

ARGUMENTS FOR AN ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNT OF ANALYTICITY

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents an alternative account of analyticity, as well as arguments for that account. Although an analysis and interpretation of previous accounts of analyticity are presented, the focus is on the analysis of, and the arguments for a solution to, the philosophical problem of the existence of analyticities. The consideration of classical and contemporary texts provides a context for the alternative account of analyticity presented, and the analysis of the arguments against previous accounts of analyticity serve to demonstrate both the need for an alternative account and the means by which it avoids the problems inherent in the previous accounts.

The dissertation begins with an initial argument for the philosophical significance of analyticity, as many have questioned its role. This is followed by an exposition and analysis of the origins and variations of the analytic/synthetic distinction in the writings of Locke, Leibniz, Hume, and Kant. As the conventionalist account of analyticity has had a considerable number of adherents, and as it has been the focus of much of the criticism of the analytic/synthetic distinction, the dissertation includes a presentation of the two primary forms of these conventionalist accounts. This sets the stage for an in-depth analysis of Quine's arguments against the analytic/synthetic distinction. With the responses to these arguments serving to clear the deck, the alternative account of analyticity is presented along with the status and implications of analyticity, concluding with the arguments for the notion of analyticity offered in this account.

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"Defending the analytic-synthetic distinction against Quine's attack is by now too ancient
an occupation to be altogether honorable."

Fred Sommers

from "Meaning Relations and the Analytic", 1963
The Journal of Philosophy 60: 524-534

Chapter 1: The Philosophical Significance of Analyticity

I. Introduction

The concept of analyticity has had a long history in philosophy, and it has played a major role in the positions of many philosophers. Hume seems to have grasped the concept with his distinction between matters of fact and relations of ideas, but it is in Kant's *Introduction* to the Critique of Pure Reason that we find the first stated presentation of a distinction between, as Kant called them, analytic and synthetic judgments. And, since then, the analytic/synthetic distinction has been an important distinction in philosophy. Kant's analytic/synthetic distinction plays a key role in his critical philosophy, and an investigation into the thinking that lies behind the distinction shows it to be interconnected in many ways to several key components of Kant's philosophy. Thus, the analytic/synthetic distinction would merit serious philosophical attention were it only for its role in Kant's philosophy.

However, as even a cursory glance at the history of 20th century (and now the beginning of 21st century) philosophy will clearly show, the distinction continues to be of considerable philosophical interest, if only for the arguments that have been marshaled against it. Additionally, the distinction seems closely related to several significant philosophical projects in philosophy of language, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and even meta-ethics. The relationships among analyticity and necessity and the *a priori* have also received considerable attention, and would seem to hold ongoing interest for many philosophers.

The benefits of (and hence the motivation for) a distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions go beyond the role such a distinction might play in various

philosophical theories (like the grounding of our *a priori* knowledge of mathematics and logic in the analytic nature of the claims of math and logic). In fact, to focus on these projects is to obscure the fact that a primary motivation for the distinction is to account for our basic pre-philosophical intuitions of a significant and readily acknowledged difference between statements like “George is a bachelor” and “All bachelors are married”. The distinction would provide a straightforward account for our intuitions regarding what Georges Rey calls “the analytic data” (Rey 1993, 83). This includes both the “first-order (non-metalinguistic)” intuitions regarding sentences such as “Cats are felines”, “To murder someone is to kill them”, as well as the meta-linguistic intuitions that Katz (Katz 1972) claims also need to be accounted for. The latter would include our intuitions that some expressions are synonymous and that we at least appear to recognize and refer to expressions that “mean the same thing”. Such analytic data motivate the analytic/synthetic distinction and provide “some *prima facie* reason for thinking that, unlike “witches”, a theory of the analytic is not *merely* about what people happen to call ‘analytic’” (Rey 1993, 83).

It may seem odd that anyone would need to argue for the philosophical significance of the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions (or, alternatively, for the existence of analytic propositions, since few question the existence of synthetic propositions). Certainly, this long-standing distinction has had a storied and significant role in analytic philosophy. Even before Kant made it of primary importance by casting the question of how there can be synthetic *a priori* truths as the central issue of his transcendental epistemology, Hume and Leibniz had both granted the distinction a

prominent role in their understanding of both metaphysics and the nature and kinds of knowledge.

