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## The Experimental Turn and Ordinary Language

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## **Erratum**

Editor's Note: Errata were corrected as of 10.11.2011.

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## Generation X-Phi

Following the publication of *Words and Things*, Ernest Gellner's 1959 polemic against what Bertrand Russell described in his laudatory preface as 'the linguistic philosophy now in vogue at Oxford', the cluster of philosophers under attack placed a stronger emphasis on the multiplicity of their diverse aims, methods, and viewpoints (cf. Mehat 1963, part D). Those leading the relatively new movement in experimental philosophy have the good sense to highlight the diversity of their ambitions from the outset:

Although the movement has a name, it includes a variety of projects driven by different interests, assumptions, and goals... While some experimental philosophers use data about ordinary intuitions to support philosophical theories, others use such data to better understand the psychological mechanisms that generate such intuitions, while still others gather such data to show that some intuitions may be too unreliable to support philosophical theories in the first place (Nadelhoffer and Nahmias: 123; cf. Knobe & Nicholls: Ch. 1).

This essay is concerned only with that branch of experimental philosophy (X-Phi) that deals with intuitions relating to everyday language and the concepts it embodies. The 'experiments' in question essentially involve Gallup polls focusing on subjects' *intuitions* as these surface in response to various vignettes, most famously that of a CEO who decides to implement a financially rewarding new program, knowing that it will have certain (harmful or helpful) effects on the environment (see Knobe 2003). I shall dub this view 'Experimental Linguistic Philosophy' (ELP) because it is primarily an investigation into what people will ordinarily say when asked certain questions (though for the most part these are not explicitly linguistic or conceptual). I will have nothing to say about other strands of X-Phi.

Prima facie, ELP has much in common with ‘that now distant philosophical style’<sup>1</sup> of its cousin, ‘Ordinary Language’ or ‘Oxford Linguistic’ Philosophy (OLP), neither of which singles out a uniquely identifiable doctrine or school in the way that ELP might plausibly be thought to.<sup>2</sup> Both ELP and OLP focus on everyday concepts and take ordinary usage to be philosophically relevant. While neither movement has an agreed manifesto on these things, they are both sympathetic to Wittgenstein’s claim that ‘one cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look* at its application and learn from that’.<sup>3</sup>

Their general goals and methods, however, seem to differ radically. ELP collects statistical data in the hope of offering psychological explanations of people’s *intuitions*, whilst OLP focuses on linguistic and conceptual *norms*, often with the aim of dissolving disputes that arise through their abuse.

What follows is an exploration of ELP’s uneasy relation to OLP. I shall argue that they share deep convictions that go against the grain of conventional conceptual analysis, which I distinguish from OLP. I shall conclude that while ELP can tell us much that is of great interest about human nature (by testing our intuitions and beliefs) it is in no position of privilege to determine *correct linguistic usage*. It may help philosophy in numerous ways, but improving upon OLP in this respect is not one of them.

## Analysis and Clarification

Alan Turing opened his landmark article ‘Computing Machinery and Intelligence’ by remarking that the question ‘Can machines think?’ should begin with definitions of the meaning of the terms ‘machine’ and ‘think’. To this he adds the following qualification:

The definitions might be framed so as to reflect as far as possible the normal use of the words, but this attitude is dangerous. If the meaning of the words “machine” and “think” are to be found by examining how they are commonly used it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the meaning and the answer to the question “Can machines think?” is to be sought in a statistical survey such as a Gallup poll. But this is absurd. Instead of attempting such a definition I shall replace the question by another, which is closely related to it and is expressed in relatively unambiguous words.

