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| **Meeting title:** Conceptual Analysis and Scientific Explanation |
| **Date:** 9.10.2025. |
| **Time:** 18.00 |
| **Place:** Zoom platform |
| **Zoom link:**  Filozofija Doktorski is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.  Join Zoom Meeting  <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84471411636?pwd=0FItHdFJI0nGmu2eQsAmaFwlDiNLyP.1>    Meeting ID: 844 7141 1636  Passcode: Us4bLL |
| **Duration:** 1 hour and 40 minutes |
| **Participants:** Boran Berčić, Vito Balorda, Justin Weinberg, Filip Grgić |
| **Agenda:**   1. Boran Berčić and Vito Balorda delivered the talk “Conceptual Analysis and Scientific Explanation” 2. Discussion, questions and comments |
| **Meeting summary:**  On Thursday 9.10..2025. the MetPhil project team organized the eleventh workshop in the series. The topic of this workshop was a talk given by Boran Berčić and Vito Balorda titled “Conceptual Analysis and Scientific Explanation”. In the first part of the workshop Berčić and Balorda delivered their talk in which they claim that, while there is some conceptual analysis present in philosophy, ultimately philosophy is not only about conceptual analysis but about building models and theories. The second part of the talk was dedicated to a Q&A session where the audience presented their questions and comments to the authors. |
| **Talk summary:**  In this workshop Berčić and Balorda gave an answer to the question “Is philosophy conceptual analysis?”. First they offered a brief historical overview regarding several authors who would answer this question in a positive manner. Leibniz believed that in the mind of God all truths are analytic: all predicates are contained in their subjects. If he was right then conceptual analysis would constitute the universal method by which we would arrive at philosophical truths. Schlick claimed that while science is concerned with the truth of statements, philosophy deals with their meaning; “philosophy is that activity through which the meaning of statements is revealed or determined” (Schlick, *The Turning Point in Philosophy*, 1930, 56). Ayer claimed that the propositions of philosophy are not factual but rather express definitions. Therefore the primary role of the philosopher is that of an analyst who concerns himself with the way in which we speak about the various properties of the world. Jackson thinks we need conceptual analysis for the overall project of reductionism. When doing conceptual analysis we are trying to make explicit what is covered by some term in our language. A prominent critic of the method of conceptual analysis is Williamson. He thinks that the dictionary definition model of conceptual analysis fails in the face of everyday usage of concepts of philosophical interest by competent speakers who are not able to give necessary and sufficient conditions for concepts such as “causation”, “knowledge”, “free” and so on. Devitt and Sterelny have another interpretation for the kind of activity that philosopher do that usually goes under the heading of conceptual analysis. What philosophers are really doing is the following: “they are constructing empirical theories about the nature of kinds on the basis of empirical judgments about instances and non-instances of the kind” (Devitt, Sterelny, *Language and Reality*, 286).  At this point Berčić and Balorda distinguish conceptual truths about *x* and theories about *x*. Conceptual truths about *x* are contained in the concept of *x*, or derived from the concept of *x*. Theories about *x* are not contained in the concept of *x*. At the same time, an a priori analysis of *x* need not be a conceptual analysis about *x*. And now they pose the following question: Is the debate about scientific explanation an instance of conceptual analysis? Or rather, is it a result of conceptual analysis? The authors conclude that the discussion about scientific explanation is not conceptual analysis. Rather than in conceptual truths, they result in models or theories.  Berčić and Balorda conclude their talk by claiming that although philosophy in general contains important elements of conceptual analysis it’s primary concern is building true models and theories about the human mind, linguistic meaning, just society etc.  Questions and Comments  **Grgić**   * If philosophy is theory or model building, why do we then need conceptual analysis? * Why would we need theories or models to answer some philosophical questions? It looks like the claim maybe a little bit too strong.   **Weinberg**   * He is not sure that the examples of Plato and Socrates give support to the idea that philosophy is conceptual analysis, since so many of the dialogues end in *aporia*. * Can’t we take the causal theory of knowledge to be explicative of what epistemic justification is, instead of understanding it in an ampliative way? Whether or not we conceive of a content as ampliative or explicative depends on the framing? * Do authors take introspection to be an empirical or a priori notion? * It seems to him that the authors are committed to the idea that some forms of introspection are a priori, while others are empirical. It looks like they have to draw the distinction in a non ad hoc way. * It seems right that philosophy is not only conceptual analysis. But it also seems right that it’s not only theory and model building either. It looks like philosophy is sometimes even just raising a question. How do the authors respond to that? * It looks like a counterexample in mathematics counts as a big breakthrough in mathematical research. He suggests that the same can hold for philosophy and that the authors should hold a more pluralistic view regarding what they count as philosophy. * Maybe the author should distinguish the aim and activity of philosophy. |
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