

ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHY: THE FORMATION OF THE CONCEPT, THE BASIC PRINCIPLES, AND THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE METHOD

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Abstract:

This study aims to provide a systematic analytic examination of analytic philosophy by tracing the formation of its concept, identifying its foundational principles, and analyzing the methodological transformations it has undergone across its historical development. The study addresses a central problem arising from the persistent ambiguity surrounding the concept of analytic philosophy and the plurality of its definitions, which has led to recurrent conflation between analytic philosophy as a philosophical direction and some of its historical strands or partial extensions. This situation calls for an analytic treatment capable of clarifying the concept and uncovering its methodological structure.

The study adopts the analytic philosophical method, grounded in conceptual analysis, examination of the logical and linguistic structure of arguments, and the historical tracing of methodological transformations. The analysis demonstrates that analytic philosophy did not emerge as a unified philosophical doctrine, but rather gradually took shape as a methodological philosophical project, closely associated with critiques of idealist philosophies and with decisive developments in logic and the philosophy of language. This project was shaped through the contributions of major figures, most notably Frege, Moore, Russell, and Wittgenstein.

The study further identifies a set of foundational principles that constitute the common core of the diverse strands of analytic philosophy, including conceptual analysis, logical rigor, the centrality of language, the rejection of unregulated metaphysical obscurity, and the conception of philosophy as an activity rather than a doctrinal system. It also shows that the methodological transformations of analytic philosophy—from the logical analysis of ideal language to the analysis of ordinary language and subsequently to more diverse contemporary approaches—represent transformations within a single analytic framework rather than breaks from its foundational principles.

The study concludes that analytic philosophy should be understood as a philosophically resilient and methodologically flexible project whose continuity lies in its analytic orientation, and that such an understanding provides a clearer and more accurate account of its nature and role in contemporary philosophical thought.

Keywords: Analysis; Analytic philosophy; Conceptual Framework; philosophical method; philosophy of language; logical analysis.

1. Introduction

Analytic philosophy is widely regarded as one of the most prominent philosophical orientations in contemporary thought, as it brought about a qualitative shift in philosophical practice—from ideological constructions and comprehensive speculative systems to the precise analysis of concepts, language, and the structure of arguments. Analytic philosophy emerged within a critical context directed against dominant idealist philosophies, and it was significantly influenced by developments in mathematical logic and the philosophy of language in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Beaney, 2013; Rorty, 1984). Over time, it gradually crystallized as a philosophical project characterized by precision, clarity, and analytic rigor.

However, analytic philosophy did not take shape as a unified philosophical doctrine defined by a fixed set of theses. Rather, it passed through multiple stages that contributed to the formation of its concept and to the diversity of views among its leading figures regarding the nature and function of philosophy. It also underwent significant methodological transformations, moving from the logical analysis of ideal language to the analysis of ordinary language, and later to more diversified contemporary approaches. Despite this internal

diversity, analytic philosophy has retained a set of foundational principles that constitute a shared methodological core across its various strands (Hacker, 2011; Tümkaya, 2020).

Accordingly, this study seeks to trace the formation of the concept of analytic philosophy, to identify its foundational principles, and to analyze the methodological transformations it has undergone throughout its historical development. Through an examination of the contributions of its major figures, the study aims to highlight the methodological character that has enabled analytic philosophy to maintain continuity and adaptability over time.

The focus on methodological transformation is not merely descriptive but aims to clarify how analytic philosophy developed its analytical tools across different stages while preserving its methodological identity. Accordingly, method in this study is treated not only as an instrument of inquiry, but as a core philosophical variable that contributes to understanding the continuity and adaptability of analytic philosophy.

2. Research Problem

Despite the prominent presence of analytic philosophy in contemporary philosophical literature, its concept remains contested with respect to its nature and boundaries. Scholarly perspectives diverge as to whether analytic philosophy should be understood as a distinct philosophical school, a historical movement, or a methodological approach with multiple applications. This divergence has generated a number of conceptual difficulties, most notably the conflation between the main analytic tradition that emerged through the work of G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, and other philosophical currents such as logical positivism, as well as the broader use of analytic methods within non-analytic philosophical traditions (Hacker, 2011; Cozzo, 2024).

