doing so would have required discussing subtle questions about the semantics of the “to be” locutions in them.

Any adequate account of philosophical analysis, in answering the questions raised above, had better provide a solution to the notorious “paradox of analysis”. Though formulations of the paradox differ, they have a common structure. We begin with something that is claimed to be a correct analysis, say:

- (1) For all x, x is an instance of knowledge iff x is a justified true belief satisfying condition C.⁴
- (2) For all x, x is a brother iff x is a male sibling

It is then claimed that if (1) and (2) are correct analyses, we may infer that they must “mean the same thing as” or “say the same thing as” or “express the same proposition as” or “make the same statement as”

- (1a) For all x, x is an instance of knowledge iff x is an instance of knowledge
- (2a) For all x, x is a brother iff x is a brother

(Different reasons may be given for this inference, depending in part on which of the above formulations (“mean the same thing as”, etc.) is used.) It is then claimed that there is some difference between (1) and (1a), (e.g. one is informative, the other not) and (2) and (2a) (e.g. one is an analysis, the other not) that precludes their “meaning the same thing”, etc. The paradox is that given that (1) and (2) are correct analyses, it appears that the sentence pairs (1)/(1a) and (2)/(2a) must *and* must not “mean the same thing”, “express the same proposition”, etc.

Limitations of space prevent me from making a point by point comparison between the account given here and accounts of philosophical analysis in the literature. However, I do want to emphasize that much of the attractiveness of the answers I intend to give to the questions raised above about philosophical analyses derives from the fact that the answers exploit a framework, the elements of which are independently motivated and defended. The answers to these questions to a large extent “fall out” of this framework. I consider this an important virtue of the present account as compared with many accounts in the literature, which often seem to be *ad hoc* attempts to solve this or that problem about analyses.⁵

We begin by discussing the various elements of the framework I intend to employ. The first element of our framework is the claim that there are properties and relations and that at least some properties and relations are *complex* and are made up of other properties and relations.⁶ To illustrate, we might imagine that the relation *x is a grandparent of y* is complex in the sense that for *x* and *y* to stand in that relation *just is* for there to be a *z* such that *x* is a parent of *z* and *z* is a parent of *y*. Similarly, the property of *being a bachelor*, I assume, is just the properties of *being adult*, *being male*, and *being unmarried* combined conjunctively, (here and elsewhere I suppress *being human* for simplicity; similar suppressions occur throughout). The properties or relations that are combined in a certain way to form the complex property or relation I call the *components* of the complex property or relation. Thus, *being a parent of* is a component of the relation *being a grandparent of*; and *being adult*, *being male*, etc. are components of the property of *being a bachelor*.⁷ Of course, the component properties and relations may themselves be complex and thus have components. In such a case, their components are also components of the property or relation of which they are components.

Though I believe that much could be said in favor of the view that some properties and relations have other properties and relations as components, I cannot engage in a full defense of the view here.⁸ However, I do wish to note that the alternative to this view is not more initially plausible or natural than it is. If one holds that no properties and relations have other properties and relations as components, what does one say about properties like *being a bachelor* and relations like *being a grandparent of*? Since the property of *being a bachelor*

does not have components, possessing that property cannot simply amount to possessing the “conjunctively combined” properties of *being male*, *being unmarried*, etc. (as it would if the property of *being a bachelor* were complex and had as components the properties of *being unmarried*, etc. combined conjunctively). Thus it seems as though the advocate of this view must say one of two things. Either she must say that possessing the (simple) property of *being a bachelor* is something over and above possessing the conjunctively combined properties of *being unmarried*, *being male*, etc.; or she must say that there is no property of *being a bachelor*. There are just the properties of *being unmarried*, *being male*, etc. and we correctly apply the word ‘bachelor’ to something just in case it jointly possesses these (simple) properties. *Prima facie*, the first of these options seems somewhat promiscuous and mysterious. For it leaves one wondering how it could be that possessing the property of *being a bachelor* is something more than possessing the properties of *being male*, *being unmarried*, etc. “conjunctively”.⁹ And the second option seems to lead to the view that there is a relatively small set of simple properties and that many (probably most) words of English don’t express properties but are abbreviatory devices for expressing claims to the effect that objects possess some range of simple properties.

Now I don’t claim that these options resulting from holding that no properties and relations have other properties and relations as components are absurd or clearly wrong. But, as I suggested above, it cannot be claimed that either is more initially plausible or natural than the view that some properties and relations have other properties and relations as components.¹⁰

The second element of the framework I intend to employ in addressing the questions about analyses raised at the beginning of the paper is a theory of propositions that I have defended elsewhere.¹¹ On this view, sentences (or something like them – see below) are the syntactic input to the rules of semantic interpretation. These rules map the syntactic inputs to structured propositions. The semantics also includes a definition of truth for propositions. Prior to discussing structured propositions themselves, it will serve us well to discuss the syntactic inputs to semantics.

Versions of Chomsky's Extended Standard Theory currently dominate thinking in syntax. On such theories, the syntactic representations that are the inputs to semantic interpretation (henceforth *SI's*) are in general distinct from the surface structures of sentences. It would be impossible to do justice here to the reasoning that has led syntacticians to suppose that the syntactic inputs to semantics are distinct from the surface structures of sentences; the interested reader should consult May [1985].

