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Susan Stebbing (1885-1943)



Brief Biography

Susan Stebbing was born in London in 1885. She studied History and Moral Sciences at Girton College, Cambridge, whose Mistress was the logician E.E.C. Jones. Stebbing's main philosophy tutor was W.E. Johnson. She always regretted that she had been unable to pursue a science degree due to her disability, Ménière's disease, which caused frequent attacks of vertigo, dizziness and nausea. As Cambridge allowed women to sit exams, but not to actually graduate with their degrees, in the early 1910s Stebbing moved to the University of London for her MA. There she met Moore, Russell, and Whitehead, who were to become her main philosophical interlocutors. Stebbing completed her thesis in 1912 and regularly spoke at the Aristotelian Society and published papers in its Proceedings, while teaching for Girton on a casual basis. After taking up a lecturing post in 1920 at Bedford College, London, she enjoyed great success there, rising through the ranks to become the UK's first female professor of philosophy in 1933. She published primarily on philosophy of science, formal and philosophical logic, metaphysics, and language, including the first accessible book on the new polyadic logic, *A Modern Introduction to Logic*. Stebbing continued to suffer severe attacks of Ménière's disease, but used these periods of illness to read books in English, French, and German, often publishing her thoughts as a book review. As a result of her extensive reading and trilingualism, Stebbing was one of the first outside continental Europe to see the significance of logical positivism. Her publications on the movement did much to introduce it to the British philosophical scene. In the late 1930s, Stebbing, increasingly alarmed by the rise of fascism, began to write on the application of critical thinking to ethics and politics, and also worked with Jewish refugees, work which she continued until her death in 1943.

List of Selected Publications

Stebbing, L.S. (1930). *A Modern Introduction to Logic*. London: Methuen.

Stebbing, L.S. (1932-33). The Method of Analysis in Metaphysics. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 33, 65–94.

Stebbing, L.S. (1933). *Logical Positivism and Analysis*. London: H. Milford.

Stebbing, L.S. (1937). *Philosophy and the Physicists*. London: Methuen.

Stebbing, L.S. (1939). *Thinking to Some Purpose*. London: Penguin.

Susan Stebbing's Metaphysics and the Status of Common-Sense Truths

Frederique Janssen-Lauret¹

Abstract: Susan Stebbing, the UK's first female professor of philosophy, was highly regarded by her contemporaries but remains largely neglected by historians of analytic philosophy. Very little has been written about Stebbing's metaphysics, philosophy of science, and views on common-sense truths. Although recent commentators typically describe Stebbing, as Ayer had done, as "a disciple of Moore", I will ascribe to Stebbing a distinctive view of her own in some respects allied to Moore, in some respects to Whitehead, in some respects wholly original. This becomes clear once we consider, as previous commentators have not done, the connections between Stebbing's views on common sense, metaphysical analysis, philosophy of science, and the refutation of idealism. It is rarely noticed that Moore's anti-idealist "Defence of Common Sense" does not end with a triumph over the idealist, but in aporia. Moore's emphasis on the truth of common-sense claims turned out to leave room for forms of idealism which accept common-sense truths but analyse them in idealist terms. Such analyses were embarrassing to Moore because he considered them "paradoxical". Stebbing, I argue, made a significant advance on Moore by distinguishing between "same-level", language-to-language, analyses, from metaphysical, directional analyses of the facts which account for the truth or falsity of expressions. Metaphysical analyses, Stebbing held, may well sound paradoxical and yet be correct, because they involve significant and possibly surprising assertions about reality, which ultimately settles truth or falsity. Stebbing applied her novel methodology of metaphysics to good effect in her philosophy of science. In *Philosophy and the Physicists*, Stebbing rebutted Eddington's idealist line, which includes the assertion that every familiar object has a

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"shadow" object in the world of physics. She argued that the scientific truth "this table is mostly empty space and some subatomic particles" constitutes, despite its "paradoxical" appearance, an admissible directional analysis of "this table is solid", so we need not posit both a solid table and its physical shadow. Thus Stebbing's method might succeed where Moore's failed, providing a new and viable route towards the refutation of idealism.

A. Introduction: Stebbing's Metaphysics and Her Role in the History of Analytic Philosophy

Susan Stebbing (1885-1943) was a pivotal figure in early analytic philosophy. She made vital contributions to early analytic metaphysics, philosophical logic, the philosophy of physics, critical thinking and applied philosophy. Stebbing was highly regarded by her contemporaries. Every year from 1924 until 1939, she published at least one paper in a major British or American philosophy journal. Her books on logic and philosophy of physics received high praise from reviewers (Mace 1931; Paul 1938). Nevertheless, historians of analytic philosophy have so far largely overlooked Stebbing's work. Although a handful of good historical publications on Stebbing have recently appeared, they are either primarily biographical (Chapman 2013) or tend to concentrate on her criticisms of more central canonical figures (Beaney 2003; Milkov 2003; Beaney 2016). To date, little has been written about Stebbing's own views on metaphysics, formal and philosophical logic, and the philosophy of science. In this paper I continue the work (begun in Janssen-Lauret 2017) of uncovering Stebbing's positive and original contributions to those fields and to the development of analytic philosophy. My focus in this paper will be on Stebbing's distinctive positions on common-sense truths and metaphysical analysis, and her application of her metaphysics in her rebuttal of idealist interpretations of physics, most notably in *Philosophy and the Physicists* (Stebbing 1937).

Stebbing took philosophical and scientific investigation to rest on a basis of ordinary-language truths—such as "I am perceiving some paper" and "Other people have seen this paper

before me" (1929, 174)—and emphasised that to know a truth is by no means the same as to know its analysis. As a result, it has become *de rigueur* to portray her as, in Ayer's words, "very much a disciple of [G.E.] Moore" (Ayer 1977, 71). Twenty-first century commentators still largely describe Stebbing as engaging in Moorean common-sense philosophy or Moorean analysis (e.g. Milkov 2003; Beaney 2016, 249-250). Even those who consider Stebbing an original thinker in her own right, like Beaney and Chapman, still describe her as "a committed Moorean" with respect to analysis and common-sense truths (Beaney and Chapman 2018, §§3-4). In this paper I will argue that the similarities between Moore and Stebbing are more superficial than they appear at first sight. On my interpretation, there is sufficient clear blue water between Moore and Stebbing on ordinary-language truths and analysis that we ought to regard Stebbing as the originator of a distinctive position of her own, rather than as an exponent of Moorean common-sense philosophy. Historians have so far missed this because they take Stebbing's respectful tone towards Moore and her humility in describing her own achievements at face value, and because there has been relatively little investigation into Stebbing's philosophy of physics. This has led commentators to overlook her signal contributions, in her philosophy of science, to the foundational project of the earliest stages of analytic philosophy, namely overcoming idealism.