Further difficulties arise from the tendency to conflate the foundational principles of analytic philosophy with particular historical applications of those principles, and from the challenge of distinguishing genuine methodological transformations from changes that affect only specific analytic programs. Consequently, the research problem addressed in this study centers on the need for an analytic clarification of how the concept of analytic philosophy was formed, what foundational principles underlie it, and how its methodology evolved across different historical stages without compromising its analytic identity (Beaney, 2013; Tümkaya, 2020).

3. Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study is as follows:

How was the concept of analytic philosophy formed, what foundational principles does it rest upon, and what are the major methodological transformations it has undergone historically?

This central question is addressed through the following sub-questions:

1. What is meant by analytic philosophy as a philosophical concept?
2. What are the foundational principles that characterize analytic philosophy?
3. How did the methodological approach of analytic philosophy transform across its historical stages while maintaining its analytic identity?

Within these questions, the study is delimited philosophically to analytic philosophy in its classical and contemporary extensions as articulated by its early figures—G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein in both his early and later phases. The study is thematically confined to examining the formation of the concept of analytic philosophy, identifying the principal figures who shaped its intellectual trajectory, specifying its shared foundational principles, and analyzing its methodological transformations, without extending to detailed applications, specialized subfields, or applied philosophical domains

4. Research Gap

The research gap addressed by this study lies in the absence of an integrated analysis that brings together three interrelated dimensions: the formation of the concept of analytic philosophy, the identification of its shared foundational principles, and the analysis of its methodological transformations across historical stages. Much of the existing literature either focuses on the historical narration of analytic philosophy and its figures without offering a systematic analysis of the principles that unite them, or examines specific principles in isolation from their historical development, or discusses methodological transformations without relating them to the formation of the concept itself.

This study seeks to bridge this gap by offering a comprehensive analytic account that presents analytic philosophy as a philosophical project that was conceptually formed, grounded in identifiable methodological principles, and transformed in its tools and approaches without losing its analytic core.

5. Research Methodology

This study adopts the analytic philosophical method as the approach most consistent with the nature of its subject matter and objectives. This method is grounded in conceptual analysis, the examination of logical and linguistic structures, the reconstruction of philosophical arguments, and the identification of underlying assumptions (Moore, 1903; Russell, 1905; Hacker, 2011).

Methodologically, the study proceeds on several interrelated levels:

- (1) **conceptual analysis**, to clarify the meaning and formation of analytic philosophy as a concept.
- (2) **historical–analytic analysis**, to trace its emergence and development without reducing the inquiry to descriptive historiography.
- (3) **analysis of foundational methodological principles**, to distinguish core commitments from their particular historical applications.
- (4) **internal methodological comparison** among key analytic figures, to identify continuity and transformation within the analytic tradition (Beaney, 2013; Tümkaya, 2020).

The study remains strictly theoretical and philosophical in scope and does not employ empirical or experimental methods.

6. Section One: The Formation of the Concept of Analytic Philosophy

Section Introduction:

A precise understanding of the concept of analytic philosophy cannot be achieved independently of tracing the historical and methodological process through which this concept was formed. Analytic philosophy did not emerge suddenly, nor was it articulated from the outset as a unified doctrine with a fixed definition. Rather, it gradually took shape through successive intellectual and methodological developments that were closely connected to specific critical contexts and to the contributions of philosophers with differing orientations (Beaney, 2013; Tümkaya, 2020).

Accordingly, approaching analytic philosophy requires moving beyond reductive definitions and viewing it as a philosophical project that emerged through the interaction between logical critique, linguistic analysis, and a reconsideration of the function of philosophy itself (Hacker, 2011). On this basis, this section aims to trace the formation of the concept of analytic philosophy by examining the intellectual context of its emergence, analyzing the problem of defining it, and clarifying how its concept crystallized through the contributions of its early figures.

6.1 The Intellectual Context of the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy

Analytic philosophy emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within a critical intellectual context directed against the idealist philosophies that dominated European thought, particularly British Hegelianism. This context was marked by dissatisfaction with philosophical approaches characterized by speculative reasoning, obscure language, and comprehensive systematic constructions that resisted conceptual scrutiny (Rorty, 1984).