I shall assume that *SI's* have at least two features. First, I assume that in *SI's* the internal structure of a sentence, including the internal structure of any phrase occurring in it, is represented. We will use brackets to represent this structure. Thus, for example, we will assume that a sentence such as

3. Robin angrily hit Jan

has as its *SI* something like

3a. [[Robin] [angrily [hit [Jan]]]]

where the brackets capture the internal structure of the sentence including e.g. the internal structure of the verb phrase 'angrily hit Jan'. To say that an *SI* has structure is to say that the lexical items in it stand in a certain relation that imposes this structure. In the case of 3a, the relation is complex. That is, for 'Robin', 'angrily', 'hit', and 'Jan' to stand in this relation in 3a is for e.g. 'hit' and 'Jan' to stand in a certain relation (represented by the brackets around them) and for 'angrily' to stand in a relation to the complex consisting of 'hit' and 'Jan' standing in the former relation, and so on. We shall call the (possibly complex) relation in which lexical items stand in an *SI* underlying a sentence *S* the *sentential relation of S*.

The second assumption I make about *SI's* is that quantifier scope relations (as well as those of other operators) are explicitly represented and that quantifiers bind variables. This assumption is endorsed by syntacticians working within the Chomskyan tradition mentioned above. Indeed, they hold that the primary difference between an *SI* (called an *LF representation* within this tradition) and the surface structure from which it was derived is that quantifier

phrases are moved leaving “traces” behind that function as bound variables; and the movement results in explicit representation of quantifier scope. So for example, a sentence such as

4. Every skier hates some snowboarder.

has as SI’s both of the following

- 4a. [[Every [x skier]] [[some [y snowboarder]] [x hates y]]]
 4b. [[Some [y snowboarder]] [[every [x skier]] [x hates y]]]

The scope ambiguity 4 exhibits is held to result from the transformations mapping 4 to an SI being able to apply in two different ways yielding 4a and 4b. These are then interpreted differently by the semantic component.

Returning now to our theory of structured propositions, the semantics provides a recursive assignment of propositions to SI’s. On the view of propositions presupposed here, propositions are complex, structured entities. As was the case with SI’s, to say that a proposition, say *P*, is structured is to say that its constituents stand in some relation, call it the *propositional relation of P*, that provides the structure of the proposition. This means that the recursive assignment of propositions to SI’s maps one structured entity, an SI, to another, a structured proposition. The view taken here is that all this mapping does is to “replace” each lexical item in the SI with its semantic value. For a simple expression ε occurring in an SI, let ε^* be its semantic value (henceforth *sv*). For a name, we suppose the *sv* is its bearer; for a predicate, the appropriate property/relation; for a logical term, the appropriate logical operation.¹² Then a sentence like

5. Mary hit Lisa

whose SI is as follows

- 5a. [Mary [hit [Lisa]]]

expresses the proposition

- 5b. [Mary* [hit* [Lisa*]]]

4, which has the two underlying SI's 4a and 4b, expresses the following propositions:

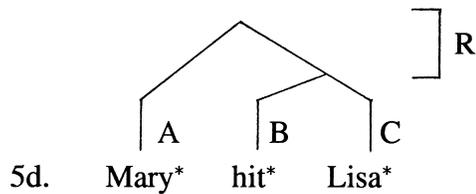
- 4c. $[[\text{Every}^* [x \text{ skier}^*]] [[\text{some}^* [y \text{ snowboarder}^*]] [x \text{ hates}^* y]]]$
 4d. $[[\text{Some}^* [y \text{ snowboarder}^*]] [[\text{every}^* [x \text{ skier}^*]] [x \text{ hates}^* y]]]$

where Every^* and Some^* are relations between sets or properties.¹³ As was suggested, the semantic clauses that map SI's to propositions simply “substitute” sv's for lexical items. The result is that the structure of a proposition is identical to the structure of the SI expressing it, (indeed, as we shall see, something stronger can be said).

It is important to be careful about what is meant by the metaphorical claim that the semantic clauses “substitute” sv's for lexical items in SI's. The proper way to interpret this claim is best illustrated by representing SI's in “tree form” rather than by means of embedded brackets. Thus consider the “tree” version of 5a:

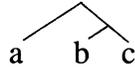


This SI is mapped to the following structured proposition (where again ε^* is the sv of the expression ε):



The portion of the proposition labeled R is the very (complex) relation that the words ‘Mary’, ‘hit’ and ‘Lisa’ stand in the SI that is mapped to the proposition, (i.e. R is the sentential relation of the SI 5c). The portions labeled A , B , and C are the (semantic) relations that the words ‘Mary’, ‘hit’ and ‘Lisa’ bear to Mary, the relation of *hitting* and Lisa, respectively, (e.g. A presumably is the reference relation holding between ‘Mary’ and Mary). Thus the proposition consists of Mary, the relation of *hitting* and Lisa standing (in that order) in the following three-place relation: *there are lexical items*

a, b, c that have as their sv's . . . // and ##### (respectively) and occur in an SI with sentential relation R as follows:



In other words, the relation that Mary, the *hitting* relation and Lisa stand in the proposition 5d (i.e. the propositional relation of 5d) is the result of composing the sentential relation of the SI 5c with the semantic relations ‘Mary’, ‘hit’ and ‘Lisa’ bear to their sv’s, while existentially quantifying over those lexical items.

Note that on this view, it is the sentential relation of the SI that provides all of the significant structure to the proposition that the SI is mapped to. For the propositional relation (the relation the constituents of a proposition stand in) is the composition of this sentential relation with the semantic relations the lexical items bear to their sv’s. And these semantic relations *add* no structure to the proposition, but simply *extend* the nodes where the lexical items occurred in the SI.

