

Frank Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics: A Defense of Conceptual Analysis*, Oxford/Clarendon, 1998, 174pp., ISBN 0198250614.

Reviewed by Andrew M. Bailey, University of Notre Dame.

Conceptual analysis is an easy target for criticism. It seems too mysteriously *a priori* and unscientific to have a place in our world. But this is misguided, Jackson says, for conceptual analysis is in fact indispensable to the philosophical project. This collection of Frank Jackson's 1995 John Locke lectures defends this thesis and further explores the metaphysics of mind, color, and ethics.

Chapter One is a discussion of the relation between supervenience, physicalism, and conceptual analysis. Serious metaphysicians seek an account of what there is and what it is like. This account is more than a long list of the things there are and their properties; it discriminates carefully (having the distribution of individual heights, for example, such an account can dispense with tallness). Some things thus forego explicit mention in the list. And this is the "location problem." For if the list discriminates, how can it still maintain completeness? *Where* in our account is there room for those things not explicitly quantified over by our most serious metaphysicians?

Jackson's answer is the "entry by entailment thesis:" something's being *entailed* by an account suffices for its being *included* in the account. The physicalist, for example, will not make mention of anything but fundamental particles and forces in her final account of the world. This does not eliminate the psychological from her account though, for it may be included in virtue of entailment (given a sufficiently strong supervenience thesis, say). Reduction without elimination.

It's widely held, of course, that physicalists are committed to the supervenience of the mental on the physical. In this chapter, Jackson interestingly claims that that physicalism can be *defined* in terms of such supervenience. His discussion of the viability of this strategy is worth reading, and one highlight of the book.

Chapter Two discusses the bearing of entry by entailment on the role of conceptual analysis. After doing serious metaphysics and telling a story of the world in terms of the *J*s, we might wonder, are there *K*s? Are the *K*s nothing over and above the *J*s? Do the *J*-facts fix the *K*-facts? The answer we give to these questions must involve the meaning of "the *J*s" and "the *K*s." And this is what makes room for conceptual analysis. For it is not

just what philosophers mean that matters, but what the Js and Ks come to *according to our ordinary conceptions*; conceptual analysis in this way connects philosophy (serious metaphysics) with our ordinary conception of the real world.

According to Jackson, the best (and perhaps only) way to divine what ordinary concepts amount to is by appeal to intuitions about possible cases. This is the space Jackson carves out for the analytic philosopher to go about her business as usual—analysis through example and counterexample. At this point, Jackson anticipates a natural question: why not conduct serious and scientific polls to divine what the folk in fact believe about the application of a concept to possible cases? Jackson's answer: this is a good idea. In all this, he is careful to keep conceptual analysis modest. Though it has a role in ensuring that our serious metaphysics has not changed the subject away from the things we ordinarily care about, it does not infallibly reveal the fundamental nature of our world.

In Chapter Three, Jackson secures the place of conceptual analysis by arguing that conceptual and metaphysical possibility are the same. In establishing the entry by *conceptual* entailment of some thing, then, one establishes its entry *simpliciter*.

Jackson thinks that many propositions have two senses; A (actual) and C (counterfactual). *A priori*, we know the watery stuff actually found in lakes is water (an A-proposition). But "water" rigidly designates H₂O (a C-proposition); this we know *a posteriori*. The C-proposition stating the truth conditions of the A-proposition is thus *a posteriori*. A-propositions set the context for reasoning with C-propositions, and this leads *a priori* to interesting conclusions. To borrow Jackson's pet example:

- (1) H₂O covers most of the earth.
- (3) Therefore, water covers most of the earth.

We are not free to move from (1) to (3). But add this premise to the mix:

- (2) H₂O is the watery stuff of our acquaintance.

(1) and (2) imply (3), and they imply it *a priori*, since we know *a priori* that water is the watery stuff of our acquaintance. There is thus a conceptual entailment between "the H₂O way the world is" and "the water way the world is." All of is supposed to illustrates the in principle conceptual and *a priori*

deducibility of everything from a serious metaphysic. On physicalism, for example, all facts are *a priori* deducible from the physical facts.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six are an exercise in application, solving the location problems for color and ethics. Jackson favors the primary quality view of color, but does not offer much new material in its defense. Luckily, his discussion of how the ethical gets a place in a descriptive picture of the world is more instructive.

Jackson is an ethical cognitivist; ethical sentences in general are eligible for ascriptions of truth and falsity (vagueness issues do generate exceptions). And this cognitivism motivates his descriptivism about ethics. Since ethical properties globally supervene on descriptive properties, there is a disjunction of descriptive properties logically equivalent to each ethical property. Indeed, this motivates Jackson's stronger thesis: that there is some descriptive property *identical to* each ethical property. He distinguishes his view from Cornell realism, however, since an analysis of ethical predicates in descriptive terms is in principle possible.

Given sufficient reflection and revision, a complete statement of folk morality is in principle accessible ("mature folk morality"). With this insight comes an in principle functionalization (reduction) strategy. Ethical properties play particular roles, and a complete statement of mature folk morality can be rewritten as a Ramsey sentence stating the role of ethical properties in purely descriptive terms. This is Jackson's moral functionalism.

Moore's open question argument looms in the background, and Jackson has an answer. Even after considering a lengthy descriptive account of an act, we may still think it is an open question whether that act is *right*. Jackson claims that this openness is a product of folk morality's still being under investigation; as such, it is not a reason to reject descriptivism. Jackson expresses faith that folk morality will firm up after sufficient debate and critical reflection; when this happens, we will have a sufficient semantics of moral terms to dismiss the open question.

The open question has a Humean form; to take an ethical stance with respect to a state of affairs is to have a "directed belief" about that state of affairs. And descriptions alone do not account for the relevant directionality. In response, Jackson wields his moral functionalism. While no descriptive beliefs necessitate a desire in their holder, to believe that something satisfies the "rightness role" *just is* to believe that it is *rational to desire*, and this suffices for a question-closing directionality. The ethical can still be located in the descriptive.

In a book this short, it's easy to find shortcomings. One wonders whether Jackson's confidence in conceptual analysis could get any traction in the face of so-called "experimental philosophy." Suppose empirical work shows that the folk radically disagree about the application of a concept to cases (and it seems that it has); is there still a fact of the matter about what is entailed by a proposition employing the concept? Worries in this neighborhood make trouble for Jackson.

But the arguments do reward reflection. This is an interesting and provocative book. As expected, the writing has an Australian tone to it. One can, for example, detect the waft of Lewisian influence in every chapter. In spirit and in letter, this is the product of a Canberra Planner. Jackson sketches key structural elements of his systematic picture of the world and philosophy's place in it. His is a picture with room for reduction *sans* elimination, and a picture with room for conceptual analysis.

As far as pictures go, it's one worth looking at.