By contrast, this period witnessed decisive developments in mathematical logic, most notably in the work of Gottlob Frege, who introduced a new formal logical framework that transcended traditional Aristotelian logic. Frege's innovations fundamentally reshaped prevailing conceptions of the relationship between language, thought, and meaning, thereby opening new possibilities for philosophical analysis grounded in precision and formal clarity (Frege, 1879/1980; Frege, 1892/1997).

These developments, together with broader advances in mathematics and the natural sciences, reinforced demands for rigor and exactness in philosophical inquiry. Within this context, a new philosophical orientation began to take shape—one grounded in the conviction that many traditional philosophical problems arise not from the structure of reality itself, but from misunderstandings of language or from conceptual confusion (Russell, 1905; Beaney, 2013). This conviction formed the intellectual background against which analytic philosophy initially developed.

6.2 The Problem of Defining Analytic Philosophy

One of the most persistent issues in the literature on analytic philosophy concerns the difficulty of providing a precise and universally accepted definition of the term. There is no single definition that commands general agreement among scholars, a fact that reflects the distinctive nature of analytic philosophy itself. Rather than crystallizing as a unified philosophical school with a fixed set of doctrines, analytic philosophy emerged as a philosophical orientation whose methods and concerns have varied across historical stages (Cozzo, 2024).

Some philosophers have described analytic philosophy as a philosophical school characterized by shared methodological features, while others have understood it as a historical movement that arose under particular intellectual conditions and subsequently diversified. A third perspective—adopted in this study—regards analytic philosophy primarily as a methodological project distinguished by its emphasis on conceptual analysis, logical clarity, and the critical examination of language (Hacker, 2011; Tümkaya, 2020).

This plurality of perspectives has contributed to recurring conceptual confusions, particularly the tendency to conflate analytic philosophy as a general orientation with specific historical movements associated with it, such as logical positivism, or with the broader use of analytic techniques within non-analytic philosophical traditions. Consequently, the difficulty lies not in the absence of definitions, but in attempts to impose a rigid and uniform definition on a philosophical project whose identity is inseparable from its evolving practice (Beaney, 2013; Cozzo, 2024).

6.3 The Formation of the Concept of Analytic Philosophy in the Work of Its Early Figures

6.3.1 Gottlob Frege and the Foundations of Logical Analysis

Gottlob Frege represents a decisive starting point in the formation of analytic philosophy through his foundational contributions to modern logic and his analysis of linguistic structure. His distinction between sense and reference, together with his formulation of the context principle, redirected philosophical attention toward language as the primary medium through which thought and knowledge are articulated and clarified (Frege, 1892/1997).

Although Frege did not explicitly present his work as part of a distinct philosophical movement, his logical innovations provided the conceptual and methodological tools that later became central to analytic philosophy. In this respect, Frege's work laid the groundwork for a conception of philosophy that prioritizes analysis over speculative system-building (Beaney, 1998; Beaney, 2013).

6.3.2 G. E. Moore and Conceptual Analysis

G. E. Moore made a central contribution to the consolidation of analytic philosophy through his rigorous critique of idealism and his insistence on conceptual clarity. Moore argued that many philosophical problems arise from confusion about the meanings of concepts rather than from substantive disagreements about facts. His method of conceptual analysis, particularly in ethics and epistemology, exemplified the analytic commitment to precision and clarity (Moore, 1903).

Moore's appeal to common sense as a philosophical starting point further reinforced the view that philosophical progress depends on the clarification of ordinary concepts rather than on the construction of abstract metaphysical systems (Moore, 1925). In this way, Moore helped establish conceptual analysis as a defining methodological feature of analytic philosophy (Beaney, 2013).

6.3.3 Bertrand Russell and the Logical Analysis of Language

Bertrand Russell played a decisive role in shaping analytic philosophy by integrating philosophy with mathematical logic and by developing a systematic program of logical analysis. His theory of descriptions illustrates the analytic conviction that many philosophical puzzles arise from the misleading grammatical form of language rather than from genuine metaphysical complexity (Russell, 1905).