Historians of philosophy (e.g. Beaney and Chapman 2018 §3) correctly note that Stebbing—who had begun her philosophical career working in a spirit sympathetic to idealism (e.g. Stebbing 1916-17)—credited her original conversion to analytic philosophy to Moore's mentorship (Stebbing 1942). But Stebbing had intended the paper in which she claimed this as an homage to Moore. Given that context, she naturally concentrated on the influence of Moore rather than her other influences or her own originality, but this does not imply that she had few other influences or original views. Stebbing also allied herself with Moore and self-identified as a member of the "Cambridge School", while discussing logical atomism (Stebbing 1933b, 5). But, there, too, further

context must be taken into account. Her goal in that discussion was to draw a contrast between the Cambridge School and logical positivism with respect to their views on analysis. Stebbing placed herself on the same side of the divide as Moore specifically in the context of a quotation from *Wisdom*² which set up Moore, representing the Cambridge School, in opposition to Wittgenstein, whose approach to analysis Stebbing tentatively classes with the positivists’.

If cited in isolation, then, these two works (Stebbing 1942; 1933b) may well provide a misleading impression about Stebbing’s originality and the breadth of her expertise. Her areas of specialisation, unlike Moore’s, included philosophy of science. Moore's philosophy had grown out of interaction with ancient philosophy during his Classics degree on the one hand, and with Kant on the other hand. He never made any serious venture into the philosophy of science. Stebbing saw the importance of a scientifically informed philosophy fit for the new science and mathematics of the age. In this respect she resembled Russell and Whitehead more than Moore. As a woman with a disability born in the Victorian era, Stebbing had not been offered the kind of deep immersion into physics and mathematics from which the young, able-bodied men Russell and Whitehead had

² "Philosophy is concerned with the analysis of facts—a doctrine which Wittgenstein has lately preached and Moore long practised." (*Wisdom* 1931, 195, n.2). For more on Stebbing’s interpretation of Wittgenstein and logical atomism in contrast to the Cambridge School, see Milkov 2003, Beaney 2003, Beaney 2016 and Janssen-Lauret forthcoming-a.

benefited.³ After her move to London and her discovery of analytic philosophy, Stebbing embarked on a programme of self-education in the philosophy of physics. In the early 1920s, she began by writing on Whitehead (Stebbing 1924, 1924-25, 1926b) on whose views she wrote more papers than on Moore's. By the late 1920s, Stebbing advanced original positions in the field, primarily consisting in rebuttals of idealist interpretations of physics (Stebbing 1927, 1928, 1929).

My paper will have four main parts. Section B sketches Moore and Russell's early analytic anti-idealist project from the 1890s and then explains why Moore had come to see, by 1925, that logical atomism could not provide a strong rebuttal of idealism, even when fortified with the certainty of common-sense truths. Moore admitted that some idealist analyses of common-sense truths remained live options despite sounding "paradoxical". Section C lays out Stebbing's views on metaphysical analysis and explains how they represent an advance on Moore's. Stebbing presented an original, rigorous account of the metaphysical analysis necessary to logical atomism, which she called "directional analysis". Stebbing sharply distinguished "same-level" analysis of sentences in terms of other sentences—a process which may well yield synonymies—from directional,

³ Chapman quotes a friend of Stebbing's saying, "if her health had permitted, she would have preferred to pursue a science degree" (Chapman 2013, 11). Chapman considers this more plausible than Wisdom's claim that Stebbing was discouraged from studying classics given the "physical strain" (Wisdom 1944, 283), but does not explain why. One possible explanation is that Ménière's disease and its attendant attacks of vertigo, dizziness and nausea were incompatible with work in a laboratory. But another possibility, which makes sense of the claims of both Chapman's source and Wisdom, is that there was a tendency in Victorian and Edwardian culture to associate sickness with femininity, and accordingly to discourage disabled young women in particular from studying subjects more strongly associated with masculinity. All fields were of course male-dominated in those early years of women's education, but classics and experimental science involving laboratory work were especial bastions of masculinity. Victorian and Edwardian culture considered classics a quintessentially masculine field because boys from educated families were steeped in the classics from a very early age, but girls almost never were. Catching up on Greek and Latin might indeed have been physically demanding for the young Susan Stebbing in the sense that it would have required many long hours of intense effort. Formal and philosophical logic, by contrast to science and classics, were considered more appropriate fields for the first female students in higher education, such as Constance Jones and Christine Ladd-Franklin, since logic and mathematics required no worldly knowledge and could be studied at home, in the private sphere culturally associated with femininity (Janssen-Lauret forthcoming-b).

metaphysical analysis which uncovers the facts that account for the truth of a certain stretch of language—a process which delivers a posteriori, non-synonymous results. Perhaps because Stebbing offered a somewhat modest account of her own achievements, stressing Moore's distinction between knowing a proposition and knowing its analysis when she elucidated her theory (Stebbing 1932-33, 86), Milkov calls Stebbing's view "Moore's directional analysis" (Milkov 2003, 358). But Stebbing claimed it as her own even in her homage to Moore, "Such an analysis I once called 'directional analysis'" (Stebbing 1942, 527). I show how Stebbing's theory has the power to dispel Moore's judgement that idealist analyses are "paradoxical".

In section D, I turn to Stebbing's position on common-sense truths, and how it differs from Moore's. Stebbing greatly valued Moore as a mentor, and was generous with acknowledgements whenever she held a view she took to have originated with Moore (Stebbing 1932-33, 86; Stebbing 1930, 155). It is notable, then, that Stebbing was relatively circumspect in describing Moore's "Common Sense View" (Stebbing 1942, 523), and while praising it as containing "important contributions to philosophy" (Stebbing 1942, 524), did not rush to endorse it. She described her own attitude towards common-sense truths instead as "realism" (1929, 174), and differed from Moore on which truths constitute a certain foundation for philosophy. Moreover, Stebbing took "realist" truths to underpin science and philosophy equally. She argued that there was no conflict between "realism" in her sense and idealist philosophy or idealist interpretations of physics. Moore, as I will show, was far less clear and explicit on this point. Section E reveals how Stebbing applied her theory of analysis to her philosophy of physics and advocated a naturalistic approach to rebutting idealist interpretations of physics. Stebbing contended that physics, like philosophy, starts from a basis of shareable observations expressed in ordinary language. Her distinction between analysis of language in terms of language, "at the same level", and analysis of facts, at a different level, implied that such common-sense, ordinary-language judgements cannot directly contradict

the analysis and interpretation of physics. A clear illustration is Stebbing's refutation of Eddington's claim that the solid table of common-sense must be distinct from the scientific table which is mostly empty space. Stebbing objected that any contradiction here is merely apparent, because the common-sense claim and the analysis in terms of subatomic particles operate at different levels. Stebbing evaluated the idealist interpretations of physics she had seen as unconvincing and usually based on a conflation of levels. She felt that the question of idealism versus materialism or dualism ought ultimately to be settled by future work in the natural sciences combined with sound philosophy of physics (Stebbing 1942, 184).