Writing in 1950, Turing is here attempting to distance himself from a methodologies which focus on the ordinary usage of terms. He proposes to replace these with an ‘imitation game’ (now called the ‘Turing Test’) in which an interrogator attempts to determine which of two ‘subjects’ is human and which is a machine, the latter being defined technically as a ‘digital computer’.<sup>4</sup> Turing’s mischaracterisation of the general

OLP approach was typical for its time.<sup>5</sup> Roderick Chisholm, for example, makes much the same mistake in the following passage (contemporary with Turing's), attempting a *reductio* of paradigm case arguments.<sup>6</sup>

Let us begin by asking how we would show that a philosopher is using language *incorrectly*. Suppose we have found an epistemologist who holds that *certainty* is very difficult to attain: he tells us that although people may *believe* that there is furniture in the room or that the earth has existed for hundreds [sic] of years past, no one can be *certain* that such beliefs are true. We might point out to him that people *do* call such beliefs "certain"; we might go on to note that ordinarily, one would apply the word "uncertain" only to beliefs of a much more problematic sort, for instance to conjectures about the weather; we might add that, if anyone were to teach a child the meaning of the words "certain" and "uncertain," he would never cite as an uncertain belief the one about the furniture; and so on. This sort of technique, which is frequently used, would show that the epistemologist disagrees with most people about the denotation of the word "certain," since he does not apply that word to the beliefs to which it is ordinarily applied. But would it show that he is using the word *incorrectly*? To see that it would not, let us consider a different case. A fifteenth century geographer might have pointed out to Columbus that ordinarily people apply the word "flat" and not the word "round" to the earth...(Chisholm 1951: 175-6).

The mistake is to identify claims about how 'one' (or 'we') would ordinarily apply a word with *beliefs* or *intuitions* about correct linguistic usage. OLP claims about ordinary usage were never claims about either personal or majority beliefs - fallible or otherwise - but about objective *norms*. Turing and Chisholm's conflation is of interest here because the type of linguistic investigation they attack adheres to at least one view that ELP has *both* of itself and of what it calls 'conceptual analysis', which its proponents sometimes mistakenly takes to include OLP. Thus, for example, Joshua Knobe and Shaun Nichols write:

...the conceptual analyst might write "in this case, one would surely say..." while the experimental philosopher would write, "in this case, 79% of subjects said..." and back her claims with statistical data (Knobe & Nichols 2008: 4).

The aim of conceptual analysis, as practiced by, among others, philosophers as diverse as Russell, Moore, Ayer, and early Wittgenstein was to report discoveries about the (logical structure of) the *world*. The optimistic thought that this could be achieved was a corollary of the view that our concepts were the *mirror* of reality, to steal a phrase from Richard Rorty. This had little to do with 'what one would surely say', indeed

Russell (as we saw from the outset) would firmly support Gellner's critique of the practice of appealing to common and/or correct linguistic usage in order to 'solve' philosophical problems. He was motivated, instead, by the idea that complex propositions or concepts could - like chemical compounds - be informatively broken down into more basic (logical or conceptual) elements or atoms:<sup>7</sup>

Every proposition which we can understand must composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted (Russell 1912:21).

I call my doctrine logical atomism...because the atoms that I wish to arrive at as the sort of last residue in analysis are logical atoms and not physical atoms. Some of the will be what I call 'particulars' - such things as little patches of colour or sounds, momentary things - and some of them will be predicates and relations and so on. The point is that the atom I wish to arrive at is the atom of logical analysis, not the atom of physical analysis (Russell 1956: 179).

Perhaps the most popular target of analysis has been the concept of knowledge. Ayer, for example, concluded that 'the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing that something is the case are first that what one is said to know be true, secondly that one be sure of it, and thirdly that one should have the right to be sure' (1956: 35). A similar view was held by Chisholm (1957:16) who, as we have just seen, was hardly a friend of OLP. Russell was less optimistic of the possibility of a precise definition, finding everyday (non-technical) terms too 'vague' to do the job (1912:78), though he did conclude that 'what we firmly believe, if it is true, is called *knowledge*, provided it is either intuitive or inferred (logically or psychologically) from intuitive knowledge from which it follows logically' (1912:81). By contrast OLP apologist Oswald Hanfling (2003) argued against the possibility of such a reductive analysis, not in virtue of finding ordinary language defective but because he took the word 'knowledge' to be no different from any other in having a multitude of interrelated senses that cannot be captured in terms of any one or more common features (cf. Wittgenstein 1953: § 67). It is ironic that many philosophers who came to be associated with OLP gave their books titles such as *The Concept of Mind* (Ryle) and *The Concept of Law* (Hart), when in effect their books showed that there was no one single concept of such things but numerous interrelating conceptions, a point often lost to advocates of conceptual analysis, as opposed to those of ELP.

