Neutralism and Conceptual Engineering[1]

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1. Paradox and Conceptual Engineering with Concepts.

Conceptual Engineering *with concepts* is the view that philosophical problems arise because our concepts are defective in some way. Fixing such problems involves suitably revising our concepts or replacing them with new and better surrogates.[2] When it comes to paradoxes, the source of such puzzles is taken to stem from *inconsistent concepts.* Roughly, these are concepts which are governed via conflicting rules—rules which, if sufficiently pressed, give incompatible instructions as to when to apply the concept. Philosophical progress on paradox consists in revising such concepts such that they are no longer inconsistent, or in replacing such concepts with consistent concepts. Once we do so, our most intractable paradoxes will disappear, or so goes the thought.

2. Paradox and Conceptual Engineering without Concepts.

Conceptual Engineering, despite its name, need not (and perhaps should not) invoke concepts. Conceptual Engineering *without concepts* is the view that philosophical problems arise because our words have defective meanings. Fixing such problems involves suitably improving the meanings of our words or replacing these words with new and better surrogates.[3] With respect to paradoxes, the source of such puzzles is taken to stem from *inconsistent words.* Roughly, these are words which are governed via conflicting rules—rules which, if sufficiently pressed, give incompatible instructions as to when to apply the word. Philosophical progress on paradox consists in suitably revising the meanings (and use) of

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[1] I should say from the outset that I don't have much sympathy for Conceptual Engineering. In Greenough ms1, I argue that prescriptive philosophy does not consist in revising or replacing our concepts and/or the meanings of our words. Rather, we merely need to revise or replace our ideas, beliefs, theories, and conceptions, about the things picked out by those words. *Conception Engineering* is all we really need. The main goal here is not to criticise or defend Conceptual Engineering, but rather show that Conceptual Engineers can (and should) help themselves to *Neutralism.*

[2] Candidate Conceptual Engineers include: Tarski (1944), Carnap (1950), Deleuze and Guattari (1991), Schiffer (1996, 2003, 2004), Scharp (2007, 2013), Burgess and Plunkett (2013a, 2013b), Burgess (2014), Eklund (2015), Thomasson (2016), Diaz-Leon (2017), Simion (2017). Haslanger (2000, 2005, 2006, 2012) is usually taken to be a paradigm Conceptual Engineer when really she is merely a *Conception* Engineer.

[3] For Cappelen (2018), the Conceptual Engineer should aim to improve our representational devices (words and thoughts). (See also Sider 2014; Leslie 2017.) On the Cappelen view, (inconsistent) concepts drop out of the picture; inconsistent words do not. Call such a view: *Semantic Engineering.* Conceptual Ethics (Burgess and Plunkett 2013a, 2013b; Plunkett and Sundell 2013; Plunkett 2015, 2016), which is broader in scope than Conceptual Engineering, can also take place with or without concepts.

inconsistent words so as to make these words have a consistent usage/meaning, or in replacing an inconsistent word with a word which is not governed by conflicting rules of use. Once we do so, our most intractable paradoxes will disappear, or so goes the thought.

3. Happy-Face Treatments.

Conceptual Engineers often invoke a distinction between *happy-face* and *unhappy-face* solutions to paradoxes.[4] Happy-face solutions involve identifying and rejecting some false or invalid principle ("the culprit") used in the generation of some paradox (and also explaining why we were initially taken in by this culprit).[5] These treatments are thoroughly *specific:* they isolate a single, basic culprit—no further more specific principle is to blame.

4. Unhappy-Face Treatments.

Unhappy-face solutions, meanwhile, are thoroughly *non-specific:* they merely establish the collective guilt attaching to the group of principles which together produce the paradox. When unhappy-face treatments succeed in suitably revising or replacing one or more defective concepts at work in some paradox then that yields a *weak* unhappy-face solution. Sometimes, a conceptual revision or replacement is out of the question—the cure may be worse than the disease.[6] The best that can be hoped for is a kind of palliative conceptual care—a *strong* unhappy-face treatment.[7] According to the standard version of this taxonomy, Conceptual Engineering can only occur via weak unhappy-face solutions and not via happy-face treatments.

5. What's the News?

> *News Item One*: A new taxonomy is needed which allows for both Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering, and two forms of Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering. The first is *The Indeterminate Concept View*, whereby it is indeterminate, and so unknowable, which principle is the culprit.[8] The second is *The Indiscriminable Concept View*, whereby our limited powers of conceptual discrimination make it infeasible to identify the culprit.

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[4] This taxonomy is due to Schiffer (1996, 2003, 2004) and has been co-opted by other Conceptual Engineers such as Scharp (2013). Cook (2013) and Cuonzo (2014) also use it in their accounts of paradox.

[5] A paradox may involve more than one false or invalid principle. I will ignore this point in what follows. The apt terminology of "culprit" is taken from Eklund (2002).

[6] See Chihara (1979) on Tarski.

[7] Schiffer (2003) thinks that the problem of free-will requires a strong unhappy-face response, while Scepticism (Schiffer 2004) and the sorites paradox (Schiffer 2003) require weak unhappy-face treatments. In what follows, I will focus on weak unhappy-face treatments.

[8] Schiffer (1996, 2003, 2004), and Eklund (2002b) are the two most overt defenders of this view.

News Item Two: Happy-face treatments (whether effective or not) are pretty rare—they represent a kind of limit case.

News Item Three: Unhappy-face treatments (whether effective or not) are also rather rare—they also represent a kind of limit case.

News Item Four: Between these limit cases are treatments which are neither maximally specific nor maximally unspecific. These intermediate treatments can nonetheless be *specific enough* to effectively treat a paradox. For example, a solution may be specific enough to tell us that the conjunction of two premises of the paradox is false, but not specific enough to tell us which one of these premises is false—they remain suitably silent, and so neutral, on this issue.

News Item Five: Such intermediate treatments become more thoroughly neutral when they reject some principle at work in a paradox from a theory-neutral perspective. With respect to various forms of sceptical paradoxes for example, we can give effective remedies which merely use relatively lightweight and fairly uncontentious theoretical claims about knowledge (and evidence). The upshot is *Neutralism*—the view that philosophical progress can take place when (and sometimes only when) a thoroughly neutral, non-specific theory, treatment, or method is adopted.[9]

News Item Six: Neutralism is available to the Conceptual Engineer and the Semantic Engineer.

