The Dissonant Origins of Analytic Philosophy: Common Sense in Philosophical Methodology

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The point of philosophy is to defy common sense (Michael Strevens, in Pyke 2011).
The answers to philosophical questions must never be surprising. In philosophy, you cannot discover anything (Wittgenstein, in Waismann 1979, 182).

1 Introduction

It is often claimed—a narrative made popular in particular by Michael Dummett—that the founding father of analytic philosophy is Gottlob Frege. Questions can be raised as to what counts as being a 'founding

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parent' of a discipline, but a reasonable conceptualization of this attribute might be given in terms of a lasting influence that the person in question would still have in the current state of a discipline. From this point of view, Frege is a plausible candidate for a number of reasons, but there is also a big chunk of what is now done under the heading of analytic philosophy where traces of his influence are not readily to be found. Indeed, one of the reasons to reject this account is that it reduces the scope of analytic philosophy to the fields to which Frege made his main contributions (especially logic and philosophy of language), to the neglect of ethics, metaphysics, aesthetics, philosophy of mind, political philosophy, etc.

Arguably, the tradition of analytic philosophy corresponds not to a coherent collection of theses and doctrines, but rather to certain *methodological approaches and choices*, which are themselves quite diverse.[1] This means that 'analytic philosophy' may well be no more than an umbrella term covering a motley of philosophical practices and approaches. If there is a unifying component at all, it might be the value that these different practices place on the method of *analysis* (as suggested by the very term 'analytic philosophy'). However, there are at least two influential and quite distinct approaches to analysis within this tradition, both in its history and in current developments: methods where *common sense* and *intuitions* play a prominent evidential role (e.g. the method of reflective equilibrium), and methods that rely extensively on formal, mathematical tools, and/or operating in close proximity with the empirical and exact sciences.[2] Each of them was, respectively, adopted by two influential figures in early analytic philosophy, namely G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell.

That these two philosophers have played a seminal role in the historical development of analytic philosophy is by no means a controversial claim, so to this extent, we are not saying anything very novel so far. Instead, our contribution in this paper consists in highlighting and describing a *tension* between the Moorean and the Russellian conceptions of analysis [an approach also present in (Beaney 2007)]. In particular, we outline a difference in attitude towards the analysandum: Moore represents what could be described as an epistemically conservative conception of analysis,[3] which accords default legitimacy to the common sense beliefs we start with; Russell represents a conception of analysis where there is more room for revision and transformation of

these initial beliefs.[4] We suggest that this tension runs through the history of analytic philosophy all the way up to present times, as exemplified by recent debates in philosophical methodology as well as by the debate involving Carnap and Strawson on explication in the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, while one conception emphasizes reliance on extra-philosophical intuitions and common sense, the other, with its reliance on formal and scientifically informed methods, often seeks to uncover incoherence and confusion in these extra-philosophical intuitions, possibly leading to significant doxastic revisions.[5]

How could these two distinct conceptions of the goals of philosophical inquiry give rise to a somewhat improbable, even if by and large merely institutional, marriage? One possible explanation highlights the importance of *common enemies* for improbable marriages to come about. Indeed, Moore and Russell had a common enemy, namely British Idealism (which they were quite successful in defeating), Bradley in particular (Hylton 1992). Later in the twentieth century, another common enemy—phenomenology and more generally what is now described as 'continental philosophy'—allowed for the heirs of Russellianism such as the Vienna Circle philosophers[6] to remain ideologically and institutionally close to the movement of ordinary language philosophy (i.e. the heirs of Mooreanism), despite their pronounced methodological differences.[7] Presently, the situation is again quite similar: in what typically falls under the heading of analytic philosophy we see both epistemically conservative, intuition-based approaches and approaches that seek to go beyond and transform common sense.[8]

This does not mean that there are no commonalities at all between these two strands; indeed, one commonality is the focus on the importance of *language* for philosophical analysis. But here again there is a crucial distinction between them: Mooreans and their heirs emphasize the languages of everyday life as the locus for philosophical analysis, whereas Russellians tend to outline the inadequacy of these languages for philosophical analysis and set out to design regimented languages that are better suited for the tasks at hand (a theme already present in Frege).[9]

In this paper, we start with a brief sketch of some of the positions currently entertained with respect to the role of intuitions and common sense for philosophical inquiry. In Sect. 3, we focus specifically on

Moore and Russell, and their respective stances with respect to intuitions and common sense. In Sect. 4, we focus on another prominent debate, which can be viewed as an instantiation of Russellianism vs Mooreanism: the debate between Carnap and Strawson on the concept of explication.

2 Current Debates on Philosophical Methodology

In the last two decades, there have been lively (and arguably, much-needed) debates on methodological aspects of philosophical analysis. Much of these discussions (though not all) have focused on the concept of intuitions and their role in philosophical inquiry. Perhaps three milestones in this debate can be identified: the publication of *Rethinking Intuition* (ed. DePaul and Ramsey) in 1998; the emergence of the Experimental Philosophy movement in the early 2000s; the publication of Williamson's *The Philosophy of Philosophy* in 2007. Attesting to the fact that the debate is still ongoing, there are the newly published edited volumes *Intuitions* (ed. Booth and Rowbottom 2014) and *Philosophical Methodology: the Armchair or the Laboratory?* (ed. Haug 2013), as well as some recent Companion volumes where methodological issues are discussed in detail (e.g. the *Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Language*, ed. Russell and Graff Fara 2012).

However, it would be a mistake to view this debate as simply opposing two neatly defined camps: the pro-intuitions camp and the anti-intuitions camp.[10] In reality, there are many more positions being articulated and defended, as well as much discussion on how to define and understand intuitions in the first place. Indeed, as convincingly argued by C.S.I. Jenkins (2014), the term 'intuitions' is used in a number of different senses in the literature, and so when people attack or defend the role of intuitions for philosophical inquiry, they are often speaking of different concepts and thus ultimately defending different positions.

