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Blackburn's Rejection of Modals

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Résumé : Dans cet article je présente le dilemme de Simon Blackburn pour les théories vériconditionnelles de la modalité, et je discute de ses limitations. Je discute la nature de circularité conceptuelle et argumentative, j'argumente que la circularité conceptuelle ne s'applique pas à toutes les théories vériconditionnelles de la modalité et que, de plus, la circularité argumentative ne s'applique pas. Il n'y a rien d'erroné, en principe, avec les théories de la modalité en termes non modaux, mais les questions épistémologiques présentes sont significatives et ont été trop peu traitées. Je conclus que le dilemme de Blackburn est insuffisant pour défricher le terrain pour sa propre conception quasi-réaliste de la modalité.

Abstract: In this paper I present Simon Blackburn's dilemma for truth conditional theories of modality and discuss its limitations. I discuss the nature of conceptual and argumentative circularity and argue that conceptual circularity does not apply to all of the main truth conditional theories of modality and that, likewise, argumentative circularity does not apply. There is nothing wrong, in principle, with theories of the modal in non-modal terms, but attending epistemological issues are significant and have been given too little attention. I conclude that Blackburn's dilemma is insufficient for clearing the way for his own quasi-realist account of modality.

Introduction

Simon Blackburn is a quasi-realist about both moral and modal discourse. His position is realist because he accepts that we sometimes speak truly when we say that some things are right and others wrong. Likewise when we say that some things are possible and others not. It is "merely" quasi-realism, though, because he parts company with many realists regarding what it is for a claim regarding morals or modals to be true. Realists typically want the truth of claims about subject matters

regarding which they are realists to be a matter of something “objective”, something “out there”, something not wholly about us and our beliefs, or our conceptual capabilities or linguistic practices. Blackburn eschews this portion of typical realist ideology for moral and modal claims. We can have truth, but there is no “out there” about it. The facts that make for the truth or falsity of various utterances in moral or modal discourses are facts about us; they are our own attitudes/commitments that we project onto the world and this projection gives us an illusion of a certain kind of fact-based objectivity. Moral and modal truth is not about moral or modal facts; it is about our attitudes regarding actions, events, objects, and the like.

Developing a projectivist theory of the modal is all very well. Suppose that it were done. It would have little force in warranting the acceptance of the theory. A developed theory is nothing more than a philosophical Just So story. Might be; might not be. What separates a Just So story from a theory that has some claim on rational assent is some ground for thinking the theory true—either reasons in favour of the theory or reasons against the going alternatives. Blackburn produces an argument that purports to show that realist theories that are any more than “quasi-” lead us to think that there are facts of certain kinds when there are none. It is this argument regarding modals that will be the subject of the remainder of this paper.

The Argument

Blackburn’s argument works at a very high level of generality. He is not concerned with some paradox that is peculiar to David Lewis’s specific realism about modality, which involves the claim that there is a plurality of concrete worlds that are the truth conditions for true modal claims. Nor is he concerned with the deficiencies of theories of possible worlds that are likewise realist and truth conditional in their semantics but with possible worlds of some different kind. Blackburn’s argument is supposed to show that there is something fundamentally misguided about any theory of the modal that is an articulation of the view that the truth and falsity of various modal claims is a matter of truth *conditions*. He claims that some modal claims are true and some modal claims are false, just not that their truth/falsity consists in some conditions, however complex and wherever located. Not only is Lewis’s truth conditional theory rejected, but so are theories that claim that the truth conditions are conditions of us, whether psychological or linguistic. The entire truth

conditional programme for the modal is misguided. His argument, then, is intended as a silver bullet argument against all forms of realism about modals.

The argument is as follows. Consider a theory of the modal, a theory that specifies the truth conditions for some claim regarding necessity. Its form would be a bi-conditional stating that it is necessary that A if and only if some fact, F , obtains.¹ Consider the fact F . Is this fact modal in character or not? If it is necessary, then the theory is that it is necessary that A if and only if some necessary fact obtains. Such a theory is inadequate because "there will be the same bad residual 'must'" [Blackburn 1993, 53]. Suppose, then, that F is not a modal fact. Then there is a mismatch between the sides of the bi-conditional. On the one side is the claim that something is necessary; on the other, a fact with no modal force. Consequently, "there is strong pressure to feel that the original necessity has not been explained or identified, so much as undermined" [Blackburn, 1993, 53]. A fact with no modal force is patently inadequate as the truth condition for a claim involving necessity. If neither modal facts nor non-modal facts are adequate for a theory of the modal, then on the modest assumption that all facts are either modal or non-modal, no truth conditional theory of the modal is adequate.

