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CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING, FOLK COMMITMENTS, AND REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM**

Abstract

While conceptual engineering aims to revise or improve known concepts, it faces the problem of avoiding changing the subject, known as the discontinuity challenge. Although there are three versions of the discontinuity challenge, this paper focuses on addressing the continuity between folk commitments and philosophers' concepts. One prevailing solution considered is appealing to the concept's proper function. This approach uses the concept's function, a theoretical notion, to solve the discontinuity challenge. However, the functional plan faces the problem of indeterminacy, namely that philosophers can never reach a consensus on a concept's function. In contrast, this paper proposes a solution based on Lycanian reflective equilibrium. The notion of "folk commitments" in Lycanian reflective equilibrium is too narrow. To address this shortcoming, this paper provides a revised Lycanian reflective equilibrium based on a richer notion of "folk commitments" that includes case intuitions, common sense, and ordinary language usage.

Keywords: conceptual engineering, folk commitment, function, reflective equilibrium

1. THE DISCONTINUITY CHALLENGE

Conceptual engineering is a metaphilosophical project aimed at revising or improving known concepts, providing new concepts, or fully rejecting defective ones.

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Despite the various forms of conceptual engineering, all assume that philosophers are responsible for providing better post-engineering concepts by revising or improving the original ones. Thus, conceptual engineers face the discontinuity challenge: how to discuss the same concept coherently after modification. When a conceptual engineer improves concept x and creates post-engineering concept x_1, how can they ensure that x_1 and x are still related to the same subject? For instance, philosophers such as Plato, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Tarski, and Bernard Williams, though from diverse backgrounds, all discuss the concept of "truth." But do they truly mean the same thing? Strawson first examined the discontinuity challenge in 1963. This challenge originates from the Strawson–Carnap debate over the method of explication, as described by Carnap (1950, 1963), which involves replacing ordinary concepts (*explicanda*) with scientific/formal concepts (*explicata*). Michael Prinzing generalizes this worry as follows:

> The thought is that a change in concept means a change in subject. A change in subject means that anything we think or say will be beside the point. We won't be able to answer the questions that initially motivated our inquiry. We won't be able to communicate successfully with anyone using the pre-engineering concepts. In short, CE results in discontinuity of subject, thought, inquiry and/or communication. (Prinzing 2018: 856)

This description highlights two negative consequences of discontinuity. The first is that the post-engineering concept cannot answer the original question and thus changes the subject. For instance, the post-engineering concept of death, defined in biological terms, might not suffice to address a philosophical question such as, "Can death affect us?" The second concern is that without continuity the conversation between users of the pre-engineering concept and those of the post-engineering concept would be undermined. This could lead to numerous misunderstandings. This concern can be broken down into more specific issues, such as verbal disputes arising when different parties use the same term with different meanings. Once new concepts are introduced it becomes impossible to describe or assess assertions using the old concepts (Cappelen 2018).

Numerous studies have addressed the discontinuity challenge (Cappelen 2018, Prinzing 2018, Belleri 2021, Knoll 2020, Sundell 2020, Kitsik 2020, Haslanger 2020, Koch 2023, Nado 2021a, Pinder 2021, Sawyer 2018). However, before addressing the discontinuity challenge, this paper will distinguish its three versions. Although it may seem that all current discussions address the same discontinuity

challenge, they actually tackle different sub-questions. The difference lies in the discontinuity between the pre-engineering and post-engineering concepts of whom. There are three versions:

1. Discontinuity challenge 1: Between philosophers' post-engineering concepts and laypeople's pre-engineering concepts.
2. Discontinuity challenge 2: Between philosopher B's post-engineering concepts and philosopher A's pre-engineering concepts.
3. Discontinuity challenge 3: Between philosophical community B's post-engineering concepts and philosophical community A's pre-engineering concepts.

These three versions should be seen as distinct problems requiring different solutions. This study focuses on the first version, namely, the discontinuity between folk commitments and post-engineering or philosophical concepts. This will be referred to as "discontinuity challenge 1" in the following sections.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that there are two distinct meta-philosophical attitudes toward discontinuity challenge 1. There are two main approaches to philosophy: conservative and radical. The conservative approach holds that philosophical ideas should respect our current practices in everyday life. This view is endorsed by philosophers such as G. E. Moore, Wittgenstein, and the school of ordinary language philosophy. Wittgenstein noted:

> It is wrong to say that in philosophy we consider an ideal language as opposed to our ordinary one. For this makes it appear as though we thought we could improve the ordinary language. But the ordinary language is all right. (Wittgenstein 1958: 28)

In contrast, the radical approach maintains that philosophy has no responsibility to respect how ordinary people talk or think. Instead, its task is to continually introduce new ideas without regard for old ways of communication. Rorty stated that philosophy should "try to ignore the apparently futile traditional questions by substituting the following new and possibly interesting questions" (1989: 9). This metaphilosophical distinction also applies to conceptual engineering. Advocates of the conservative approach attempt to solve discontinuity challenge 1 (Prinzing 2018, Sundell 2020, Haslanger 2020, Pinder 2021), whereas proponents of the radical approach bypass this challenge by dissolving the problem (Belleri 2021, Knoll 2020, Schupbach 2017, Nado 2021a, Koch 2023).