To summarize, the sentential relation, obtaining between lexical items in an SI, is a component of the propositional relation, obtaining between the constituents of the structured proposition the SI is mapped to. To repeat, the propositional relation is the result of composing the sentential relation with the semantic relations lexical items bear to their sv’s and existentially quantifying over the lexical items. The structured proposition consists of the constituents of the proposition standing in this complex relation.¹⁴

The final element in the framework I intend to employ is a claim about linguistic competence. The idea is that there are (at least) three categories of words (or phrases) such that the standards that determine whether one is competent with a word vary from category to category. In the first category are words that express (i.e. have as sv’s) complex properties (relations), where to be competent with the word requires that one know the components of the complex property (relation) in question, and how they are combined to form the complex property (relation).¹⁵ A paradigmatic example of a word belonging to this category is ‘bachelor’. Thus to be competent with the word ‘bachelor’ one must know that the complex property associated with the word has as components the properties of *being*

male, being unmarried, and being an adult; and that these properties are combined conjunctively to yield the complex property that ‘bachelor’ expresses, (i.e. that the property *being a bachelor* is the property *being adult and being unmarried and being male*).¹⁶

In the second category are words that express complex properties (relations), where competence does *not* require that one be able to articulate the components of the property in question, but instead requires that one’s usage of the word be *guided* by the property in the sense that one applies the word to an object iff it possesses the property in question.¹⁷ The idea here is that though competent users are guided by the complex property expressed by the word in question and so generally apply the word correctly, they need not be able to give an account of the components of the property guiding their application. Probably most words that refer to artifacts, such as ‘cup’, ‘chair’, etc. fall into this category. Similarly for phrases such as ‘knows that P’.

The final category is comprised of words such that to be competent requires neither that one be able to articulate the components of the complex property expressed by the word nor that one be able to generally properly apply the word. Indeed, it is difficult to say what competence requires in the case of such words, and I won’t try to say anything about this.¹⁸ For I think we can distinguish words in this category from words in the other two, and that is all I require here. What many people have called “natural kind terms” (‘elm’, ‘aluminum’, etc.) are included in this category.

Regarding this last element of our framework, it seems to me uncontroversial that there are three categories of words whose standards for linguistic competence vary in something like the way suggested (especially when it is realized that we by no means claim that there are not further categories or that finer distinctions cannot be made within these categories). If anything is controversial, it is our claim that the differences in standards of competence are to be cashed out in the way suggested: namely, in terms of speakers being able to articulate components of complex properties expressed by predicates, or being guided by a property without being able to specify its components, etc. However, given that the first two elements of our framework entail that there are complex properties and relations

and that words express them, this is the natural way to describe the differences in the standards of competence we have noticed.

With our framework now in place, we may begin to discuss philosophical analyses. Let us begin by discussing the propositions expressed by sentences of the form that we have assumed are used to state analyses. Recall that these are sentences of the form:

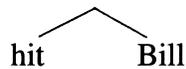
- (6) For all x , x is P iff $C(x)$

On the view of propositions discussed above, such sentences express propositions of the form:

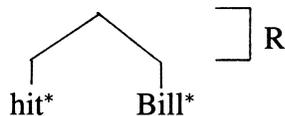
- (7) [[EVERY: x] [[P^*x] IFF [?]]]

where EVERY is the sv of ‘For all’; IFF is the sv of ‘iff’; and P^* is the sv of (property expressed by) the predicate ‘ P ’.¹⁹ The question mark indicates where the semantic contribution of the complex predicate ‘ $C(x)$ ’ occurs in the proposition. We must now discuss the nature of that contribution.

According to our account of propositions, the structure of a proposition is identical to the structure of the sentence (SI) expressing it. More specifically, the relation holding together the lexical items in an SI (the sentential relation) is a subcomponent of, and provides all the structure to, the relation holding together the sv’s of those lexical items in the proposition (the propositional relation). This means that a complex predicate will contribute to a proposition a complex entity consisting of the sv’s of the lexical items occurring in the predicate standing in a relation whose structure is identical to the structure of the syntactical relation binding together those lexical items in the predicate. To take a simple example, consider the complex predicate ‘hit Bill’. In tree form, this predicate has the following syntactical structure:



Thus its contribution to a proposition expressed by a sentence containing it is the following complex entity:



where the portion of the relation obtaining between $Bill^*$ and hit^* labeled R is the relation obtaining between 'hit' and 'Bill' in the predicate and the remaining portion of the relation are the semantic relations between 'Bill' and $Bill^*$ and 'hit' and hit^* . Thus, the complex predicate 'hit Bill' does *not* contribute the (relational) property of *hitting Bill* to propositions expressed by sentences it occurs in. Instead, it contributes a complex entity consisting of the relation of *hitting* and *Bill* standing in a relation that is the composition of the syntactical relation obtaining between 'hit' and 'Bill' in the predicate 'hit Bill' and the semantic relations holding between 'hit', 'Bill' and their sv's (existentially generalizing over 'hit' and 'Bill').

To return to the point, then, sentences of the form of (6) express propositions like (7), where in place of the question mark occurs a complex entity of the sort just described, contributed by the complex predicate in (6). We can represent such propositions as follows:

$$(8) \quad [[\text{EVERY: } x] [[P^* x] \text{ IFF } (\mathcal{C}(x))]]$$

where $\mathcal{C}(x)$ is the complex entity contributed by the complex predicate 'C(x)' in (6).

Now what are the truth conditions of propositions of the form of (8)? Obviously the truth conditions of instances of (8) will depend upon the particular property P^* and the nature of the particular $\mathcal{C}(x)$ the propositions contain. Still, there are some general points to be made about the truth conditions of propositions this form.