The Purpose of a Theory

Blackburn is objecting to a certain kind of theory: one that purports to be both explanatory and truth conditional. Though he puts his concern in terms of judgements, truth, and truth conditions, he need not. He could simply frame things in terms of that in which necessity consists, with ' A ' and ' F ' merely being dummies which, in the hands of different theorists, might take different things as substituends. If ' A ' stands for some truth bearer or other, then the issue might be one of necessary truth and ' F ' might stand for some non-linguistic state of the world. Or, ' A ' might do duty for states which are themselves taken to be necessary, such as four being twice two and ' F ' might stand for some other states of numbers or sets or structures. Blackburn does not separate meta-linguistic from object language issues. Following suit, I note only that there are subtleties that deserve further attention, but I leave those for another occasion.

¹The appeal to facts is intended to be as uncontroversial as possible. I attribute to no party any more than appeal to worldly conditions, like the cat's being on the mat. Whether these conditions have anything to do with universals, for example, is something on which I can remain neutral here.

The fundamental problem that Blackburn thinks he has identified is the inevitable failure of explanation that will attend any “direct” theory of modality. A dilemma akin to the Euthryphro dilemma is posed. On one horn is a problem something like circularity. On the other is the problem that the theory remains unsatisfying, even if not circular. It is not question begging to suspect that something is awry, since one advocating this argument gives the appearance of being impossible to satisfy. Blackburn takes the argument to show not that no theory of the modal whatever is adequate but only that no truth-conditional, non-projectivist, theory is adequate.

In setting his own quasi-realist alternative against all truth conditional approaches, Blackburn needs his argument to work against rather different understandings of the point of a truth-conditional theory of the modal.

“Within this conception of the philosopher’s quest, there is room for disagreement over detail—for instance, whether the description of the state of affairs finally fixed upon as making true the original modal judgement has to be synonymous with that judgement; whether one range of arguments or another succeeds in showing some concepts to be defective, or over what would count as an admissible reduction class for the modal claims.” [Blackburn 1993, 53]

With the remainder of this paper I will argue that closer attention to these details is necessary for assessing the effectiveness of the dilemma posed by Blackburn. Since the first horn of the dilemma is a circularity-like problem, I will begin by examining when circularity is a problem.

First, to what sort of theory is circularity even so much as relevant? Certainly, any theory that purports to be an illuminating conceptual analysis is a failure if the analysans uses the very concept to be analysed. Circularity in analyses, like circularity in arguments, is not a simple, straightforward matter though. One might say that an argument is circular if the conclusion appears as a premise in its own proof. This account of circularity expresses at least a sufficient condition for a kind of circularity in argument that undermines the effectiveness of the argument. It is most dubious, though, as a statement of conditions that are both necessary and sufficient for circularity. One would be hard pressed to find any argument proposed by a reputable philosopher that failed because its proponent failed to spot the conclusion hiding, explicitly, among the premises. Likewise, analyses rarely, if ever, fail because the very concept to be analyzed was used in the analysis.

In an argument, it is much more likely that circularity is present when one introduces a premise for which one would be hard pressed to provide adequate grounds without appealing to the conclusion of the circular argument. In analyses, it is more likely that one concept is analysed in terms of others and the crucial concepts in the analysandum and the analysans form a tightly-knit family of concepts and, furthermore, the legitimacy of the entire family is the matter of philosophical dispute. Given that Blackburn's task is to provide grounds for a non-truth-conditional, projectivist understanding of modal discourse and given that this argument for the general untenability of truth conditional accounts is to provide some of those grounds, it is this reliance on a tightly-knit family of concepts that is in question. To say that A is necessary if and only if it is not possible that not-A is certainly to avoid the first, simple-minded, kind of circularity and it would be uncharitable to think that the circularity at issue was one so easily avoided. Since, however, necessity and possibility are so closely related and given the breadth of Blackburn's overall project, it is the status of the entire family of alethic modal notions that is in question. So, *if* our theory of the modal is to be a conceptual analysis and if the issue is whether the entire family of modal concepts is philosophically respectable, then the standard analysis of necessity in terms of possibility and negation that one finds in textbooks is clearly inadequate.