Jenkins identifies four main bundles of features associated with the concept of intuitions: (i) commonsensicality, (ii) aprioricity,

(iii) immediacy and (iv) meta-philosophical functions. She goes on to note that there are all kinds of interesting connections between the features across bundles, but the main point is that, on this conception, different conceptions of intuitions are characterized by some (or even many) of these features, but not by all of them—hence the absence of 'tidy necessary and sufficient conditions on intuitionhood' in the existing philosophical literature:

> On this type of view, the concept *intuition* expressed by the semantically general term 'intuition' might be best regarded as a kind of family resemblance concept, such that possessing enough of the symptoms in bundles one to four qualifies something as an intuition (where certain symptoms might be more heavily weighted than others, or otherwise of particular significance), but it is difficult or impossible to give tidy necessary and sufficient conditions on intuitionhood. (Jenkins 2014, 98)[11]

In the present contribution, we focus on Jenkins' first bundle, i.e. intuitions as *common sense*, given that we are predominantly interested in the legacy of Mooreanism (and criticisms of it). She associates two main features with the commonsensicality bundle: 'folk beliefs', and lack of theoretical contamination. Now, while this meaning of 'intuition' indeed does not cover all of the uses of the concept in the philosophical literature, it is certainly widespread, and Jenkins presents authors as influential as Kripke, Lewis and Jackson as exemplifying commitment to this understanding of intuitions (and to their centrality for philosophical analysis). This commitment is aptly captured in the following passages by Kit Fine and David Lewis:[12]

> In this age of post-Moorean modesty, many of us are inclined to doubt that philosophy is in possession of arguments that might genuinely serve to undermine what we ordinarily believe. It may perhaps be conceded that the arguments of the skeptic appear to be utterly compelling; but the Mooreans among us will hold that the very plausibility of our ordinary beliefs is reason enough for supposing that there *must* be something wrong in the skeptic's arguments, even if we are unable to say what it is. (Fine 2001, 2)

> One comes to philosophy already endowed with a stock of opinions. It is not the business of philosophy either to undermine or justify these pre-existing opinions to any great extent, but only to try to discover ways of expanding them into an orderly system. (Lewis 1973, 88)

One important motivation to ascribe evidential force to common sense is to avoid radical scepticism, as suggested by Fine in the passage above. Another central point is that the very fact that commonsensical beliefs seem to be so plausible to a large number of people must be an indication of their (at least approximate) truth. More recently, T. Kelly (2005, 2008) has been a vocal defender of common sense as evidence in philosophical inquiry, thus arguing against revisionary approaches (see also (Harman 2003) for a similar position). S. Rinard (2013), in turn, makes a compelling case for why philosophy can overturn common sense, engaging in particular with Kelly's arguments.

Those who criticize the approach to philosophy based on intuitions-as-common-sense do so for various reasons,[13] which means that strikingly different conceptions of philosophy and philosophical methodology emerge among the critics. For reasons of space, it is impossible to present a comprehensive account of all, but here are some of the relevant ones:[14]

1. Philosophers should not shy away from embracing the counterintuitive conclusions of their best philosophical theories, and should thus be prepared to revise their original beliefs in such cases. But philosophy remains predominantly an armchair, a priori enterprise (Williamson 2007).
2. Philosophers should submit the content of widely shared intuitions to empirical scrutiny, thus approaching philosophical issues in an empirically informed way (also known as 'naturalism'). Our best sciences may well contradict these intuitions (Bishop and Trout 2005a, b).
3. Philosophers must not simply assume that people have this or that intuition on a given matter (established on the basis of introspection, or interaction with one's colleagues, or what have you), and that the intuition is or is not universally shared. Intuitions must be systematically and empirically investigated (X-Phi).

For present purposes, the main difference between common sense philosophy of the Moorean strand and at least some of the critiques that have been voiced pertains to whether one sees as the very goal of philosophical inquiry that of revising and possibly improving the extra-philosophical, anterior beliefs that serve as its starting point, or instead that of 'systematizing and stabilizing' them. It may well be that, in both cases, so-called intuitions (commonsensical beliefs) will be at the starting point: the question is then whether they will also be at the end-point. On one conception, philosophical analysis goes full circle back to the initial beliefs (which are now 'systematized and stabilized'—and this can, of course, mean different things); on the other conception, it ends somewhere different from where it starts, thus leading to a revision of one's initial commonsensical beliefs.

3 Moore and Russell[15]

With these considerations on the current debates on philosophical methodology in place, we now turn to Moore and Russell, who we claim endorsed different attitudes towards intuitions in the sense of common sense belief.[16] This difference in attitude seems to stem from a difference in their respective conceptions of the method of analysis, and in particular in their respective attitudes towards the analysandum. Although both Moore and Russell begin a philosophical investigation by analysing common sense beliefs, Moore's stance is *conservative* in nature, while Russell's stance can be described as *revisionary*.[17]

Early Stages

We already find explicit emphasis on the method of analysis in Moore's 'The Nature of Judgment' (Moore 1899/1993). What marks this paper as a founding text for analytic philosophy is Moore's contention, against Bradley (the most prominent of the British Idealists), that independently existing concepts, not subjective ideas, are the true objects of knowledge (Moore 1899/1993, 8). Moore then goes on to claim

that conceptual analysis is the key philosophical tool, since '[a] thing becomes intelligible first when it is analysed into its constituent concepts' (Moore 1899/1993, 8). Russell followed Moore in this regard and would endorse the centrality of the method of analysis for the rest of his career. As he reminisced in *My Philosophical Development*:

> Ever since I abandoned the philosophy of Kant and Hegel, I have sought solutions of philosophical problems by means of analysis; and I remain firmly persuaded, in spite of some modern tendencies to the contrary, that only by analysing is progress possible. (Russell 1959, 14)

The close connection between the method of analysis and commonsensical intuitions is already suggested by the fact that the use of intuitions in philosophy became more important with the rise of analytic philosophy (see (Della Rocca 2013) for a detailed account). While Bradley, for instance, did not hesitate to reject a common sense view of the world as completely mistaken by denying the reality of space, time and relations (Bradley 1893), both Moore and Russell started to defer to common sense, although in different ways (Della Rocca 2013, 204).