First, prior to a definition of truth for propositions, or as a part of it, complex entities contributed to propositions by complex predicates must be associated with properties. To illustrate, consider the predicate 'is a tall man with two children who have many friends'. This predicate contributes a complex entity, consisting of the sv's of the words in the predicate standing in a relation whose structure is identical to the structure of the syntactical relation obtaining between the lexical items in the predicate, to propositions expressed by sentences containing the predicate. Now this complex entity obviously is not the property of *being a tall man with two children who have many friends*, (just as the complex entity contributed by 'hit Bill' is not the relational property of *hitting Bill*). Nonetheless, the truth or falsity of a proposition containing this entity will depend on what things possess this property: whether the proposition expressed by 'Sean

is a tall man with two children who have many friends' is true or not depends on whether Sean possesses the property in question. This, I claim, is because the complex entity in effect represents the property in question. Thus prior to, or as part of, the definition of truth for propositions, we must give a definition that associates with a complex entity the property it represents.²⁰

Second, there are a variety of ways to handle logical terms and their propositional contributions ('for all'/EVERY; 'iff'/IFF) within a theory of propositions of the sort I am defending. However, as far as I can see, nothing I wish to say about analysis requires one of these treatments as opposed to any other. Since spelling out a particular treatment would require a detailed and fairly technical discussion, I shall not adopt any particular view of the matter here. For present purposes, it is enough to suppose that we have adopted an account of EVERY and IFF that results in propositions of the form of (8) being true just in case every thing is such that it possesses P* iff it possesses the property represented by $\mathcal{C}(x)$.²¹ Clearly, there will be many true instances of (8) that don't constitute anything like philosophical analyses.

Having discussed the propositions expressed by sentences of the form of (6) and their truth conditions, we are at last ready to address the questions about philosophical analyses with which we began. Before saying what *philosophical* analyses are, it will prove helpful to characterize the more general notion of an *analysis*. The characterization of this more general notion will be facilitated by the introduction of a final bit of terminology.

The complex entity $\mathcal{C}(x)$, contributed to propositions of the form of (8) by complex predicates, consists of the sv's of the lexical items occurring in the predicate standing in some relation. I shall call these sv's the *constituents* of $\mathcal{C}(x)$. To take a simple case, the predicate 'hit Bill' contributes the following complex entity to propositions expressed by sentences containing it:



The relation of *hitting* (i.e. hit*) and Bill (i.e. Bill*) are constituents of this complex entity.

We can now characterize an analysis as follows. A proposition of the form of (8) constitutes an (correct) analysis just in case: (i) the property P^* is identical to the property represented by the complex entity $\mathcal{C}(x)$; and (ii) the constituents of $\mathcal{C}(x)$ are components of P^* .²²

To illustrate, consider the proposition expressed by

(9) For all x , x is a bachelor iff x is an unmarried adult male.

Roughly, this proposition is as follows:

(9a) [[EVERY: x] [[bachelor* x] IFF [unmarried* [adult* [male*]]]]]]

(where bachelor* is the property of *being a bachelor*, unmarried* is the property of *being unmarried*, etc.). Now the entities on the left and right sides of IFF in this proposition are quite distinct. The complex property bachelor* is on the left and the entity on the right is a complex entity (contributed by the complex predicate in (9)) of the sort described earlier, whose constituents are unmarried*, adult*, and male*. Nonetheless, I assume that the definition of a complex entity representing a property (relation) alluded to earlier will map the complex entity [unmarried* [adult* [male*]]] to the property of *being a bachelor*, that is, that the complex entity represents the property of *being a bachelor*, so that condition (i) in our characterization of an analysis is satisfied. Further, (we have assumed that) the *constituents* of the complex entity [unmarried* [adult* [male*]]], namely unmarried*, adult*, male*, are *components* of bachelor*. So condition (ii) of our characterization of an analysis is satisfied as well.²³

A point to notice about our characterization of an analysis is that it allows “varying depths” of analyses. Consider, for example, the sentences

(9) For all x , x is a bachelor iff x is an unmarried adult male

and

(10) For all x , x is a bachelor iff x is an unmarried man

We have seen that (9) expresses the proposition (9a) above. Now assuming that ‘man’ has as its sv the property of *being an adult male*, (10) expresses the proposition

- (10a) [[EVERY: x] [[bachelor* x] IFF [unmarried* [adult-male*]]]]

where adult-male* is the complex property of *being an adult male*, which has as components the property of *being an adult* and the property of *being male*. Though (9a) and (10a) are different propositions, the complex entities on the right side of IFF in each presumably represent the same property: *being a bachelor*. And both are analyses. However, (9a) is a “deeper” analysis than (10a). For the complex entity in (9a) has as constituents more components of the property of *being a bachelor* (unmarried*, adult* and male*) than does the complex entity in (10a) (unmarried* and adult-male*). And of course there very likely are analyses “deeper” than (9a). Supposing that the constituents of the complex entity in (9a) (unmarried*, adult*, male*) are complex properties, there is a proposition like (9a) except that the complex entity in it contains as constituents the components of *these* complex properties.

It should be clear that many analyses intuitively will not be *philosophical* analyses. The instances of the following “propositional schemata”, for example, that are analyses are the outcomes of scientific and not philosophical inquiry:

- (11) [[EVERY: x] [[water* x] IFF [C(x)]]]
 (12) [[EVERY: x] [[gene* x] IFF [C(x)]]]

Thus our account of analyses is not an account of philosophical analyses. Nonetheless, we can answer some of the questions about analyses we began with since these answers will hold for all kinds of analyses, including those that are philosophical. First, it is properties that are the objects of analysis. More specifically, it is the property on the left side of IFF in an analysis that is being analyzed. In considering particular analyses, we shall sometimes call the property on the left side of IFF *the analyzed property* (of that analysis). The complex entity on the right side has as constituents, and so displays, components of the analyzed property. The more constituents it has, the more components of the analyzed property are displayed and the deeper the analysis. Second, our solution to the paradox of analysis is to block the inference from the claim that (1)/(2) are (express) correct analyses to the claim that they must express the same propositions as (1a)/(2a). Even when (1)/(2) express correct

analyses they do not express the same propositions as (1a)/(2a).²⁴ This is because even when (1)/(2) express correct analyses, ‘is a brother’/‘is an instance of knowledge’ make different contributions to the propositions expressed by (1)/(2) than do ‘is a male sibling’/‘is an instance of a justified true belief satisfying condition C’.²⁵