The Purpose of Analysis

"Analytic" philosophers hark back to a time when Anglo-American philosophy took as its *raison d'être* the analysis of concepts. Though the explicit rationale for taking philosophy to be conceptual analysis was the elimination of metaphysics and all intellectual things insufficiently answerable to experience, the focus on metaphysics, ethics, and religious belief obscured the primary value that was to be maximized *via* conceptual analysis, i.e., some epistemic value that I shall label "warrant". That there were metaphysicians who seemed to say unverifiable or unfalsifiable things was a problem only because the apparent lack of verifiability/falsifiability for metaphysical claims meant that one important means of providing warrant for a non-trivial claim was unavailable. Furthermore, one important means of gaining agreement to a metaphysical claim by way of rational persuasion was unavailable. Consequently, metaphysics gave the appearance of being unmoored, of being the project of constructing systems with no generally-accepted means of adjudicat-

ing between them.

Conceptual analysis promised to provide a means of securing warrant for philosophical claims. If philosophical claims are about the interrelations among concepts, and if conceptual content is sufficiently transparent, then with the guidance of an expert philosopher we could come to see that some philosophical claims deserved our assent and others did not. The project of analysis was gradually replaced, partly because of critiques of the ideological foundations of conceptual analysis [Quine 1953] and partly, I suspect, because fewer issues were settled than one might have expected if conceptual content were sufficiently transparent to us. As a result, metaphysics was revived and other domains took on the appearance of metaphysics at least to this extent: philosophers gradually spoke less in terms of the meaning of 'cause', 'natural right', or 'knowledge'; they spoke instead of what causation, natural rights, and knowledge *are*. It was no longer what the content of a concept was. Perhaps our concepts are not well-behaved, or they are poorly structured, or they are otherwise inadequate for all of our intellectual endeavours. No matter. We are really interested in what it is for two events or facts to be causally related, or what it is to have rights by nature, or what it is to know something. Whether the relevant information has ever been packed into our concepts is irrelevant, if upon investigation we could arrive at an acceptable theory of the relevant phenomenon.

The pertinent question for us now is what kind of philosophical theory is it against which Blackburn presses his dilemma? If the offending theory is supposed by its proponents to be a conceptual analysis, then the charge of circularity is relevant. If the theory is not intended as a conceptual analysis and if it is to be a theory of what it is, in reality, for something to be necessary, then some further account of a different defect, perhaps so analogous to the two kinds of circularity canvassed above that it deserves the same name, must be given.

Conceptual Projects

Suppose the project is to legitimize the use of the family of modal notions that includes the notions of necessity, possibility, contingency, and impossibility. It is a commonplace now to concede that these notions form a family of inter-definable notions, so long as we have purely logical notions like negation to hand. Because of their inter-definability, it is difficult, if not impossible, to maintain that necessity is the conceptually fundamental member of the family while the others are defined in

terms of it. If the task of a theory of the modal is to provide a route into understanding one concept in terms of others that can be understood prior to the concept analysed, then perhaps the phenomenon of inter-definability prevents success. One either has mastery of all members of that modal family or of none at all. Blackburn, however, is not concerned with the success of this project. He objects neither that he or others fail to understand the concepts nor that understanding does not begin with a single conceptual ancestor for the rest of the family. He takes for granted that we have the appropriate understanding, however it is achieved. His concern is the substance behind our sensible and competent use of the concepts, and for that he provides his quasi-realist alternative. So, while the dilemma he poses would be sufficient to prevent success in completing this kind of task, this task is not his target.

A different metaphorical way of thinking about this particular task is to think that modal concepts are part of a conceptual structure. That structure is well-founded, if it has foundations, i.e., if there are fundamental concepts in terms of which all others are analysed. If it is assumed that the modal structure is a superstructure, then the modal *superstructure* requires non-modal foundations. On such a picture, the family of inter-definable concepts is inadequate to supply these foundations, since each member of the family is part of the superstructure.

Continuing the metaphor, why should we think, that the modal structure is part of the conceptual *superstructure*? Why not, rather, think that it is part of the foundations of any sophisticated conceptual structure? If modal concepts are not definable in terms of non-modal concepts, that is evidence that when we reach those concepts we have reached conceptual bedrock. If so, then the inter-definability of modal concepts is unsurprising. Consider Euclidean geometry. Point, line segment, line, plane. Pick one and with uncontroversial resources, the others can be defined. These four concepts form a tightly-knit family of inter-definable notions. No philosopher of mathematics, however, is exercised over the legitimacy over Euclidean geometry on the basis of the inter-definability of these concepts. Instead, all take the family to form part of the conceptual basis for geometry. It is an interesting question how one can come to grasp concepts that form a small conceptual circle, but the geometry case demonstrates that whether we provide a satisfactory theory of how this is done, the lack of such a theory in no way provides grounds for thinking that the phenomenon does not occur. It manifestly does and all parties find this so obvious in the case of fundamental geometric concepts that the issue is rarely raised.

