View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk
brought to you by CORE
provided by Memorial University Research Repository

Animus 2 (1997) www.swgc.mun.ca/animus

On Reading Philosophy After Analytic Philosophy

Floy E. Andrews
fdoull@gmail.com

It is already some years since I was struck by the multitude of falsehoods that I had accepted as true from my childhood, and how doubtful was the whole edifice I had afterward built on them. Descartes, *Meditation I.*

We have grown accustomed to the censure and abuse of the philosophic sages of former times, especially from our contemporaries in Anglo-American philosophy. It is no longer shocking to read of Kant's achievement, "Like all great pioneering works in philosophy the *Critique* is full of mistakes and confusions...the *Critique* still has much to teach us, but it is wrong on nearly every page"[1]; or of Aristotle, "[he], like Adam, began right, but soon wandered into a wrong path, with disastrous consequences for his posterity."[2] Such judgments about pre-twentieth century philosophy are the results of the success of logical positivism of the early part of the century and its transformation into the linguistic philosophy of more recent times. In this decade linguistic philosophy has itself been described as "that now distant philosophical style[3]." Richard Rorty finds his 1965 essay "Metaphilosophical Difficulties of Linguistic Philosophy" partly embarrassing, partly amusing, saying of it, "The controversies which I discussed with such earnestness in 1965 already seemed quaint in 1975. By now they seem positively antique,"[4] But this does not signal that earlier philosophy has been somehow redeemed or enjoyed any renaissance. It is rather that there is despair in the ranks of those former linguistic philosophers: they no longer believe they can save even that tenuous link with the past which their linguistic reinterpretation of Plato, Descartes, Hume, Kant etc. attempted. Philosophy as a discipline with a method of its own, philosophy as "anything unified, continuous or structured" does not for them exist.[5]

What is the legacy which remains after this century of overthrow? For those with an unrepentant devotion to the study of the works and arguments of the Western philosophical tradition, it would be premature to regard what has happened in the ranks of analytic philosophers as corresponding to, say, the destruction of the Berlin wall. For decades, philosophy in the English-speaking world has had to conform to external standards of "intellectual correctness"; several generations of philosophers in our

[1] Jonathan Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, Cambridge, 1966, viii.
[2] Peter Geach, *Logic Matters*, Berkeley, 1972, 44.
[3] Bernard Williams, "The Need to be Sceptical", *Times Literary Supplement*, Feb. 16-22, 1990, 163.
[4] "Twenty five years Later" in *The Linguistic Turn*, ed. Richard M. Rorty, Chicago, 1992, 371.
[5] *Ibid.*, 374.

universities have molded their institutions and formed their students to think that philosophy was analytic philosophy. If now it appears we may think otherwise, it would be rash to conclude that we are able to do so, that our minds are unfettered and free after all those years of conformity to an essentially alien logic and a distorting reductionism. Before we turn again to the texts of our tradition, it would be wise to reflect on what has been endured, and what we might do to overcome the lingering effects of our ordeal.

The early history of analytic philosophy is well enough known, its rise at the beginning of the century[6], then the production of its logic and accompanying ontology[7], and as a further development the emergence of logical positivism.[8] The subsequent history is of the division in the movement itself, principally the difference between Ideal Language philosophy and Ordinary Language Philosophy.[9] If the earlier history of linguistic philosophy simply dismissed most philosophy prior to itself as meaningless, the later history appropriated what it could of earlier thought to itself. Whether from the side of Ideal Language, where traditional philosophical theses are viewed as inchoate attempts at the formulation of an ideal language, or from the perspective of Ordinary Language philosophy, where as with Strawson one might glean a "descriptive metaphysics" from Leibniz or Kant, the intention was no longer to commit all of past philosophy to the fire, but to give to linguistic philosophy a way of appropriating that whole history to itself.[10]

How shall we approach, even modestly, the task of identifying the consequences of this history for those who have been its victims? It is perhaps too early to be systematic; certainly it would be overly long and arduous in this instance to try. Here I will draw attention to two sources of deception that the history suggests: deceptions arising from its logic and deceptions from its appropriation of older philosophy to itself. There are important reasons for drawing attention to these two sources. The logic of *Principia Mathematica*, wholly inappropriate to a philosophical text, is still with us and rules the intellectual world; and the commentary that fills our journals and philosophy book shelves, if it was published in the twentieth century, is quite likely a reduction of rich text to the limited vision of what conforms to linguistic philosophy. Through examples of the

[6] Anthony Quinton in the first of a series of BBC radio broadcasts on modern British philosophy in 1971 : "I think everyone would agree that there is a genuine continuity in British philosophy since the great year of 1903 when Russell's and Moore's first vitally important works came out." These conversations have been published in Bryan Magee, *Modern British Philosophy,* London, 1971. I quote from p. 1

[7] Its logic is given in *Principia Mathematica* (1910-14); its ontology, Russell's "logical atomism" given precision in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, where the logic together with its theory of meaning and ontological commitments form one system.

