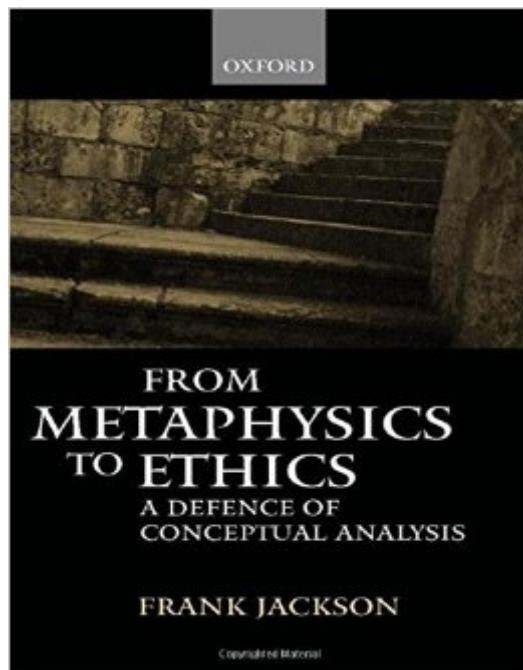


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From Metaphysics To Ethics: A Defence Of Conceptual Analysis



Synopsis

Frank Jackson champions the cause of conceptual analysis as central to philosophical inquiry. In recent years conceptual analysis has been undervalued and widely misunderstood, suggests Jackson. He argues that such analysis is mistakenly clouded in mystery, preventing a whole range of important questions from being productively addressed. He anchors his argument in discussions of specific philosophical issues, starting with the metaphysical doctrine of physicalism and moving on, via free will, meaning, personal identity, motion, and change, to ethics and the philosophy of color. In this way the book not only offers a methodological program for philosophy, but also casts new light on some much-debated problems and their interrelations.

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Customer Reviews

With this work, Frank Jackson has provided us with a much needed explication of the assumptions underlying most forms of philosophical analysis. Indeed, Jackson argues forcefully that conceptual analysis is much more prevalent in philosophical works than is admitted by many of Jackson's colleagues. One of the most important insights offered in this work is the idea that metaphysics, if done seriously, must depend strongly on folk intuitions. The intuitions about when 'the folk' would plausibly apply a certain concept reveal the 'folk theory'. The metaphysician's job is then to locate these intuitions in a coherent account of 'what there is' in the traditional sense. Consequently, Jackson offers two examples of such analysis, namely colours and ethics. Both are located in the natural world: colours as the surface properties which cause our colour experiences and ethical

properties as concealed descriptive properties. Whether you agree with these conclusions or not, the line of thought is both clear and sharp. Throughout, Jackson remains true to his general points, which are that metaphysics has to do with analysis of folk concepts as much as empirical discovery. This inevitably leads to considerations on Kripke and Putnam and the nature of so-called 'a posteriori necessities'. Jackson argues that the fallacious intuition that such exist stems from the fact that a single sentence may express different propositions, depending on its intension. Thus 'water is H₂O' may express the necessary (and a priori) truth that 'what is actually water is H₂O' or it may express the contingent (and a posteriori) proposition that 'the watery stuff of our acquaintance is H₂O'. This is a profound insight, which solves many sceptical worries instigated by the Quinean movement. The distinctions a priori/a posteriori and contingent/necessary may now be employed with a clear conscience; something which has been difficult ever since Quine's Two Dogmas first appeared half a century ago. Not all will agree with Jackson's line of argument but the clarity of his claims and significance of their implications make this book a great asset for anyone interested in metaphysics and the philosophy of language.

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