The circularity horn of Blackburn's dilemma not only *may* be grasped, but it is grasped by those who take modality, i.e., at least one modal concept, to be primitive. Modalists look at this horn and see not only nothing troubling, but they also see nothing surprising. Graeme Forbes, for instance, explicitly embraces modal concepts as basic to show that David Lewis's possible worlds discourse provides no theoretical advantage when it comes to expressing truths about possibility [Forbes 1985]. This horn of the dilemma, then, is inadequate by itself. Were the horn supplemented with some further considerations, it might form part of an overall basis for rejecting modalism in particular and truth conditional theories of modality in general. Perhaps the considerations that motivated the early Analytic philosophers could be invoked here and arguments could be given that there is too little agreement on modal matters to think that we employ modal concepts to good effect for expressing truths. Perhaps, there is no good modal epistemology that could form part of an overall modalist framework. Perhaps our use of modal discourse fails to show the signs of the kind of truth and objectivity that the typical modalist wants [Wright 1993]. None of these, though, is Blackburn's strategy. His dilemma is supposed to be sufficient to see off of any truth conditional theory of modality, even one that takes modal notions as enabling us to express basic features of the world. Once we were to have seen that there is something deeply misguided by the entire truth conditional approach, we were to be open to the quasi-realist alternative. Since the phenomenon given in the first horn is *part of* the modalist's theory, it cannot be effective *against* the modalist's theory. Were we to go no further, we have grounds for thinking that—so far as Blackburn has argued—there are at least two going alternatives in the theory of modality: modalism and quasi-realism.

Non-Conceptual Projects

Given the kinds of theories that Blackburn must have had in mind, it is clear that those theories were not really intended as conceptual analyses. David Lewis made clear that his project was not conceptual analysis [Lewis, 1986]. If it had been he would not have relied as he did on inference to the best explanation as the main means of providing warrant for his version of the ontology of a plurality of concrete worlds. Lewis recommended using inference to the best explanation to justify his theory partly because it showed philosophical justification to be similar to the means of justification used by scientists. This parallel with scientific

justification could not have been maintained plausibly had Lewis thought his project to be that of the conceptual analyst. Whereas conceptual analysis is the pursuit of a set of concepts that means precisely what that to be analysed means, inference to the best explanation is meant as an evidence-providing exercise that, if successful, raises the probability of the conclusion which articulates that which is to be the best explanation for the phenomena reported in the premises of the inference.

If conceptual analysis was not the project for Lewis and others, then the relevance of Blackburn's dilemma to the going theories of modality is not immediately obvious. Perhaps the circularity is not really conceptual, but metaphysical. Perhaps it is not that the concept of possibility can be defined only by way of other modal concepts that are part of the same conceptual family, but that in order for Lewis's account to be correct, it must be the case that all and only the *possible* worlds exist. Not just any old set of worlds will do. Blackburn does not make this particular point explicitly, though something like it has been made in [Lycan 1979], [McGinn 1981], and [Shalkowski 1994]. I will not pursue this consideration further both because it is not Blackburn's and because it seems to inhabit some middle ground between conceptual and argumentative circularity.

If conceptual circularity is not at issue for many contemporary truth conditional theories of the modal, perhaps the arguments given for the relevant theories are circular. Perhaps, for example, Lewis's theory that something is possible if and only if it occurs or exists in some concrete world can be accepted as extensionally adequate only if one has some prior justification for accepting that there really is a plurality of all and only genuinely possible concrete worlds. If there were impossible concrete worlds or if the plurality were missing some worlds that are possible, then the analysis would not be extensionally adequate. Ruling out such states of the plurality, perhaps, could be done only after one had accepted the general Lewis-style account.

If this is the problem, we can make some progress if we ask what is supposed to be so bad about argumentative circularity. "It is necessary that *A* if and only if necessarily *A*" is not false, even if wholly useless as an illuminating analysis. Likewise, inferring that it is necessary that *A* from the premise that it is necessary that *A* will never lead one from truth to falsity. So, what is the problem supposed to be? The faulty analysis need not be false and the faulty argument need not lead to a conclusion that is false.