[8] "Now the logical positivism which developed to a very large extent out of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* arose from taking this abstract structure [that for a proposition to have meaning it must picture a fact]..., and giving it a particular application. The essential step is the idea that the elementary or basic propositions of language describe sense experiences, immediate experiences - the occurrence of colour patches in the visual fields of observers, the hearing of sound, the smelling of smells. And when you make this application of Wittgenstein's fundamental doctrine about meaning, what you get is something that is well-known as the central thesis of logical positivism - the verificationist doctrine that for a form of words to have meaning is for it to be correlated with some type of experience which makes it true, and whose failure to occur would falsify it." Anthony Quinton again, Magee, 6-7.

[9] The former centered at Cambridge, although the later Wittgenstein is exceptional; the latter at Oxford.

[10] The history of linguistic philosophy is presented in a most readable form in Richard Rorty's 1965 essay, the introduction to his *Linguistic Turn*, 1-39.

misunderstanding of older things that results from either the application of an alien logic or the reduction of texts to alien forms, the work will have begun of heightening our awareness of such deceptions. It is remarkable how frequently they occur, how easy to identify and convict them, and how essential for our philosophical health that we root them out and be done with them.

A. Philosophy In An Alien Logic

Modern logic presented most lucidly is developed as a *formal system*, where `validity' can be defined either syntactically in terms of the axioms and rules of the system or semantically in terms of its interpretation. What follows is an account of modern logic as a syntactic formal system, that is, as a rigorous syntax or grammar using a small number of symbols to which is added an apparatus of axioms and transformation rules, as well as a method for deriving other elements expressible in the grammar from the axioms and rules, `theorems', say, which follow rigorously from the axioms by the rule(s) of inference. As soon as we ask, "But are the theorems true?" we must recognize that the system is not equal to the question. No claim is made for the truth of the axioms.[11] We might want to say that the theorems `follow from' the axioms, but even that must be understood as an abstraction, there being no justification for assuming that what `follows from' is the same as what is logically implied.

`Validity', a concept which arises in making objective appraisals of logical inference, can be given an analogous sense when transformed to a property of a formal system. In the axiomatic system of *Principia Mathematica* (PM) or *Begriffsschrift* (B), we can say that a certain formula is `valid-in-the-system-of-PM (or B)' if and only if it is a line in a sequence derived from lines which precede it by means of the axioms, already established theorems and the rule of inference of the system. A `theorem' in such a system can also be usefully described as a line valid-in-the-system-of PM (or B). But we should always remember that we are not saying anything objective ("extra-systematic" in Haack's account) about the relation of axioms to theorems, or conclusion to premises, but something laid down in the system itself. What is deducible-in-the-system-of-PM is not *prima facie* objectively deducible, but only what is counted as deducible, taken as deducible, laid down as deducible, within and only within that system. If we should change the axioms or rule(s) of inference, if we should change the derivation procedure, what was formerly deducible would perhaps no longer be so. The employment of an axiomatic formal system removes from discussion all questions of objective criteria of validity and deducibility, all objective logical appraisal, and replaces it with a more or less arbitrary criterion of its own, appropriate only to that formal system itself.

[11] Susan Haack notes, "Frege confidently supposed that the principles of his logical system were self-evident until Russell showed that they were inconsistent!" *Philosophy of Logics*, Cambridge, 1978, 153.

What has been said about logical appraisal in syntactic formal systems can be extended, *mutatis mutandis*, to semantic formal systems. In both cases, the conceptions of `validity', `deducibility' are strictly system-relative.[12]

In spite of these well-known, unimpeachable characteristics of the system of PM (or B), now called "classical logic", it is not uncommon to find in commentary on the arguments of past philosophers an analysis of such arguments by the methods of "classical logic", most often to show the invalidity of the arguments in question. Without reservation or so much as a "by your leave", the argument is symbolized, its invalidity duly noted, and it is summarily dismissed, not as invalid-in-the-system-of-PM, but as objectively invalid. Textbooks on logic, especially those that carry such titles as *A Logical Introduction to Philosophy*[13] provide notable examples. But so does the world of scholarship. For example, G.E.M.Anscombe in the her *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*:

> Frege also gave us the modern conception of `quantification', which is so useful and in such general use in logic that we regard it as we regard the wheel, forgetting its inventor. Quantification essentially consists in reformulating `Everything is heavy' as : `For all x, x is heavy; and `Something is heavy' as: `For some x, x is heavy' or ` There is an x such that x is heavy'. These are written in a symbolic notation.
>
> The general reader may wonder at first whether the interest of such a device is not purely technical. It is easy to bring out that this is not so; it is of great general interest in philosophy.
>
> For example, this formulation supplies us with a perspicuous refutation of the celebrated Ontological Argument of Descartes: people have been generally agreed that, but not how, it is to be refuted. According to the Ontological Argument the notion of God involves that of existence, as that of a triangle involves the various properties of a triangle; therefore, God exists. Let us concede the premise. (There is even good ground for it in that fact that e.g. `There used to be a God, but isn't any more' seems to conflict with the concept `God'.) The premise should be stated as follows: Just as, *if* anything is a triangle, it has those properties, so *if* anything is God, it must possess eternal existence. This is fair; we must be permitted to take seriously the argument about triangles which Descartes relies on. But in the sense in which the conclusion `God exists' is intended, it means that *there is* a God. And that by no means follows from the premise. For, quite generally, from `For all x, if Fx, then Gx, we cannot infer: `There is

[12] *Ibid.*, 13-14. She remarks further, "...formal logical systems aim to formalise informal arguments, to represent them in precise, rigorous and generalisable terms; and an acceptable formal logical system ought to be such that, if a given informal argument is represented in it by a certain formal argument, then that formal argument should be valid in the system just in case the informal argument is valid in the extra-systematic sense. ... In fact, there is like to be a quite complex process of adjustment."
[13] By Richard Purtill, New Jersey, 1989.

> an x such that Fx.' That is, interpreting `Fx' as `x is God' and `Gx' as `x has eternal existence', we cannot infer `*There is* a God' from `For all x, if x is God, x has eternal existence'. ...
>
> Again, the following fallacious piece of reasoning is found in Aristotle: `All chains of means to ends must terminate in a final end. This final end will be the supreme good.' The first statement is reasonable; the second assumes that the first has shewn that there is some one end, the same for all chains of means to ends, in which they all terminate: the fallacy is immediately avoided by writing:
>
> For all x, if x is a chain of means to ends, there is a y such that y is the final end and x terminates in y, which is very different from:
>
> There is a y such that y is a final end, and for all x, if x is a chain of means to ends, x terminates in y.

Here I do not enter into the validity of the two arguments, although I will consider the content of the latter argument below. What is to be noted is simply the tacit assumption that what is invalid-in-the-formal-system-of -B (in this case) is objectively invalid. The assumption is unwarranted but commonly made. Considerable stubbornness must be exercised, in fact, to resist it, especially after almost a century of submission to this logical system. Susan Haack notes:

> One may begin to develop a formal system on the basis of intuitive judgments of the extra-systematic validity of informal arguments, representing those arguments in a symbolic notation, and devising rules of inference in such a way that the formal representations of informal arguments judged (in)valid would be (in)valid in the system. Given these rules, though, other formal arguments will turn out to be valid in the system, perhaps formal arguments which represent informal arguments intuitively judged invalid; and then one may revise the rules of the system, or one may, instead, especially if the rule is agreeably simple and plausible and the intuition of informal invalidity not strong, revise one's opinion of the appropriateness of representing that informal argument in this particular way. *And once a formal logical system becomes well-established, of course, it is likely that it will in turn tutor one's intuitions about the validity and invalidity of informal arguments.*[14]

Lest the undeniable success of "classical logic", its universal acceptance in the English-speaking world[15], should deceive us into thinking there is no harm in presuming

[14] Haack, 16; italics mine.

[15] . Peter Geach in his "History of the Corruptions of Logic", *Logic Matters*, 61, rhapsodizes: "But in spite of all enemies modern logic grows and flourishes; we have reaped such a harvest of discoveries that in the words of the hymn we may `boast More blessings than our fathers lost'. And thanks to Russell and Frege, most of the logical insights that were lost by Aristotle's Fall have been recovered."

it is sound, it is required that we show the price that has been paid in taking the formal system of PM as authoritative, the given orthodoxy. This will also shed more light on the impropriety of Anscombe's remarks above. Henry Veatch put the inadequacy of "classical logic" rather dramatically thirty years ago:

> Has it never struck anyone as passing strange that the logic of *Principia Mathematica*, for all its elaboration, provides no means either for saying or thinking what anything is? And if we not only cannot claim to know what things are, but if our very logic debars us from even stating or formulating propositions as to what this, that, or the other thing is, then the very idea of what a thing is, or the very conviction that each thing is what it is, that things are what they are, or indeed that anything is anything becomes simply impossible, or at least logically improper.
>
> So what? Why worry about what things are? Will computers, or deficit financing, or atomic explosions, or whatever else this present age esteems be any the less effective merely because people no longer ask the question "What is it?" ... Perhaps, though, this is just the point, that modern culture is not merely despairing of ever answering the question "What?" but that it no longer even wants the question to be asked, or at least not seriously.[16]