And, more recently, the very controversy over the distinction since Quine's seemingly wholesale rejection of it would, if anything, make the distinction more significant. But, of course, this would all depend on the nature of the distinction and the roles that one claims it can play. In fact, since Quine's famous article, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (Quine 1961), the prevailing view has been that, even if there is a distinction to be made between analytic and synthetic propositions (though many who hold this view would say "sentences" rather than "propositions"), it is of little importance.

Thus, those who would again claim that the distinction is of central importance in a theory of meaning and casts light on a range of philosophical issues find themselves needing to argue for both the distinction and its philosophical significance. Arguments for the distinction itself will be presented later, while this chapter will focus on the challenge of arguing for the philosophical significance of the distinction and the role that it plays.

II. Why Some Question the Significance of the Distinction

Probably the single most damaging blow to the estimation of the significance of the analytic/synthetic distinction is that it is no longer seen as playing the key role it was once claimed to play in explaining both how some truths could be necessary and how we could know them *a priori*. This was the role that was claimed for analyticities by the positivists. However, this, admittedly significant, role was thought to be only possible for analytic propositions given an account of analyticity as "truth by convention", and this

account has been soundly criticized. Still, it would serve us well to be clear on what it purported to offer. If we had a legitimate account of analyticity according to which all analytic truths were true by linguistic convention, then this would appear to explain how such truths could be knowable *a priori*. All that is required is that we be aware of the conventions (which we ourselves stipulate) which make the claims true, and this does not require any *a posteriori* experience of how the world (independent of us) is, then it seems easy to understand how we can know these truths *a priori*. And, as was key for the positivists, this account does not require any "rational insight" or other special power of the mind. This was important for the positivists, since their account of analyticity was intended to explain our ability to have *a priori* knowledge. Furthermore, it was thought, this account of analyticity also explains why these *a priori* claims are necessary, since they are not contingent upon any fact of the world, but rather are true simply due to our linguistic conventions, and thus would be true in all possible worlds in which our words have the meanings we imbue them with.

However, given the collapse of the account of analyticity as "truth by convention", it seems difficult to see how analyticity can possibly play the central role it was held to play by the positivists. Still, while not playing the same explanatory role as was once thought, it is my position that a proper understanding of the nature of analyticity is closely connected to any explanation of how we can have *a priori* knowledge of analytic truths and why they are necessary. This position will be fleshed out later, as for now we will briefly mention a second reason for dismissing analyticity and the analytic/synthetic distinction.

Another reason that is at least apparently held by many philosophers, and one that is not often made explicit, is that only "trivial" claims are analytic. This notion is present in Quine's distinction between "the first class of analytic statements, the logical truths" (which he accepts) and "the second class, which depends on the notion of synonymy" (which he rejects) (Quine 1961, 24). And, we see this idea present in Fodor and Lepore's reference to "consequential" analytic truths, and they apparently think only these would be "philosophically interesting" (Fodor and Lepore 2006, 128).

III. Why the Analytic/Synthetic Distinction is Significant

A. Explains Our Pre-Theoretic Semantic and Linguistic Intuitions

As noted previously, one reason the analytic/synthetic distinction is significant is that it would provide an explanation of our pre-theoretic intuitions. A *prima facie* case for analyticity can be found in the fact that we at least appear to be able to make the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions and to teach this distinction to others. That we even tend to be able to recognize the same propositions as analytic is a fact that requires an explanation and shifts the burden onto those who reject the analytic/synthetic distinction to provide a suitable explanation. If there were nothing to the distinction at all, then why would we all seem to come up with the same examples, and why would these examples even tempt us into thinking they were analytic? Georges Rey calls this convergence (i.e., "the patterns and projections in people's judgments") "the analytic data" (Rey 1993, 83), and he argues that it provides a *prima facie* case for analyticity. In addition to these appeals to our ordinary intuitions of analyticity, there are more formal, linguistic studies that also provide evidence of such convergence. Katz

(Katz 1972) points out that these studies show subjects to be in significant agreement about analytic relations.