Even though ‘brother’ and ‘male sibling’/‘knowledge’ and ‘justified true belief satisfying condition C’ make different propositional contributions, we preserve the intuition that they “stand for the same property”: ‘brother’ contributes the property of *being a brother* to the proposition expressed by (2) and ‘male sibling’ contributes a complex entity to the proposition that *represents* (and thus is mapped by the definition of truth for propositions to) the property of *being a brother*.²⁶

I believe that what makes a proposition a *philosophical* analysis, as opposed to a “scientific” analysis, has to do with the sort of epistemic relations typical members of the linguistic community bear to the analyzed property.²⁷ And the epistemic relations typical members of a linguistic community bear to a property are reflected in the standards of linguistic competence the community associates with the word expressing the property in question. Thus I shall attempt to get at the notion of philosophical analysis by combining our account of analyses with the final element of our framework: the claim that there are (at least) three categories of words (or phrases) such that different standards of linguistic competence are associated with words in different categories. Recall that the three categories of words (or phrases) are: 1) those whose sv’s are complex properties (relations), where to be competent with the word requires that one know the components of the complex property (relation) in question, and how they are combined to form the complex property; 2) those whose sv’s are complex properties, where competence does *not* require that one be able to articulate the components of the property in question, but where one’s usage of the word must be *guided* by the property in the sense that one applies the word to an object iff it possesses the property in question; and 3) those such that to be competent requires neither that one be able to articulate the components of the complex property expressed by the word nor even that one be able to generally properly apply the word.

Because I take philosophical analyses to be distinguished from others in virtue of the epistemic relations typical members of a linguistic community bear to the analyzed property, a proposition will be a philosophical analysis *only relative to a linguistic community*. A proposition P is a philosophical analysis for a linguistic community c iff (i) P is an analysis; and (ii) there is a sentence of the language of c that expresses P and the word that contributes the analyzed property to P is in category 1) or 2) above.²⁸

The idea is that if the word contributing the analyzed property were drawn from the third category, the result would be more properly a scientific analysis (recall that words from this category are often “natural kind terms”) and would require scientific investigation to be known. The reason is that in this case competence with the word does not by itself yield the appropriate epistemic connection to the property that is the sv of the word so that the speaker may produce a sentence expressing an analysis of the property without engaging in scientific investigation.

By contrast, if the word belongs to the first category, competence with the word requires one to be able to articulate the components of the complex property that is the sv of the word and how they are combined to form this complex property. Thus, in virtue of one’s competence with the word, one will be able to produce a sentence that expresses a proposition that is an analysis. I count the propositions in such cases as philosophical analyses for the community in question. However it is important to see that they will always seem trivial to the members of the linguistic community in question. For any speaker competent with the word is, in virtue of that competence, able to produce such a philosophical analysis or recognize that another has produced one. Thus, for example, the analysis expressed by (9) ((9a)) is trivial. ‘Bachelor’ is a paradigmatic category 1) word.

Because of the triviality of these cases, perhaps the term ‘philosophical analysis’ should be reserved for the cases in which the sentence expressing the analysis has a word drawn from category 2) contributing the analyzed property to the analysis, (I have grouped these trivial cases under the heading of philosophical analyses primarily because examples such as (9) are so often mentioned in discussions of philosophical analyses). Only these cases will be both non-trivial or informative and the outcome of philosophical inves-

tigation. In such a case, competence with the word requires that one's usage be guided by the complex property that is the sv of the word in the sense that one generally applies the word to a thing iff it possesses the property in question. Thus one's competence requires that one be able to reliably detect the presence or absence of the property in question. This does not mean that one's competence *insures* that one is able to produce a sentence that expresses an analysis (as in the previous case). However, one's competence does provide a start in such a case. Because one is able to reliably detect the property in question and so correctly apply the word in question, one can reflect on the circumstances in which the word would correctly apply to an object and reflect on the circumstances in which it would not. By successively dropping features from the circumstances in which the word correctly applies and successively adding features to circumstances in which that word fails to apply, with a bit of insight and ingenuity one *might* come to see some of the components of the complex property that is the sv of the word and how they combine to form the complex property. That is, one might be able to assert a sentence that expresses an analysis.

But again, one's competence is no guarantee in this case. It merely provides one with the wherewithal to judge whether the word in question correctly applies in a variety of real or imagined situations. And this is why an analysis in such a case is by no means trivial or uninformative. Speaking roughly, though competence with the word in question guarantees reliable detection of the property that is the sv of the word, it does not guarantee insight into the components of that complex property. Thus one may *learn* something from such an analysis; it may be informative.

To summarize, the current attempt to characterize philosophical analyses appeals to the standards of linguistic competence for words occurring in sentences used to express the analyses. The triviality of some analyses as compared with others is explained by the same appeal. I mentioned above, however, that the leading idea of this attempt to characterize philosophical analyses is that philosophical analyses (for a given community) are simply analyses such that typical members of the linguistic community bear a certain sort of epistemic relation to the analyzed property in the analysis. Thus the appeal to words and standards of linguistic competence is simply an

indirect way of getting at the epistemic relations typical members of the community bear to the properties in question.²⁹ However, it is not difficult to put the matter more directly, without the detour through linguistic competence.