6. The Test-Bed of Philosophical Theory.

Philosophical puzzles and paradoxes yield a kind of test-bed for philosophical theory. Adapting some remarks of Russell, we may say that:

> A logical [or philosophical] theory may be tested by its capacity for dealing with puzzles, and it is a wholesome plan, in thinking about [philosophical questions], to stock the mind with as many puzzles as possible, since these serve much the same purpose as is served by experiments in physical science.[10]

That is, if your favoured philosophical theory of X cannot address the relevant puzzles and paradoxes which centrally involve X, then your theory is akin to a scientific theory which cannot accommodate the experimental data. This is important because, at one extreme, there are prominent Conceptual Engineers (and philosophers more generally) who think that puzzles and paradoxes do not (or should not) play any central role in philosophy. At the other extreme, there are some philosophers who think that paradoxes exhaust the main business of

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[9] For intimations of Neutralism see Greenough (2002; 2003). See Greenough (2018) for an application of Neutralism to the Observational Sorites Paradox. See Greenough (ms2) for the developed view.

[10] Russell (1905), pp. 484-5.

philosophy.[11] Russell's point is that an intermediate position is called for whereby paradoxes remain central.

7. The Standard Account of Paradox.

Standardly conceived, a paradox is an argument that proceeds via seemingly valid reasoning from seemingly true premises to a seemingly false conclusion.[12] Relatedly, a paradox is an argument that proceeds via plausible reasoning from plausible premises to an implausible conclusion.

8. A Flaw.

Despite being pretty widespread, the standard account has an immediate flaw. Once a (typical) subject notes that the premises of some argument are part of a putative paradox then they may (but need not) reasonably retract their original judgment that the premises are plausible, the reasoning plausible, and the conclusion implausible—they may reasonably sit on the fence until they have worked out what is going wrong. Still, the argument remains a paradox all the while—contrary to what is predicted by the standard account. Equally, once a subject has been exposed to some promising solution for long enough then they may no longer find, for example, that a certain premise in the proof is plausible (or seems true). Again, the argument remains a paradox all the while—contrary to the standard account.[13]

9. The Standard Account Tweaked.

Properly understood, a paradox is an argument that proceeds via reasoning which seems *initially* to be valid, from premises which seem *initially* to be true, to a conclusion which seems *initially* to be false. Relatedly, a paradox is an argument that proceeds via *initially* plausible reasoning from *initially* plausible premises to an *initially* implausible conclusion.[14]

10. Treating Paradox: The Standard Account.

It is also part of the standard view that a good treatment of a paradox must do at least two things:

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[11] Sorensen (2003).

[12] See Mackie (1973); cf. Sainsbury (2009).

[13] Equally, is is sometimes said that putative paradoxes for which we have a solution are not paradoxes proper. That's not a good way to think about paradoxes. We don't speak of diseases for which we have a cure as not being diseases proper.

[14] Cf. Schiffer's useful formulation whereby "a paradox is a set of apparently mutually incompatible propositions each one of which enjoys some non-negligible [or better: high] degree of plausibility *when considered on its own*" (Schiffer 2003, my italics).

(1) Provide good reason to: reject some basic premise in the paradoxical proof; or, reject some basic rule of inference; or, reject some basic presupposition(s) of the proof; or, give good reason to "bite the bullet" and endorse the conclusion. Here the culprit is basic in the sense that there is no more specific culprit to be be found.

(2) Explain why we were so initially susceptible to the paradox—despite the faults isolated in (1). That is, explain how and why we found the premises, rules of inference, or presuppositions, so *initially* plausible. Or, if biting the bullet, we must explain why the conclusion struck us as so *initially* implausible despite being true/acceptable after all.

It is clear that this standard view is an account of how to give a happy-face treatment.

11. Treating Paradox: A Third Desideratum.

Something important is missing from the standard account. Suppose we have some particularly stubborn, intractable paradox. It's one thing to provide an explanation as to why we were initially seduced by this paradox; it's potentially quite another thing to explain why this paradox has proved to be so tricky to treat. We thus need to distinguish two properties of paradoxical arguments: *contagiousness* (the easy-to-catch property), which is covered by desideratum (2) above, and *intractability* (the hard-to-cure property). These may come apart both ways. Just because it is easy to be initially seduced by some paradox does not entail that some resolution will be hard to find—perhaps our faulty thinking is perfectly natural but easy to correct once noticed. Equally, perhaps it takes a while for some paradox to get a grip; but, once it does so, it proves very difficult to dislodge. Given this, a complete response to some intractable paradox must also answer the following questions:

(3)   Why has this long-standing paradox proved to be so intractable? More generally: Why are intractable paradoxes intractable?

This third desideratum will come into greater relief below.

12. Inconsistent Concepts.

To make sense of philosophical puzzles and paradox, Conceptual Engineers (who deploy concepts) place the notion of an *inconsistent concept* centre-stage. On the most prevalent conception, inconsistent concepts are concepts whose conceptual principles cannot all be true.[15] Given classical logic, it follows that one or more conceptual principles for the concept is /are false.[16] A cartoon example is the concept of *blair* whose conceptual principles include: x is a blair if x is a chair; x is not a blair if x is blue. Thus, these conceptual principles entail something contingently false: there are no blue chairs. Other inconsistent concepts have conceptual principles which entail something necessarily false. Take the invented concept

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[15] See Eklund (2002a), Scharp (2013).

[16] The most prominent forms of Conceptual Engineering (with concepts) retain classical logic.

tallster which has the two conceptual principles: x is a tallster if x is taller than 2m in height; x is not a tallster if x is less than 2.1m in height. According to this concept, someone who is 2.05m in height is both a tallster and not a tallster. Since this cannot be true then at least one of these conceptual principles must be false (given classical logic).

13. Concepts and Conceptual Principles.

What are conceptual principles? Say that concepts are constituted by conceptual principles, where a principle is a conceptual principle for a concept C if and only if S's understanding C entails that S bears relation X to this principle. The epistemic version of this view says that X is the knowledge relation; the justificationist version says that X is the justified belief relation; the doxastic version says that X is the belief relation; the dispositional view says that X is the disposed to believe relation.[17] We will mostly be concerned with the latter dispositional view.

14. Why are Certain Paradoxes so Contagious and/or Intractable?

Why do we get so caught up in paradoxes? Candidate diagnoses include: easily confusing one principle with another, oversight, ignorance, intellectual prejudice, over-generalisation, and the hasty use of false theory. The Conceptual Engineer, meanwhile, is able to offer a very different kind of diagnosis, at least for the most obstinate paradoxes: our mastery of these concepts explains why the paradox is both initially seductive (contagious) and hard to treat (intractable). Such mastery disposes us to accept the conceptual principles for the concept in question—even when one of these conceptual principles is false.

15. Can the Conceptual Engineer Embrace Happy-Face Treatments?

The happy-face/unhappy-face taxonomy, as standardly presented, is incomplete and misleading: it entails that the Conceptual Engineer cannot avail themselves of happy-face solutions. Here the standard thought is something like: "A happy-face approach to paradox is just the traditional, purely descriptive approach to paradox. Conceptual Engineering, meanwhile, calls for a prescriptive approach. Hence, Conceptual Engineering can only involve unhappy-face solutions". That runs together two independent axes of paradox: the descriptive/prescriptive axis with the happy-face/unhappy-face axis. Conceptual defects can be non-specific (a collective defect) or specific (an individual defect); either way, Conceptual Engineering can be used to fix the problem. Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering is thus an eminently live option.[18]

16. Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering.