The disagreement over the necessity of respecting ordinary practice is a metaphilosophical issue. It is highly possible that there is no way to arbitrate metaphilosophical disagreements (Double 1996, Rorty 1989, Rescher 2014). Assuming this is correct, the difference between those who provide solutions and those who dissolve the challenge is metaphilosophical and does not require a final arbitrator. The metaphilosophical stance cannot be evaluated by truth conditions; rather, it is about which metaphilosophy one prefers. Both camps have a grain of truth. However, this distinction can be viewed from both practical and theoretical perspectives. Theoretically, it is a normative issue, focusing on what should be done – adopting either the conservative or the radical view. Practically, it could be a matter of degree: a radical view supporter might still maintain some continuity with the folk view, while a conservative view supporter might offer a concept quite different from daily understanding.[1]

This paper focuses on the theoretical perspective and intends to provide a solution for discontinuity challenge 1 from the standpoint of metaphilosophical conservatism, while respecting those with radical metaphilosophical attitudes. In section 2, one prevailing solution is considered: appealing to the concept's proper function. After identifying the disadvantages of this approach, section 3 presents a more promising plan based on William Lycan's (2019) version of reflective equilibrium. Section 4 offers a revised plan to address the shortcomings of Lycan's reflective equilibrium.

2. THE FUNCTIONAL PLAN AND THE PROBLEM OF INDETERMINACY

Before addressing the functional plan, let us first consider the solution that appeals to the coarseness of topics/same-saying. As Herman Cappelen stated, "Topics are more coarse-grained than extensions and intensions, and so expressions that differ with respect to extensions and intensions can be about the same topic" (2018: 101). The rationale behind Cappelen's idea is that topics, or same-saying, are more coarse grained than semantics (extensions and intensions). Based on this, we can discuss the same thing or the same topic, even when employing the same concepts with different meanings. The reasoning is as follows:

P1. Topics are more coarse grained than semantics.

[1]Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

P2. A and B can discuss the same topic without using concepts with the same meaning.

C. It is therefore *possible* to discuss the same topic when two people employ concepts with different meanings.

While this inference is valid, the conclusion of this argument does not align with the true aim of metaphilosophical conservatism. Cappelen described the Strawsonian challenge as follows: "Conceptual engineering involves a change of topic because it involves a change of intension and extension" (Cappelen 2018: 113). Cappelen proved that, given the coarseness of topic/same-saying, it is possible that when performing conceptual engineering, the engineer might not change the topic. Metaphilosophical conservatives can accept that a change of meaning might not lead to a change of topic, but they worry that it is also possible that a change of meaning would lead to a change of topic. What Cappelen provides is a description: it is highly probable that, in most cases, a change in meaning would not necessarily lead to a change in subject. What is particularly concerning for metaphilosophical conservatives is that a change of meaning could lead to a change of subject, and we need a practical plan to preserve continuity. In short, Cappelen's plan addresses the "why" question – why the topic does not shift easily – while what is essential for metaphilosophical conservatism is the "how" question: how to preserve the topic.

A more promising solution is the functional approach, which offers a practical guide for maintaining continuity. This section of the paper now turns to the solution that appeals to the concept's proper function. The functional approach is endorsed by many conceptual engineers, such as Sally Haslanger (2020), Sigurd Jorem (2022), Jennifer Nado (2021a), Prinzing (2018), Matthieu Queloz (2022), Jared Riggs (2021), Mona Simion and Christoph Kelp (2020), and Amie Thomasson (2020). Although they are all considered "functionalists," this paper will argue that there is a metaphilosophical disagreement between different versions of functionalism. One functionalist approach can be used to solve discontinuity challenge 1, while another aims to dissolve it.

According to functionalists, appealing to concepts' functions (needs, interests, desires, projects, aims, aspirations, values, etc.) can help avoid discontinuity challenge 1. Quoting Queloz, it can create a post-engineering concept able to "tie in with our concerns as they are before the engineer's intervention" (2022: 1253). Queloz further claimed, "The functional turn can be used to formulate

success conditions for engineering projects that, duly mindful of Strawson's challenge, take care to preserve the continuity of subject" (2022: 1255). Put simply, this approach insists that preserving the target concept's proper function could preserve its topic. Here is the functionalist solution for discontinuity challenge 1: Each concept *x* has a proper function *F*; a post-engineering concept that maintains this function can preserve continuity with folk commitments.

Regarding the question of what constitutes a proper function, the proper function of the heart is to pump blood, the voltmeter is to measure voltage, and the bottle opener is to open bottles. Therefore, the proper function of *x* is what *x* is designed to do. However, such a functional design may not be conscious or intentional, and this includes explanations in evolutionary terms. Here I use the term "design function" in a broad sense, encompassing both conscious and non-conscious design. Many conceptual engineers believe that, similar to biological or artificial kinds, concepts (linguistic kinds) also possess proper functions.[2] As Prinzing put it, "The driving idea is that there are 'intentions' or 'goals' behind concepts; they have 'jobs'; they are supposed to do certain 'work'; they have a 'point,' 'purpose,' 'role,' or 'function' (2018: 867). Therefore, concepts are functional kinds.[3] To determine a concept's function, according to Prinzing, we must ask, "Why did this concept emerge in our conceptual repertoire in the first place? Why was it useful for people to have this kind of cognitive tool?" (2018: 870).