To understand the ramifications of this deficiency we must go to the heart of the Fregean/Russellian system. Frege held that the syntax of natural language was hopelessly muddled, misleading and inconsistent; and therefore that one must construct an artificial language (as sketched above) which would be a more accurate and reliable representation of the structure of thoughts than natural language.[17] Such a language and the logical

---

But note George Englebretsen, *Something to Reckon With: the Logic of Terms*, Ottawa, 1996, 54: "Generally speaking, the twentieth century has seen a fairly clear division of philosophy into two quite different branches. One, analytic philosophy, has been pursued mostly in English-speaking countries ... More importantly, it has taken formal logic, in one guise or another, to be an essential tool in its investigations. The other branch of philosophy encompasses a much broader range of philosophical programmes, most of which have been pursued by philosophers on the European continent...Continental philosophers have generally abjured recourse to the results of the natural sciences ... In particular, they have generally had little regard for logic - especially formal logic. But the two very closely related fields of philosophy of logic and philosophy of language have come to dominate the work of analytic philosophers..." Michael Dummett in *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Cambridge MA, 1993) argues that analytic philosophy and phenomenology share the same roots. But analytic philosophy is distinguishable from phenomenology and other schools "in the belief ... that a philosophical account of thought can be attained through a philosophical account of language." (p.4) On Dummett's account analytic philosophy was born when the "linguistic turn" was taken.(p.5) But the contributors to the collection of articles titled *The Rise of Analytic Philosophy* (ed. Hans-Johann Glock, Oxford, 1997) take exception to Dummett's account. They regard the characterization of analytic philosophy as consequent upon the "linguistic turn" as stipulative definition marking no more than what Dummett himself regards as of value in philosophy. (p. viii)

[16] *Two Logics*, Evanston, Ill., 1967, 26-7.

[17] . "I started out from mathematics ... The logical imperfections of language stood in the way of such investigations. I tried to overcome these obstacles with my concept-script. In this way I was led from mathematics to logic." "Notes for Ludwig Darmstaedter" in Gottlob Frege, *Posthumous Writings*, trans. Peter Long and Roger White, Oxford, 1979, 253. Alfred Tarski argues further in his "Concept of Truth in

system which incorporates it (where the formal system is the formal language and the deductive apparatus) is a purely syntactical structure devoid of content (for Tarski, this is required to avoid the paradoxes of natural language), language in which the sense of every expression is uniquely determined by its form.[18] Where in an older philosophy one might conclude that "Every living thing will die" and mean by that statement that in the biological world there is necessarily the germ of death in every living thing, in a Fregean logic the statement expresses no necessary connection of subject and predicate at all: (x)(Mx > Cx) asserts indiscriminately that there are possibly non-living things which die just as there are possibly living things which die.[19] Necessity, causal relations, universality simply cannot be expressed. And the stated dogma is that what cannot be expressed in this logic cannot be expressed at all.[20]

To effect the abstraction from all content, hence from the necessity of content, this logic limits itself to truth-functional propositions and quantificational formulae, where the truth and falsity of a truth-functional proposition is entirely determined simply by the truth and falsity of its constituents and the truth and falsity of a quantificational formula by its extension:

> If statements are compounded by truth-functions to form a longer statement, the truth value of the compound will depend, we know, on no features of the compound statements beyond their truth values. Thus, two propositions which are true are equivalent regardless of content, and two "interpretations" of a quantificational formula collapse into each other if they have the same extension: "Whether we interpret `Fx' as `x has a backbone' or as `x has a heart' will matter none to the resulting truth value of any quantificational schema in which `Fx' occurs, unless there be in fact some vertebrates without hearts or some hearted creatures without backbones."[21]

Such eccentricities of this logic are required if it is to exclude all content, therefore all real connections, necessary relations and causality, none of which are truth-functional or revealed by `class membership'. We have lived under the restrictions of this logical system for several decades now and it takes considerable effort to see through the purported corrections and refutations when the logic is imposed on philosophical arguments of the past.

Formalized Languages" in *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics*, trans. J.H.Woodger, 1983, that the semantic antinomies (of the `liar' or heterological words) which arise in natural language seem to provide a proof that natural language must be inconsistent.

[18] Tarski, 166.

[19] As Brand Blanchard observes, " Strictly speaking `p>q' does not assert any relation at all. What it asserts is simply that p is never in fact true while q is false." *Reason and Analysis*, Lasalle, Ill., 1964, 158. 20.

[20] *Tractatus*, 6.53 and 7.