We can summarise the components of *Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering* as follows:

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[17] Eklund (2002) defends the dispositional view. See fn.22 for Scharp's view.

[18] Though see §33 below.

Component One: Isolate the basic culprit. Give sufficient reason to think some basic premise or rule of inference or presupposition invoked in a paradox is false or invalid; or, give sufficient reason to "bite the bullet" and endorse the conclusion. Thus, the derivation of the unacceptable conclusion is blocked (or the conclusion turns out to be acceptable). If no more specific culprit is to blame then you have found the basic culprit.

Component Two: Explain contagiousness. Mastery of the concepts deployed in the proof disposes us to accept all the conceptual principles (including the culprit) which feature as premises or rules of inference or presuppositions in the proof: our conceptual competence pulls us into the paradox.[19]

Component Three: Explain intractability. Any (initially) promising solution to a paradox entails that we must give up on some particular conceptual principle deployed in the proof. Since our competence with the relevant concept strongly disposes us to accept such a principle then that makes all promising solutions hard to swallow—even when we have succeeded in isolating the culprit. Thus, the paradox is tricky to treat.

Component Four: Revise or replace.[20] To prevent the paradox from returning we need to either suitably revise one of the concepts deployed in the proof so that this concept is no longer inconsistent.[21] Or, if engaging in conceptual replacement, we need to ensure that the surrogate concept does not give rise to a related paradox.[22]

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[19] The terminology of "pull" is from Eklund (2002a).

[20] See Greenough (ms1) for an evaluation as to whether, and in what way, this really is an essential feature of Conceptual Engineering.

[21] See Richard (2018) for a view which permits concepts to evolve.

[22] Has Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering been embraced by contemporary Conceptual Engineers (who accept concepts)? As it turns out, no Conceptual Engineer (that I know) explicitly endorses the view. Eklund (2002a) seems to endorse the first three components of Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering, but not the fourth. On Eklund's view, inconsistent concepts are not in need of revision or replacement. Eklund thus does not subscribe to Conceptual Engineering. Eklund (2015, 2017) is much more amenable to Conceptual Engineering (for moral concepts) but not because such concepts are inconsistent. Spicer (2008) and Weiner (2009) take the concept of knowledge to be inconsistent, but neither recommend revision or replacement. Fassio and McKenna (2015), meanwhile, sponsor a mild kind of revisionism for the concept of knowledge. Scharp (2013), meanwhile, comes close to endorsing Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering, but he does not accept that mastery of a concept requires that a subject be (initially) disposed to accept the conceptual principles for that concept. That is because Scharp (2013) accepts the arguments given in Williamson (2006) that competence with a concept does not require that a subject be disposed to accept any candidate conceptual principles for that concept. So, Scharp, does not endorse the second and third components of Conceptual Engineering. Rather, Scharp thinks that a subject who is competent with some concept is merely *entitled to believe* the conceptual principles for that concept. (The notion of entitlement deployed is taken from Burge (1992).) Scharp's view has an immediate cost: it cannot straightforwardly explain the contagiousness and intractability properties of typical paradoxes via the notion of conceptual competence. One answer is to hold that philosophical paradoxes are meant to be formulated so as to apply to some typical or normal or idealised subject. Perhaps a case can be made that such a subject, if competent, *is* disposed to accept the conceptual principles for that concept. Such a fix would enable Scharp to embrace Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering.

Let's now turn to unhappy-face treatments and see if they are needed in addition to, or in place of, happy-face treatments.

17. The Indeterminate Concept View: The Non-Specific Version.

Recall that unhappy-face solutions merely establish a kind of collective guilt attaching to the group of principles which, taken together, produce some paradox: not only can we not isolate a single, basic culprit, we cannot even exclude any principle at work in the paradox from suspicion of guilt. Why is this so? On what may be termed *The Indeterminate Concept View*, it is indeterminate which principle in the set of principles which gives rise to the paradox is false —and it is indeterminate which conceptual principles in this set are true. Given the standard view of indeterminacy, under which indeterminacy precludes knowledge, we cannot, as a matter of metaphysical necessity, know that some principle in the paradoxical proof is false; nor indeed can we isolate any true principles.[23]

18. The Indeterminate Concept View: The Gappy Version.

What model of indeterminacy could make sense of the view that inconsistent concepts have conceptual principles which are indeterminate in truth-value? One immediate proposal is that all the conceptual principles for some inconsistent concept (used to derive a contradiction in some paradox) are neither true nor false. This provides an immediate explanation as to why we can't know which principle is false: propositions which lack truth-values cannot be known. Some paradoxes are such that they involve no guilty (false) conceptual principles, and they are such that they involve no innocent (true) conceptual principles either.

19. The Excess Baggage Objection.

Truth-value gaps are not something that every Conceptual Engineer will be happy to take on board as an essential piece of kit from the outset—Conceptual Engineering was not supposed to be some kind of niche doctrine. Furthermore, one key motivation to introduce inconsistent concepts into a theory of paradox in the first place was that it enables us to preserve classical logic and classical semantics. On a gappy way of understanding indeterminate concepts, that attractive feature is lost. Call that *The Excess Baggage Objection*.

20. The Overkill Objection.

On the gappy version of the Indeterminate Concept View, all the conceptual principles deployed in some paradoxical proof are neither true nor false—and so not true. It is just this

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[23] Schiffer (1996, p. 330) notes that even omniscient beings cannot know which element of an inconsistent ("glitchy") concept is false.

feature that blocks the paradox.[24] Yet, that's a kind of overkill because the untruth of just one of these principles would be enough to block the derivation. Call that *The Overkill Problem*.

21. The Symmetry Argument.

At the root of the Indeterminate Concept View is some kind of symmetry argument: when a set of conceptual principles is used in some paradoxical derivation then we should treat these principles as relevantly symmetrical—they are all equally guilty, as it were, in the derivation of the contradiction. In the simple case, where an inconsistent concept has just two such conceptual principles, then the grounds for accepting one principle (somehow) cancel out the grounds for accepting the other. But that does not mean that both principles are false—just that these grounds are not sufficiently strong to make either principle true. So, both these principles are neither true nor false.