My interpretation presents Stebbing as an innovative, transitional figure. Her contributions moved analytic philosophy from its early, anti-idealist and largely logical atomist phase into its middle phase, typified by increased focus on ordinary uses of language, undermining of the analytic-synthetic distinction, a turn towards the analysis of language, overcoming logical atomism and logical positivism, and naturalistic tendencies in the philosophy of science. Unlike Moore's, Stebbing's thought encompasses all of the above.

B. Metaphysics, Analysis, and Anti-Idealism in Early Analytic Philosophy: From "The Nature of Judgement" to "A Defence of Common Sense"

To grasp the impact and originality of Stebbing's metaphysics and her anti-idealism, we must trace the arc of history that constituted the main developments and strands of thought constituting early analytic philosophy. One of them, beginning around 1898-99, was Moore and Russell's "New Philosophy". A mini-movement of two young research fellows, it strove for a credible realist alternative to idealism, and especially to the philosophical system of their foil, the British Hegelian F.H. Bradley. As Moore and Russell proposed, and then jettisoned, several attempts to do so, it began to emerge that only a narrow range of idealist positions were truly ruled out by their views.

The original New Philosophy of the late 1890s and early 1900s, one of the tributaries to the overall intellectual current that was to grow into analytic philosophy, was both novel and, in its way, a back-to-basics movement in philosophy. Moore, who had previously been in thrall to Kantian transcendental idealism, sought to construct a "Platonic system" of cognisable objects in order to answer Kant as well as Bradley. A crucial thesis of the New Philosophy was that judgement should be thought of as a binary relation between a mind and something independent of and distinct from that mind (MacBride 2018, 30- 39). According to the youthful New Philosophers, the falsity of idealism followed from the very logical form of true statements describing the relation between a judging mind and its discrete object of thought (Moore 1899; Moore 1903).

The New Philosophers' account of judgement ruled out both the transcendental idealism of Kant and the peculiar idealism of Bradley. While Kant's idealism was epistemological, Bradley held a version of ontological idealism, the view that reality is in the final analysis mental or spiritual in nature. Unlike some other idealists, Bradley never claimed, and indeed explicitly denied, that reality was composed of the ideas in our minds or anything remotely resembling them. On the contrary, Bradley premised his case for idealism on a strong denial that thought (or language) could share a structure with reality. He held that reality was, while spiritual, primarily fundamentally one. According to Bradley, our ordinary, common-sense thought and language radically misrepresent reality. Everyday and ordinary-language judgements never represent reality monistically. We think or represent using small, discrete individual units of thought or language and expect that, if we are representing correctly, reality will contain discrete, individually cognisable units to correspond to our representations. Bradley considered this whole picture utterly misguided. He argued that singular reference, subject-predicate analysis (Bradley 1897, 17), and discourse about facts all lack coherence. Singular reference cannot fully single out or describe a referent; it always requires reference to further descriptive judgements. Yet the apparent cohesion of things standing in relations

to each other is itself, on further analysis, illusory. A relation must either be something, or nothing, to its relata. If it is something to them, a further relation is needed to connect them. If it is nothing to them, then they are simply unrelated. In either case there is no possibility of distinct things standing in relations (Bradley 1897, 32-33).

Bradley concluded that we must be mistaken whenever we assume any kind of conformity between our everyday judgements and reality. Reality lacks any kind of articulated structure. So there can be no question of correspondence between the structure of our ordinary judgements and the structure of reality. For ordinary purposes, he granted, we may say that it is true that humans live on the planet Earth, and other such common-sense judgements. Yet when we apply ourselves to searching metaphysical enquiry, we discover that such judgements are not fully true, not fully faithful to reality.

These arguments of Bradley's were to be young Susan Stebbing's first introduction to philosophy. As an undergraduate in History at Girton College, in 1907 she had come upon *Appearance and Reality* while idly browsing in the library. She enjoyed reading Bradley so much that after completing her studies in history, she stayed on at Girton for another year to read for the Moral Sciences Tripos, as Cambridge called its exams in philosophy. After her move to London in the early 1910s, she continued to write on idealist themes for some years (e.g. Stebbing 1916-17; 1917-18).

In 1899, Moore and Russell had not had the same reaction to Bradley as the youthful Stebbing. The New Philosophers found his conclusion utterly intolerable, and felt that it simply must be false. Rather than attempting to refute Bradley's attack on the coherence of subject-predicate discourse and the correspondence theory of truth, Moore and Russell performed a modus tollens on Bradley's modus ponens. The best rebuttal of Bradley, the New Philosophers felt, was to

insist that we certainly do know the world, and are able to make true claims about it in ordinary language, and therefore reality must after all comprise individually cognisable, mind-independent units to correspond to our representations. Indeed, Moore and Russell thought, our minds could reach out and grasp individual constituents of reality directly. Ordinary-language representations and thoughts, therefore, could straightforwardly succeed in correctly representing reality.

Moore's first attempt at an anti-idealist system (Moore 1899) appeared—rather boldly—to suggest that every word refers, including "exists" and the copula. Russell, some years later, enthusiastically embraced the model on which every word stands for a constituent of reality (Russell 1903 §46). Such a model turned out to imply conclusions hardly less abhorrent than Bradley's. First, if every word denotes, we cannot distinguish ways to concatenate our words which represent falsely from ways which represent truly. We must, according to Moore, rest content with the conclusion that the truth or falsity of a sentence "must be immediate properties of its own, not dependent upon any relation it may have to something else" (1899, 192). Second, the all-words-refer model implies that we cannot say that something does not exist without having to attribute some form of being to it. Having seen the difficulties with their early model, the New Philosophers instead devised a model where not every word, but every true sentence corresponds to something—to a fact (Moore 1953 [1910-11]). Falsity need no longer be an inexplicable, primitive property. On the new model, falsity consists in failure to correspond to a fact. True non-existence claims are accommodated by the theory of descriptions. Certain sentences have a grammatical form which misleads us as to their true underlying logical form. "Unicorns do not exist", for example, appears to have a subject-predicate form, but philosophical analysis reveals that its true logical form is quantificational: a negative existential.