[21] *Ibid.*

As a case in point, consider Peter Geach's identification of what he takes to be a common fallacy in passages from Aristotle, Plato, Berkeley and Spinoza. He argues informally[22] but it is clear that his thought is thoroughly informed by the "classical logic" analysis of quantification and modal logic. The first critique is:

> At the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle passes from "We do not choose everything for the sake of something else, for that way one would go on *ad infinitum*, and the pursuit would be empty and vain" to "There is some end of actions which we make an object of will for its own sake, and everything else for its sake ... this would be the good and the best" (1094a18-22). It is clear that he thinks himself entitled to pass from: "Every series whose successive terms stand in the relation *chosen for the sake of* has a last term" to "There is something that is the last term of every series whose successive terms stand in the relation *chosen for the sake of*".[23]

This is presumably the same passage to which Anscombe refers above - she gives no reference. It is abundantly clear to this reader of the passage, what precedes it, what follows it, that Anscombe and Geach misconstrue it entirely. The passage in question reads, not as Geach has given it, but as follows:

> If then there is some end of the things we do which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain) clearly this must be the good and the chief good.[24]

Geach takes what is in fact the premise as Aristotle's conclusion.[25] The whole paragraph which precedes this passage (1094a1-17) is the explanation and justification for that premise. It begins, "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good." Aristotle observes that some arts fall under others, and where this occurs the master art is preferred, is the higher good, to the subordinate ends. Then he continues with the passage in question, concluding that whatever is the end desired for its own sake, for the sake of which everything else is desired, must be the highest good. Of the minor, that there is not an endless subordination of means to ends, John Burnet says, "In other words, we should never desire anything at all, unless there were something we desire for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else."[26]

---

[22] He gives as his reason, "But the application of formal logic to statements made in the vernacular has lately been rather blown upon [sic]...", that is, by ordinary language philosophers. "History of a Fallacy" in *Logic Matters*, 1.
[23] *Ibid.*, *I*2.
[24] *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. W.D.Ross, Oxford, 1915, 1094a18-21.
[25] St. Thomas Aquinas calls it the major: "Quarum principalis talis est. Quicumque finis est talis, quod alia volumus propter ipsum ..." *In Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum Expositio,* Rome, 1949, 6.
[26] . *The Ethics of Aristotle*, ed. John Burnet, London, 1900, xlvi-xlvii.

How does such a misreading occur? The most benign interpretation is that the method and limitations of his logic constrain the understanding. If we examine the passage on Berkeley, we find the same incapacity to see the point of the argument:

> Berkeley argues as follows (*Second Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous*): "...sensible things cannot exist otherwise than in a finite mind or spirit ... seeing they depend not on my thought and have an existence distinct from being perceived by me, *there must be some other mind wherein they exist* ...I ...immediately and necessarily conclude the being of a God, because all sensible things must be perceived by him." Let us notice the way Berkeley tells us that his inference follows immediately and necessarily; when a philosopher talks like this, always suspect a fallacy; when something really does follow immediately and necessarily, there's no need to say so.[27]

His analysis of the argument is as follows:

> (a) Every sensible thing depends for its existence upon being perceived by some mind.
>
> (b) Of no *finite* mind is it true that any sensible thing depends for its existence on being perceived just by *that* mind;
>
> Ergo (c) Every sensible thing depends for its existence upon being perceived by some *non-finite* mind. - If we add to (c) the premise, which was almost certainly in Berkeley's thought,
>
> (d) There cannot be more than one non-finite mind, we may then infer:
>
> (e) There is some non-finite mind upon whose perception every sensible thing depends for its existence.
>
> At least, I shall not dispute the inferability of (e) from (c) and (d). To infer (e) from (c) alone would be, of course, an instance of our fallacy, and I once thought Berkeley was here guilty of it; but Strawson has convinced me that this was probably an injustice.
>
> There is, however, still an instance of our fallacy in inferring (c) from (a) and (b). To show this I construct a parallel argument in which the fallacy is patent.
>
> (a') Every game depends for its actual existence on being played by some person.

[27] *Logic Matters*, 3.

> (b') Of no *finite* person is it true that any game depends for its actual existence on being played just by *him*;
>
> *Ergo* (c') Every game depends for its actual existence upon being played by some *non-finite* person.[28]

Geach again does not see or refuses to grant that where Berkeley says "seeing they depend not on my thought and have an existence distinct from being perceived by me, *there must be some other mind wherein they exist*..." he means that sensible beings depend on the thought of no finite mind, not as he would have it "of any particular finite mind". The so-called "parallel argument" is not parallel to Berkeley's at all but to Geach's misinterpretation of it. It is difficult to account for Geach's obtuseness except as a blindness to argument which goes beyond the capacity of "classical logic".[29]