Corresponding to the different standards of linguistic competence associated with our three categories of words, we might suppose that there are (at least) three different ways that typical members of a community are epistemically related to complex properties. First, typical members of the community may know the components of a complex property and how they are combined to form the complex property. Second, typical members of the community may not know the components of the property but be able to reliably detect the presence or absence of the property. Third, typical members of a community may be aware of the existence of a property but in general not know its components and not be able to reliably detect its presence or absence. Then we may say that a proposition *P* is a philosophical analysis for a community *c* iff (i) *P* is an analysis; and (ii) typical members of the community are related to the analyzed property in either of the first two ways mentioned above.³⁰

Why is it that only when typical members of a community are related to a property in the second way mentioned above, is an analysis containing that property as the analyzed property a (non-trivial) philosophical analysis? The answer to this question concerns the conditions under which the methods of philosophical inquiry are applicable. If typical members of the community can reliably detect the presence or absence of a property, then the philosopher can imagine a variety of circumstances and reliably determine whether some object possesses the property or not in those circumstances. She can then form hypotheses concerning the components of the complex property based on her judgments about the imagined circumstances. With a hypothesis in hand, she can imagine further circumstances, some quite fanciful, with which to test her hypothesis. Further, when presented with purported analyses of others, she can invoke imagined situations to provide counterexamples.

NOTES

* Thanks to David Copp and Patrick Findler for helpful discussions and suggestions.

¹ It is often unclear whether a given assertion is intended as an analysis or as something else. An example, suggested to me by David Copp, is the utilitarian account of right action. When a utilitarian says that right actions are those that maximize happiness, is this intended to be an analysis of right action or to merely provide what are in fact (or even necessarily) necessary and sufficient conditions for being a right action? My concern is with cases in which one intends to give an analysis of the relevant notion.

² I do invoke the notion of a standard of linguistic competence, and it might be claimed that to spell out in more detail the standards of linguistic competence I employ would require invoking concepts. However, I think that this claim is almost certainly wrong. My own view is that a theory of linguistic competence, in the sense of an account of what constitutes being competent with various kinds of linguistic expressions, is going to be *extremely* complicated and will employ many different mechanisms. Concepts, however, won't be among them. Indeed, one of my primary objections to concepts is that their employment has masked the complexity of phenomena they are used to explain. Saying that one's linguistic competence with an expression consists in "grasping a concept" (and associating it with the expression) is an example, in my view.

³ Of course philosophers often assert sentences of this form without intending to provide, and without providing, analyses, (see notes 1 and 22).

⁴ Condition C is designed to get around Gettier cases.

⁵ For example, Bealer (1982) proposes to solve the paradox of analysis by positing an ambiguity in 'that' clauses, so that on one reading 'that whatever is a circle is a locus of points in the same plane equidistant from some common point' expresses the same proposition as 'that whatever is a circle is a circle'; and on another reading it doesn't. However, it is hard to see what this alleged ambiguity has to recommend it except that it solves the paradox.

⁶ A version of this view is discussed in Michael Jubien (1993) (see pp. 111–115). Though Jubien doesn't quite endorse the view that some properties have others as constituents, he is clearly sympathetic to it.

⁷ As is some sort of conjunction relation between properties. Presumably it combines with pairs of properties to form a property.

⁸ Jubien (1993), for example, notes that this view provides a nice explanation of what he calls property entailment, (*being a sister* entails *being female*, etc.)

⁹ This is not to say that positing distinct but necessarily coextensive properties generally seems mysterious or counterintuitive. There is a strong inclination to hold that e.g. *being the even prime number* and *being the result of subtracting 5 from 7* are distinct properties.

¹⁰ In holding this view I am not committing myself to the claim that there is some "basic" set of simple properties and relations out of which the others are constructed.

¹¹ King (1994, 1995, 1996). The material in the next several pages is largely drawn from King (1995).

¹² The claim that names have their bearers as *sv*'s is not an important part of the view being defended. Those who disagree with this claim may still embrace the view of propositions being defended, minus this feature.

¹³ E.g. *Some** is the relation that obtains between two sets (or properties) iff they have a common member (or instance). As I mention below, there are a variety of ways to handle quantification within a theory of propositions of the sort I

am proposing. King (1996) contains one approach. I adopt the present approach for illustrative purposes, and so nothing should be read into my adoption of this approach here.

¹⁴ Virtually everything I say about philosophical analyses could be said by one who merely held that the structure of a proposition is identical to the structure of the SI expressing it (and who didn't hold my view that the propositional relation is the composition of the sentential relation and various semantic relations). Further, some of the things I say could be said by one who held merely that simple and complex predicates make different propositional contributions, even when they "stand for" the same property. However, as I suggested, the motivation and defense of my theory of propositions is independent of questions about analysis. And I find an account of analysis that invokes such independently defended theories attractive.

¹⁵ One need only know what we might call the *immediate components*. These may themselves be complex and have components but competence with the word does not require that one know these latter components. An illustrative example might be 'vixen'. Competence requires that one know that the property of *being a vixen* has as components the properties of *being female* and *being a fox*, and that these are combined conjunctively to form the property of *being a vixen*. But supposing *being a fox* itself to be complex, competence with 'vixen' does not require knowing the components of *being a fox*. Also, perhaps competence requires only that one know some "core" components – can everyone competent with 'bachelor' really specify *all* the immediate components?

¹⁶ Of course the competent speaker need not put all of this in terms of properties and their components. That is how *we*, given our views about the complexity of the property of *being a bachelor* and its having *being unmarried*, etc. as components, describe his knowledge. He need only be able to articulate the claim that being a bachelor is being unmarried and male and an adult.