Although this plan is promising, it could be undermined from within by the functionalists. The metaphilosophical divergence between conservatives and radicals also applies to functionalists. Radical functionalists tend to challenge rather than amend conservative functionalists. Conservative functionalists believe that functions and concepts have an intrinsic relationship, and conceptual engineers could use the concept's function to avoid changing the subject. For radical functionalists, there is no enduring or intrinsic relationship between concepts and

[2]There remains an issue of whether the function of a concept is more akin to the function of natural kinds such as hearts and livers, or to artificial kinds like voltmeters and bottle openers. Some argue that language is akin to a human organ, with language development resulting from an interaction between genetic inheritance and the linguistic environment (Anderson and Lightfoot 2002). However, we must acknowledge that some concepts, such as the philosophical, are designed rather than evolved unintentionally. My general view is that the intentional perspective of a concept's function can be included within the broader understanding of human language as a human organ. I will address this issue elsewhere.

[3]Arguably, the proper functions of concepts are not limited to epistemic functions. Naturally, the proper function of many concepts, especially natural kinds, is inevitably epistemic. However, some concepts have primary functions that might be expressive or normative rather than epistemic.

functions. According to Thomasson (2020), conceptual engineering seeks to go beyond merely detecting and describing the fixed proper function of a given concept. As Nado claimed, "Functions can be rejected, traded off, split, combined, reshuffled" (2021a: 1520). In certain cases, original functions should simply be preserved, while in others one should either revise defective functions or reject them. Jorem termed this "the selection problem" (2022), further claiming that conceptual revisions "cannot be normatively constrained by insignificant functions or harmful functions" (2022: 106). According to him, not all functions are good and worth preserving; some are insignificant and some are harmful.

Given this metaphilosophical divergence, the major problem faced by conservative functionalists is what this paper calls the "problem of indeterminacy." Simply put, even if a conservative functionalist is right about the functionalist way of addressing discontinuity challenge 1, the thorny problem of how to determine the function remains. Even with a fixed function we can avoid changing the subject, but the real problem is that there is no way to determine which function is the right one given so many candidates and various opinions among philosophers. The following passages will consider three specific issues related to the "problem of indeterminacy."

Let us consider the first issue of indeterminacy between two philosophers. John believes that the concept's function is multiple, while Bob asserts that the concept's function is singular. This debate concerns whether a concept has a single exclusive function or multiple functions. Prinzing endorsed a monist view and opposed the multifunctional approach, asking, "[C]ould *concepts* be multifunctional? I suspect that, even if they can, multifunctional concepts will be somewhat rare" (2018: 873). In contrast, Nado held the opposite view: "[I]n nearly all cases there will be multiple purposes that a concept is used for, and multiple roles it plays in our cognitive lives" (2021b: 4). However, both sides have valid points, and there is no decisive argument to settle this issue. Consequently, given that the question of how many functions a concept has is not settled, we cannot use function as a criterion for topic continuity.

Now let us turn to the second issue of indeterminacy. Suppose that philosophers reach an agreement that only a concept's primary function matters in preserving the topic; that is, there is no controversy concerning the first issue of indeterminacy. Even if that is granted, the problem between the two philosophers still exists, with John opining that the primary function of the concept of knowledge is A and Bob holding that the primary function of the concept of knowledge

is B. There are real cases of this debate. For example, building on Edward Craig's work (1990), Michael Hannon (2019) argued that the primary function of the concept of knowledge is to identify reliable informants. Concerning the function of the concept of knowledge, however, there are many other candidates, such as signaling the appropriate end of inquiry, tracking epistemic norms, distinguishing blameworthy from blameless behavior, and offering assurance to others. There is an ongoing discussion of what the primary function of knowledge is (Hannon 2019), and it does not appear that the debate will close soon. This problem also applies to other concepts; namely, there will not be a consensus over the primary function of a given concept *x* among philosophers.

One may argue that by taking the multifunctional approach (one that can possess several functions) to avoid the above predicament faced by the monist approach, the post-engineering concept should fulfill at least some of these functions. According to this approach, to establish the continuity of the topic the post-engineering concept should preserve at least some of the pre-engineering concept's functions, though not necessarily its primary function. Even if multifunctionalism is correct, however, the problem remains. It is possible that John proposes the set of functions {A, B, C, D, E} while Bob proposes the set of functions {A, B, C, D, F}. The controversy would consequently undermine the functionalists' plan for continuity.