Stebbing was not immediately won over by these views of Moore and Russell. In papers at the Aristotelian society in the mid-1910s, she described Moore's analysis of "Unicorns do not exist"

as "based upon a serious mistake, viz., upon *the identification of reality with existence*, an identification which it is quite obvious Dr. Moore deliberately makes" (Stebbing 1917-18, 583, her italics), and criticised Russell's dismissal of Hegelian concrete unity (Stebbing 1916-17, 469-470). But Moore pressed his rebuttals to her objections to both papers, in the question period and in letters afterwards. These painstaking responses and their devotion to clearing up a "muddle" (Stebbing 1942, 531) were what Stebbing credited, in her much later retrospective, with winning her over to analytic philosophy.

Armed with the distinction between complete and incomplete symbols, the theory of descriptions, and a new and improved account of philosophical analysis, the New Philosophers were, by the 1910s, on the path to logical atomism. Even so, Moore and Russell still did not seek to refute Bradley's arguments against the correspondence theory, which Bradley had called the "copy theory". They remained content to trust that if their position was true, Bradley's must be false, and that they had reason to believe their own position was, indeed, true. But if their position was true, did idealism in general, as opposed to Bradley's view specifically, have to be false? Moore increasingly began to see that neither logical atomism nor logical atomism plus the certain truth of particular common-sense claims provided a sufficiently strong refutation of idealism.

Even Moore's landmark anti-idealist paper, "A Defence of Common Sense", does not end with a triumph over the idealist, but in a kind of aporia. Moore opened his paper by asserting that we know the meaning and certain truth of such common-sense, ordinary English statements as "There exists at present a living human body, which is my body", and "The earth has existed for many years past" (Moore 1925, 33). He swiftly dismissed as ill-founded the approach of philosophers who would retort, "It all depends on what you mean by 'the earth' and 'exists' and 'years': if you mean so and so, and so and so, and so and so, then I do; but if you mean so and so, and so and so, and so and so, or so and so, and so and so, and so and so, or so and so, and so and so,

and so and so, then I don't, or at least I think it is extremely doubtful"(Moore 1925, 36-37). Moore argued such an approach was misguided because, he maintained, "'The earth has existed for many years past' is the very type of an unambiguous expression, the meaning of which we all understand" (Moore 1925, 37). Although Moore did not invoke Bradley by name in 1925, Bradley was one philosopher who insisted that common-sense judgements were not fully true. So Moore's argument ruled out Bradley's idealism specifically. It does not refute Bradley on Bradley's own terms, but Moore never intended to. In this respect the 1925 argument resembles Moore's first anti-idealist publications. Moore thought the most effective argument against Bradley was to maintain that we do know ordinary-language truths and that they reflect reality.

Yet towards the end of his paper, Moore confessed himself unable to refute idealist analyses of the propositions common-sense truths express. He sharply distinguished knowing a proposition from knowing its analysis. And no matter how certain we take our knowledge of common-sense truths to be, Moore saw, we cannot infer certain knowledge of their analyses. I may feel utterly certain, for example, looking at my hand, that "This is a human hand" is true. But since, Moore contended, it is impossible for me to perceive my whole hand all at once, the analysis of the proposition I expressed must refer to what I can perceive directly, namely sense data. Moore considered three possible analyses of "This is a human hand", all of which begin with "This [i.e., the sense datum] is part of the surface of a human hand". The first takes sense data to be physical entities themselves, identical with the surfaces of objects. The second takes sense data to be mental, hands physical. Moore worried that the first has difficulty accounting for the possibility of double vision, and the second posits a mysterious relation expressed by the predicate "is an appearance of". According to the third type of analysis, sense data are mental and hands are logical constructions out of mental sense data. Objects such as hands, which common sense calls "material things" (Moore 1925, 42), are in the final analysis no more than "permanent possibilities of

sensation" (Moore 1925, 57), that is, they are ultimately mental in nature. The third type of analysis implies that a form of ontological idealism is true. Such analyses were embarrassing to Moore, because, in his words, they have a "paradoxical" (Moore 1925, 59) sound to them. Nevertheless, he had to admit that the objections against the idealist type of analysis were no better than those against analyses of the first and second type. Moore could not see how to rule out analyses of "this is a hand" in terms of permanent possibilities of sensation, no matter how unsatisfactory they seemed to him.

Moore's complaint above may be read in one of two ways. First of all, it might be read as expressing a version of C. H. Langford's "paradox of analysis". According to this dilemma, if a common-sense truth and its analysis have the same meaning, then the analysis is no more informative than the common-sense truth. But if the two do not have the same meaning, then the analysis must be wrong. Langford wrote, "One is tempted to say that there must be some appropriate sense of 'meaning' in which the two verbal expressions do have the same meaning and some other appropriate sense in which they do not" (Langford 1942, 323). As we will see below, Stebbing had offered a solution to this paradox of analysis ten years before Langford (Stebbing 1932-33), by distinguishing between grammatical analysis of a sentence, which may deal in synonymy, and metaphysical analysis, which is concerned to describe what kind of facts there are in the world if the sentence is true.

But when we look closely at Moore's complaint outlined above, we find that he did not ascribe paradoxicality equally to all three types of analysis which he considered. While Moore maintained that to analyses "of any of these types, there seem to me to be very grave objections", the only type of analysis which Moore explicitly called "paradoxical" was the third, idealist, type. Moore wrote, "the true analysis may, for instance, possibly be *quite* as paradoxical as is the third view ... as to the analysis of 'This is part of the surface of a human hand'" (Moore 1925, 59, his

italics). Although all three types of analyses face significant problems, Moore appears to have thought that there was something especially wrong-sounding about idealist analyses. I conjecture that Moore was exercised by the apparent implication of the third view that it is not just sense data which are mental objects, but that hands are mental as well. Moore was willing to entertain the hypothesis that sense data might be material or mental, but felt certain that common sense categorises hands as material objects. Stebbing's theory of analysis has the power to cut through this Gordian knot.