Argumentative circularity is troublesome because it prevents an advocate of that argument from persuading one of the conclusion on its basis. A necessary condition for an argument being persuasive is that

one believes the premises and understands that the premises provide good grounds for the conclusion. Acceptance of the conclusion needs to be on the basis of a prior acceptance of the premises. A circular argument prevents this priority condition on rational persuasion from obtaining. Hence, circularity is an argumentative defect and the defect is epistemic. A circular argument fails to impart entitlement to embrace the conclusion to one who accepts the conclusion on the basis of that argument.

Against the modern metaphysician, as contrasted with the conceptual analyst, Blackburn's dilemma becomes this: by virtue of not being a conceptual analysis, the form of the theory does not, by itself, generate sufficient confidence in the theory. The schematic theory is that it is necessary that A if and only if F , for some non-modal F . Any defence of this theory will either make plain that F is sufficient for the necessity of A by way of circularity, or else the argument will fail to demonstrate that A really is necessary in virtue of F . For metaphysicians wary of framing their theory in terms of "in virtue of", an exactly parallel problem can be posed regarding the extensional adequacy of the theory: either the argument that the non-modal F is extensionally adequate for the necessity of A is circular or else the argument will fail to demonstrate the adequacy of the non-modal F for the necessity of A .

Lewis, at least, took great care to avoid any charge of circularity in his use of inference to the best explanation. The strategy was to specify things for which philosophers want theories, show that if the thesis about a plurality of worlds were true, we could provide a single, unified theory of those things. Certainly, there are competing theories for the truth conditions of modal claims, the semantics for counterfactual conditionals, the natures of properties and propositions, etc. Each of those competing theories is, however, a single-issue theory. Lewis's theory provides a single framework within which one can provide theories of all of these things. As scientists take theoretical unification as a mark of scientific truth, so Lewis takes philosophical unification as a mark of philosophical truth. The inference to the best explanation generates no more circularity for metaphysical theories than it does for physical theories. So the first horn of our new dilemma can be avoided, if inference to the best explanation is legitimate in metaphysics.²

Consider now the second horn, according to which there is no residual "must" but a fugitive "must". Any theory stating that the truth conditions for a necessary A in terms of some non-modal F inadvertently

²I argue that inference to the best explanation is not legitimate in metaphysics in *Inference to the Best Explanation and Metaphysical Projects* [Shalkowski forthcoming].

renders the *A* unnecessary. The *A* is supposed to have modal force, but the *F* is not. Thus, any theory of the necessity of four's being twice two will, in effect drain four's being twice two of all modal force.³

The mistake of this inference can be seen by focusing on reductive theories in science, since Lewis models the justification of his own view on the justification for these theories. Let us bracket any question of the modal status of scientific reductions, since scientists may or may not think that the scientific reductions they propose are necessary. When asked what lightning is, we are told that lightning is the discharge of static electricity either between clouds or between clouds and the surface of the earth. Here we have a theory of lightning in non-lightning terms. No problem. If there is a problem for theories of modality that are given in non-modal terms, it is not that they are theories of *A*-things in terms of non-*A*-things, where we categorize *A*-things and non-*A*-things on the basis of the concepts we use to specify them. If it really is the case that something is possible if and only if it occurs/exists in some concrete world that is just one among many, why is that any less adequate than the modern theory of lightning?

The troublesome difference is epistemic. In the scientific case, the theory identifying lightning with the discharge of static electricity is not even accepted unless investigators are in a position to identify occurrences of lightning and discharges of static electricity independently of each other. I, being rather incompetent as an experimenter about all things electrical, am capable of identifying times and locations of lightning strikes. Someone else who is well schooled in the fine art of detecting discharges of static electricity can set up the relevant devices to measure such discharges. I can keep my log about where and when I see strikes of lightning during a storm and the intrepid weather scientist can likewise keep a log of discharges. Later, we can compare notes. We repeat the procedure at other times and with other investigators. At some stage we might reasonably conclude that lightning is nothing but discharges of static electricity because we have never confronted cases where we were in a position to observe both the phenomenon as lightning and the phenomenon as a discharge of static electricity and where the time and location of the lightning was not also a time and location of a discharge of static electricity. We may be well aware that an inference from this

³This is not to say that the account renders it contingent that four is twice two. If four is twice two but might not have been, then four's being twice two is contingent. The second horn of the dilemma is that for any non-modal *F*, *A* has no modal force at all.

unbroken correlation among observations is not conclusive grounds for thinking that these phenomena are identical, but at some point we take the grounds to be more than sufficient.