B. Role in an Overall Theory of Meaning

It is not a minor feature in a theory of meaning to distinguish two fundamentally different kinds of propositions, and, as this is precisely what the analytic/synthetic distinction allows us to do, it plays a rather significant role in an overall theory of meaning. Further, understanding the precise nature of this distinction has further implications for our theory of meaning and the various positions that have been taken on issues in semantics, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and epistemology. Although this is more or less a promissory note at this point, we will be in a better position to assess the significance of analyticity in terms of its role in a theory of meaning after we have presented our account of the nature of analyticity. And even then, we will only be able to sketch an outline of a broader theory of meaning, but hopefully this will be sufficient to indicate the significant role analyticity has in the theory. As a hint of this role, the next section introduces the relationship between analyticity and sense meaning, which is a central component to the broader theory of meaning.

C. Relationship to Sense Meaning

One of the basic facts about meaning, and thus one of the pieces of data to be explained by a theory of meaning, is that some sentences are meaningful and some are not. Lycan lists among the data that "our philosophical study of language begins with": "Some strings of marks or noises are meaningful sentences" (Lycan 2002, 4). Thus, it is a basic meaning fact that users of a language can recognize that some sentences (as well

as smaller expressions than complete sentences) are meaningful or not meaningful (sometimes called "nonsensical") in that language. And, it is also important to note that we can both generate and recognize an indefinitely large number of meaningful sentences, which is also a fact that a theory of meaning needs to explain.

While much more goes into determining the full meaning of a sentence, a key component for determining whether a sentence is meaningful is the "sense meaning" of each of the constituents of the sentence. The sense meaning of an expression is determined by the set of expressions it can be meaningfully predicated of and that can be meaningfully predicated of it. This notion of meaningful predication is an intuitive one, since we can all recognize that it is meaningful to predicate "tall" of a building or a person, but not meaningful to predicate it of the square root of three or a baseball game. It should be noted that sense meaning is only one component of the full meaning of an expression and that the sense meaning does not exhaust the meaning of an expression. So, although "short" (in the physical as opposed to the temporal sense) and "tall" have the same sense meaning, they clearly differ in their meaning, and do not have the same truth conditions. For now, we need to just be clear that the sense meaning of an expression determines what it may be meaningfully related to and thus can be used to determine the meaningfulness of expressions, but is not sufficient to determine the truth-value of sentences.

Analyticity is key to understanding sense meaning as all of the sense relations are analytic, being simply the logical implications of the predication relation between meanings. Since the values of the basic predication relation are solely a function of the relation between meanings, these values are analytic, and as all other sense relations may

be derived from the predication relation, they are also analytic. For example, it is due to the relations between the meanings *tall* and *building* that *tall* is predicable of *building* (note: I will use italics to indicate propositions and meanings rather than the words used to express these). And, such a relation holds whether there are any buildings or even anything that is tall, for it is a relation between meanings.

The relationship of analyticity to sense meaning has further implications for various issues of metaphysics. As just one example, consider how at least some philosophers think it constrains the possible positions regarding identity across possible worlds. Adams argues that "there are necessary conditions of intra- and transworld identity which follow (analytically, indeed) from the concept or property of being a person and which entail that no individual that is in fact a person could under any circumstances be a musical performance" (Adams 1979, 25). Much more could be said about the concept of a type as an equivalence class of meaning relations that constrain the meaningful predications that underlie the intuitions that Adams implicitly draws upon to reject as nonsense the claim (technically, it should be construed as a form of pseudo-claim, but that would be a further digression) that a person is a musical performance. But, this should suffice to show the implications of analyticities for questions of identity and, thus, hopefully, their philosophical significance. For a fuller treatment of sense meaning (as well as sense logic), see the entries for Sommers (Sommers 1959, Sommers 1963a, Sommers, 1965).

D. Relationship to Philosophy of Mathematics and Philosophy of Logic

Analyticity is also key to understanding the nature of logic and mathematics, since all the truths of logic and mathematics are analytic. Both of these systems involve

nothing other than the logical implications of the relations of meanings. And, further, it is this fact that explains the necessity of the propositions of these systems. $(P \ \& \ Q) \rightarrow P$ is true because of the logical relations of the meanings $\&$ and \rightarrow , and $2 + 2 = 4$ is true because of the logical relations of the meanings 2, +, =, and 4. And, both of these propositions are true in all possible worlds because they are truths about the relations between these meanings. Thus, as Fodor and Lepore say, "If, in particular, it were to turn out that the logical and/or mathematical truths are analytic, we would understand why they are necessary" (Fodor and Lepore 2006, 114). And, although they put it sarcastically, "It would be ever so nice to understand why the logical and/or mathematical truths are necessary" (Fodor and Lepore 2006, 114). Despite Fodor and Lepore's sarcasm, a good case can be made not only that there are analyticities, but that the truths of logic and mathematics are analytic. And, since they are true in all possible worlds because they are analytic, we do have an explanation of the necessity of these truths. One can only trust that Fodor and Lepore would find these analytic truths "consequential".