C. Stebbing on Metaphysical Analysis

Stebbing, in her work on metaphysical analysis, idealism, and philosophy of science, made significant progress towards dispelling Moore's aporia. Stebbing solved what Langford later called the "paradox of analysis" by means of her distinction between grammatical and metaphysical analysis. Her development of this view offers a solution to the complaints voiced later by commentators including Langford and the Moore scholar David O'Connor, who similarly objects to the systematic ambiguity in Moore's use of the term "meaning", namely "to cover the ordinary uses of an expression and ... as a proxy for 'analysis'". (O'Connor 1982, 71-72). Stebbing's original metaphysics was not plagued by any such ambiguity. Where Moore had claimed that philosophers analyse propositions, not sentences, Stebbing clearly separated the analysis of sentences—grammatical analysis—from the analysis of propositions, but in addition separated both from the analysis of facts, which she took to be the true province of metaphysical analysis.

An analysis with a different meaning from the original common-sense truth we aimed to analyse is problematic only if we are engaged in what Stebbing called "grammatical analysis", analysis "at the same level" (Stebbing 1932-33, 77), or analysis of sentences. A difference in

meaning is no reason to disqualify an analysis of the sort which Stebbing calls "metaphysical analysis", analysis at a different level, or analysis of facts. At the level of grammatical analysis, we may, if certain conditions are fulfilled, expect the analysans and the analysandum to stand in a relation of synonymy. But, Stebbing averred, we should never make synonymy a desideratum of metaphysical analysis, because, "The metaphysician is concerned with what the words refer to, i.e., with the constituents there must be in the world if the sentence is so used as to say what is true" (Stebbing 1932-33, 78). Metaphysical analysis describes what facts, with which components, the world will contain in case the sentence is true. Such analysis yields truths which are neither analytically true nor logically necessary (Stebbing 1932-33, 80).

According to Stebbing, "a proposition is a logical construction out of a set of facts in which someone is using a sentence to express what he is truly or falsely judging" (Stebbing 1932-33, 78). As a result, we may indeed analyse propositions, but that process does not determine a fact or collection of facts which render the sentence expressed by the proposition true (or false). To arrive at an analysis which accounts for the truth (or falsity) of our expressions, we must, by Stebbing's lights, analyse facts. A proposition, Stebbing thought, whether true or false, has an "immediate reference [which] is what would ordinarily be understood to be what the proposition asserts" (Stebbing 1932-33, 78). But its immediate reference generally asserts something about logical constructions, such as tables or other middle-sized objects and their characteristics. Metaphysical analysis seeks to "determine the elements and the mode of combination of those elements to which reference is made when any given true assertion is made" (Stebbing 1932-33, 79). That is, its aim is to analyse the apparent middle-sized facts down in successive steps into ever simpler facts.

Metaphysical analysis, in Stebbing's sense, then, tends towards greater and greater simplicity. This is why she also used the term "directional analysis" for it. Stebbing maintained that

the kind of analysis engaged in by the logical atomist must proceed towards ever simpler facts until we reach the level of what she called "basic facts" (Stebbing 1932-33, 80), namely facts whose elements are simples. Stebbing also deployed the language of "levels". The lowest level is the level of simples; higher levels have increasingly greater complexity. We saw above that Stebbing described grammatical analysis as "analysis at the same level" (Stebbing 1932-33, 77) because it links sentences to other sentences and need not aim at finding an analysans simpler than the analysandum. In other words, grammatical analysis has no direction in Stebbing's specific sense of descending down the levels in search of greater simplicity. Stebbing's description of language itself as one of the levels evinces her metaphysical position on linguistic types and tokens. According to Stebbing "the type is a logical construction out of tokens having similarity or conventional association" (Stebbing 1935, 9), and consequently, language indeed consists in high-level logical constructions.

Although I do not mean to suggest that Moore had no inkling of the distinctions drawn in Stebbing's metaphysical system, by now it has become clear that Stebbing's position, far from being a repackaging of his views, in fact made a significant advance on Moore. She provided a solution to the paradox of analysis. Next, I will argue that Stebbing, in her account of metaphysical analysis, also pointed the way towards a solution to Moore's other problem of paradoxicality, specific to idealist analyses. Her solution will appear perplexing to those who see her as a Moorean common-sense philosopher who held that common sense itself is in tension with idealism. To those who consider Stebbing an innovative, transitional figure whose contributions moved analytic philosophy from its early, anti-idealist and largely logical atomist phase into its middle, more naturalistically-oriented phase, by contrast, Stebbing's solution typifies her breadth of knowledge and originality.

In brief, Stebbing allowed for metaphysical and scientific analyses of common-sense or ordinary-language truths which sound paradoxical. An analysis which has a paradoxical sound to it

is objectionable only in the case of grammatical or same-level analysis, not in the case of metaphysical analysis. After all, metaphysical analysis is not a process which we should expect to yield analytic, platitudinous, or logically necessary truths (Stebbing 1932-33, 80). When we consider the inferential relations which ordinary-language sentences have to other sentences, we rightly make inferences such as "this is a hand; therefore, this is a material object", and disallow inferences like "this is a hand; therefore, this is a mental object", which, we might say, have an air of analytic falsehood to them. While these kinds of inferences may count as grammatical analyses only in an extended sense, they certainly take place at the level of sentences of ordinary language or, as Stebbing sometimes put it, "at the level of organized common-sense knowledge" (1930, 392). Stebbing also sometimes spoke of "translation" of sentences into other sentences with the aim of clarifying their logical form (Stebbing 1932-33, 81). Such translation she intended as a preliminary step to metaphysical analysis.

Once we begin the process of metaphysical analysis in earnest, we engage in the a posteriori project of finding out what facts are referred to in the proposition expressed by our sentence. In the context of metaphysical analysis it would be illegitimate to disallow the inference "this is a hand, therefore this is a logical construction out of permanent possibilities of sensation" merely on the grounds that it sounds paradoxical. Stebbing would have defused its air of paradoxicality along similar lines to her argument in the following passage, "It has been erroneously supposed that from the two statements *I am sitting on this chair* and *This chair is a logical construction*, it follows that *I am sitting on a logical construction*. The two statements are fundamentally different in logical form. The confusion is as gross as the confusion in supposing that if men are numerous and Socrates is a man, it would follow that Socrates is numerous." (Stebbing 1933a, 505). We may extrapolate that Stebbing would have pointed out that "this is a hand, and this hand is a logical construction out of permanent possibilities of sensation, therefore this hand is a mental object" is an

equally fallacious inference, brought on by a merely superficial similarity in grammatical form not mirrored in its logical form.