According to Della Rocca (2013, 199–204), one of the reasons why common sense became more important with Moore and Russell (who he views as more deferent to common sense than we do) is their rejection of the Bradleian view of relations and, with it, their rejection of the principle of sufficient reason. In Chapter 3 of *Appearance and Reality* (Bradley 1893), Bradley had argued against the existence of relations. In virtue of the principle of sufficient reason, every relation between things must itself be grounded, i.e. a grounding relation must hold between the relation and that which it relates. However, since this grounding relation is itself a relation, it needs to be grounded itself, and so on, which, according to Bradley, leads to a vicious infinite regress. When Moore and Russell rejected Idealism, they would also reject this argument by claiming that it 'seems to rest upon some law of sufficient reason, some desire to show that every truth is 'necessary' (Russell 1910a). By contrast, Moore and Russell began to hold that 'it seems quite obvious that in the case of many relational properties which things have, the fact that they have them is *a mere matter of fact*' (Moore 1919/1993).[18]

What makes Moore and Russell's denial of the principle of sufficient reason relevant, according to Della Rocca, is that the existence of inexplicable relations is fundamental to the method of intuition (see (Della Rocca 2013, 205) for details). As such, the acceptance of ungrounded matters of fact paved the way for the acceptance of the use of intuitions in philosophy.

However, we propose a different, possibly more straightforward explanation for why the use of intuitions became more prominent with the rise of analytic philosophy, which is related to the value that analytic philosophy places on the method of analysis itself. Indeed, any method of analysis presupposes an analysandum. Although other starting points are possible, so-called pre-theoretical intuitions (or commonsensical beliefs about the world) are a natural place for an analysis to start. We will see below that both Moore and Russell will indeed use common sense beliefs as a starting point for philosophical analysis. But before we focus on the analysandum from which an analysis might start, let us first say something about the method of analysis itself.

Kinds of Analysis

Recent work in the history of analytic philosophy, most notably the work of Michael Beaney, has shown that Moore and Russell did not hold uniform conceptions of the method of analysis [see, for instance (Beaney 2007, 2013, 2014)]. Beaney distinguishes between three main conceptions of analysis: the regressive conception, the decompositional conception and the transformative conception. One can think of these different conceptions as different attitudes towards the analysandum. We will see below that one's attitude towards common sense is partly determined by how transformative one's conception of analysis is. The more one's conception of analysis allows for a *transformation* of the analysandum, the less epistemically conservative one tends to be.

On the regressive conception, analysis is the process of finding the premises that demonstrate a given conclusion. This conception of analysis is important in early analytic philosophy since it is central to any attempt at axiomatization, but although it was important to Russell as

well [see e.g. 'The Regressive Method of Discovering the Premises of Mathematics' (Russell 1907/1973)], it will not concern us here.

According to the decompositional conception, analysis is the process of, to speak in a somewhat metaphorical way, breaking down an analysandum into its constituent parts. Moore's method of conceptual analysis is an instance of the decompositional conception.[19] True enough, this conception was not invented by Moore:[20] one can find it, for instance, in Anselm and Descartes, and it played a crucial role in Kantian philosophy, since Kant took the method of analysis in this sense to reveal all analytic a priori truths.[21] But when Moore and Russell revolted against Idealism around 1900, it was precisely this conception of analysis that they took to be essential to philosophy. Russell, however, would quickly go beyond this method.

It has been argued [see for instance (Baldwin 2013)] that Moore's conception of analysis also changed over time and slowly developed from a decompositional conception of analysis to a more clarificatory conception. But Moore's characteristic emphasis on clarification is already present in his early work. It is perhaps surprising that, according to his autobiography, he was most influenced in this by the Cambridge Idealist J.M.E. McTaggart:

> I think what influenced me most was [McTaggart's] constant insistence on clearness – on trying to give a precise meaning to philosophical questions, on asking the question "What does this mean?" (Moore 1942a, 18)

And, as we learn from *Principia Ethica*, once the meaning of a question or a statement is clarified, the main difficulty is thereby solved:

> Indeed, once the meaning of the question is clearly understood, the answer to it, in its main outlines, appears to be so obvious, that it runs the risk of seeming to be a platitude. (Moore 1903, 237)

The third kind of analysis presented by Beaney is called the *transformative* or *interpretive* conception. What distinguishes this conception from the decompositional conception is that, according to the transformative conception, the analysandum must first be interpreted (or explicated)

into a more suitable regimented (possibly artificial) language. This interpretative step might change the analysandum. A good example of this conception of analysis is Russell's famous theory of descriptions (Russell 1905), where definite descriptions are first translated into a logical form that does not contain the description.[22] Whereas on a purely decompositional account of analysis the proposition 'The present King of France is bald' seems to attribute baldness to a non-existing present King of France, Russell's transformative analysis makes it apparent that this proposition actually corresponds to a false existential statement.

According to Beaney, it was the development of quantificational logic that led to the development of the transformative conception (Beaney 2007, 199). Since 'On Denoting' (Russell 1905) is often seen as the paradigm of analytic philosophy, Beaney thinks that it is this conception of analysis that is characteristic of what we call the Russellian strand of analytic philosophy. Beaney sees the history of analytic philosophy as the story of the creative tension between the Russellian and the Moorean strands of analytic philosophy. We agree, and believe that this tension reveals itself in Russell and Moore's different attitudes towards intuition and common sense in philosophical methodology.

Analysandum

So let us now turn to the analysandum. We argue that common sense played an important part in the philosophical methodologies of both Moore and Russell. However, related to their different conceptions of analysis, there is also an important difference. Moore's philosophy is *conservative* with respect to common sense, whereas Russell's attitude towards common sense is *transformative* and *revisionary*.[23] Moreover, while Moore seems to imply that common sense is all the philosopher can take as her starting point, Russell speaks of the initial 'data' for philosophical analysis as comprising both common sense beliefs and scientific beliefs.