Finally, let us turn to the third controversial issue of indeterminacy, which concerns whether a pre-engineering concept has a single successor or multiple successors. Suppose that philosophers reach an agreement that each concept can have multiple functions, as well as on how many functions set a criterion for continuity. The problems may still remain, with John believing that a concept's multiple functions can be performed by several sub-concepts, while Bob opines that a concept's multiple functions should be performed by a single concept. Suppose that both John and Bob offer a revisionary plan for concept *x*. While John only provides x_1 as the resulting concept, Bob proposes x_1, x_2, and x_3, three concepts to replace the original one. They disagree on whether the post-engineering concept is one or many. As an example, Nado (2021b) proposed that several different sub-concepts could perform the various functions of the concept of knowledge. Michael Hardimon (2017) also suggested that four post-engineering concepts could replace the original concept of race. Why would this cause a problem for concept preservation? Considering personal identity theory, suppose that half of Jake's brain is placed in John and the other half is placed in

Bob. Some philosophers refuse to accept that John and Bob can be identified with Jake because it does not make sense that two divided people can be continuous within one person. Likewise, one may refuse to accept that many concepts can be continuous with one concept. For now, it does not matter which view is correct; the point is that the ongoing debates still undermine the functionalists' solution to the discontinuity challenge.

This paper does not intend to settle these debates concerning the function of concepts. However, a settled function is required to solve the discontinuity problem. Concerning the concept's function, there remains a great deal of diversity of opinion among philosophers. Contention remains on how to determine the concept's function, with ongoing issues such as whether the concept's function is single or multiple, what the exact primary function for the target concept *x* is, and whether we can substitute one concept for many sub-concepts. If those issues are unsettled, then, for functionalists, the criteria for continuity also remain unsettled.

3. LYCANIAN REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM PLAN

The functional approach is a plan devised to help conservative conceptual engineers avoid changing the subject. As argued above, the problem is that concerning a concept's function(s), there are too many opinions, making it difficult to judge whose answer is correct, which might ignite long-standing debates. To avoid the indeterminacy problem, this section proposes a new approach by appealing to reflective equilibrium, which provides a practical method to evaluate the results of conceptual engineering and thus preserve the continuity between philosophical concepts and folk commitments.[4]

The reflective equilibrium-based plan can avoid the predicament faced by the functional plan. According to the reflective equilibrium plan, the persistent debates concerning concepts' functions would not be a problem. Reflective equilibrium has been discussed by many philosophers, such as Goodman and Rawls. This paper adopts Lycan's characterization of reflective equilibrium as a solu-

[4] Brun (2022) also endorsed reflective equilibrium-based conceptual engineering. However, his primary focus was on addressing the continuity between various theorists, whereas this paper aims to use reflective equilibrium to ensure continuity between folk commitments and philosophical concepts.

tion to discontinuity challenge 1.[5] Lycan characterized reflective equilibrium as follows:

> It consists in taking our original intuitions about particular cases, formulating rules or generalizations that attempt to capture them, testing the further predictions of the proposed rules, accepting some, rejecting others, revising the rules, and – most importantly – abandoning original intuitions when they stand in the way of major gains in explanatory coherence for the system as a whole. (Lycan 2019: 108)

Lycanian reflective equilibrium entails a theory of coherence. In the web of beliefs, each belief should be consistent with others. When one belief is challenged it can be justified by other beliefs. Therefore, we have sufficient motivation to respect already accepted beliefs, i.e., those that can be accepted without further justification. This paper aims to incorporate Lycanian reflective equilibrium into the process of conceptual engineering to address discontinuity challenge 1. In doing so, a conceptual engineer should follow these steps:

1. Provide an initial conceptual engineering plan for concept *x*;
2. Collect data on case intuitions regarding concept *x*;
3. Adjust the initial plan according to case intuitions regarding concept *x*;
4. Achieve a state of final equilibrium.

By following these steps, a conceptual engineer can address discontinuity challenge 1. Specifically, a conceptual engineer should test the continuity between their revised plan and folk intuitions. If case intuitions are so significant for conceptual engineering, one might wonder what the difference is between conceptual analysis and conceptual engineering, given that both must respect intuitions. For conceptual analysis, a counterexample is a fatal blow to the resulting definition. In other words, if our intuition indicates that case P could be considered a counterexample to the result of the conceptual analysis of concept *x*, then the conceptual analysis fails completely. However, case intuitions will not be regarded as a decisive argument against a conceptual engineering proposal. To preserve the continuity between folk intuitions and post-engineering concepts, one does not need to set either side as the final standard; instead, a mutual adjustment must

[5]The reason for adopting Lycan's reflective equilibrium is that it applies to the entire philosophical project, whereas Goodman's reflective equilibrium focuses on logical concepts and Rawls's reflective equilibrium on political concepts.

be made between folk intuitions and the philosopher's engineering proposals. Neither folk commitments nor philosophical concepts possess the privilege of being unrevised. When facing counterexamples, a conceptual analyst can either explain away or eliminate the intuitions. However, a conceptual engineer can, in addition to explaining away or eliminating the intuitions, fully embrace the case intuitions and thus make amendments to their initial plan. The real difference between conceptual analysis and conceptual engineering is not their attitudes towards case intuitions but rather their philosophical goals. Conceptual analysis seeks to capture universal conceptual truths, while conceptual engineering aims to improve our current conceptual tools to meet our theoretical or practical needs.[6]

While the Lycanian plan is a practical method for solving discontinuity challenge 1, it still faces two problems. First, Lycanian reflective equilibrium faces the challenge of ordinary language philosophy, i.e., case intuitions cannot represent real folk commitments. Second, the folk commitments characterized by the Lycanian plan are too narrow.