22. The Indeterminate Concept View: The Classical Version.

As it turns out, such symmetry considerations need not threaten bivalence. An alternative model of indeterminacy allows that some propositions can be either true or false but nothing grounds the truth-value that they have.[25] This alternative version of the Indeterminate Concept View entails that inconsistent concepts will have at least one false conceptual principle. However, since indeterminacy precludes knowledge, we will never be able to find out just which one is false.[26] That goes some way to addressing the Excess Baggage Worry because bivalence may be retained on an Indeterminate Concept View. It also addresses the Overkill Problem because only one principle in the set of conceptual principles used in the paradoxical derivation is false (the rest are true).

23. Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering via The Indeterminate Concept View.

Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering (via the Indeterminate Concept View) can thus be summarised as follows:

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[24] Schiffer is pretty quiet about this feature of his view. Perhaps because a further worry soon emerges: if all the conceptual principles for some inconsistent concept are neither true nor false, and so absolutely unknowable, then, to use his own words back at him, "I think we would have heard about it by now." On that score, Schiffer (1996) is very keen to show that contextualism about "knows" is committed to an implausible error theory whereby alert competent subjects fail to to see that "knows" is context-sensitive. Given that worry, however, how come alert, competent subjects fail to see that the conceptual principles for some ordinary concept are indeterminate in truth-value? Ironically, Schiffer also seems committed to an implausible error theory. See Kindermann and Greenough (2017) for the idea that everybody has an error-theory of some sort.

[25] See Greenough (2008) which builds on Sorensen (2001).

[26] Eklund (2002b, 2006) endorses a version of the Indeterminate Concept View when he says (of the liar paradox): "it is *likely* that it is indeterminate just where the liar reasoning goes wrong. But still, somewhere there is an untrue assumption or invalid step." (2002b, p. 323, my italics).

Component One: Explain why a happy-face solution is not available. A happy-face treatment is not available because all the conceptual principles used in the paradox are equi-culpable. As such, they are each indeterminate in truth-value: they are either gappy (on the truth-value gap version), or, they are either true or false but it is indeterminate which (on the classical version). Either way, the derivation is blocked.

Component Two: Explain contagiousness. Mastery of all the concepts deployed in the proof disposes us to accept all the conceptual principles which feature as premises or rules of inference or presuppositions in the proof. This explains why the paradox was so contagious from the outset: our very understanding of the words used in the proof pulls us to accept a set of incompatible propositions.

Component Three: Explain intractability. The paradox is *absolutely* intractable because we have been looking for a happy-face solution when it is metaphysically impossible to find one. (See Component One.)

Component Four: Revise or replace. To prevent the paradox from returning we need to either suitably revise our concepts so that the conceptual principles deployed in the proof no longer, when taken together, entail a contradiction.[27] Or, if engaging in conceptual replacement, we need to ensure that the surrogate concepts do not themselves give rise to a related paradox.

24. Absolute versus Relative Intractability.

Should a Conceptual Engineer allow for both Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering and Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering (via the Indeterminate Concept View)? One reason to do so would because there are two basic types of paradox: those where it is feasible to find a culprit; and those where it is not (metaphysically) possible to isolate any guilty or innocent principles. The former paradoxes exhibit *relative* intractability whereby what blocks the route to uncovering the culprit is some contingent feature of us, our language, our methods, our concepts, our conceptual competence, and so on. Resolving such paradoxes may require some Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering or some more descriptive resolution of paradox. The latter paradoxes are *absolutely* intractable. Are there any such paradoxes?

25. Paradoxes as Stress-Tests.

Paradoxes are akin to stress-testing a complex machine—where the aim is to uncover faults in the design (rather than reveal manufacturing faults in the particular machine being tested). Such a test may reveal that, if sufficiently pressed, the machine malfunctions. That malfunction may be due to the design of a single component—the other components are simply enabling features of the malfunction rather than contributory causes of the defect.[28] In other stress-tests, it may make little sense to speak of a single, faulty component. If an internal combustion

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[27] See Richard (2018) for a view which permits concepts to evolve.

[28] In another design of machine, that component may work perfectly well.

engine misfires at low revs that may be due to a confluence of factors involving several features of the design—there will be a kind of collective culpability at work. In such cases, there is no single (best) remedy, but rather various ways in which one or more features of the engine can be altered in order to address the problem.[29] This analogy suggests that we should be very open to the possibility of Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering.

26. The Master Argument.

It's one thing to be open to the possibility of Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering, quite another to think that some, many, or even most, of our most stubborn philosophical paradoxes require an unhappy-face treatment. The challenge here is that Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering is merely a fall-back approach—one to be adopted after a Happy-Face approach has been thoroughly exhausted. It turns out that advocates of the Indeterminate Concept View do indeed think that Happy-Face treatments have had their day with respect to most (and perhaps nearly all) of our most stubborn paradoxes. Their master argument goes something like this: we've looked long and hard for the culprits in our most stubborn paradoxes; we've not been able to find them; what best explains this is that such paradoxes are absolutely intractable—it is indeterminate just which principle is the culprit in some paradox.[30]

27. The Imperialism Objection.

It's far too hasty to assume that all the main work has been done as regards finding some (suitably) specific treatment to some long-standing paradox. Perhaps philosophy is merely in its infancy (as I am inclined to think). New philosophical theories continue to spring up. Old theories are still getting reworked. To think that *right now*, and *only* right now, in the 21st Century, are we sufficiently enlightened so as to recognise that various long-standing paradoxes require us to posit indeterminacy to make sense of their intractability is unduly imperialistic. Call that *The Imperialism Objection.*

28. The Indiscriminable Concept View.

Furthermore, a complete taxonomy of paradoxes should countenance an additional species of paradox whereby while it is metaphysically possible to locate the culprit in some long-standing, stubborn paradox, it is simply not feasible to do so. Here the thought is that the conceptual principles at work in some (stubborn) paradox are indeed relevantly symmetrical—but only in the sense that we are unable to discriminate the false/invalid conceptual principle from the

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[29] More typically, attribution of fault will be a matter of degree.

[30] Schiffer sponsors just this kind of argument when he says: "That no classical philosophical problem, including the sorites, yet has a happy-face solution is attested to by the fact that we are still debating each one of them." (2003, ch.5) And: "Philosophers have been debating the problem of free will for centuries, and they are still debating it, with philosophers lined up behind each of the solutions in logical space. If the problem of free will had a happy-face solution, I think we would have heard about it by now." (2004, p.179). (I suspect that something like this argument also underlies Eklund's advocacy of the Indeterminate Concept View.)

true/valid ones. That is, one of these principles is false alright but they are similar enough to each other in their role in our thought and understanding such that our limited powers of (conceptual) discrimination are unable to discern which principle is false. And so many, or indeed most, stubborn paradoxes are not absolutely intractable—an omniscient being, or perhaps even a superior being who is hard-wired differently from ourselves, would be able to uncover the culprit. Call that *The Indiscriminable Concept View.*[31] We can now summarise a third kind of Conceptual Engineering.

29. Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering via The Indiscriminable Concept View.