Russell maintained that the primary task of philosophy is to analyze complex propositions and reduce them to their simplest components, thereby revealing their underlying logical structure. This approach reinforced the view that philosophical inquiry should be guided by logical rigor and analytical precision (Russell, 1918/1956).

6.3.4 Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Transformation of the Analytic Project

Ludwig Wittgenstein occupies a pivotal position in the formation of analytic philosophy due to the two distinct phases of his philosophical development. In his early work, Wittgenstein conceived philosophy as an activity aimed at clarifying propositions by uncovering their logical form, thereby delineating the limits of meaningful discourse (Wittgenstein, 1921/1961).

In his later philosophy, however, Wittgenstein reconceptualized analysis as an investigation of the ordinary uses of language within concrete contexts of human practice. He argued that philosophical problems arise when language is taken out of its everyday settings and that philosophy's task is to dissolve such problems by restoring words to their ordinary use (Wittgenstein, 1953/2009). This shift represents a transformation in analytic method rather than a rejection of the analytic project itself (Hacker, 2011).

Section Conclusion

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that the concept of analytic philosophy did not emerge as a fixed definition or a unified doctrine. Instead, it took shape through a complex historical and methodological process involving philosophers with diverse orientations. What unites these figures is not a shared set of substantive doctrines, but a common commitment to analysis, clarity, and the critical examination of language and concepts. This gradual formation of the concept of analytic philosophy laid the foundation for the identification of its foundational principles and for the methodological transformations examined in the subsequent sections (Beaney, 2013; Tümkaya, 2020).

7. Section Two: The Foundational Principles of Analytic Philosophy

Section Introduction:

Following the analysis of how the concept of analytic philosophy was formed, it becomes methodologically necessary to identify the foundational principles upon which this philosophical orientation is grounded. These principles constitute the shared methodological core that unites the diverse strands of analytic philosophy despite their historical diversity and differences in emphasis. By “foundational principles,” this study does not refer to a fixed set of substantive doctrines, but rather to methodological commitments that guide philosophical inquiry and shape the manner in which philosophical problems are approached and addressed (Beaney, 2013; Hacker, 2011).

Distinguishing these principles from their historical applications is essential, as much of the conceptual confusion surrounding analytic philosophy arises from attributing the features of particular movements—most notably logical positivism—to analytic philosophy as a whole. A careful analytic approach reveals that the foundational principles of analytic philosophy are broader and more enduring than any of its specific historical manifestations (Tümekaya, 2020; Cozzo, 2024).

7.1 The Principle of Conceptual Analysis

Conceptual analysis represents one of the most fundamental and enduring principles of analytic philosophy. It involves the systematic clarification of philosophical concepts through their decomposition into simpler elements and the examination of the logical relations that govern their use. This principle was articulated with particular clarity in the work of G. E. Moore, who argued that many philosophical problems arise not from empirical facts but from conceptual confusion (Moore, 1903).

Moore maintained that certain basic concepts are indefinable in reductive terms and that attempts to define them result in philosophical error, a position famously expressed in his critique of ethical naturalism (Moore, 1903). This approach established conceptual analysis as a central philosophical method and significantly influenced subsequent analytic practice across various domains (Beaney, 2013).

7.2 The Principle of Logical Rigor and the Examination of Argument Structure

A further foundational principle of analytic philosophy is the commitment to logical rigor and the systematic examination of the structure of philosophical arguments. According to this principle, philosophical claims must be evaluated in terms of their logical coherence, validity, and inferential relations, rather than solely on the basis of their rhetorical or intuitive appeal.

Bertrand Russell played a decisive role in establishing this principle through his integration of philosophy and mathematical logic. His theory of descriptions illustrates how logical analysis can uncover hidden assumptions embedded in ordinary language and dissolve philosophical puzzles generated by misleading grammatical form rather than genuine metaphysical complexity (Russell, 1905). Russell’s broader program of logical analysis reinforced the view that philosophical clarity depends on revealing the underlying logical structure of propositions (Russell, 1918/1956).