It follows that Stebbing was committed to the position that there can be no direct contradiction between common-sense truths about what in everyday language we call "material objects" and idealist analyses of them. As a result common-sense truths cannot provide a refutation of ontological idealism in philosophy, nor of idealist interpretations of physics. To suppose that they can is, by Stebbing's lights, to confuse levels, and to be caught up in a muddle about logical form. This conclusion may come as a surprise to those who view her as a Moorean common-sense philosopher and are aware that she rebutted idealist interpretations of physics in her *Philosophy and the Physicists*. But a closer look at *Philosophy and the Physicists* and its connection to Stebbing's overall philosophy of physics, developed over 18 years in a series of journal papers, reveals that Stebbing never relied on incompatibility between common sense and interpretations of physics. She saw clearly that other kinds of arguments against idealism were necessary.

D. Stebbing on Realism, Common Sense, and Metaphysics

By the 1910s, the two founders of the New Philosophy were heading in different directions concerning common-sense judgements and their reliability. Russell was increasingly driven by his desire for a scientific philosophy. He took the subjective certainty of common-sense judgements to be a dangerous quality of theirs, rendering them "irresistibly deceptive" (Russell 1914, 33), liable to entice us even after we have established their falsity. In short, Russell dismissed common sense as the metaphysics of the caveman (Janssen-Lauret and MacBride 2018, 53).

Russell's views stand in sharp contrast to Moore's, whom some commentators describe as holding a position "according to which our ordinary common-sense view of the world is largely correct" (Baldwin 2004, §6). As we have seen, historians of philosophy customarily classify

Stebbing as being on Moore's side, as did some of her contemporaries (Ayer 1977; Milkov 2003; Beaney and Chapman 2018 §3-4). But Stebbing resembled Russell, and differed from Moore, insofar as she was also on a quest to find a properly scientific philosophy. Her many papers on philosophy of physics reveal that she, like Russell and Whitehead, attached great importance to the project of finding a philosophy compatible with the new Einsteinian physics (Stebbing 1924, 1924-25, 1926a, 1928, 1929, 1942). This empiricist strand is still central to the analytic movement today. To Stebbing, her scientific philosophy was also vital to her rebuttal of idealism. These two strands of her thought, empiricist and anti-idealist, connect her both to the fledging New Philosophy and the naturalism of mid- and late analytic philosophy.

It is clear that Stebbing would not have endorsed Russell's blanket dismissal of common-sense judgements as prehistoric metaphysics. But there is textual evidence to suggest that she also opposed the position Baldwin ascribes to Moore, that 'our ordinary common-sense view of the world is largely correct'. I offer three reasons for ascribing to Stebbing a third view, original with her, rather than subsuming her position under what she calls Moore's "Common-Sense View" (Stebbing 1942, 523).

First, Stebbing was quite careful about which allegedly common-sensical judgements she accepted as truths. Like Whitehead and Russell, Stebbing sought a philosophy that could accommodate the sometimes counter-intuitive truths of general relativity. She was, in addition, well-versed in set theory (1930, 139-161). Her expertise in the philosophy of science and mathematics, then, implies that she could not have regarded statements like "nothing is the same size as its proper part" and "parallel lines never meet" as acceptable common-sense truths. While such statements may sound intuitive, platitudinous, or commonsensical, they are falsified by Dedekind's definition of the infinite and by the non-Euclidean geometry required by modern physics. So they cannot form the building blocks of an empiricist or naturalistic analytic philosophy

(MacBride and Janssen-Lauret 2015, 293). Moore never commented on whether he took such judgements to be part of our common-sense view of the world. Russell may well have had them in mind as "irresistibly deceptive" pseudo-truths. But Stebbing could not consistently have taken them as certain or true in their complete generality.

Textual evidence reveals that Stebbing was well aware of the above constraint. In her *Modern Introduction to Logic*, she remarked that "the common-sense conception of number is to a considerable extent based on intuitions derived from counting, whilst the operation of counting remains unanalysed. Consequently our conception of number is unduly restricted and unclear" (Stebbing 1930, 456). She also stated that we may explain "how the exact and tidy world of the physicist is connected with the fragmentary and untidy world of common sense [if we] demonstrate the applicability of abstract deductive systems to the world given in sense-experience" (Stebbing 1930, 452), and referred the reader to Whitehead's work for a detailed account of that sort.

When Stebbing set out her position on the relationship between the world given in sense experience and physics, she provided a conservative list of propositions she knew to be true, namely,

- (1) I am now seeing a red patch.
- (2) I am now perceiving a piece of blotting paper.
- (3) That is a piece of blotting paper.
- (4) That piece of blotting paper is on the table.
- (5) That piece of blotting paper was on the table before I saw it.
- (6) Other people besides myself have seen that piece of blotting paper (Stebbing 1929, 147).

Stebbing referred to the position that (1)-(6) above are true and known to be true, not as "the Common Sense View", but simply as "realism" (Stebbing 1929, 147). While there are certainly commonalities between her view and Moore's, there are also noticeable differences. One is that Stebbing stressed their role in science as well as philosophy, claiming "that facts such as those expressed in my six propositions can all be known, and that such facts are the basis upon which all scientific and philosophical speculation must rest" (Stebbing 1929, 147). Unlike Moore, Stebbing made clear that she saw philosophical and scientific inquiry as proceeding from the same modest range of truths about perceptual observations, the relationship of the observer to her perceptions, and her relationship to other observing subjects.

It follows from what I have just said that the denial of realism is inconsistent with the validity of physical theories, since all such theories are based upon the acceptance of propositions such as the six I have enumerated. I am quite aware that this statement conflicts with views held by many distinguished scientists. But it seems to me quite clear that theoretical physics has developed by the continual modification of common-sense views through a stage of what might be called perceptual science, and that unless perceptual science is true theoretical physics cannot be true (Stebbing 1929, 148).