Component One: Explain why a happy-face solution is not available. A happy-face treatment is not available because the conceptual principles used in the paradox are sufficiently symmetrical such that we are unable to discriminate the true conceptual principles deployed from the false one. Still, the paradox is blocked because we know that one of the conceptual principles deployed is false—it is just not feasible (for us) to work out which one.

Component Two: Explain contagiousness. Same as for the Indeterminate Concept View.

Component Three: Explain intractability. The paradox is intractable because we have been looking for a happy-face solution when it is not feasible to give one. (See Component One.)

Component Four: Revise or replace. To prevent the paradox from returning we need to either suitably revise our concepts so that the conceptual principles deployed in the proof no longer, when taken together, entail a contradiction. Or, if engaging in conceptual replacement, we need to ensure that the surrogate concepts do not themselves give rise to a related paradox.

30. The Imperialism Objection Again.

Why think that our most stubborn paradoxes require treatment via the version of Conceptual Engineering just given? The Indiscriminable Concept View is also motivated via (a version of) the master argument given above: we've looked long and hard for the culprits in our most stubborn paradoxes; we've not been able to find them; what best explains this is our limited powers of conceptual discrimination—these make it infeasible (for us) to uncover the culprit. But this argument also suffers from a form of the Imperialism Objection given above: To think that *right now*, and *only* right now, in the 21st Century, have we achieved sufficient philosophical enlightenment to realise that it is not feasible for creatures like us to discover the culprit in some stubborn paradox is unduly imperialistic.

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[31] There is really a family of Indiscriminable Concept Views depending on just how feasible it is to discover the culprit. One prominent member of this family is Mysterianism, the view that creatures like us will never be able to find the culprit in some paradox (cf. McGinn 1993, p. 31).

31. Which Form of Conceptual Engineering Wins Out?

Given the above discussion, does Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering win out? That's a bit too hasty. Instead, the Conceptual Engineer is better off acknowledging that they are not in a good enough position to say whether some long-standing, stubborn paradox calls for Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering or calls for Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering. In the meantime, they are free to propose both kinds of treatment. Only when they have collected various treatments of both types will an answer begin to emerge as to whether Happy-Face Conceptual Engineering is called for.

32. A Happy-Face Treatment?

As it turns out, the discussion so far presents the Conceptual Engineer with a false choice: choose Happy-Face or choose Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering (or choose to pursue both kinds of approach). Most treatments of paradox which purport to be happy-face treatments are not in fact happy-face at all. While these treatments promise to isolate a specific, basic culprit, they merely turn out to have isolated a group of culprits which cannot all be true. For example. There is a whole raft of responses to the liar paradox which reject Tarski's T-schema for truth, namely the schema: a sentence S is true if and only if p (where S says that p). That may initially seem like a good candidate for being a happy-face solution: a culprit has been identified and rejected; the paradox is thus blocked. Not so. Tarski's T-schema is a biconditional. You only need to reject one direction of the biconditional to block the relevant form of the liar paradox. Those solutions which reject the T-schema but do not tell us which direction of the T-schema fails cannot count as happy-face solutions because they have not put their finger on a single, basic culprit.[32] Rather, they have put their finger on two principles, at least one of which must be untrue.[33]

33. Happy-Face Treatments Represent a Limit Case.

This is not an isolated case. Happy-face treatments (whether involving Conceptual Engineering or not) represent a kind of limit case. Absolute specificity is extremely hard to come by. Some candidate culprit Z will typically be entailed by (or theoretically motivated by) some conjunction of two or more principles (A & B & ...) which are each weaker than Z. Philosophical treatments of paradox which reject Z will often not be specific enough, as they stand, to say which of these principles A, B, ..., is to be rejected. The only cases where a happy-face solution is in prospect will be when there is a single culprit which is *basic*—where the guilty party is not grounded in, or theoretically motivated by, a conjunction of two or more principles which are relevantly more fundamental or explanatory. The devotees of happy-face solutions have yet to give us sufficient

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[32] Horwich (1990), Eklund (2002), Scharp (2013) all propose solutions in which the T-schema is rejected. However, they do not tell us which direction of the T-schema is to be rejected. And since classical logic is respected on each of these proposals then one (or both) of the directions of the T-schema is false/invalid.

[33] This is why Scharp (2007, 2013) is *not* a Happy-Face Conceptual Engineer (for truth) otherwise there would be no reason, as he thinks, to replace concept of truth with two surrogate concepts *ascending truth* and *descending truth*. See Greenough (2017) for relevant discussion.

confidence that paradoxes always bottom out in a single, basic culprit, let alone give us the confidence to declare that it is always feasible to find one.

34. Unhappy-Face Treatments are also a Limit Case.

Unhappy-face approaches, as mentioned above, are maximally unspecific. Such treatments are also rather uncommon. Some process of elimination will typically always take place whereby certain principles used in some paradoxical proof will (justifiably) not fall under suspicion. So, while unhappy-face treatments represent a perfectly achievable limit case, no self-proclaimed Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineer really practices what they preach and offers up such treatments. Rather, a more specific set of allegedly culpable principles will typically be selected for suspicion of guilt.[34]

35. Intermediate Treatments.

The discussion in the last two sections now suggests that there is a scale of intermediate treatments of paradox between the limit cases of Happy-Face and Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering. Such intermediate treatments are neither fully happy-face nor fully unhappy-face, neither thoroughly specific in isolating a single (basic) culprit, nor thoroughly unspecific in being content to simply apportion collective blame to all the principles at work in some paradox. Furthermore, as we shall see, absolute specificity is not required in order to successfully treat a paradox; rather, a treatment which is *specific enough* will do.

36. Fully Neutral Treatments: a First Pass.

Once we allow for intermediate treatments which are non-specific, but nonetheless specific enough to effectively combat a paradox, we can also make room for treatments which are *fully neutral*. These are treatments which don't simply stay suitably silent (and therefore neutral) on certain theoretical questions posed by the paradox. These treatments reject some culprit at work in the proof *from a theory-neutral perspective*, a perspective which endeavours to be as neutral as possible on (relevant) points of theory. An exemplar paradox, together with a neutralist solution, will help get clearer on the proposal.