First to consider are the challenges of ordinary language philosophy. Roughly, "folk commitments" could mean folk ideas, folk intuitions, folk beliefs, or folk platitudes. In Lycanian reflective equilibrium, folk commitments refer solely to case intuitions. However, this understanding faces a challenge from ordinary language philosophy. Contemporary ordinary language philosopher Avner Baz (2017) challenged the idea of explaining folk commitments in terms of case intuitions and argued that case intuitions cannot represent real folk commitments. According to him, case intuitions are connected with the methods of cases, which always end with a so-called "theorist's question," such as "Does Jake *really* know *p*?" Baz's concern is that the theorist's questions are in fact detached from an ordinary person's linguistic practice; he claimed that "the theorist's questions have encouraged us to forget what phenomenologists have called our 'being-in-the-world,' and in particular what is involved in positioning ourselves in the world and in relation to others by means of words" (2017: 5). According to Baz, theorists' questions generate a hypothetical context that distorts our ordinary and normal conditions for the felicitous use of our concepts. Baz uses the "lottery paradox" to illustrate his point. Suppose John claims that he knows he will not

[6] Some might argue that the boundary between conceptual analysis and conceptual engineering is not clear cut. If a conceptual analyst is willing to modify their definition over time, they are not very different from a conceptual engineer. Similarly, if a conceptual engineer continuously refines their definition to approach objective truth there is no significant difference between them and a conceptual analyst.

have enough money to go on a trip to Egypt for this summer holiday. Normally, we would accept that John's assertion about his condition is true. Under normal circumstances, John knows his own economic condition. Now suppose John has bought a lottery ticket and the lottery has not yet been drawn. If John says he knows his lottery ticket will not win, we would normally refuse to accept that he knows it, for no one can know the result in advance of a lottery drawing. Therefore, John does not really know that he cannot afford to go on a trip to Egypt for this summer holiday, given that he might win the lottery. There is a tension between our ordinary use of "know" and the fact that we cannot know the result of the lottery in advance. Baz pointed out, however, that John's claim "I know that I will not have enough money to go on a trip to Egypt this year" is not a natural and intelligible way of using ordinary language. According to Baz, the tension can easily be dissolved if we notice that the lottery puzzle is "generated not by ordinary and normal discourse itself, but rather by a theoretical construction that is forced onto it from the outside" (Baz 2017: 20). What John really means is not "know" in a strict philosophical sense (such as a justified true belief) but rather that he is "inclined to accept" as true that "he will not have enough money to go on a trip to Egypt this year." The real tension is therefore not between the normal ordinary use of "know" and the fact of our incapacity to know the result of a lottery in advance, but between a specific philosophical use of "know" and an apparent fact. Setting Baz's detailed argument aside, the point is that the method of cases involves a specific philosophical application of concepts that is detached from our ordinary use.[7]

Baz is correct that some philosophically designed cases might not properly represent real folk commitments in terms of our ordinary use of language. However, Baz's argument is too sweeping; not all case intuitions are useless for philosophy. For Baz, the concern is that if a philosophical concept is of interest only to philosophers, then the cases designed to test such concepts cannot elicit real folk commitments from our ordinary use of language. A well-designed case can still be used to test normal folk ways of using language. Even accepting Baz's argument, it is still possible that a well-designed case can be used to test normal folk ways of

[7]Rescher (2005) expressed a similar view, arguing that case intuitions might not be considered common sense because philosophers' thought experiments are often too outlandish. As he says, "And this pushes common sense to the forefront. For, their factual basis in a standardistic gearing to the ordinary course of things in human experience accordingly has the great advantage of immunizing our philosophical theses and theories against the far-fetched hypotheses and bizarre counter-examples so popular among recent and contemporary philosophers" (Rescher 2005: 232–233).

using language. For example, to test the theory of knowledge attribution, one may design a case like this: John and Bob both passed by Peter's office at 3:00 pm yesterday and heard his voice. Suppose that Peter is accused of murder. Bob is interrogated by the police about whether John *knew* that Peter was in his office at 3:00 pm yesterday. How should Bob reply? In this case, it is quite natural that the police would use "know" in such a situation; this application is also the philosopher's concern.

Concerning the Gettier case, we rarely care whether someone possesses justified true belief out of epistemic luck can be accounted as having knowledge. Therefore, the philosophical use of "know" in the Gettier case does not seem to appear in daily contexts. However, in the case of the policeman, it is quite felicitous that in an ordinary context the police would pose such a question concerning others' knowledge status. Therefore, the case intuition could reflect how people are inclined to use language in the policeman scenario. The lesson to draw is that to test linguistic intuition, the test case should meet several conditions: First, it should be a daily life case rather than a science-fiction style case (e.g., zombie, brain in a vat, Swampman, etc.), and second, the words used to describe the designed case should be natural and intelligible.