7.3 The Principle of the Centrality of Language

The centrality of language constitutes a defining feature of analytic philosophy, although analytic philosophers have differed in their understanding of how language should be analyzed. Early analytic philosophers such as Frege, Russell, and the early Wittgenstein regarded language primarily as a logical medium whose structure reflects the structure of reality (Frege, 1892/1997; Wittgenstein, 1921/1961).

In contrast, later developments—most notably in the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein—shifted attention toward the ordinary use of language in everyday contexts. On this view, meaning is grounded in use rather than in abstract logical form, and philosophical problems arise when language is taken out of its ordinary contexts (Wittgenstein, 1953/2009). Despite this shift, language remained the central object of philosophical analysis, indicating continuity rather than rupture within the analytic tradition (Hacker, 2011).

7.4 The Principle of Rejecting Unregulated Metaphysical Obscurity

Analytic philosophy is characterized by a critical stance toward metaphysical speculation that lacks conceptual clarity or methodological discipline. From its earliest stages, analytic philosophers sought to challenge forms of metaphysical discourse characterized by vague terminology, ambiguous claims, and insufficient argumentative support (Moore, 1925; Russell, 1918/1956).

This principle does not entail a wholesale rejection of metaphysics. Rather, analytic philosophers have insisted that metaphysical claims must be articulated in clear concepts and subjected to rigorous logical and conceptual analysis in order to be philosophically legitimate (Hacker, 2011; Cozzo, 2024).

7.5 The Principle of Viewing Philosophy as an Activity Rather Than a Doctrine

A further foundational principle of analytic philosophy is the conception of philosophy as an activity rather than a doctrinal system. This view is most explicitly articulated in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, who argued that philosophy does not aim at constructing theories but at clarifying the use of language and dissolving conceptual confusions (Wittgenstein, 1953/2009).

Understanding philosophy as an activity helps explain both the internal diversity of analytic philosophy and its capacity for methodological renewal. Because analytic philosophy is defined by how philosophical inquiry is conducted rather than by a fixed set of substantive conclusions, it can accommodate a wide range of topics and approaches without losing its analytic identity (Beaney, 2013; Tümkaya, 2020).

Section Conclusion

The analysis presented in this section demonstrates that analytic philosophy is grounded in a set of foundational methodological principles that collectively define its distinctive character. These include conceptual analysis, logical rigor, the centrality of language, resistance to unclarified metaphysical speculation, and the view of philosophy as an activity rather than a doctrine. Together, these principles constitute the common core that unites the diverse strands of analytic philosophy and sustains its continuity across historical transformations. They also provide the framework within which subsequent methodological developments can be understood, a task undertaken in the following section.

8. Section Three: Methodological Transformations in Analytic Philosophy

Section Introduction

Understanding analytic philosophy requires not only identifying its foundational principles, but also examining the methodological transformations through which it has developed. Analytic philosophy did not remain bound to a single fixed method, nor did its practitioners employ one immutable set of analytical tools. Instead, it underwent significant methodological shifts that reshaped the way philosophical problems were approached and analyzed. These transformations, however, should not be understood as ruptures with the analytic project, but rather as developments that occurred within a shared analytic framework.

Accordingly, this section examines the major methodological transformations that analytic philosophy has undergone across its historical stages, with particular attention to how

these transformations expanded analytic tools while preserving the core methodological commitments identified in the previous sections.

8.1 From Logical Analysis to the Ideal Language Program

In its early phase, analytic philosophy was closely associated with the project of logical analysis and the construction of an ideal language capable of eliminating the ambiguities of ordinary language. This orientation was shaped primarily by the work of Frege, Russell, and the early Wittgenstein, who viewed philosophical problems as arising from the failure to represent logical form accurately (Frege, 1879/1980; Russell, 1905; Wittgenstein, 1921/1961).

Within this framework, analysis aimed at decomposing complex propositions into simpler logical components and revealing their underlying structure. Russell's theory of descriptions exemplifies this approach, demonstrating how philosophical puzzles often stem from misleading grammatical form rather than genuine metaphysical complexity (Russell, 1905). The ideal language program thus represented an attempt to secure philosophical clarity through formal precision and logical rigor (Beaney, 2013).