37. Sameness Scepticism.

Let the Bad Case be a case where it appears to some subject that they have two legs; they believe that they have two legs; and yet their belief is false—because they are the victim of an evil genie who is deceiving them. In such a Bad Case, the subject fails to know that they have two legs. Let the Good Case be a case where it appears to the subject that they have two legs; they believe that they have two legs; and the subject is not being deceived by an evil genie—

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[34] For example, in his (1996), Schiffer does not put any logical concepts under suspicion of guilt in discussing what to say about scepticism.

so their belief is true and would ordinarily be taken to be knowledge.[35] The *Sameness Sceptic* says that the Good case and the Bad Case are relevantly the same when it comes to knowing: the subject is no better off (and no worse off), with respect to knowing, in the Good Case than they are in the Bad Case. The key sceptical thought here is that: all the subject has to go on, when it comes to knowing, is the evidence of their senses—how things appear—and such appearances are the same in both cases. However, since the subject fails to know in the Bad Case, and since the subject is no better off (and no worse off), with respect to knowing, in the Good Case, then they also fail to know in the Good Case. Upshot: the subject in the Good Case cannot know that they have two legs.[36] This form of scepticism might seem to be a thoroughly troublesome challenge—indeed a paradox because from initially plausible premises, via initially plausible reasoning, we have derived an initially implausible conclusion. Even so, when we properly regiment the symptoms of Sameness Scepticism, it becomes rather easy to see *that* the paradoxical proof fails, but not so easy to see *where* the proof fails.

38. Sameness Scepticism Regimented.

Suitably regimented, the symptoms of *Sameness Scepticism* are:

(1) Ex hypothesi, the Good Case and the Bad Case are phenomenally alike (with respect to the proposition that *p*): it appears to the subject, in both Good Case and Bad Case, that *p*.[37]

(2) If the Good Case and the Bad Case are phenomenally alike then they are evidentially alike (with respect to *p*): the evidence had by the subject in the Good Case for *p* is the same evidence the subject has in the Bad Case for *p*. (After all, the thought goes, the only evidence we have to go on is the evidence from our senses—from how things appear to us via looking, tasting, smelling, and so forth—and matters appear the same in both cases.)

(3) If the subjects in both Good Case and Bad Case are evidentially alike (with respect to *p*) then they are alike with respect to knowing that *p*: the strength of the subject's position with respect to knowing that *p* is the same in both Good Case and Bad Case. (After all, the thought goes, our evidence is what determines how good our position is with respect to knowing.)

(4) If the strength of the subject's position (with respect to knowing that *p*) is the same in both Good Case and Bad Case then the subject in the Good Case knows that *p* if and only if the subject in the Bad Case knows that *p*. (How good our position is with respect to knowing determines whether or not we know.)

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[35] The terminology is taken from Williamson (2000).

[36] Sameness Scepticism is not a form of Cartesian Scepticism because it doesn't invoke the claim that the Good Case is (phenomenally) indiscriminable from the Bad Case. (Nor does it invoke any kind of closure principle for evidence or knowledge.) It is much closer to what has come to be known as *Underdetermination Scepticism* (see Brueckner 1994; Vogel 2004; Pritchard 2005).

[37] More generally, let the subject in the Good Case be a phenomenal duplicate of the subject in the Bad Case.

(5) Ex hypothesi, the subject cannot know, in the Bad Case, that *p*.

(6) Therefore, given (1)-(4), the subject cannot know, in the Good Case, that *p*.

Premises (1) and (5) are just part of the set-up; the conclusion (6) is highly implausible; and, (2)-(4) unpack the initially plausible sounding claim that "all the subject has to go on, when it comes to knowing, is the evidence of their senses—how things appear". Paradox!

39. A Neutralist Treatment of Sameness Scepticism.

The conjunction of premise (2) and (3) entails the following sceptical claim SC:

> (SC) If the Good Case and the Bad Case are phenomenally alike (with respect to *p*) then the strength of the subject's position with respect to knowing that *p* is the same in both Good Case and Bad Case.

But SC is just false—and everybody can agree on that. It is part of our ordinary conception of knowledge that phenomenal alikeness does not entail that two subjects are in the same position with respect to knowing that *p*. A subject with a true belief that *p* is in a better, or at least different, position with respect to knowing that *p* than a subject who has a false belief that *p*. That's because having a true belief that *p* is a necessary condition on knowing that *p*. Meeting that condition puts you in a better (or at least different) position with respect to knowing that *p* than someone who has a false belief that *p*.[38]

What's crucial here is that a failure of SC is neutral between competing theories of knowledge. This means that the paradoxical derivation fails either at step (2), or at step (3).[39] However, it is a far from straightforward matter to see *which* of these two principles fails. That's because we need to deploy much more controversial, specific philosophical theory to blame (2) but not (3).[40] Likewise, we need to deploy much more controversial, specific theory to blame (3) but not (2).[41] Fortunately, we don't need to be so specific in order to effectively treat a paradox. Effective treatments just need to be *specific enough*. Additionally, we don't need to adopt a controversial theory of knowledge to address Sameness Scepticism—we can reject SC from a theoretically neutral, non-controversial, position. Let me now try to bolster these latter claims.

40. Back to the Engineering Metaphor.

Recall the engineering metaphor invoked above. An engineer will typically be able to bring to bear sufficient theory to isolate that a design defect is present, say, in the ignition system. Let's

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[38] Note that (4) is not under dispute.

[39] Rejecting both would be overkill. See The Overkill Objection above.

[40] Williamson (2000, ch.8), for example, blames the phenomenal conception of evidence.

[41] Those who accept the phenomenal conception of evidence will take just this route.

say it is this defect that is causing the engine to misfire at low revs. On that basis, they may be able to fix the fault via some fairly non-specific theorising, but without having a sufficiently specific theory to say exactly what it is about the design of the ignition system that is causing the defect to emerge. That still represents a perfectly respectable, suitably specific resolution of the trouble—because they have enough theory to fix the fault. It would be entirely misplaced to say: "Wait! We need to find out *exactly* what is causing the fault." That is a demand too far. Likewise, we can defeat the Sameness Sceptic but without being able to say which of (2) and (3) is invalid. It would also misplaced to say: "Wait! We cannot defeat the Sameness Sceptic until we know just which of (2) and (3) is false." We have sufficient understanding of knowledge to provide a dialectically satisfying resolution of the paradox.

41. The Primary Goal of Treating Paradox.

This suggests there is a primary and secondary goal at work in resolving paradoxes. When the engineer is faced with a faulty ignition system, her primary goal is to fix the fault. When the doctor is faced with a disease, his or her primary goal is to cure the patient. When the philosopher is faced with a paradox, her primary goal is to prevent the paradox from taking hold (and, if it has taken hold, to release the grip that the paradox has upon us). To do that, in each case, some theory is needed. The mechanical engineer uses fluid dynamics, metallurgy, and more; the doctor uses human biology, biochemistry, pharmacology, and more; the philosopher uses the theory of knowledge, the theory of truth, and more. As we have just seen, this theory need not be that specific (or that deep)—it just needs to be specific enough (and deep enough). It is not part of the primary dialectical goal to have the last word, or even a very specific word, on the concept of, e.g., knowledge.