In *Our Knowledge of the External World*, Russell states that:

> In every philosophical problem, our investigation starts from what may be called "data" by which I mean matters of common knowledge, vague,

> complex, inexact, as common knowledge always is, but yet commanding our assent as on the whole and in some interpretation pretty certainly true. (Russell 1914/1993, 72)

Although this meta-philosophical stance towards common sense belief is less clearly expressed by Moore himself, Moore is, of course, a perfect example of someone for whom common sense beliefs are important for philosophical theorizing (he is after all the author of 'A Defence of Common Sense'!). This is especially clear in his controversial proof of the external world in (Moore 1939/1993), where he presupposes that a philosopher is allowed to take common sense statement, such as 'This is a hand', to be simply true. However, we should be careful with what exactly we ascribe to Moore. Although Moore thought that philosophy could presuppose common sense beliefs of the world as true, it could not presuppose that these propositions were also perfectly clear. This is why a decompositional analysis is required. As he writes in 'A Defence of Common Sense':

> I am not sceptical as to the truth of such propositions as 'The earth has existed for many years past', 'Many human bodies have each lived for many years upon it', i.e. propositions which assert the existence of material things: on the contrary, I hold that we all know, with certainty, many such propositions to be true. But I am very sceptical as to what, in certain respects, the correct analysis of such propositions is. (Moore 1925/1993, 127)

Although it is not easy to find clear statements on methodology in Moore's own writings, that this interpretation of his philosophical methodology, at least in his later years, is correct is corroborated by Duncan-Jones, a student of Moore in the 1920s:[24]

> Ever since G.E. Moore published his 'defence of common sense,' the idea has been current that the main activity of these philosophers consists of taking propositions which are known to be true, and which are matters of common sense, and discovering what their correct analysis is. (Duncan-Jones 1937, 139–140)

Conservative vs Transformative/Revisionary Analysis

Moore's method of analysis is essentially *conservative* with respect to common sense. One might think that Moore is not so conservative, since his method seems consistent with some apparent revisions of our common sense beliefs. However, this description misrepresents Moore's view. Moore held quite controversially that 'the "common sense view of the world" is, in certain features, *wholly* true' (Moore 1925/1993, 118). And 'wholly true' here is used in the technical sense that the proposition is true in all respects. As he tells us in 'A Defence of Common Sense':

> I wish, therefore, to make it quite plain that I am not using 'true' in [the sense that a proposition which is partially false may nevertheless also be true.] I am using it in such a sense (and I think this is the ordinary usage) that if a proposition is partially false, it follows that it is *not* true, though, of course, it may be *partially* true. I am maintaining, in short, that all the [common sense] propositions in (1), and also many propositions corresponding to each of these, are *wholly* true. (Moore 1925/1993, 110)

In other words, for Moore, analysis of common sense beliefs cannot lead to a revision in their truth-value. Furthermore, he held that such an analysis could not radically change the meaning of the common sense propositions either. He continues:

> [Some philosophers] use [a common sense expression] to express, not what it would ordinarily be understood to express, but the proposition that some proposition, related to this in a certain way, is true; when all the time they believe that the proposition, which this expression would ordinarily be understood to express, is, at least partially, false. I wish, therefore, to make it quite plain that I was not using the [common sense] expressions I used in (1) in any such subtle sense. I meant by each of them precisely what every reader, in reading them, will have understood me to mean. (Moore 1925/1993, 110)

That is, according to Moore, common sense propositions are known to be true and mean exactly what they are ordinarily taken to mean.

Analysis of common sense beliefs can only give us clarity. This conservative aspect of Moore's philosophy is the reason why Della Rocca calls Moore 'the patron saint of [the method of intuition]' (Della Rocca 2013, 203).[25]

One might think that Moore and Russell do not differ that much on this issue, given that both require that philosophers analyse common sense propositions/sentences in order to clarify them. However, when we compare Moore's view with Russell's considered account, we see a clear difference in methodology.

We have seen that according to both Moore and Russell, philosophy can presuppose a common sense view of the world and that Russell calls this vague collection of common sense knowledge 'data'. We have also seen that for Moore, analysis might help systematize this data and make it clear. However, for Moore, no analysis should radically *revise* this body of knowledge since Moore takes it to be 'wholly true', and no analysis can radically change the meaning, let alone the presumed truth-value, of the original common sense beliefs. We now show that the same does not hold for Russell; for him, the purpose of analysis is to *transform* this body of common sense beliefs.

First, for Russell, analysis can lead to the revision of the truth-value of (at least some) common sense beliefs. According to Russell, although every philosophical investigation starts with data, not all data is equally certain. He distinguishes between two kinds of data, 'hard data' and 'soft data' (although he points out that this is actually a continuum rather than a binary distinction):

> I mean by "hard" data those which resist the solvent influence of critical reflection, and by "soft" data those which, under the operation of this process, become to our minds more or less doubtful. (Russell 1914/1993, 77)

In particular, Russell thinks that there are only two kinds of hard data: particular facts of sense (which he and Moore generally called sense-data) and general truths of logic. All the other data, i.e. the matters of common knowledge, are soft and can become doubtful under critical reflection.

It is by logical analysis that philosophy proceeds, according to Russell. The final chapter of *Our Knowledge of the External World* contains an informative passage on Russell's philosophical methodology:

> We start from a body of common knowledge, which constitutes our data. On examination, the data are found to be complex, rather vague and largely independent logically. By analysis we reduce them to propositions which are as nearly as possible simple and precise, and we arrange them in deductive chains, in which a certain number of initial propositions form a logical guarantee for all the rest. (Russell 1914/1993, 214)

Anticipating what Neurath would famously come to hold, Russell believed that philosophical inquiry can only scrutinize our belief system from within:

> The most that can be done is to examine and purify our common knowledge by internal scrutiny, assuming the canons by which it has been obtained, and applying them with more care and with more precision. (Russell 1914/1993, 73)

However, as is clear from the quote, this process does not only clarify what was vague, but also involves a certain amount of criticism. Russell's attitude towards the data that philosophical investigation starts from is summed up in the final chapter of *The Problems of Philosophy* (Russell 1912/1998):

> The essential characteristic of philosophy, which makes it a study distinct from science, is *criticism*. It examines critically the principles employed *in science and in daily life*; it searches out any inconsistencies there may be in these principles, and it only accepts them when, as the result of a critical inquiry, no reason for rejecting them has appeared. (Russell 1912/1998, 97, emphasis added)

That is, when soft data that is commonly held true is in conflict with the hard data of sense perception or logic, it needs to be rejected as false, thus leading to revision. Common sense beliefs are not exempt from this form of criticism.

> The man who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from the convictions which have grown up in his mind without the co-operation or consent of his deliberate reason. (Russell 1912/1998, 102)

Furthermore, unlike Moorean analysis, Russellian transformative analysis can change our very conception of the analysandum. (We will come back to this point when discussing Strawson and Carnap below.) We see this, for instance, in Russell's analysis of the concept of number. This analysis starts from the intuitive common sense understanding of the natural numbers (Russell 1919, 3). In this case, through the analysis, Russell accounts for mathematical truths about the natural numbers as ultimately being logical truths that can be deduced from the basic laws of logic. And thus, what he started out with has changed through the analysis. Given Russell's solution to the logical paradoxes by means of the theory of types, it turns out that there is not one set of natural numbers but in fact a whole hierarchy of them. Against what common sense holds, the analysis shows that we cannot count individuals with the same numbers as we use to count classes. Similarly, the theory of descriptions shows that descriptions are not what they appear to be according to the surface grammar of our language. These are two examples of transformative analysis.