OLP, then, is generally not interested in analysing concept in the traditional sense of breaking them down into smaller conceptual components; instead it often seeks to *clarify* or *elucidate* by laying out the detailed norms of their employment. The sound of the two methodologies clashing has been aptly recorded by Frank B. Ebersole:

Like many another I was once committed to a certain type of philosophical endeavor—a type that goes under the names of "linguistic analysis" or "conceptual analysis" . . . Then I read Wittgenstein. My first reaction was to add footnotes to the things I had been writing. Then I added appendices. Finally I tore the things up; and I have been trying in various ways ever since to overcome a state of paralysis (1972: 186).

Supporters of ELP have been known to ignore the important methodological difference between traditional analysis (of the sort practised by Russell, who was ‘persuaded that common speech is full of vagueness and inaccuracy’<sup>8</sup>) and post-Wittgensteinian concern with conceptual clarification. Kwame Anthony Appiah, for instance, reports the following anecdote:

In the empirical spirit, I should report that, when I typed the phrase “it would be natural to say” into Google’s Book Search, it happily returned, as its top search results, passages by Gilbert Ryle, Peter Strawson, Max Black, and Bertrand Russell (2008b:VI).<sup>9</sup>

Like OLP, ELP is also interested in clarification as opposed to analysis but what it seeks to clarify does not appear to be conceptual *norms* but, rather, particular conceptual uses and the reasons that motivate them. In this respect ELP is linguistic psychology capable of making truly fascinating discoveries relating to the beliefs or intuitions (folk psychology).<sup>10</sup>

OLP, by contrast, is not interested in what the majority of people happen to think at any given time and place but, rather, in objective facts about linguistic norms. As noted by Turing above, gathering statistics about what people *believe* is true tells us precious little about whether these beliefs are *actually* true. Indeed, it may even be possible for the majority of people to hold mistaken views about what Grice called *conventional meaning* (viz. the conventional meaning of words within a given language).

To elaborate, linguistic polls can only tell us what people *think* about (speaker or expression) meaning. Accordingly, ELP can offer explanatory accounts of why people tend to think certain things in certain contexts, but not others. Such information might not even tell us anything about *speaker* meaning (viz. what they intend to say and get others to believe etc.) unless it were true that people do not *use* words in ways which contradict their own assertions about what the words mean; empirical studies could yield informative answers here. A competent speaker will, of course, mean to say what they say *conventionally*, even if they cannot fully spell out why,<sup>11</sup> but ELP is in the wrong business if it wishes to ascertain the expression meaning of any given term or expression, let alone how it came to arise.

This is not to say that the kind of evidence gathered by experimental philosophers of everyday tells us nothing about the norms of *conventional (expression) meaning*. After all, majority usage is typically a good indicator of correct usage.<sup>12</sup> But it would be wrong to conclude from this that ELP offers empirically verified – and therefore *better* – answers to the same questions that OLP is answering. First of all, even if the results of ELP accurately and reliably reflected ordinary usage, it would not follow that ELP was a methodological improvement on OLP. For we do not need to conduct experiments in order to report correct usage, no matter how difficult the case; it would be an awkward state of affairs indeed if we relied on questionnaires to find out whether or not a certain kind of action (whose psychological and behavioural aspects had been made explicit) was intentional.