42. The Secondary Goal of Treating Paradox.

The secondary goal of treating some paradox is to improve our philosophical theory—to give insights into the deeper nature of, e.g., knowledge by answering all of the theoretical questions posed by the paradox. In particular, we want to know whether or not all the premises of some paradox are true (and why these premises have the truth-value that they have). Recall Russell's remark above that philosophical puzzles serve the same role that experiments serve in science. Equally, recall also that above we conceived of paradoxes as yielding theoretical stress-tests. In meeting the primary goal we act like a doctor (or engineer); in meeting the secondary goal, we act like a human biologist (or metallurgist or chemist or physicist).

43. Don't conflate the Primary and Secondary Goals.

The primary and secondary goals may often march in step, but they may come apart. In giving a neutralist treatment of some paradox, the secondary goal will typically not be fully met. In particular, we will not be able to say whether or not all the premises of the paradox are true— that's just what happened with respect to premises (2) and (3) of Sameness Scepticism. An effective treatment of this paradox need not take a stand on the phenomenal conception of evidence. We should not conflate the Primary and Secondary goals of treating paradox: if we

demand that all theoretical questions posed by some paradox be answered then that sets an unreasonably high-bar for a treatment to be effective.[42]

44. Three Axes of Neutralism.

It's worth stressing that there is more to a neutralist treatment than being non-specific but specific enough. There are two more axes of neutralism at work in the treatment of Sameness Scepticism. Suppose that a paradox involves a principle A and a principle B, which, taken together entail some principle Z. Suppose that a treatment involves giving an independent reason to reject Z. Given this, there are three axes of Neutralism to consider. Firstly, we have:

> *Axis One*: Be neutral as to which of A, B, is false (where A, B are both weaker than Z).[43]

This Axis will be an essential feature of typical neutralist treatments.[44] Secondly, we have:

> *Axis Two*: Reject Z using neutral theory.

Not all non-specific treatments will invoke this Axis because on some non-specific treatments it may be a controversial matter that Z fails. Those remedies that do invoke this axis have the attractive feature that the non-specific treatment on offer issues from a perspective which is available to all (sensible) theorists concerning knowledge and evidence. Finally, we also have:

> *Axis Three*: Stay neutral as to the following options: (i) one and only one of A, B is false, and it is feasible to find out which; (ii) one and only one of A, B is false, and it is not feasible to find out which; (iii) it is indeterminate whether A/B is false and so it is metaphysically impossible to find out which.

Axis Three in effect entails that Neutralism stays silent on the issue as to whether or not a more specific treatment is feasible: the jury is out on whether we can move beyond neutral treatments to our central philosophical paradoxes to more specific treatments. (And so we remain neutral on the veracity of the Indeterminate and Indiscriminable Concepts views.)

45. Neutralism and Intractability.

Why have our central paradoxes proved so hard to treat via (relatively) specific treatments? Because of the third axis, Neutralism cannot co-opt the accounts of intractability given by the

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[42] Another way of thinking about the distinction in hand is via two different sorts of opponents: the paradox-peddler—the sceptic, the misologist, the absurdist, the irrationalist, the sophist, the pyrrhonist, the gadfly—versus the bemused theorist who is beset by paradox. The primary goal is to defeat the paradox peddler via some specific or non-specific treatment; the secondary goal is to provide the bemused theorist with better, more complete theory.

[43] On one refinement of Neutralism, principles A and B should both not only be epistemically possible for the subject who is endeavouring to resolve the paradox, but these principles must each have some strong (prima facie) evidence. See Greenough (ms2) for such refinements. (Thanks to Tim Sundell here.)

[44] See § below.

Indeterminate/Indiscriminable Concept Views. Those accounts make it impossible/infeasible, respectively, to discover specific treatments—but Neutralism is neutral on that issue. What about the account of intractability offered by Happy-Face Conceptual Engineers? That is certainly available. So, Sameness Scepticism has proved to be tricky to treat because our conceptual competence with the concept of evidence and the concept of knowledge seduces us into accepting premises (2) and (3). Any promising solution which rejects one of these premises just (initially) feels wrong because of such competence. A broader question is simply: why have our central paradoxes proved so hard to treat *simpliciter*? The neutralist answer is (in part) that we simply have overlooked the possibility of neutral treatments—treatments which have all three axes of neutrality. We have been too focussed on specific, controversial treatments and have overlooked the possibility of non-specific, theory-neutral treatments.[45]

46. Neutralism and Minimal Adequacy.

Neutralism allows for a modest kind of pluralism because neutral and non-neutral treatments can happily co-exist. There may be some more specific, controversial theory of knowledge which improves upon a neutralist treatment by better satisfying *both* the primary and secondary goals of an effective treatment. Not all non-neutralist proposals should be taken seriously however. Go back to Sameness Scepticism. Neutralism rejects SC, where SC follows from the conjunction of premises (2) and (3). Only those specific responses which both reject SC and go on to reject either (2) or reject (3) should be taken seriously. Should some non-neutralist treatment fail to entail that SC is to be rejected then we can dismiss its credentials from the outset. For this reason, neutralist treatments serve as a kind of minimal adequacy condition on any more specific, substantive remedy.[46]

47. Neutralist Conceptual Engineering With Concepts.

> *Component One: Isolate the non-specific culprit from a neutral perspective.* Give sufficient reason, from a theory-neutral perspective, to think that some (non-basic) premise or rule of inference or presupposition invoked in a proof is false or invalid; or, give sufficient reason to "bite the bullet" and endorse the conclusion. Here the culprit will be non-specific in the sense that it is entailed by the conjunction of two or more conceptual principles (each weaker than the non-specific culprit) and where the treatment is neutral as to which of these principles is false. Thus, the derivation is blocked (or the conclusion turns out to be acceptable after all).

> *Component Two: Explain contagiousness.* As above, our very understanding of the concepts used in the proof pulls us to accept a set of incompatible propositions.

> *Component Three: Explain intractability.* The explanation is two-fold: as above, our conceptual competence makes any proposed solution difficult to swallow; but also we

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[45] Relatedly, we have conflated the primary and secondary goals of treating paradox.

[46] Neutral treatments are akin to Tarski's minimal adequacy condition on any substantial theory of truth.
For discussion of Neutralism in relation to philosophical progress see Greenough (ms2).

have hitherto overlooked the possibility of neutralist solutions—and so we have, in the first instance at least, been looking for a treatment in the wrong place.

Component Four: Revise or replace. To prevent the paradox from returning we need to either suitably revise our concepts so that the conceptual principles deployed in the proof no longer, when taken together, entail a contradiction. Or, if engaging in conceptual replacement, we need to ensure that the surrogate concepts do not themselves give rise to a related paradox.