¹⁷ Obviously this is an idealization since speakers make mistakes of various sorts. Further, often a speaker won't encounter some objects possessing the property in question, or won't apply the predicate to an encountered object possessing the property. Spelling this out precisely so as not to idealize might be quite difficult and problematic. Also, note that some words falling into the first category might be such that competent speakers do not satisfy the requirements for the second category. Again, 'vixen' might be an example. Competent speakers may not be able to reliably detect vixens.

¹⁸ Putnam's (1975) doctrine of stereotypes was an attempt to address this question.

¹⁹ See the remarks on EVERY and IFF below. We assume here, and for the remainder of the paper, that 'P' is syntactically simple, (i.e., a word). When 'P' in (6) is syntactically complex, a number of complications arise that result in some of the things subsequently said being false for such cases. A statement of the present account that applies to instances of (6) even where 'P' is syntactically complex is available but requires significant complications in many formulations.

²⁰ I do not give this definition here, (nor do I give a definition of truth for propositions). However, it would be a definition with cases determined by the various forms had by the complex entities contributed by complex predicates. So the definition would begin as follows: complex entity $\mathcal{C}(x)$ represents the property P iff: case 1) $\mathcal{C}(x)$ is $[R[a]]$, where R is a two-place relation and a an individual and P is the relational property *Ra*. etc.

²¹ The account of logical terms and their propositional contributions given in King (1996) yields such an account. On that type of account EVERY is a relation between sets and IFF is a truth function.

²² A number of points must be stressed about this definition. First, note that the definition entails that every analysis is a true instance of (8), but not every true instance of (8) is an analysis. Second, if one expresses an instance of (8) intending to give an analysis, but e.g. condition (i) is not satisfied, our terminology entails that one has not given an analysis at all, (even if the instance of (8) is true). Similarly, one might give an analysis without intending to. Third, we have implicitly relied upon the fact that propositions of the form of (8) really do contain complex entities on the right side of IFF. Thus 'For all x, x is a bachelor iff x is a bachelor' does not express an analysis since it does not express a proposition of the form of (8), (nor would it even if the terms on the left and right of 'iff' were distinct but still both syntactically simple). For, the proposition it expresses has a (complex) *property* (bachelor*) on the right side of IFF rather than a complex entity of the sort required. Fourth, I take condition (i) to rule out "circular analyses" such as that expressed by 'For all x, x is a bachelor iff x is an unmarried bachelor'. For the proposition expressed by this sentence has as the complex entity $\mathcal{C}(x)$ [unmarried* [bachelor*]], which I take to represent the property of *being an unmarried bachelor*. And I take this latter property to be distinct from, but necessarily coextensive with, the property of *being a bachelor*. Those who disagree with this seemingly eccentric position can add a third condition to the definition: (iii) $\mathcal{C}(x)$ does not have P* as a constituent.

²³ Here and elsewhere my view may seem to entail that linguistic expressions neatly mirror the "internal structures" of the properties/relations they are associated with. However, that is not at all the case. First, I have already indicated that a *simple* predicate may express a *complex* property or relation (e.g. 'bachelor'). Further, nothing I say rules out complex predicates being associated with simple properties. Finally, nothing I say rules out a complex predicate being associated with a complex property/relation, where the structure of the predicate is in no way isomorphic to the structure of the property/relation and where the sv's of the lexical items in the predicate are not even components of the property/relation associated with the predicate. I only require that *in a correct analysis*, the constituents of the complex entity on the right side of IFF be components of the property on the left side. Of course, the structure of this complex entity will be identical to the structure of the predicate that contributes it to the proposition. But this leaves open the question of the relation between the structures of the complex entity and complex predicate on the one hand and the complex property on the other.

²⁴ Like the present account of analyses, the account offered in Sosa (1983) uses the idea that properties and relations can be complex and have as components other properties and relations. However, Sosa combines this with a very different theory of propositions than the one invoked here. The resulting account of analysis, though perhaps similar in spirit in certain respects (see especially p. 704), is quite different. In particular, on the present view the sentence

- (A) No one can believe the proposition that all and only cubes are cubes without believing the proposition that all and only cubes are closed solids with sides all square.

is false since ‘all and only cubes are cubes’ and ‘all and only cubes are closed solids with sides all square’ express different propositions. On Sosa’s view, this sentence is true (see his C2; pp. 695-696). Sosa claims that the reluctance to accept (A) as true comes from confusing the proposition it expresses with another proposition that is false. This false proposition (roughly) asserts that no one can believe the proposition that all and only cubes are cubes *in a certain way* (i.e. under the aspect M) without believing the proposition that all and only cubes are closed solids with sides all square (which is the same as the proposition that all and only cubes are cubes) *in a different way* (i.e., under the aspect M’), (something that turns out to be false given Sosa’s notion of aspect – see p. 701). I view the present explanation of the apparent falsity of (A) as superior: it *is* false. Further, the present account does not need to invoke anything like aspects, which appear to be quite like Fregean senses. Finally, Sosa makes no attempt to distinguish philosophical analyses from others, as is done here.