Nor is it to say that we know such things by *intuition*, anymore than we know the rules of chess by intuition. We learn from parents, teachers, rule-books, dictionaries, literature etc. as well as by observing general linguistic behaviour, appealing to precedents to resolve cases of conflict. Neither OLP nor ELP is in a *better* position than the other in this respect, for linguistic mastery does not require any philosophical methodology at all.<sup>13</sup> When OLP talks of what we *would* say, it refers not to the latest up-to-the-minute statistics about what happens to be the case but to well-established, *legitimate* use, distinguishing further between paradigm and peripheral cases. Antti Kauppinen puts it well when he points out that phrases such as ‘what we would ordinarily say’ are elliptical for how ‘(1) *competent users* of the concepts in question would respond if (2) they *considered the case in sufficiently ideal conditions* and (3) their answer was *influenced only by semantic considerations*’ (2007:3).

Appiah has made similar-sounding point:

For Austin, “What is to be said?” was not an invitation to collect ethnographic data about how a given population of persons might make sense of these statements. The answer was supposed to be obvious. What a person knows in knowing English, say, is what everyone competent speaker *should* say in a certain situation; and so, being competent myself, I know what everyone else speaker *would* say if they were competent. That is why it wouldn’t matter if we found individuals who *didn’t* say it: it would just show that they weren’t competent. In section 21 of the Philosophical Investigations...Wittgenstein wrote: “We do in fact call ‘Isn’t the weather glorious today?’ a question, although it is used as a statement.”Until recently, philosophers in my tradition would have thought it impertinent to ask who the “we” is here, and pointless to go out and inquire of people in the street whether someone who said these words was really asking a question. (Appiah 2009a:19-20; cf. 1007 & 2008b: VI)



But only to add:

Philosophers have always been wonderfully confident in their ability to say what “it would be natural to say.” This confidence, experiments show, can sometimes lead us astray...the right answer, if there is one, isn’t necessarily to be determined by a head count... X-phi helps keep us honest and enforces a useful modesty about how much weight to give one’s personal hunches, even when they’re shared by the guy in the next office...this work is in a continuation of the project of conceptual analysis. If conceptual analysis is the analysis of “our” concepts, then shouldn’t one see how “we”—or representative samples of us—actually mobilize concepts in our talk? So one strain of this work seeks to elicit and tabulate intuitions people have about various scenarios (Appiah 2008b:VI)

This puts the conceptual cart before the horse. Claims about ‘what we ordinarily say’ are not based on *intuition* but on well-established facts about the meaning of expressions (analogous to facts concerning the rules of Monopoly or chess), which no competent language-speaker could deny.<sup>14</sup> This is not to say that philosophers may err in such matters e.g. by ignoring an established use at the expense of others. Indeed, one of the most central tenets that OLP inherited from the later Wittgenstein was that the disposition to make such mistakes is strengthened when one is in the grip of a philosophical picture.<sup>15</sup> Such mistakes may be discovered *looking again* at the various established uses of any given word or expression, but this is *not* to rely on intuition but on *fact* (and factive explanation). Austin, who frequently returned to the literary samples listed in the Oxford English Dictionary would have welcomed ELP as an ally with new tools, rather than as a competitor.<sup>16</sup>

### Norm and Intuition

Whilst OLP is a form of ‘armchair philosophy’ it does not determine what counts as legitimate usage through hunches, intuition, or common sense. Rather, it proceeds by way of *recalling* various different senses, usually through illustrative examples. This is neither empirical discovery nor arbitrary decision (Hare 1960:208), for the norms of language are part and parcel of the (contingent) practices that embody them. An expression may thus acquire a new meaning through systematic misuse or a (non-arbitrary) decision to adopt or extend some rule of usage, but this does not make it illegitimate.