Moreover, the method of cases is not only used to test our ordinary linguistic intuitions; it has a broader application. Robert Nozick's experience machine case is not used to test our linguistic intuition about "well-being"; Derek Parfit's teletransportation paradox does not test folk's use of "self"; David Chalmers's zombie thought experiment is not used to test folk's use of "consciousness"; Judith Thomson's trolley case does not test folk's use of "moral." Matti Eklund (2015) distinguished between competent intuition and rational intuition. Competent intuition refers to our disposition to use certain concepts, while rational intuition refers to our judgments concerning moral or metaphysical cases. Baz's challenge is only applicable to competent intuition (more specifically, some competent intuitions). Taking a step back, even if Baz's critique is valid for all cases designed to test linguistic intuition, it is still not valid for those cases designed for other purposes, such as testing rational intuition.

As opposed to Baz, this paper argues that not all case intuitions fail to represent how we normally use words; rather, a properly described case can be used to test this. Moreover, besides linguistic intuition, case intuitions might be used to test other forms of folk commitments. Therefore, Lycanian reflective equilibrium can be immune to the challenges of ordinary language philosophy from Baz, but its

real problem is that the notion of folk commitment it incorporates is too narrow, only including case intuition. To fully address discontinuity challenge 1, adjusting between case intuitions and post-engineering concepts is not enough. Some philosophers, such as Georg Brun, argued that intuition is not even necessary for reflective equilibrium, stating that "characterizing reflective equilibrium in terms of intuitions instead of commitments or judgements is inadequate" (Brun 2014: 246). As detailed in the next section, there are other forms of folk commitments. With these concerns in mind, section 4 aims to establish a richer notion of folk commitments to revise the Lycanian reflective equilibrium plan for conceptual engineering.

4. REVISED LYCANIAN REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM PLAN

The previous section detailed that appealing to Lycanian reflective equilibrium faces a major problem: certain case intuitions cannot represent real folk commitments. Concerning this problem, I argue that even if intuitions extracted by philosophers cannot represent real folk commitments in some cases, this does not lead to the global invalidity of case intuitions. This section focuses on another problem faced by Lycanian reflective equilibrium: case intuition is insufficient for characterizing folk commitments. By addressing this problem, this section proposes a revised version of the Lycanian reflective equilibrium plan that offers a broader notion of "folk commitments."

In contrast to Lycan's original reflective equilibrium, my version holds that a full-fledged characterization of folk commitments includes three elements: case intuitions, common sense, and ordinary language usage. In the current literature, when dealing with discontinuity challenge 1, most works do not distinguish among common sense, ordinary language usage, and case intuitions. For example, Norman Malcolm defined Moore's common sense as respecting ordinary language use, stating, "Moore's philosophizing has consisted mostly in his refuting the repudiators of ordinary language" (1964: 122). Cappelen and Matthew McKeever (2022) seem to lump common sense and ordinary language together, as they identify common sense about whether eating meat is wrong with the ordinary language use of the concept of good. Timothy Williamson (2007) argued that case judgment is just ordinary judgment. Thus, common sense, ordinary language usage, and case intuitions are all lumped together in contemporary discussions.

This paper aims to clarify the differences among the three sub-contents of folk commitments: case intuition, common sense, and ordinary language usage.

Case intuition has already been considered. Philosophers have used imaginary scenarios to test their theories, such as John Rawls's veil of ignorance, Philippa Foot's trolley problem, David Chalmers's zombie, etc. However, case intuitions cannot be identified with common sense. Common sense can be understood in terms of folk theories, such as "we have hands," "love is irrational," "the earth had existed for many years before my body was born," etc. While James Somerville characterized common sense as "the view of the plain man as opposed to those of the scientist's" (1986: 233), Lycan claimed that to count as common sense, "belief must be the sort of belief that every normal human being holds every day of her/his life" (2019: 40). Common sense is therefore a set of beliefs that are widely shared by people or can be coined as folk theory. Common sense, widely held beliefs whose truth conditions can be judged detached from a given context, is different from case intuition, which should be based on a specific scenario. While it is true that our case intuitions might be influenced by our common sense, it remains possible that case intuitions could conflict with our common sense. As an example, the supposition that "lying is morally wrong" is common sense. However, philosophers can always conjure up cases in which most people intuitively think it is morally permissible to lie. Further, suppose that "a wise person lives well" is common sense. One can envisage a case in which someone was once a widely accepted wise man. After taking some pills, however, their side effects make him feel depressed, and he loses his appreciation for living well. However, many would still intuitively judge him as a wise person. And while we suppose that "incest is morally wrong" is common sense, Jonathan Haidt (2001) proposed a scenario in which a brother and a sister decide to make love secretly. They both enjoyed it, adopted birth control measures, and swore to never do it again. Some would judge that, in this case, it is morally acceptable for them to make love.[8]

Common sense is also different from ordinary language usage. As Henson stated: "The considerations which persuade us that the sun is larger than the Peloponnesus or that the earth is roughly spherical do not include any arguments which aim to correct our use of 'larger than' or 'spherical'" (Henson 1967: 32). The point is that if one intends to object to the use of common sense, then one

[8]There is likely to be controversy over whether these three beliefs can be considered common sense. I am not arguing that these three cases must be considered common sense. Rather, the point is to show that it is logically possible for common sense to contrast with case intuition.

should appeal to empirical evidence; if one intends to argue against ordinary language use, then one should challenge the criteria of linguistic meaning.