What do these arguments which he criticizes share? In each case, the premise is given a finite interpretation which is not supported in the text. Why this finite interpretation? Why must an "end" be only a finite end? Why must a mind in which perceived things have their being be a finite mind? Why must "everything" in Spinoza be interpreted, not universally, but as the finite "anything", some particular thing? What exercises Geach is a movement from (x)(Ey)Fxy to (Ey)(x)Fxy, which clearly in "classical logic" is unwarranted as one can see by counter-example or by an expansion of those two formulae.[30] If each of the texts is given the finitist interpretation, then there would be the illicit movement Geach identifies. But if the texts are read as embodying universal principles of ethics, of metaphysics, then in each case (x)(Ey)Fxy is an improper formulation of the premise. Indeed there is no proper formulation of these matters in the formal system of PM. Why? Because arguments where connections between premises and conclusion are not simply external but depend on necessary relations between subject and predicate, between premises and conclusions, cannot be stated in this logic; because arguments of strict universality, which imply, in the words of Aristotle, "not only that such and such is the case, but why it is the case and it couldn't be otherwise", cannot be formulated or adjudicated in this logic; because arguments which depend on content for their power and weight cannot find a place here. The formal system of PM is a logic alien to philosophy and therefore it is a wholly inappropriate standard for appraising philosophical argument.

---

[28] *Ibid.*, 4.

[29] His distortion of Spinoza, *Ethics* I.17, "Nothing can be imagined more absurd or more contrary to the Divine omnipotence" than to deny that God "can effect everything that is within the scope of his power" again misses the point. [Geach interprets it as meaning that God can effect anything within his power.] Spinoza speaks there of God's omnipotence, and where he says "everything" he means it: everything that is possible exists for Spinoza. It was precisely this that turned Leibniz from Spinozism. Cf. "Two notations for Discussion with Spinoza", Dec. 2, 1676, in Louis Couturat, *Opuscules et fragments inedits de Leibniz*, Paris, 1903, 529-30.

[30] . Geach gives this counter-example: interpret (x)(Ey)Fxy as "For every boy there is some girl such that he love her; with the same substitutions (Ey)(x)Fxy would then be "There is some girl (say, Sally) whom every boy loves. These are clearly different, and the second cannot be derived from the first.

B. Philosophy In An Alien Form

Bertrand Russell in his Introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* expresses clearly what that work says about philosophy:

> Mr. Wittgenstein maintains that everything properly philosophical belongs to what can only be shown, to what is in common between a fact and its logical picture. It results from this view that nothing correct can be said in philosophy. Every philosophical proposition is bad grammar, and the best that we can hope to achieve by philosophical discussion is to lead people to see that philosophical discussion is a mistake. ...The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. The result of philosophy is not a number of `philosophical propositions', but to make propositions clear.[31]

The logical positivists of the Vienna Circle read the *Tractatus* to the same effect. From the tautological character of valid inference, Carnap is persuaded that the conclusion says no more than the premises, saying it only in a different linguistic form. Thus, "One fact can never be inferred from another. From this follows the impossibility of any metaphysics which tries to draw inferences from experience to something transcendent which lies beyond experience and is not itself experiencible; e.g. the `thing in itself' lying behind the things of experience, the `Absolute' behind the totality of the relative, the `essence' and `meaning' of events behind the events themselves."[32] If this sounds Kantian it is not, for "experience" here is not as in Kant any imposition of our minds on the data of sense perception.

Logical positivists, as Wittgenstein before them, could find no place for the synthetic *a priori*. First of all, truth-functional logic could not express it: there is no difference among propositions true in every line of a truth-table. They are one and all tautological, say nothing about the world (the proposition is true for every possible state of affairs), are therefore uninformative and have no empirical content.[33] More significantly, the epistemological commitments bound up with the logic of PM and expressed in the *Tractatus* cannot tolerate necessity and universality except in the empty category of the tautological. "There is no compulsion making one thing happen because another has happened. The only necessity that exists is logical necessity."[34]

The radical conclusion of the logical positivist that all previous philosophy was untenable and meaningless gave way in the `forties and `fifties to the proposal for a different relation to older philosophy. Rather than laying aside philosophy, it being

---

[31] From the 1922 edition, reprinted in Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B.F.McGuinness, London, 1961, xii.
[32] "The Old and the New Logic", trans. Isaac Levi, in Peter T. Manicas ed., *Logic as Philosophy*, New York, 1971, 71-80, from p.79.
[33] "Tautologies and contradictions lack sense ... (For example, I know nothing about the weather when I know it is either raining or not raining.)" *Tractatus*, 4.46
[34] *Tractatus*, 6.3

meaningless, for methodological interests in the hard sciences, or as Wittgenstein after writing the *Tractatus* abandoning it for a life as a village schoolteacher[35], linguistic philosophy took up the older texts again to dissect and dissolve with their new techniques of linguistic analysis. Peter Strawson describes those heady days at Oxford:

> ...in the face of this refined examination of actual linguistic practice, a lot of traditional philosophical theorizing began to look extraordinarily crude, like an assemblage of huge, crude mistakes. And it was, of course, extremely exhilirating to see these huge and imposing edifices of thought just crumbling away, or tumbling down, to the tune of this fairly modest sort of piping.[36]

Older philosophy was not ignored, but all was grist for the mill. Subsequently, some of the Ordinary Language analysts reread those older texts and can be described as expropriating older philosophy, putting it under the knife to cut and pare, transforming Spinoza or Kant and whoever else fell into their hands into unrecognizable forms of themselves. But let us let Strawson speak for himself:

> You might say that what I was trying to do there [in *The Bounds of Sense*] was to perform the intellectual equivalent of a surgical operation on the body of a great philosoper's greatest work Of course that involved a risk that one needn't name. *The Critique of Pure Reason* is a very complex work with many interconnected doctrines in it, but there is I think a central distinction we can draw. There is in the work a body of doctrine about the necessary structure of experience; and this really means, as I said before, a body of doctrine about the limits of what we make truly intelligible to ourselves as a possible structure for out own experience. Now this body of doctrine, though not acceptable in all respects, is in its general outline and in many substantial points, I think, correct. But it is surrounded by, and in Kant's own view it's dependent on, another, second body of doctrine, probably that by which he's best known. And this is the doctrine that the nature of things as they really are, or as they are in themselves, is necessarily completely unknown to us ... Now all this second body of doctrine I take to be a kind of nonsense, though it has a certain appealingly dramatic and exciting quality, like most metaphysical nonsense. So I conceived my task to be that of extracting as it were ... the first body of doctrine from ... the second body of doctrine ... But Kant of course conceived of this second body of doctrine as intimately and, indeed, vitally connected with the first body of doctrine; so these connections had

[35] He believed that the problems of philosophy had been solved in the *Tractatus*. See the Preface, 5. True to this conviction he turned away from the promise of a prominent position in Cambridge for a life of service to school children.
[36] Magee, 116.

> to be severed, and I had to show they could be harmlessly severed, without killing the patient ...[37]

The operation of expropriation and mutilation gave to linguistic philosophy that vital connection to the former history of philosophy, creating for them one continuous development where they were just the latest and best in that history, of course at the expense of interpreting former philosophy as unwittingly engaged in linguistic analysis.[38] Whatever would not fit such an interpretation was therefore expurgated. Let us continue with Strawson's *The Bounds of Sense* to illustrate the enterprise.

Strawson reconstructs the *Critique* for his own purposes, excising synthetic *a priori* propositions and all other elements of the extramundane. What is his argument for rejecting that central Kantian novelty, and the central question of the *Critique*, "How are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible?". Strawson acknowledges that he has taken no account of the distinction of analytic and synthetic *a priori* propositions, and for this reason:

> We can enumerate, as belonging to this intended class, truths of geometry and arithmetic and supposed *a priori* presuppositions of empirical science. But we can really form no general conception really of the intended class except in terms of Kant's answer to his epitomizing question. What Kant means in general by synthetic *a priori* propositions is really just that class of propositions our knowledge of the necessity of which could, he supposed, be explained only by mobilizing the entire Copernican resources of the *Critique*, by appealing to the model of "objects conforming to our modes of representation", i.e. to our sensibility's constitution and the understanding's rules. Since, as I have already argued, nothing whatever really is, or could be, explained by this model - for it is incoherent - it must be concluded that Kant really has no clear and general conception of the synthetic *a priori* at all.[39]

Concerning the enumeration of judgments belonging to the class of synthetic *a priori* propositions, Strawson has the ready answer that the truths of arithmetic are one and all analytic, deducible from *Principia Mathematica*. So far as the "truths" of geometry are concerned Strawson agrees "to a very great extent" with the view that "insofar as there are necessary geometrical propositions they are really truths of logic, only incidentally geometrical; while those propositions which are both synthetic and essentially geometrical are not necessary truths at all, but empirical hypotheses concerning the structure of physical space, subject to empirical confirmation or disconfirmation."[40]

---

[37] Magee, 123-4.
[38] Rorty, 4: "The linguistic philosopher's claim of continuity with the Great Tradition can be substantiated only by saying that insofar as the philosophers of the past attempted to find out the nature of X by doing something other than investigating the uses of words (postulating unfamiliar entities, for example), they were misguided."
[39] *Bounds of Sense*, 43.
[40] *Ibid.*, 278