So, unlike Moore, Russell is not strictly conservative with respect to common sense. Commonly held beliefs can both turn out to be false (revision) and to mean something other than what they were taken to mean before the analysis (transformation). To be sure, Russell's methodology also contains a strong conservative component (in the sense countenanced here,[26] it is only in later heirs of Russellianism that the transformative component overshadows the conservative component. But there are still fundamental differences with respect to Moore, who remains wholly conservative.

Although Russell's appeal to this kind of analysis mostly concerns theoretical truths, we can also observe this revisionary attitude in his tacit commitment to the venerable (but polemic) ideals of the Enlightenment.[27] In criticizing our common sense knowledge, Russell

thought we should go beyond the uncritical doxastic attitudes of our ancestors. He would famously use his scientific understanding of social issues to press for social change, on the basis of philosophical analysis. Russell was, for instance, an avid supporter of women's suffrage (Russell 1910b), sex outside marriage (Russell 1929), and against the continued existence of nuclear weapons (see, e.g. the Russell–Einstein Manifesto).

Summing up: we have shown that two of the basic stances towards commonsensical intuitions within analytic philosophy, a *conservative* and a *revisionary/transformative* stance, were already present in Moore and Russell (respectively). We have shown that for Moore, the body of common sense knowledge is taken to be *wholly* true, although it might be imprecise and unclear in its original form. But however this body of knowledge is systematized, the purpose is to *conserve* and clarify whatever was already vaguely known. For Russell, however, philosophy consists in critically reflecting on a given common sense view of the world by logically analysing it and reconstituting it so that what is certain in itself grounds what is less so, and whatever is in conflict with what is certain in itself is rejected. That is, by means of Russellian analysis, common sense belief may be transformed and revised, leading to philosophical knowledge.

4 Carnap and Strawson

We have just seen that, while sharing many presuppositions and doctrines, Moore and Russell held different stances with respect to the role of common sense for philosophical methodology: Moore's stance was essentially conservative, whereas Russell held an essentially transformative and revisionary stance. The distance between these two stances then became intensified in the mid-twentieth century, in particular in the debates opposing so-called ordinary language philosophers to proponents of so-called scientific philosophy. Significantly, ordinary language philosophers overtly claimed to be inspired by Moore. Austin, for instance, famously expressed his philosophical debt to Moore by saying that '[s]ome people like Witters [Wittgenstein], but Moore is my man' [see (Hacker 1996, 172)]. Norman Malcolm even claimed that

Moore was the first ordinary language philosopher (Malcolm 1942), though Moore himself rejected the label, believing that philosophy deals primarily with concepts, not with language (Moore 1942b). In turn, Russell, with his transformative and revisionary account of analysis, represented a key influence for the proponents of a 'scientific' conception of philosophical inquiry, defended in particular by the members of the Vienna Circle.[28]

Perhaps the best illustration of the clash between these two conceptions of philosophical inquiry in the mid-twentieth century is the debate opposing Carnap and Strawson[29] on Carnap's concept of explication, contained in the volume dedicated to Carnap in the *Library of Living Philosophers* (Schilpp 1963). In what follows, we focus on this debate; we will see that Strawson's main charge against Carnap is that his method of explication in fact 'changes the subject', which is arguably a charge that can be levelled against Russellian transformationist conceptions of philosophical inquiry in general. But before discussing Strawson's criticism and Carnap's reply, a brief 'crash course' on Carnapian explication is in order,[30] as well as a few brief considerations on the relationship between common sense and ordinary language.

Explication

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in Carnap's concept of explication, with a number of publications on the topic (Carus 2007; Maher 2007; Justus 2012; Reck 2012; Wagner 2012; Richardson 2013; Dutilh Novaes and Reck 2017). Carnapian explication provides a convenient background for the discussion in particular of the application of *formal methods* in philosophical inquiry and elsewhere (Maher 2007), but Carnap's own conception of explication went beyond (while also including) formal methods specifically. The canonical presentation of Carnapian explication is to be found in Chapter 1 of *Logical Foundations of Probability* (1950), but *Meaning and Necessity* (1947) already contains some illuminating remarks on the concept:

> The task of making more exact a vague or not quite exact concept used in everyday life or in an earlier stage of scientific or logical development, or rather of replacing it by a newly constructed, more exact concept, belongs among the most important tasks of logical analysis and logical construction. We call this the task of explicating, or of giving an *explication* for, the earlier concept; this earlier concept, or sometimes the term used for it, is called the *explicandum*; and the new concept, or its term, is called an *explicatum* of the old one.[31] (Carnap 1947, 7–8, original emphasis)

> By an *explication* we understand the transformation of an inexact prescientific concept, the *explicandum*, into an exact concept, the *explicatum* (Carnap 1950, 1, original emphasis).

It is clear that the explicanda for a process of explication correspond for the most part to the very commonsensical beliefs that Moore and Russell took to constitute the starting point[32] for philosophical analysis (after all, explication simply *is* a form of analysis). But the process of explication is transformative—indeed, *ameliorative* (Haslanger 2006); it transforms an inexact prescientific concept into a new, exact and scientifically informed concept, which is supposed to be better suited for the relevant applications (though perhaps not entirely supplanting the prescientific concept). The explicatum will still bear some similarity to the explicandum, but similarity is a rather weak criterion of adequacy for explication. The two main criteria of adequacy are exactness and fruitfulness (Dutilh Novaes and Reck 2017).