Finally, ordinary language usage cannot be fully identified with case intuition. First, as mentioned earlier, case intuition is not solely about semantic intuition or the meaning of words. Given the distinction between competent intuition and rational intuition, it is fair to say that only some cases are designed to test linguistic intuitions. Second, as shown above, a poorly designed case cannot serve the purpose of testing our normal use of words; rather, a philosophically oriented case could distort our proper ordinary use. Third, besides the method of cases, there are other ways of testing our ordinary language usage, such as the Oxford school's method (Baz 2017), linguistic corpora (Hansen, Porter, and Francis 2019), etc.

To summarize, case intuition refers to folk intuitions elicited by well-designed philosophical cases; common sense should be defined in terms of folk theory; and ordinary language usage reflects what words mean in our daily context.

As stated above, reflective equilibrium has already been put into philosophical practice. The point of this paper is to provide a systematic plan for conceptual engineers who adopt metaphilosophical conservatism and wish to respect the continuity between folk commitments and philosophical concepts. My positive claim is that by incorporating a rich notion of folk commitments (case intuition, common sense, ordinary language usage), Lycanian reflective equilibrium can be revised to fully address discontinuity challenge 1 without facing the problems encountered by the functional plan and by Lycan's original reflective equilibrium. One significant consideration is that when a conceptual engineer designs a concept, they are actually constructing a set of interrelated concepts that evolve together. For example, when someone engineers the concept of "free will," related concepts such as "action," "responsibility," "desire," "wholeheartedly," "coercion," and "determination" are inherently involved. Additionally, a single word in one language often corresponds to multiple words in another. For instance, the word "intentionally" conveys a concept in ordinary English but lacks a direct equivalent in Polish, where it can be translated as *celowo, specjalnie, świadomie,* or *umyślnie,* depending on the context.[9] Therefore, embracing this perspective, when conceptual engineers test folk commitments they should not solely focus on the

[9]Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this perspective and providing this example.

isolated concept under scrutiny; rather, the testing should encompass closely related concepts as well.

Accordingly, my version of reflective equilibrium for conceptual engineering should be performed as follows:

1. Provide an initial conceptual engineering plan for concept *x*;
2. Collect data on case intuitions, common sense, or ordinary language usage concerning concept *x* and other related concepts;
3. Adjust the initial plan with case intuitions, common sense, or ordinary language usage;
4. Achieve a state of final equilibrium.

According to this plan, it is not necessary for conceptual engineering to cover all three versions of folk commitments (common sense, ordinary language usage, and case intuition) to meet discontinuity challenge 1. In other words, it is a disjunctive requirement rather than a conjunctive one. A case of conceptual engineering can meet one, two, or all three of the folk commitments, depending on the specific case at hand.[10]

In the following, I will illustrate some examples of how philosophers or conceptual engineers attempt to maintain continuity between philosophically designed concepts and case intuition, common sense, or ordinary language usage, respectively.

Let us first consider an example of employing case intuition to respect the continuity between folk commitments and a philosophical concept. In the context of the philosophy of law, one central question is whether law is intrinsically moral. Most philosophers who consider this concept wish to respect our folk concept of law, as did Brian Flanagan and Ivar R. Hannikainen: "One prominent point of agreement among theorists is the desirability of consistency with the folk concept of law" (2022: 165). According to them, a theorist's departure from the folk concept of law would bear a huge burden of argument to prove that the cost is worth it. They set their task as testing "claims concerning intuitions about the broader relation between a rule's legality and the morality of its substance" (Flanagan and Hannikainen 2022: 169). In an experimental philosophy survey

[10] Meeting all three requirements is too demanding and not very practical.

they designed a case for testing folk intuitions that went as follows: Suppose that a statute (*S*) has recently been enacted by a fictional state. However, *S* entails the belief in white supremacy, and marriage is only allowed among members of the same race. The researchers asked whether one would agree that (A) *S* can be considered a law in some sense, and (B) ultimately, upon deeper reflection on the true nature of a law, *S* would not genuinely qualify as one. Their results found that "stronger moral condemnation was associated with greater denial of deep legality, but not of superficial legality" (Flanagan and Hannikainen 2022: 172). The result is thus consistent with the natural law theory but not with the positivist view.

Respecting common sense has been considered a theoretical virtue by many philosophers. Proposing his theory of emotion, Brady stated: "In doing so I hope to illuminate a central tenet of common-sense thinking, contribute to an ongoing debate in the philosophy of emotion" (Brady 2013: 3).