A second difference between her and Moore is that Stebbing was acutely aware, and at pains to point out, that realism, in her sense, did not imply the negation of idealism in the ontological sense. Stebbing, when discussing idealism, took its negation to imply either materialism or dualism, or sometimes neutral monism. But realism, in her sense, she took to be a thesis about the truth of, and our knowledge of, statements like (1)-(6) above. Bradley's view, in addition to being ontologically idealist, was also, in Stebbing's sense, anti-realist. Stebbing, incidentally, concurred with the New Philosophers that such anti-realism could not really be argued with. But realism, in her sense, is not opposed to ontological idealism generally. Most varieties of ontological idealism

do not consist in rejecting (1)-(6); rather, they provide an idealist analysis of (1)-(6). There is, as she would later put it, a difference of levels. Stebbing asked,

But does physics give us any reason to suppose that propositions such as the six propositions I asserted above are false? I cannot see that it does. The first point to be emphasized is that *modern* physics has no particular relevance to the question.⁴ It has relevance to naive realism, which is a theory about the analysis of such propositions. Recent physical theories make it increasingly difficult to take the substance-attribute view upon which naive realism is based; moreover, they emphasize the fact that the world is infinitely more complex than common sense assumes." (Stebbing 1929, 147, her italics)

The last sentence of the above quotation reveals a third difference between Stebbing and Moore. It shows Stebbing explicitly denying that what "common sense assumes" is true across the board. Always courteous to Moore, she referenced his "Defence of Common Sense" in a footnote when distinguishing our knowledge of the propositions from their analysis. Yet she disavowed the Common Sense View, at least as Baldwin characterises it. It is clear that Stebbing also disavowed the position that the negation of most forms of ontological idealism, or the falsity of idealist interpretations of physics, follows immediately from any common-sense truths, or, as we might call them, realist truths. The falsity of Bradley's position might be so entailed. His would perhaps count as an "anti-realist" view by Stebbing's lights, denying that the accurate observation of some part of reality is possible, that distinguishing oneself from other observers to compare notes with is possible, that correct description of one's observations is possible. But the idealist interpretations of

⁴ Stebbing emphasised "modern" physics because she had just referenced Joad's sweeping thesis that modern physics is incompatible with realism generally. Stebbing was concerned to pointed out that modern physics was not only compatible with realism in her sense, but that it put no more pressure on her kind of realism than Newtonian physics did. Like Whitehead, Stebbing argued that the relevant difference was rather that Newtonian physics was compatible with naïve realism, but Einsteinian physics was not.

physics which Stebbing wished to refute accept (1)-(6) and related observations, but argue that upon further analysis they are best interpreted as describing a mental reality.

Stebbing, as we have seen, appears to have had a clear and consistent view on common-sense truths, or, as we may call them to distinguish them from Moore's range, "realist" or ordinary-language truths, from at least the late 1920s onwards. There is a well-delineated collection of truths about perception, mind, other minds, and external objects which form the basis of philosophical and scientific investigation; together these truths constitute "realism". They imply that there are multiple things and multiple minds, and those implied statements ought also be respected as realist truths. But they say nothing about the analysis or underlying nature of those things and those minds. They leave open possible analyses which claim that what ultimately accounts for their truth is that everything is made of matter, or everything is made of mind, or everything is made of both at the same time, or that mind and matter both exist and stand in complex relationships. There is some textual evidence to indicate that Moore's "Common Sense View" was less well-circumscribed than Stebbing's realism. Stebbing emphasised that "realist" truths did not imply the negation of idealism, and even stated, in the quotation above, that modern physics is at variance with what "common sense assumes". By contrast, Moore insisted that common sense tells us that most of the universe is unconscious, "we believe, I think no less certainly, that to the vast majority of material objects, *no* acts of consciousness are attached" (Moore 1953, 8, his italics). Such a statement does appear to force a conflict between common sense and the kind of panpsychist idealism Eddington sometimes gestured towards, " All through the physical world runs that unknown content, which must surely be

the stuff of our consciousness" (Eddington 1920, 200).⁵ Stebbing's case against Eddington rested on no comparable assumptions.

E. Metaphysics and Anti-Idealism in Stebbing's Philosophy of Science

Stebbing applied her novel methodology of metaphysics to good effect in her philosophy of science. In this last section I will sketch an argument, with some illustrations from her argument against Eddington in *Philosophy and the Physicists* and some from her journal papers, to indicate that Stebbing's method might succeed where Moore's had failed, providing a new and viable route towards the refutation of idealism. Not only would Stebbing have demurred from relying on any apparent conflict between idealist interpretations of physics and common sense, considering that style of argument a fallacious confusion of levels, she regarded many key arguments in favour of idealist interpretations of physics as themselves resting on similar confusions of levels.

Rebutting idealist interpretations individually in Stebbing's way is of necessity a piecemeal business. Yet Stebbing held out hope for progress to be made by her methods, and in addition recommended a naturalistic attitude towards the relationship between science and philosophy. Even though idealist interpretations of physics did not seem promising to her, she held that in the end the question of idealism, materialism, or dualism ought to be settled by a division of labour between practitioners of different sciences plus well-informed philosophers of science,

⁵ In fairness to Moore, I note that his statement quoted above dates from a series of lectures which he himself never sought to publish, and which were brought to publication by John Wisdom some forty years after Moore gave them. It might also be fair to say that the statement might possibly be interpreted in a way compatible with Stebbing's constraints, e.g. as saying that at the level of ordinary language, we call rocks and stars non-conscious because they are not conscious in the same way humans and animals are. Still, there is a major contrast between this statement of Moore's and Stebbing's claims quoted above about the "unduly restricted" common-sense conception of number and "the fragmentary and untidy world of common sense" (Stebbing 1930, 456, 452).

it seems to me quite clear that the new physics does not imply idealism. Neither, however, does it imply materialism ... There are problems in plenty to be dealt with concerning the inter-connexions of mental and bodily activity, but none of these problems are in any way affected by developments in physics. To pursue this topic further it would be necessary to consider in detail the various abstractions by means of which we are able to divide 'the sciences' up, assigning some problems to physicists, some to chemists, some to biochemists, some to physiologists, and some to psychologists (Stebbing 1942, 184).

A full account of Stebbing's philosophy of physics, or even the whole of her case against Eddington, is beyond the scope of this paper. I will concentrate on an illustrative case, namely the parallel between Stebbing's distinction of levels, the consequent dissolution of the "paradoxical" sound Moore ascribes to idealist analyses, and Stebbing's forceful argument against Eddington's "two tables". Eddington had maintained that every familiar object has a "shadow" object in the world of physics. Eddington had argued as follows, "Two tables! Yes, there are duplicates of every object about me ... One of them has been familiar to me from earliest years ... it has extension, it is comparatively permanent; it is coloured; above all, it is substantial ... Table No. 2 is my scientific table ... There is nothing substantial about my second table. It is nearly all empty space" (Eddington 1928, xi-xii).