On one interpretation [defended notably by Carus (2007)], Carnapian explication is not only a clear descendant of Russell's conception of philosophical analysis; it is also arguably an instantiation of Enlightenment ideals (which we also identified in Russell): 'the ambition of shaping individual and social development on the basis of better and more reliable [i.e. scientific] knowledge than the tangled, confused, half-articulate but deeply rooted conceptual systems inherited from our ancestors' (Carus 2007, 1).[33] From this point of view, the opposition between Mooreanism and Russellianism in the twentieth century can be viewed as an instantiation of older debates opposing partisans of the Enlightenment ideals and their critics.[34] In effect, the core of the opposition pertains to the privilege accorded to scientific knowledge

over what could be described as 'ancestral knowledge', or vice versa, in philosophy as well as in other domains of inquiry. (We will see that Strawson's critique of Carnap's perceived 'scientism' consists in delineating a domain of questions that are inherently philosophical, and which purportedly cannot be addressed with scientific methods.)

Ordinary Language Philosophy

Turning now to ordinary language philosophy of the mid-twentieth century, in what sense can we say that it represents the stance of according priority to commonsensical beliefs and 'ancestral knowledge'? A short detour via the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid should suffice to show that Reid, Moore and twentieth-century ordinary language philosophers all share a basic common understanding of the nature of philosophical inquiry. Nichols and Yaffe (2014, Sect. 1.1) describe these connections in the following terms:

> Reid often appeals to the structure of languages as evidence for generalizations about human cognition, belief, and descriptive metaphysics. Language, being something so widely shared, offers an abundance of data for observation. Reid finds many commonalities across languages. (The connection between ordinary language and common sense that Reid espouses was of great influence on later philosophers such as G.E. Moore and J.L. Austin.) Reid does not believe, however, that every feature of ordinary language is indicative of some important tenet of common sense (EIP 1.1, 26–27). Reid often suggests that the relevant features are those that can be found in "the structure of all languages", suggesting that the linguistic features of relevance are features of syntactic structure shared among languages. Reid says there is some important difference between the active and the passive, since "all languages" have a passive and active voice. All languages distinguish between qualities of things and the things themselves (EIP 6.4, 466). This suggests that certain universal features of the syntactic structure of languages inform us of a common sense cognitive commitment, even if it is implicit.

In other words, insofar as certain basic common sense cognitive commitments are reflected and registered in our linguistic practices

(especially if they are present across different languages),[35] then we can rely on these linguistic practices as providing data (in Russell's sense) for philosophical analysis. It is in this sense that ordinary language philosophy can be seen as an instantiation of common sense philosophy.

It is well known that 'ordinary language philosophy' never constituted an official, articulated philosophical movement (different from, for example, the Vienna Circle), and that initially the term itself was used by its critics rather than by its champions. Indeed, there are significant differences among the doctrines of the different 'ordinary language philosophers'. Therefore, the present analysis of the debate between Carnap and Strawson on explication should not be viewed as revealing all there is to reveal about the commitment of ordinary language philosophy to common sense in philosophical methodology. But it provides an glimpse at what these philosophers thought was wrong with Russellian transformative analysis (as exemplified by Carnapian explication, in this case).

Strawson's Critique of Carnapian Explication, and Possible Replies

Strawson begins his essay in the *Living Philosophers* volume dedicated to Carnap by introducing two paradigmatic methods of philosophical clarification:

> To follow one method is to construct a formal system, which uses, generally, the ordinary apparatus of modern logic and in which the concepts forming the subject matter of the system are introduced by means of axioms and definitions. The construction of the system will generally be accompanied by extra-systematic remarks in some way relating the concepts of the system to concepts which we already use in an unsystematic way. This is the method of 'rational reconstruction' […] Following the other method seems very different. For it consists in the attempt to describe the complex patterns of logical behaviour which the concepts of daily life exhibit. It is not a matter of prescribing the model conduct of model words, but of describing the actual conduct of actual words; not a matter of making rules, but of noting customs. (Strawson 1963, 503)

Strawson attributes two properties to what he calls rational reconstruction: the use of formal tools, and a high level of idealization—which can be understood in normative terms, how things *ought* to be. The other method, in turn, is presented as purely descriptive of certain existing customs belonging to daily life, and presumably, as not relying on formal tools. As the essay continues, it becomes clear that one of the main oppositions Strawson is interested in is the one between scientific questions on the one hand and purely philosophical questions pertaining to concepts of non-scientific discourse on the other hand. The question then becomes: which method of philosophical clarification is appropriate for the latter? In an often-quoted passage, Strawson sharply expresses his position:

> For however much or little the constructionist technique [rational reconstruction] is the right means of getting an idea into shape for use in the formal or empirical sciences, it seems prima facie evident that to offer formal explanations of key terms of scientific theories to one who seeks philosophical illumination of essential concepts of non-scientific discourse, is to do something utterly irrelevant—is a sheer misunderstanding, like offering a text-book on physiology to someone who says (with a sigh) that he wished he understood the workings of the human heart.[36] (Strawson 1963, 504–505)

And so, one possible reading of Strawson's analysis is as a critique of the tendency towards scientism that he identifies in Carnap's notion of explication. His response is to reclaim a specific domain of inquiry as not amenable to this 'scientific' methodology, namely non-scientific discourse and the concepts of daily life. This criticism represents an intensification of the different stances towards common sense of Moore and Russell, which was not explicitly cast in terms of the opposition between scientific and non-scientific discourses. But it is also a rejection of the possibility of philosophical clarification having a transformative or revisionary import: philosophical clarification ought to be purely descriptive of beliefs and concepts underlying daily life, rather than producing new concepts which should replace the old ones or revising entrenched commonsensical beliefs.

> And it seems in general evident that the concepts used in non-scientific kinds of discourse could not literally be *replaced* by scientific concepts serving just the same purposes; that the language of science could not in this way *supplant* the language of the drawing-room, the kitchen, the law courts and the novel. (Strawson 1963, 505)

Strawson's conservativeness towards existing (linguistic) practices is further confirmed in the following passage:

> [I]n most cases, either the operation [scientific language replacing non-scientific language for non-scientific purposes] would not be practically feasible or the result of attempting it would be something so radically different from the original that *it could no longer be said to be fulfilling the same purpose, doing the same thing.* More of the types of linguistic activity in which we constantly engage would succumb to such an attempt than would survive it … (Strawson 1963, 505–506, emphasis added)

And naturally, this would represent a failure of the very goal of the philosophical enterprise. Carnap's response to Strawson's criticism (in the Schilpp volume) makes a number of interesting points. We do not have the space to discuss Carnap's reply in detail, but let us point out that (as noted by Carnap himself in his reply) Strawson's objection relies crucially on the presupposition that there is a strict separation between scientific discourse and non-scientific discourse. At heart, it is a critique of the perceived scientism at the core of the notion of explication tied to a lack of appreciation for the know-how embedded in traditional customs and techniques, including ordinary language. Strawson simply takes this strict separation to be obvious, i.e. to require no argumentation in its support, but it is far from obvious that scientific discourse and non-scientific discourse are (or even should be) strictly separated in this fashion. There are countless examples in the history of humanity of concepts that were initially developed in strictly scientific contexts, but which were then absorbed (albeit perhaps in simplified forms) in everyday, non-scientific practices. As for philosophy more specifically, Strawson also seems to presuppose (again, without much argumentation given) that some questions are purely and strictly philosophical, and

thus not amenable to scientific clarifications. This is again a presupposition that could well be (and has often been) contested, but which for reasons of space, we do not discuss further at this point.