By contrast, Kaupinnen (2007) claims that research into people’s linguistic intuitions cannot reveal any conceptual truths, for what we can legitimately say is not necessarily the same as what we ordinarily *think* we can say. Joshua Knobe has responded to such charges by arguing that X-Phi is simply not interested in such semantic questions:

Kauppinen's argument raises many fascinating questions both in philosophy and in cognitive science, but I worry that the principal claim is simply a red herring in the present context. It doesn't even matter whether experimental philosophy can help us to analyze the semantics of our concepts because that is not the aim that most experimental philosophers were trying to achieve in the first place. Most experimental research now being conducted is actually in the service of a very different philosophical project... As far as I can see, the idea that questions about human nature fall outside the scope of philosophy was just the expression of a bizarre sort of academic fashion. The thing to do now is just to put aside our methodological scruples and go after the traditional problems with everything we've got. The question now is why all of these researchers attach so much significance to the issue in the first place. My bet would be that very few of them began pursuing the issue because they were curious about the extension of the English word 'intentional.' (I'm not even sure why that is supposed to be an important philosophical question.) ... I have suggested that we abandon the assumption that the study of people's intuitions about cases can only have philosophical significance insofar as it helps us to answer semantic questions (Knobe 2007: 120).

Knobe adds:

It is true that there was a period in the twentieth century when many philosophers did hold such a view about the scope of philosophical inquiry, but perhaps we should regard that whole episode as just a peculiar aberration in the otherwise consistent history of our discipline. After putting it behind us, we can return in full force to what have traditionally been seen as the central questions of philosophy (Knobe 2007: 121).

It is not obvious that the philosophers that Knobe has in mind have approved of ELP's use of statistical surveys, David Hume, for instance, frequently states that both philosophers and the 'vulgar' misuse various terms and that if they grasped the proper significance of any idea (to be determined by searching for the relevant impressions) numerous disputes central to philosophy would disappear.<sup>17</sup> Contrary to philosophers associated with OLP, Hume's talk of 'common usage' is not elliptical for *legitimate* use. OLP could thus agree with his view that 'words, as commonly used, have very loose meanings annexed to them; and their ideas are very uncertain and confused.'<sup>18</sup> *Pace* Appiah it is ELP (rather than Hume or OLP) that seems to be attaching considerable value to our *intuitions*.

Moreover, it is simply false that ELP makes no attempt to answer semantic questions. Consider the following passage from Knobe's 2003 paper 'Intentional Action and Side-Effects in Ordinary Language', in which he follows Harman (1976) in claiming that 'a person's intuitions as to whether or not a given side-effect was produced 'intentionally' can be influenced by that person's ethical attitude toward the specific side-effect in question.'

There seems to be an asymmetry whereby people are considerably more willing to blame the agent for bad side-effects than to praise the agent for good side-effects. And this asymmetry in people's assignment of praise and blame may be at the root of the corresponding asymmetry in people's application of the concept *intentional*: namely, that they seem considerably more willing to say that a side-effect was brought about intentionally when they regard that side-effect as bad than when they regard it as good ...This question goes to the heart of a major controversy regarding the proper analysis of the concept of intentional action...Now, when we encounter a controversy like this one, it can sometimes be helpful to ask ourselves what people would ordinarily say about the situation under discussion. Would people ordinarily say that the side-effects of a behaviour were brought about intentionally? Clearly, ordinary language does not here constitute a court of final appeal. (Even if it turns out that people ordinarily call side-effects 'intentional', we might conclude that they are truly unintentional.) Still, it does seem plausible that the examination of ordinary language might provide us with some useful guidance about difficult cases like this one (Knobe 2003: 191)

There's the bit where you say it and the bit where you take it back.<sup>19</sup> Knobe notes that in 2001 Alfred Mele claimed that it is always wrong 'to say that a side-effect was brought about intentionally' but that 'he now retracts this view in response to an earlier version of the present paper'. Whatever the linguistic truth of the matter, this is a clear case of a philosopher (Mele) consciously changing their minds about 'the extension of the English word "intentional"' as the result of a Gallup poll.