8.2 The Turn to Ordinary Language Analysis

A major methodological transformation occurred with the shift from ideal language analysis to the analysis of ordinary language, most prominently articulated in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein and developed further by philosophers associated with the Oxford tradition. In this phase, ordinary language was no longer regarded as defective or misleading, but as the primary medium through which meaning is generated and understood (Wittgenstein, 1953/2009).

Wittgenstein argued that philosophical problems arise when language is taken out of its everyday contexts and subjected to abstract theorizing. By focusing on language as it is actually used in diverse forms of life, analytic philosophy redirected its attention toward clarifying linguistic practices rather than constructing formal systems (Hacker, 2011). This transformation broadened the scope of analytic inquiry while retaining its commitment to conceptual clarity.

8.3 Methodological Pluralism in Contemporary Analytic Philosophy

In its more recent developments, analytic philosophy has exhibited a form of methodological pluralism, characterized by the expansion of analytic methods into a wide range of philosophical domains, including philosophy of mind, epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of science. This expansion has been accompanied by the incorporation of new tools and approaches, while maintaining the core analytic emphasis on argument, clarity, and conceptual analysis (Tümekaya, 2020; Cozzo, 2024).

Contemporary analytic philosophy thus cannot be reduced to a single methodological model. Instead, it encompasses a variety of approaches that differ in emphasis and application, yet remain unified by their shared commitment to analytic standards of reasoning and justification. This pluralism reflects the adaptability of analytic philosophy as a methodological project rather than a doctrinal system (Beaney, 2013).

8.4 Continuity Through Transformation

Despite the significant methodological transformations analytic philosophy has undergone, a strong element of continuity can be identified across its historical stages. The transition from logical analysis to ordinary language analysis, and subsequently to contemporary pluralistic approaches, did not abandon the core analytic commitments but rather reinterpreted them in light of new philosophical challenges (Hacker, 2011).

This continuity is evident in the persistent focus on clarifying concepts, examining arguments, and scrutinizing the use of language. Methodological change within analytic philosophy thus reflects an evolving practice that remains anchored in its original analytic orientation, rather than a sequence of disconnected or incompatible approaches (Beaney, 2013; Tümekaya, 2020).

Section Conclusion

This section has shown that the methodological transformations of analytic philosophy—from logical analysis and the ideal language program to ordinary language analysis and contemporary pluralistic approaches—represent developments within a unified analytic framework rather than breaks from it. These transformations expanded the range of analytic tools and topics while preserving the core methodological commitments that define analytic philosophy.

Understanding analytic philosophy through the lens of methodological transformation highlights its capacity for renewal and adaptation without loss of identity. In this respect, the transformations examined in this section complete the picture of analytic philosophy as a dynamic yet coherent philosophical project, shaped by both continuity and change

9-Conclusion

This study set out to provide an integrated analytic–philosophical treatment of analytic philosophy by tracing the formation of its concept, identifying its foundational principles, and analyzing its methodological transformations across different historical stages. The study proceeded from a methodological assumption that analytic philosophy cannot be adequately understood as a closed philosophical doctrine or a school with a fixed definition. Rather, it is best understood as a philosophical project that gradually took shape, was grounded in a set of shared methodological commitments, and developed its tools without losing its analytic identity.

Within this framework, the analysis of the foundational principles of analytic philosophy clarified the common core uniting its diverse strands. It showed that conceptual analysis, logical rigor, the centrality of language, resistance to unregulated metaphysical obscurity, and the conception of philosophy as an activity rather than a doctrinal system together constitute the core of the analytic method, despite variation in applications and fields of inquiry.

Moreover, the study demonstrated—through examining methodological transformations—that the movement of analytic philosophy from the logical analysis of an ideal language to the analysis of ordinary language, and then to more diverse contemporary forms, should not be construed as a break with the analytic project. Rather, these shifts represent developments within the same methodological framework, contributing to the expansion of analytic tools and deepening analytic philosophy’s capacity to address new philosophical problems

10- Acknowledgements:

The Researchers would like to thank the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research at Qassim University for financial support (QU-APC-2025).

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