In a similar vein, Eddington also claimed that, being made of a swarm of particles, a plank in the floor of his study had "no solidity" (Eddington 1928, 342). Stebbing made short shrift of Eddington's reasoning, which she considered to be a confusion putting ordinary-language observational truths on a level with proposed analyses. According to Stebbing, "Nothing but confusion can result if, in one and the same sentence, we mix up language used appropriately for the furniture of the earth and our daily dealings with it with language used for the purpose of philosophical and scientific discussion" (Stebbing 1937, 42); reasoning like Eddington's provides no

grounds either for positing an additional "scientific" or "shadow" table, or for abjuring ordinary-language claims about the existence of tables, or about their solidity.

Eddington's "two tables" passage constitutes a much more obviously bad argument than Moore's hesitation about admitting a "paradoxical" idealist analysis. To begin with, Eddington posited both the ordinary-language object and the analysis. He claimed outright to be sitting down to write his book at both tables at once (Eddington 1928, xi) and repeatedly stressed that he meant his statements about "a spiritual world alongside the physical world" (Eddington 1928, 288, see also *ibid.*, 109) literally. Yet there is some resemblance between Moore's argument and Eddington's, and Stebbing's metaphysical system of levels is able to defang both. Stebbing began by pointing out that if the predicate "is solid" cannot be applied to a plank of wood in a well-maintained floor, we lose all grip on our ordinary-language usage of such words (Stebbing 1937, 51). As Chapman rightly points out, another difference between Moore and Stebbing is that Moore was largely concerned with the certain truth of whole sentences, while Stebbing paid closer attention to patterns of usage, and the application of ordinary-language terms. Still, Stebbing might be seen as making a Moorean move here, insisting that we do know that our own dependable study floors and writing tables are solid. Yet Stebbing also made further moves which appear to put into practice her metaphysical analysis, distinguishing it sharply from the linguistic and from the level of common sense.

Stebbing argued that the scientific truth "this table is mostly empty space plus some subatomic particles" constitutes an admissible analysis of "this table is solid". This remains the case, she argued, even if it does have an air of analytic falsehood about it. The air of analytic falsehood, she contended, is merely illusory. She diagnosed its roots as lying in a confusion of levels plus mistaken, reflexively held beliefs about the nature of analysis, which upon further examination rest on outdated models of science. First, "the physicist is is not, in fact, concerned with tables" (Stebbing 1937, 54). The physicist is, rather, concerned with forming a theory which is

based in the first instance on a "realist" base of observations of tables and the like, but which ultimately provides an analysis which specifies what kinds of things in the world it takes for us to have those observations. Second, "this is solid, therefore it is not mostly empty space" is true at the level of ordinary language, insofar as a floor or desk which is visibly mostly empty space in the sense that it has large holes in it, is not solid. Yet Eddington maintained that his perfectly functional study floor and writing table failed to be solid because they consisted mostly of empty space at the subatomic level. Stebbing patiently pointed out that this is a fallacy. Why would a scientist assume that whenever something is solid, all or most of its smallest constitutive parts are solid? Russell might have vituperated that assumption as an "irresistibly deceptive" pseudo-truth of common sense. But Stebbing saw the matter differently. She pointed out that the nineteenth-century model of atoms portrayed them as little hard billiard-balls, which were thought to satisfy the ordinary-language predicate "is solid". Stebbing concluded that "it would be more appropriate to say that the modern physicist no longer believes that the table consists of solid atomic balls, than to say that 'the table no longer possesses solid reality'" (Stebbing 1937, 54).

A metaphysical or scientific analysis which offers up a collection of facts that jointly account for the truth of a sentence ought not to be dismissed because it sounds surprising, or even has an air of analytic falsehood about it. A posteriori discoveries are often surprising, and often do not simply follow the lines laid down by a previous, more limited body of knowledge. Analyses provided by the natural sciences may well have an appearance of analytic falsehood. According to Stebbing, this should not deter us from embracing them as true analyses of the original ordinary-language judgement. Stebbing had been pressing this style of argument for some years beforehand. She put forward a version of it in 1929, in reply to C. E. M. Joad: "Mr Joad seems to argue that there cannot be two worlds both of which are real, and that, consequently, the world of common sense is not real. Hence, he concludes, realism is a mistake. The mistake surely lies in this initial

setting of two worlds in opposition between which we are forced to choose" (1929, 151-152).

Stebbing, instead, took the Whiteheadian line that "since science grows out of, and returns to, the world of common sense, there must be a precise connexion between the 'neat, trim tidy, exact world which is the goal of science' and the untidy and fragmentary world of common sense" (Stebbing 1930, 447). Setting up two worlds in opposition blocks the connection she and Whitehead sought.

F. Conclusion

Stebbing, I have shown, made a significant advance both on Moore and on logical atomism by distinguishing "same-level", language-to-language, analyses, which explicate an expression in terms of further expressions, from metaphysical, directional analyses, which aim at revealing the basic facts, the ultimate components of analysis which account for the truth or falsity of a sentence.

Unlike Moore, Stebbing made clear that metaphysical analysis may perfectly well sound paradoxical, because it involves significant assertions about reality, which ultimately settles truth or falsity (Stebbing 1932, 89). Once we separate the project of intra-linguistic analysis, which may yield synonymy, from the non-analytic, reality-directed project of determining what they are ultimately about, the paradox of analysis is solved, and a clearer path towards the rebuttal of idealist analyses lies open. Such analyses are defective not because they are at odds with common sense, but because they themselves often tend to confuse the level of language-to-language analysis with directional analysis at a level of greater simplicity (Stebbing 1937, 54).

A reading of Stebbing as a Moorean common-sense philosopher, I have argued, gives her insufficient credit for her originality. First of all, Stebbing's overall philosophical project was much broader than Moore's common-sense philosophy. Unlike Moore, she made crucial contributions to the strand of early analytic thought which aimed to build a scientifically informed philosophy fit for the new science and mathematics of the age. While Stebbing spoke very respectfully of Moore and

expressed agreement with him more often, and disagreement more rarely, than with Russell and Wittgenstein, her substantial agreement with Whitehead and her incorporation of Whiteheadian ideas in her philosophical system have thus far been overlooked. Stebbing's position on metaphysical analysis, on my interpretation, improves upon Moore's and provides a clearer route towards the foundational project of the earliest stages of analytic philosophy, namely overcoming idealism.

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