Knobe denies that 'ordinary language' constitutes a 'final court of appeal' yet is happy to be conceptually informed by statistical surveys. But to ask what the extension of the English word 'intentional' is just is to ask what its extension is *within* established discourse. The philosophical significance of ELP largely rests on the employment of perceptive questions that serve as neat linguistic reminders irrespective of how the 'ordinary folk' responded to them. To this extent it functions much like any other thought experiment, such as the sorts of 'oblique intention' scenarios discussed by Glanville Williams and H.L.A. Hart:

Suppose one man is walking with another along the edge of a cliff and sees a diamond ring on the path before him. Knowing that his companion also wishes to get the ring, he pushes him over the cliff, believing that this will in all probability lead to his death (Hart 1968: 126; cf. G. Williams 1987).

The first man does not (directly) *intend* to kill the second yet it would be *absurd* to deny that this is a case of attempted murder. This is not a matter of intuition or common-sense but of *conceptual competence* (which cannot be acquired through straw polls). Not all cases will be so clear-cut, of course. ELP confirms that some of our notions (such as that of doing something intentionally) are vague, ambiguous, or divided. In this, however, it resembles the work of legal theorists such as G. Williams and Hart, replete as it was with references to actual court cases.

In conclusion, proponents of ELP have a strong tendency to lumber claims about ordinary usage together with claims about intuitions or common-sense. To give a final example, Thomas Nadelhoffer and Eddy Nahmias write:

Any areas of philosophy that rely on (i) intuition-pumps and thought experiments, (ii) appeals to commonsense and pre-philosophical intuition or (iii) conceptual analysis based in part on ordinary usage or ‘platitudes’ are ripe for investigation by experimental philosophers who are, above all, interested in examining these things in a controlled and systematic way. This interest is driven by two assumptions: First, there is a shared distrust of philosophers’ (common) claims of the general form ‘X is intuitive,’ ‘Ordinarily, we believe X,’ ‘The ordinary use of “X” is Y,’ ‘It is natural for people to believe X,’ and the like. These are claims that philosophers usually make based upon armchair reflection on their own intuitions and (perhaps selective) consideration of their conversations with friends, family, and especially students. But these methods of determining what is widely accepted seem highly susceptible to well-known biases such as confirmation bias, disconfirmation bias, and false consensus bias—biases that may be even more pronounced in philosophers than laypersons given the philosophers’ extensive theoretical training and their use of intuition claims to confirm their own theoretical views. (Nadelhoffer & Nahmias 2007: 125; cf. Appiah 2008a).

I have tried to show that while various kinds of bias may cause one to make mistaken claims about ordinary usage, opinion polls have no privileged position from which they might better settle normative questions about proper linguistic usage.<sup>20</sup> It is natural for members of a movement in relative infancy to overstate their case. This proved to be disastrous for OLP, hopefully it will not be so for ELP.

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<sup>1</sup> B. Williams 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hacker (1996:158ff.).

<sup>3</sup> Wittgenstein (1953: § 340).

<sup>4</sup> Turing's central claim was that should a machine pass the test we would have no reason to deny that it thinks. Indeed he further maintained - with prophetic accuracy - that by the end of the (twentieth) century 'the use of words and general educated opinion will have altered so much that one will be able to speak of machines thinking without expecting to be contradicted'.

<sup>5</sup> More recent attacks on OLP (e.g. Williamson 2007: 10-22) tend to distort its conception of philosophical analysis. For a detailed criticism of Williamson's mischaracterisations see Hacker 2009.

<sup>6</sup> For a full defence of why such attempted reductios fail see Hanfling (2000:Ch.5 esp. P.89ff.)

<sup>7</sup> David Pears (1963) notes some interesting parallels between logical atomism and Hume's theory of ideas. Of course. not all who practised conceptual analysis were logical atomists or empiricists (cf. Baldwin 2004). For an overview of different philosophical senses of 'analysis' see Glock (2008: chs. 2 and 6).