The problem with metaphysical theories of modality is not their form; it is their means of justification. What is missing from typical metaphysical theories—not just metaphysical theories of modality—is independent access to phenomena described using different vocabulary. We can observe that some things are red and some green. What we do not observe independently is the universals of redness and greenness being instantiated or the presence of the trope of this gown's redness and that ball's greenness. Our access to the universals or the tropes is solely by way of philosophical theory. This is the same kind of problem that those who pursued semantic analysis as the proper task of philosophers sought to avoid and the problem to which metaphysicians need to devote more attention.

Suppose we were in a position regarding possibilities and the states of the plurality of worlds as we are regarding lightning and discharges of static electricity. What could the problem be? It might be somewhat surprising that possibility really is just existence. We had not expected that because we had been thinking that there is only one world and, consequently, we had been thinking that what exists does not exhaust what is possible. We had also been thinking that the possible was not co-extensive with the necessary. If we keep the latter but give up the former, then we lose our resistance to thinking that existence somewhere is really what possibility comes to and that existence everywhere (suitably qualified) is what necessity comes to. Blackburn is right regarding the second horn of his dilemma to this extent: so long as we keep in place all of our initial, metaphysically-naïve assumptions, a theory of the modal in non-modal terms will appear inadequate. If, to continue to use Lewis's theory as our example, it turns out that every warranted judgement we make about possibility is correlated with existence in some world, then we should not take our initial surprise as a philosophical trump card any more than believers in Zeus's hurling lightning bolts at the earth when angry should take their initial surprise that Zeus might have nothing to do with lightning as a trump card against scientific accounts of lightning. Initial intellectual surprises can be overcome with sufficient grounds. The problem, then, is mis-diagnosed by Blackburn in the second horn of his dilemma. There is nothing wrong, in principle, with giving a theory of A-things in terms of non-A-things, assuming that it is not intended as a conceptual analysis. If there is a problem with a theory of the modal in terms of the non-modal, it is not the initial "pressure" we feel to think that the theory fails. It is a matter of wider epistemic issues that the

dilemma does not touch.

Conclusion

Blackburn's generalisation of the Euthyphro dilemma is inadequate to the task to which he wanted to put it. It is insufficient as grounds for casting aside all forms of truth conditional accounts of the modal. If all such accounts of the modal required both that the theory be a conceptual analysis and that the analysis permit one to break into the circle of modal concepts and attain mastery of modal concepts, then the dilemma would effectively show all truth conditional theories to fail. One might take the project to be that of providing a conceptual analysis, but not one that is sufficient to gain competence with all modal vocabulary. Any such semantic account would assume some modal competence and would serve only to characterise relations among different modal concepts and could not legitimize the entire domain of our modal conceptual framework. A conceptual analysis of the modal in non-modal terms does fail for the reason Blackburn suggests: the analysis does not wear its adequacy on its sleeve the way conceptual analyses should.

Most truth conditional theories of the modal, however, are not intended as conceptual analyses of either sort. There are modalist accounts according to which some modal concepts are fundamental, i.e., for which there are no non-modal equivalents. Unless one holds the thesis that every concept is subject to an analysis in terms more basic concepts, there must be some basic concepts at which conceptual analysis stops.⁴ Why not some modal concept or other? The dilemma does nothing to answer this question. There are other, more metaphysical, theories that may not even address the issue of the meaning of modal concepts, but only the truth conditions of modal claims. Since they do not even pretend to express the meaning of modal concepts, then the fact that understanding an account of the modal in terms of the non-modal does not bring warrant for believing the account is itself insufficient to show that account really to be inadequate. Such a theory must, surely, fit with some suitable account not only of how one can come to have warranted belief about particular modal claims—like the claim that four is twice two—but also how one could come to have warranted belief in that particular

⁴If there are analyses "all the way down", then one must confront the question of how it is that one can begin the process of concept acquisition, if the process continues infinitely, or the question of why large conceptual circles are philosophically adequate, but small ones are not.

truth conditional theory of modality. These epistemic issues are important and too-little addressed in the philosophy of modality. That these deserve more attention than they have received does nothing, however, to undermine the contention of this paper: that Blackburn's dilemma fails to show something wrong with all truth conditional theories of modality. It fails to show that we have a philosophical itch that should be dealt with in some way other than by finding a truth conditional theory that reaches the itch so that it can be scratched.

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