If not in mathematics, then how about in natural science? Kant turned to the traditional categorical logic, to the Table of Judgments, for the clue to the discovery of the categories. But Strawson says if we are to take the clue from formal logic seriously, we must recognize there are different logics and so must make a choice. He suggests we will not go far astray if we take "current" logic "in which economy of primitive concepts has been so assiduously pursued as our guide."[41] It is, of course, the logic of truth-functional composition and quantification. Not surprisely therefore,

> The results of the appeal to formal logic [the logic of PM] are not merely meagre. Their meagerness is such as to render almost pointless any critical consideration of the detail of Kant's derivation of the categories from the Table of Judgments.[42]

But the results do have their use. When Strawson turns to the question "What in general must be true of a world of objects in which we make empirical judgements, determined as true or false, in which we predicate concepts of identifiable objects of reference?" he answers

> ...we are left with something; if not with proof, yet with reason for entertaining favourably an exceedingly general conclusion: viz. that any course of experience of which we can form a coherent conception, must be, potentially, the experience of a self-conscious subject and, as such, must have such internal, concept-carried connectedness as to constitute it (at least in part) a course of experience of an objective world, conceived of as determining the course of that experience itself.[43]

It is more than coincidence that Strawson should have found in his work on Kant, after the mutilation he preform, that posing a question in imitation of Kant on what is there in the "current logic", he finds no synthetic *a priori* judgments but rather the opposite, the naive realism he himself expounded in his previous book *Individuals.* He comments to Magee: "... one obvious connection ... is, I suppose, that the actual structure of our conceptual scheme, as described in *Individuals*, turns out really to have rather a lot in common with the necessary structure as revealed in *The Bounds of Sense*." We need go no further. What is acceptable in the *Critique*, after extraordinary cutting and straining, is what Strawson has himself written elsewhere! The analysis of Kant turns out to be an analysis and commentary on Strawson's own work and its quite direct relation to contemporary logic. Nothing could be farther removed from Kant's achievement in the *Critique* than the `realism' of Strawson's position. This is a most remarkable illustration of the results of putting the works of older philosophy into the hands of linguistic analysts for their sort of reconstruction.

[41] *Ibid.*, 81.
[42] *Ibid.,* 82.
[43] *Ibid., 117.*

The Bounds of Sense is, of course, only one example of this sort of "critical" commentary. Mention can be made of Jonathan Bennett's two books on Kant[44], where predictably there is also the denial of synthetic *a priori* judgments, Kant's categories, and the the elements of Kant's transcendental idealism. There is also Bennett's book on Spinoza[45], on which one reviewer has commented: "It assumes a formalist bias and a notion of logic that Spinoza unquestionably rejects, and it leads Bennett into gross error on fundamental points throughout his book. As a result ... Bennett tends far more to distort and dismiss Spinoza's philosophy than to explain and enlarge it."[46] Another notes: "To stick with the logical assumptions and methods of analytical philosophy as Bennett does, is to condemn Spinoza from the start."[47] Philosophical journals, especially in the `fifties, `sixties and `seventies, provide a rich array of articles dressing up the "Great Tradition" in the garb of linguistic philosophy. It would be hard to pick up a volume of *Mind*, *The Philosophical Review*, *The Journal of Philosophy* and countless other journals which flourished in those years that did not publish articles reinterpreting older philosophy in linguistic forms. All these articles, all these books are commentary not on older philosophy but on linguistic philosophy itself.

Conclusion

Analytic philosophy still survives in only certain pockets of the Anglo-American philosophical world. It is entirely possible that it will continue to fade away. But certain elements of that movement will still remain as impediments to the understanding of the works and arguments of the western philosophical tradition unless we are forewarned against their influence. The argument of this paper, and in imitation of the well remembered admonitions of David Hume, suggests these:

If we take in our hand any volume of twentieth century Anglo-American philosophy, let us ask ourselves, "Does it use in its argument either formally or informally the formulary of *Principia Mathematica* or its equivalent?" *Yes*. Then insofar as it does it possesses universality and necessity only as empty tautology. "Does it dissect and unravel the argument of a great philosophical text of the past, extracting certain elements and rejecting other parts? Does it reconstruct the text after some other image?" *Yes.* Then it is wholly unreliable on the text it would explain. If I do not say with Hume, "Commit it to the flames!" it is simply because such volumes are themselves now part of the history of philosophy, a moment in the tradition of Western thought, to be comprehended and understood in that history.

[44] *Kant's Analytic*, Cambridge, 1966, and *Kant's Dialectic*, Cambridge, 1974.
[45] *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, Indianapolis, 1984.
[46] Vance Maxwell, "The Formalist Treatment of Spinoza", *Dialogue* xxv (1986), 338.
[47] Stuart Hampshire, "Aspiring to Abstraction", *Times Literary Supplement*, Nov. 16-23, 1984, 1308.