Let us look at a case concerning eliminative materialism, which is the view that all of our folk psychological concepts, such as belief, desire, intention, and hope do not exist. The conservative conceptual engineer is duty-bound to respect common sense, and there must be a distinction between the radical philosophical claim and our common sense concerning folk psychological concepts. Lycan, adopting such a conservative attitude, stated, "Philosophical assumptions have very weak epistemic credentials and cannot by themselves outweigh simple common-sense facts" (2019: 40). Let us consider another case concerning "love." Ulrika Carlsson (2018) discussed the philosophical theories of love. For ordinary people, we often accept the common sense notion that "love is irrational." However, some philosophers attempt to revise this common understanding, arguing that true love should be rational. They contend that the person who loves should be able to understand and reflect on why they have fallen in love with the other person and recognize the qualities in the beloved that are worth cherishing. The rationalist view of love presupposes that a person can be seen as a bundle of qualities, and our love for others needs to be based on the reflection and evaluation of these qualities. This perspective subverts common sense, which generally considers love to be driven by passion and instinct, without the need for rational reflection. In response to this counter-common sense philosophical theory, Carlsson pointed out that a good philosophical theory of love should be able to explain our common sense understanding of love. According to common sense, when we love someone, we love them as a whole. We understand what they say and do based on their

overall qualities rather than by examining each quality in isolation. Carlsson argued that the rationalist view of love fails to adequately explain the common understanding of love. Therefore, for a conceptual engineer who seeks to respect common sense, the rationalist version of "love" may not be an ideal choice.

Many cases can be found in the current literature that show respect for ordinary language usage. For example, concerning the theory of knowledge attribution, Keith DeRose (2005) stated that a theory of knowledge attribution should respect our ordinary use of the concept "knowledge/know." He also claimed that contextualism is more consistent with ordinary language than other theories, such as "subject-sensitive invariantism." As DeRose explained,

> The best grounds for accepting contextualism concerning knowledge attributions come from how knowledge-attributing (and knowledge-denying) sentences are used in ordinary, non-philosophical talk: what ordinary speakers will count as "knowledge" in some non-philosophical contexts they will deny is such in others. (DeRose 2005: 172).

In another example, there is a debate concerning whether one knows or asserts that *p* requires a higher epistemic standard than one believes the same. Some philosophers hold that belief attribution is epistemically weaker than knowledge attribution. In other words, asserting something requires more evidence than believing something. Those who hold that belief is weak would appeal to our ordinary language usage as evidence for supporting their view. For example, it is normal to claim that I believe my lottery ticket will lose while it is not normal to say that I know that my lottery ticket will lose (Hawthorne, Rothschild, and Spectre 2016).

As shown by these cases, compared to the functional plan, the advantage of the reflective equilibrium plan is that it doesn't rely on unresolved theoretical concepts to address practical issues. Additionally, the reflective equilibrium plan can align with the functional plan. As noted previously, those who believe that the functions of concepts are key to maintaining continuity would encounter the problem of indeterminacy. However, one possible approach to addressing this indeterminacy problem is to use reflective equilibrium to assess which candidates are the better choice.

One might question how philosophical concepts can be considered continuous with folk commitments, given that both folk commitments and philosophical concepts are subject to revision. I believe we can distinguish between two senses of "being continuous with folk commitments": the strong sense and the weak

sense. In the strong sense, folk commitments are seen as the ultimate standard, and philosophical concepts should never deviate from ordinary views. In the weak sense, folk commitments are not considered the final criterion. However, when proposing a philosophical concept, philosophers should respect folk commitments by considering which idea, the philosophical or the folk, is more plausible when they clash. Those who endorse the weak sense of continuity do not simply ignore folk talk; they actually value it. The difference between the strong sense and the weak sense lies in the fact that the latter does not view ordinary wisdom as the ultimate standard, but still recognizes some truth in ordinary talk. This paper adopts the weak sense of the continuity thesis. Even the representative of ordinary language philosopher J. L. Austin admitted that ordinary language is not the last word, as he claimed, "we are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of, though not as the final arbiter of, the phenomena" (Austin 1956/1957: 8).

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

To summarize, this paper distinguishes among three versions of the discontinuity challenge, which are mostly ignored by the current literature. These different versions call for different treatments. This study focuses on the first version, namely, the continuity between folk commitments and philosophers' post-engineering concepts. There are two metaphilosophical attitudes toward discontinuity challenge 1: the radical one calls for the insignificance of the discontinuity challenge, while the conservative one claims that it is important for philosophy to be continuous with folk commitments. Metaphilosophical disagreement more closely resembles a value disagreement, however, and cannot be judged by truth conditions. It is plausible that some philosophers intend to dissolve the discontinuity challenge while others intend to resolve it. This paper set out to resolve this problem, and after pointing out the shortcomings of the prevailing solutions, such as appealing to the coarseness of the topic and a concepts' proper functions, argues that employing the dynamic solution of Lycan's reflective equilibrium is a better way of dealing with this challenge. Finally, to address the possible limitations of Lycan's reflective equilibrium, this paper provides a revised approach that defines folk commitments in terms of common sense, ordinary language usage, and case intuition.

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