48. Semantic Engineering.

There is little agreement as to what concepts are, where they live, how they survive, and what role they play in a theory of meaning and understanding. Arguably, the concept of a concept is not in great shape.[47] Ironically, it is in desperate need of some Conceptual Engineering.[48] That gives some initial reason to think that Conceptual Engineering without concepts is the more promising view.[49] Such a view aims to solve philosophical problems by revising the meanings— the intensions—of our words. Call that view *Semantic Engineering.*[50]

49. Inconsistent Meanings (Intensions).

Without concepts, there are no inconsistent concepts. How does the Semantic Engineer make sense of the source of paradox? One surrogate for inconsistent concepts are inconsistent meanings (or intensions). These are like inconsistent concepts in that they are composed of principles—intensional principles—which cannot all be true. These principles play an extension-determining role: they fix (or partially fix) the extension of the relevant word (relative to some world). Such inconsistent meanings are rather exotic entities. How do they (partially) fix an extension? Is an idealised user disposed to accept them? I don't propose to answer these questions here. That would take us too far afield. Instead, let's look at an alternative view.

50. Inconsistent Words.

One alternative surrogate for inconsistent concepts are *inconsistent words.* Roughly, inconsistent words have uses which are in conflict. Indeed, these uses compete to become the privileged use which manages to confer a consistent meaning onto the word. (In order to make sense of paradoxes, this conflict had better be intra-personal in order to account for why a single subject can be drawn into a paradox.) Take Sameness Scepticism. A competent subject

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[47] Worse shape than, for example, the notion of intension.

[48] See e.g. Machery (2009) for a version of Concept Eliminativism.

[49] One further prominent reason to reject concepts stems from Williamson (2006) who argues that there are no conceptual truth/principles, and so no concepts.

[50] See Cappelen (2018) for this kind of view.

uses the words "evidence" and "knows" such that they are *initially* disposed to accept both (2) and (3). It's easy to develop an account of contagiousness and intractability from there.

51. Neutralist Semantic Engineering.

To make Neutralism available to the Semantic Engineer we need to replace talk of inconsistent concepts with inconsistent words in the account of Neutralist Conceptual Engineering. Component Four then becomes: To prevent the paradox from returning we need to suitably revise or replace the inconsistent words deployed in the paradox. There are (at least) two ways in which a revisionary form of Neutralist Semantic Engineering can proceed.

52. Type I Neutralist Semantic Engineering.

Suppose we have some paradox, involving some term T, which consists of two initially plausible premises A, B, and an initially implausible conclusion Z which follows from A & B via initially plausible reasoning. To simplify matters, suppose that rejecting logic is not on the table for this paradox. The broad options for an effective treatment are: reject Z (and so reject the conjunction A & B), or accept A & B—and thus bite the bullet and accept Z. Suppose further that our current use of T is unable to break the (relevant) symmetry between these two options —we are not able to currently work out which of the two options is the correct one. The Semantic Engineer now suggests that, by suitably revising the use and meaning of the term T, we can break this symmetry such that it is obvious, after this revision, to a competent subject that the conjunction A & B is to be rejected.[51] Thus the paradox is blocked and we can happily comply with our initial disposition (before the revision) to reject Z. Moreover, if this revision is successful then it becomes common ground amongst all competent users of T that the conjunction A & B is to be rejected. In other words, this conjunction is rejected from a suitably neutral theoretical standpoint. It may well be, however, that the semantic revision of T is not sufficiently fine-grained to tell us which of the two premises A, B, is to be rejected. So, after the revision, we must remain neutral on this issue.[52] Furthermore, we also remain neutral on the issue as to whether or not a more specific revision is available which enables us to readily work out which of these two premises is false. All three axes of Neutralism are thus satisfied. This kind of Neutralist Semantic Engineering uses semantic revision to take us from a paradox to a fully neutralist treatment.[53]

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[51] To be properly engaged in Semantic Engineering we must simultaneously engage in revising the use *and* meaning of a word. In particular, we must revise those uses which are meaning-determining (and not just revise any old use of the word). See Greenough (ms1) for discussion of *The Old Problem Problem*.

[52] The relevant symmetry of the two options may arise because of indeterminacy: before the semantic revision it is indeterminate, and so unknown, which of the two options is correct; but after the revision it is known (and so it is not indeterminate) that A & B is to be rejected. Or, the relevant symmetry may arise because of indiscriminability: before the semantic revision, the conjunction A & B is true, say, but it is not feasible to find this out; after the revision, A & B turns out to be not only false, say, but obviously so.

[53] If the revision of the use and meaning of T *is* specific enough to yield knowledge as to whether or not A/B is false then all competent subjects can readily reject one of these premises from a theory-neutral perspective. Would this yield a kind of hybrid between a Happy-Face and neutralist treatment? Not necessarily. As we saw above Happy-Face treatments may well be an unachievable limit case.

54. Type II Neutralist Semantic Engineering.

Suppose we have a paradox with the same structure as that just given—except that prior to any revision of the term T we *are* able to reject the conjunction A & B from a theoretically neutral standpoint—thus blocking the paradox. Suppose also that our (descriptive) treatment is unable to tell us which of the two premises A, B, is the false premise. Furthermore, suppose, we remain neutral as to just why this is so. Consequently, the (descriptive) treatment is neutralist on all three axes of Neutralism. The revisionary Semantic Engineer then proposes that our use and meaning of the term T is revised such that either we are disposed to accept (2) but not (3), or we are disposed to accept (3) but not (2). So, after such a revision, one of these premises will no longer yield any kind of initial pull on the competent subject. Before such a revision, there is no obvious *basic* culprit to blame.[54] After the revision, we can easily identify a more basic culprit. This kind of Neutralist Semantic Engineering uses semantic revision to go from a (descriptive) neutralist treatment to a treatment which, on one axis of Neutralism at least, is less neutral, more specific, and more happy-face in character.

55. Concluding Remarks.

The broad goal of this paper was to show that Conceptual Engineering approaches to Paradox are not limited to (weak) Unhappy-Face treatments (via the Indeterminate Concept View). Conceptual Engineers can also pursue: happy-face treatments; unhappy-face treatments (via the Indiscriminable Concept View); treatments which are intermediate between the limit cases of Happy-Face and Unhappy-Face Conceptual Engineering; and treatments which involve Neutralism—the broad view that philosophical progress can take place when (and sometimes only when) a thoroughly neutral, non-specific theory, treatment, or method is adopted. In this last case, we found that Neutralism can be combined with Conceptual Engineering with or without concepts. Finally, it is noteworthy that Neutralism is a natural consequence of Semantic Engineering—after all, when it comes to treating paradox, the revision of the use and meaning of some term deployed in the paradox aims to produce consensus as to which premises are to be accepted and which are to be rejected. That consensus represents a kind of neutral standpoint. Conceptual Engineering naturally leads to Neutralism—though not vice versa.[55]

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[54] Either because of indeterminacy or because of our limited powers of discrimination.

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