Indeed, our goal here is not that of adjudicating between these two methodologies/conceptions of philosophy, but rather that of describing some of the stages in the development of these two different stances with respect to common sense and everyday life practices and concepts in philosophical inquiry. While there are some important differences between the Russell/Moore debate and the Carnap/Strawson debate (such as that the latter is explicitly cast in terms of the use of formal or informal methods, something only implicitly present in the former), in both cases, we have the tension between a transformative approach and a conservative approach to philosophical analysis with regard to extra-philosophical, commonsensical beliefs. Carnap defends the transformative conception through the concept of explication; Strawson criticizes it as leading to a 'change of subject', and thus to a failure to clarify what he sees as the real objects of philosophical analysis—primarily, concepts of non-scientific discourse. Russell's reply to Strawson's criticism of his theory of description sums up perfectly these two stances in their mid-twentieth-century instantiations. He writes that there is

> a fundamental divergence between myself and many philosophers with whom Mr. Strawson appears to be in general agreement. They are persuaded that common speech is good enough, not only for daily life, but also for philosophy. I, on the contrary, am persuaded that common speech is full of vagueness and inaccuracy, and that any attempt to be precise and accurate requires modification of common speech both as regards vocabulary and as regards syntax … For technical purposes, technical languages differing from those of daily life are indispensable … In philosophy, it is syntax, even more than vocabulary that needs to be corrected … My theory of descriptions was never intended as an analysis of the state of mind of those who utter sentences containing descriptions … I was concerned to find a more accurate and analysed thought to *replace the somewhat confused thoughts which most people at most times have in their heads.* (Russell 1957, 387–388, emphasis added)

5 Conclusion

In this paper, we argued that different conceptions of the method of analysis have given rise to either a *conservative* or a *transformative/revisionary* attitude towards common sense beliefs in analytic philosophy. We dubbed these stances *Mooreanism* and *Russellianism*, respectively.

We first discussed how different contemporary positions with respect to philosophical methodology within analytic philosophy might be viewed as instances of these two approaches. We then argued that these two stances are already exemplified by Moore's and Russell's own respective philosophical methodologies and the role of common sense in philosophical inquiry. In the final part of the paper, we focused on a concrete instance of a (roughly) Moorean criticism often levelled at the Russellian transformative approach, namely the debate between Strawson and Carnap in the Carnap *Living Philosophers* volume: from the conservative perspective, the transformative perspective runs the risk of unduly changing the subject.

We believe that a better understanding of the history of analytic philosophy should contribute to current debates on philosophical methodology, and the point of view adopted here does this by bringing to the fore some of the presuppositions and implications pertaining to two of the main positions in the debate. The contemporary methodological debate between Mooreanism and Russellianism (as we described these two positions) really is a discussion about the possibility of reinterpreting our common sense views of the world into the language of science by means of, inter alia, philosophical analysis. Russelianism can be seen as the optimistic view according to which we can improve our common sense picture of the world and turn it into scientifically informed philosophical knowledge. Mooreanists, in contrast, worry that a transformative understanding of our common sense worldview will change the subject matter, and thus will fail to provide an analysis of the true objects of philosophical inquiry.

Notes

1. See (Glock 2008) for a thorough and sustained defence of a similar position.
2. We are not ruling out the existence of yet other (influential) conceptions of analysis besides these two, but we do claim that these are particularly pervasive within analytic philosophy.
3. To avoid potential confusion, let us point out that, in what follows, whenever we use the term 'conservative', it should be understood specifically in an *epistemic* sense [as discussed, e.g. in (Christensen 1994)], not in a political sense (though there may be interesting connections between conservativism in the two domains, which we do not discuss).
4. While there is much agreement between the present contribution and (Della Rocca 2013), the fundamental difference is that Della Rocca presents Moore and Russell as essentially agreeing with each other on the role of intuitions in philosophical inquiry. In contrast, here we emphasize the methodological disagreements between the two.
5. 'The dogmatic basis of Moore's method is the pronouncement of commonsense, of Russell's that of the scientist' (Black 1939, 26, Fn. 6). Alternatively, it may be suggested that the tension between conservative and transformative/revisionary approaches that we identify in Moore and Russell, respectively, is, in fact, already present in Russell alone, given that his methodology contains both transformative/revisionary and conservative components. (We owe this suggestion to Greg Frost-Arnold.)
6. See (Friedman 2000) on the Carnap vs Heidegger 'animosity'.
7. 'The continentals were the "other" against which the virtues of the British could first be constructed and then juxtaposed' (Akehurst 2010, 4). See also a *Philosophy Bites* podcast with S. Glendinning, Simon making a similar point (continental philosophy as 'the other'): http://philosophybites.com/2013/05/simon-glendinning-on-philosophys-two-cultures-analytic-and-continental.html.
8. This does not entail a commitment to the view that there is a common core to 'analytic philosophy' as a unified tradition, nor that there are intrinsic differences between analytic philosophy and continental philosophy; the divide might well be largely a sociological phenomenon, though also marked by some differences in methodology. Indeed, the whole point of the paper is to argue that, within analytic philosophy itself, there are rather different methodological approaches being pursued, which puts pressure on the idea that it corresponds to a unified tradition.