²⁵ S.D. Rieber (1994) develops a solution to the paradox of analysis according to which, as on the present account, the following sentences express different propositions:

- (B) For all x, x is a wager iff x is the pledging of something on a possible event
- (C) For all x, x is a wager iff x is a wager

(Actually, Rieber uses the “to be” formulation. Also Rieber couches his discussion in terms of what (B) and (C) “mean” or “express” or “say”, rather than in terms of what proposition they express. I describe Rieber’s view in my terms to make it easier to compare to my view. I do not think this affects any substantive issue.) To get this result Rieber introduces the notion of *semantic structure* as follows:

‘Suppose that M is a meaningful expression and that each of M_1, \dots, M_k are its meaningful components. Now consider the property of being a meaningful expression each of whose meaningful components have the respective meanings of M_1, \dots, M_k . This property is the semantic structure of M.’ (pp. 110–111)

Rieber’s idea is that in statements of analysis, such as B or C (or, more strictly, their “to be” analogues), expressions refer to their semantic structures. Since ‘is a wager’ and ‘is a pledging of something on a possible event’ have different semantic structures, they refer to different things in (B), so that (B) expresses something different than (C). I am sympathetic to Rieber’s notion of semantic structure. It has much in common with the view, endorsed by the present account, that complex predicates make different contributions to propositions than do simple predicates, even when both predicates “stand for” the same property. However, I find it objectionable that on Rieber’s account ‘... expressions are being used in analysis statements differently from just about anywhere else in the language.’ (p. 113). On his view, it is only in such statements that expressions refer to their semantic structures, (Rieber compares such uses to quotational uses of words in which words refer to themselves). Such an account seems *ad hoc*, as does any semantic theory that solves a problem by claiming that words are functioning in a different manner in the problematic context. On the present view, by contrast, (B) and (C) express different propositions, but the words in these sentences make precisely the same propositional contributions as they do in other (normal) contexts. In any

case, Rieber is concerned only to solve the paradox of analysis, and does not give an account of what analyses are – see his note 19.

²⁶ Other solutions to the paradox of analysis block the inference at the same place as the present account, but do so by holding that ‘knowledge’ and ‘justified true belief satisfying condition C’ stand for different properties. See, for example, Chisholm and Potter (1981) and Ackerman (1981, 1986). On both accounts, one property P (*being a justified true belief satisfying condition C*) is held to analyze a distinct property Q (*being an instance of knowledge*). I find accounts of analysis of this sort extremely implausible. In giving an analysis, one is saying what a property or relation *is*. One is not saying that the property in question is related to this or that other property in certain ways. (Rieber (1994) also makes this point). I do not deny that philosophers sometimes do want to merely assert that one property is related, perhaps even in the way Ackerman or Chisholm and Potter suggest, to another property. And they may even do so by asserting an instance of (8) (– recall that instances of (8) may be true without being analyses). To take the example mentioned in the body of the paper, it may be that some utilitarians, in asserting that for all x, x is a right action iff x maximizes the general happiness, intend only that the property of being a right action and the property of maximizing the general happiness are (necessarily) coextensive (and perhaps that they satisfy other conditions specified by Ackerman or Chisholm and Potter). Perhaps they think that they are providing a way of recognizing right actions, thinking that it is easy to tell when an action maximizes happiness. But then I would say that they are precisely not intending to provide an analysis of right action, (though of course they may have inadvertently provided an analysis). For they do not intend to tell us what right action *is*. So accounts like Ackerman’s and Chisholm and Potter’s may correctly characterize some of what philosophers do. But they do not correctly characterize analyses. Each of these proposals suffers other difficulties as well.

Chisholm and Potter (1981) give definitions of the relations between properties used to define *property P is analysed by property Q* (i.e., property P involves property Q; property P entails property Q, etc.) that make essential use of the undefined “concepts” of conceiving and attributing understood as ‘intensional attitudes . . . [that] take properties as their objects’ (p. 2). Because these “concepts” are undefined, I find it impossible to determine whether e.g. ‘[property] P is necessarily such that whoever conceives it conceives [property] Q’ (definition of *P involves Q*, p. 2). Thus I find it impossible to determine whether the account of analysis offered is plausible or not. Neil Thomason (1992) seems to have a similar complaint, among a number of others. See note 27 for an additional problem with Ackerman’s account.

²⁷ Ackerman’s (1981, 1986) account also requires that certain epistemic conditions be met for something to be a philosophical analysis, and I am sympathetic to this feature of her view. (see conditions 2 and 3 below). On her account, a property P is the analysans of a property Q, the analysandum, just in case: 1) P and Q are necessarily coextensive; 2) it is knowable a priori that P and Q are coextensive; and 3) the proposition that necessarily all and only what is P is Q can be justified by “the philosophical example-and-counterexample method” in which “The person whose concept is being tested is presented with a series of simple described hypothetical situations and then asked questions of the form ‘If such-and-such were the case, would you still say this was a case of [Q]?’ . . .” (p. 318), (Ackerman (1981) holds

that *concepts* are the objects of analysis, but in Ackerman (1986) she makes clear that concepts just are properties; I assume that even in Ackerman (1981) concepts are properties). The third condition on analyses (above) is crucial to Ackerman's account since, as she recognizes, many properties will satisfy conditions 1 and 2 where neither property is an analysis of the other in any intuitive sense. But her condition 3 amounts to little more than requiring that the claim that all and only P's are Q's be the outcome of philosophizing (by means of hypothetical situations). It is somewhat unsatisfying to be told that philosophical analyses differ from (e.g.) truths of mathematics (many of which would satisfy Ackerman's conditions 1 and 2 above) in that they are the outcome of philosophical inquiry. What is wanted is at least some explanation as to why such analyses can be the outcome of philosophizing and how this is connected to condition 2 (that it be knowable *a priori* that the concepts are coextensive).

²⁸ For the purposes of this definition, I assume that there are not two words in the language of *c*, one in category 1 or 2 and the other in category 3, such that both words express the same property. Were this the case, various subtleties would have to be addressed.

²⁹ Perhaps it is not that indirect in that it seems plausible to suppose that the acquisition of a language significantly determines the epistemic relations one bears to the properties expressed by words of the language.

³⁰ Neither definition of a philosophical analysis for a community requires that members of the community recognize that the analysis is an analysis; and the second doesn't even require that the community have the linguistic wherewithal to express the analysis.

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