<sup>8</sup> Russell (1959: 241). Of course 'common speech' is often vague and inaccurate, the question is whether this is necessarily a bad thing (cf. Wittgenstein 1953: § 71).



<sup>9</sup> Appiah elsewhere also conflates OLP with both intuitionism and common-sense philosophy (2008a:73ff).

<sup>10</sup> For great examples of such studies see Knobe (2006) and Knobe & Kelly (2009). ELP practitioners such as Knobe emphasize this aspect of their work more clearly than supportive commentators such as Appiah, but this is not to say that there are no remaining tensions (cf. Knobe 2007, discussed further below).

<sup>11</sup> Thanks to David Dolby for reminding me of this. Whether or not full mastery of any given term requires the ability offer an exhaustive definition is not at issue here, for ‘knowing how to use a term’ is ‘a loose expression’ that ‘does not require knowing all the uses...To know how to use a term in general would have to be explained as knowing how to use it in many, or most, or common situations’ (Henle 1957: 218-9).

<sup>12</sup> Many thanks to the referees for putting this point across so persuasively.

<sup>13</sup> Certainly sentences may acquire new meanings if sufficient people consistently use (or misuse) them in a new way for an extended period of time, and eventually lose their old meaning if people altogether cease to use them as they once were used. But the majority of speakers can misuse a term or expression (e.g. ‘bespoke’ or ‘beg the question’) for a considerable period of time before it becomes true that the conventional meaning of the expression has changed. Such changes don’t miraculously occur as soon as a 50% threshold is reached. To suggest otherwise is to overstate the connection between expression meaning and speaker use. While it may be true that that for a word to have a meaning is for it to have a use (i.e. function), and that to possess full knowledge of the one is to possess full knowledge of the other, it does not follow that meaning *is* use, nor even that constancy in meaning must always by constancy use (cf. Rundle 1978: 283-9). Once the meaning of an expression has changed, its old meaning is arguably not lost; only the *expression* of it is. The distinction between ‘refute’ and ‘deny’, for example, might still exist even if the terms are rarely, if ever, used to make it. Conventional meanings are inextricably tied up with human practice, past as well as present (with no fixed barriers between the two).

<sup>14</sup> Levy (nd) defends the following, alternative account of what armchair philosophers mean by ‘we’ (opposed to both ELP and OLP): ‘By “we” I mean the geographically and temporally extended philosophical community, engaged in an open-ended debate. Everyone is invited to participate in this debate, but the price of entry is hard work: only when you expose your intuitions to the best arguments and the full range of relevant cases will they count as (defeasible) evidence for and against philosophical theories’. Levy (2009) believes that ‘the choices facing philosophy, in the wake of the experimental philosophy movement, are these: give up reliance on intuition to the extent to which this is possible (either generally or with regard to those areas in which the experiments suggest that intuition-mongering is ethno-psychology, or otherwise suspect) or rebut the experimentalist attack on intuitionism’ and follows the second route’. This essay, by contrast, suggests that – at least as far as OLP is concerned – the dilemma which ELP presents us with is a false one.

<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein (1953: §§ 140). For the view that Wittgenstein’s descriptions have a prescriptive purpose absent from OLP see Hutto (2003: 192ff.)

<sup>16</sup> Again, this is not to say that the OED provides infallible, but the possibility of mistakes does not justify scepticism cf. Hanfling (2000: chs. 11 & 12, esp. 237ff).

<sup>17</sup> E.g. *A Treatise on Human Nature*, I.3.14 & I.4.2 and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (EHU), VIII, Parts I & II.

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<sup>18</sup> EHU, VII, Part II, 77, fn. 1

<sup>19</sup> Austin 1962: 2.

<sup>20</sup> For extremely helpful comments and suggestions I would like to thank David Dolby, Joshua Knobe, John Shand, the journal and issue editors, and two anonymous referees.