9. Contrast this with, e.g. a Heideggerian critique of language and its limitations, which nevertheless does not resort to a regimented, 'improved' language; instead, the idea is that these limitations are inherent to any language, and potentially even more present in these regimented, artificial languages created by theorists.
10. A third, interesting but arguably improbable, position is defended by Cappelen (2012): current (analytic) philosophy *does not* as a matter of fact (and should not) rely extensively on intuitions.
11. Notice that this is not Jenkins' own preferred account of the situation; she favours a 'contextual shiftness' account over this 'semantic generality' account. For our purposes, however, nothing significantly hinges on this distinction.
12. These two passages are quoted in (Rinard 2013) and (Kelly 2008).
13. Jenkins (2014, 102) provides a helpful list of some of the main criticisms that have been voiced.
14. Notice that the approaches discussed here, that is the one based on common sense as well as its critics, seem to share the presupposition that there is a genuine distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge. A rejection of this presupposition would presumably yield yet other conceptions of philosophical methodology, but we will leave the issue aside. (We owe this point to Michael Della Rocca.)
15. We are grateful for valuable comments and suggestions by our colleagues at the University of Groningen during a critical discussion of an earlier draft of this section.
16. It must be noted that neither Moore nor Russell uses the term 'intuition' in any other sense than the technical sense of immediate knowledge. More specifically, they do not use the term to refer to common sense belief or folk belief. For instance, Moore uses the term 'intuition' in *Principia Ethica* for propositions that cannot be proved or disproved (Moore 1903, p. x), and in his articles, Moore does not use the term at all, except for a single quote of Kant in *The Nature of Judgment* (Moore 1899/1993, 12). Something similar holds for Russell. For instance, in *The Principles of Mathematics* (Russell 1903), Russell only uses the term 'intuition' when he discusses Kantian philosophy of mathematics, and he does not use the term in *The Problems of Philosophy* (Russell 1912/1998) at all. The closest Russell comes to our current use of the term is when he discusses the philosophy of Bergson, for instance, in his collection of lectures known as *Our Knowledge of the External World*

where he claims that 'Bergson, under the name of 'intuition,' has raised instinct to the position of sole arbiter of metaphysical truth' (Russell 1914/1993, 31). But Russell himself never seems to use the term 'intuition' in that sense. Even in his late *A History of Western Philosophy* (Russell 1945), we find him using the term 'intuition' only in the context of mathematics, in the sense of immediate knowledge in his discussion of Locke and Kant, and in his discussion of Bergson.

17. However, there is also a conservative component in Russell's methodology. It is only in later Russellians such as Carnap that a more radical rejection of the reliability of common sense beliefs is perceived.
18. For a similar view expressed by Russell, see Chap. 9 of *The Principles of Mathematics* (Russell 1903).
19. One might worry that Moore's decompositional method of analysis only holds for concepts and not for the common sense beliefs that this paper is about. Such a worry is however unfounded since, according to Moore, 'a proposition is nothing other than a complex concept' (Moore 1899/1993, 5).
20. In fact, this holds of all three conceptions discussed by Beaney; they were not invented by Russell, Moore and other pioneers in analytic philosophy.
21. Note that Kant explicitly distinguished analysis in this sense from the regressive conception of analysis [see Kant (1783/2004, Sect. 5)].
22. Although it might seem that this process of logical analysis proceeds in a single step, it is important to note that a logically analysed definite description might still contain complex concepts which need further (decompositional) analysis.
23. 'Transformative' and 'revisionary' as used in this paper are not synonymous, though a given instance of analysis may be both transformative and revisionary. An analysis is transformative when the very conception of what the explanandum is about may change as a result of the analysis process; it is revisionary when it leads to a change in the truth-value attributed to a particular common sense belief. In other words, the transformative component pertains to the meaning of propositions, whereas the revisionary component to their truth-value.
24. For more details on Moore and the Cambridge School of Analysis, see (Baldwin 2013).
25. Moore answers the objection that many of our common sense beliefs, like our intuitions concerning physics, are false with the rejoinder that

his method only applies to a certain kind of common sense beliefs (say, that science says nothing about): '[F]or all I know, there may be many propositions which may be properly called features in "the Common Sense view of the world" or "Common Sense beliefs", which are not true, and which deserve to be mentioned with the contempt which with some philosophers speak of "Common Sense beliefs". But to speak with contempt of those "Common Sense beliefs" which I have mentioned is quite certainly the height of absurdity'. (Moore 1925/1993, 119)

26. 'Our hypothetical construction… shows that the account of the world given by common sense and physical science can be interpreted in a way which is logically unobjectionable, and finds a place for all the data, both hard and soft' (Russell 1914/1993, 104).
27. We will come back to these Enlightenment ideals when discussing Carnap later on.
28. Carnap explicitly claimed that Russell's *Our Knowledge of the External World* profoundly influenced him (Beaney 2007, p. 207).
29. Recall that Strawson (1950) also explicitly criticized Russell's theory of definite descriptions as not truly capturing the meaning of these expressions.
30. The account of Carnapian explication presented here draws heavily on (Dutilh Novaes and Reck 2017).
31. As the reference to 'logical analysis' and 'logical construction' in this passage indicates, Carnap views explication as the successor to some related methodologies, used by Frege, Russell, and others earlier. This includes 'rational reconstruction', which is the term that Strawson uses in his critique to refer to this methodology. See Beaney (2013) for more on the historical background.
32. Or, in the case of Russell, one of the possible starting points, along with, e.g. scientific principles.
33. To be clear, Carus' (2007) interpretation of Carnapian explication as Enlightenment is not unanimously accepted. But this angle allows for a fruitful framing of the debate with Strawson and the charge of scientism in particular.
34. Importantly, Mooreanism is fundamentally different from the position of other Enlightenment critics, for example the nineteenth-century German Romantics. Indeed, it is rather in the spirit of that venerable English institution called 'common sense' (Akehurst 2010), which

constitutes a very different response to scientism when compared to that of the Romantics.

35. However, it is well known that philosophers who turn to linguistic practice and linguistic intuitions in their analyses often fail to take into account possible cross-linguistic variation. More often than not, only English is examined, and sometimes other closely related Indo-European languages. This is a real methodological shortcoming of this approach, which Reid seemed to be well aware of.
36. It is somewhat ironic that much of the recent progress made on understanding 'the workings of the human heart' relies extensively on physiological analysis, e.g. Helen Fisher's book *Why We Love: The Nature and Chemistry of Romantic Love* (Fisher 2004).

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