E. Relationship of Analyticity to Necessity and *A Priori* Knowledge

In the previous section, a case was made for claiming that analyticity provides an explanation of (at least some) necessary truths - these truths are necessary because they are analytic, i.e., because their truth is a function of the logical relations of the meanings involved in the propositions. Since both these meanings and their logical relations are not contingent upon the state of the world, they obtain in all possible worlds, and thus truths dependent solely upon them are necessary truths. So, all analytic truths are necessary. But surely this is simply the old positivist conflation of the concepts of necessity and analyticity, it might be objected. No, it is not. First, this is not an outright

identification of the concepts of necessity and analyticity, for the implication that all analytic truths are necessary had to be deduced from the conception of analyticity as the logical relations of meanings. Second, nothing as of yet follows about whether all necessary truths are analytic.

A further distinction between this account of analyticity and that offered by the positivists can be seen by examining the relationship between analyticity and *a priori* knowledge. The positivists claimed that analyticity as truth by convention provided a ground for *a priori* knowledge such that we could explain *a priori* knowledge simply by our knowledge of our own linguistic conventions. But no such appeal to linguistic conventions is made in my account of analyticity. Instead, analyticities are viewed as independent of language use and are solely determined by the logical relations of meanings. The result is that there are analytic truths of which we have never heard and never conceived much less formulated words to express. Our linguistic conventions only determine which words and expressions we associate with which meanings, and far from making any propositions analytically true, these conventions must themselves be known *a posteriori* via our exposure to the linguistic practices of language users. And, even in the case in which a single individual stipulates how she will use a word, the association of the word with a meaning in the past is hardly a guarantee of future commitment to such usage. So even the proposition that I use an expression to mean something, that is, I associate the expression with a particular meaning, is not itself analytic, is not necessary, and must be known *a posteriori*, as it is a claim about my ongoing behavior, which may change in ways even I cannot entirely foresee.

So, if this account of analyticity does not even pretend to offer a "free ride" to *a priori* knowledge, what is the relationship of analyticity to *a priori* knowledge?

According to this account, there are some basic facts that relate analyticity to our ability to have *a priori* knowledge of (at least some) analytic truths. First, there are meanings and these meanings have logical relations to each other. Second, the truth value of some propositions is determined simply by the predication relations the proposition claims to hold between the meanings of which the proposition is composed, and it is these propositions that are analytic. Beyond this account, it seems also to be the case that we can comprehend these meanings, their relations, and thus determine for ourselves the truth values of at least some of these analytic propositions (I say "at least some", since there may well be analytic propositions that are either too complex, too long, or cannot be comprehended by us for some other reason). And, finally, this ability to determine the truth values of these analytic propositions does not appear to require any *a posteriori* observations as evidence for these propositions and thus may be properly deemed *a priori* knowledge. It is in this sense that analyticity may help explain our ability to have *a priori* knowledge.

It should be noted that none of this is to say that analyticity fully explains our ability to have *a priori* knowledge, since this account presupposes our ability to comprehend meanings, their relations, and the truth values of analytic propositions. This differs greatly from the positivist program which claimed analyticity as truth by convention did not require such mental capabilities. Thus, while a proper understanding

of the analytic/synthetic distinction and the nature of analyticity does not provide the explanation for *a priori* knowledge that the positivists claimed it did, it is a significant component of an explanation of how such knowledge is possible, since what we are able to comprehend via "rational insight" or some such mental capability are the logical relations of meanings which enables us to determine the truth values of analytic propositions and thereby have *a priori* knowledge. This relationship of analyticity to *a priori* knowledge and the role it plays in an overall explanation of our ability to have *a priori* knowledge would certainly seem to be philosophically significant, since, as Fodor and Lepore so charmingly put it, "if there is an *a/s* distinction, we could explain why the necessary truths, or at least some of the necessary truths, are knowable *a priori*" and "It would be ever so nice to understand how *a priori* knowledge is possible" (Fodor and Lepore 2006, 114).

F. Role of Analyticity in Philosophical Arguments

Finally, to further cement the philosophical significance of the analytic/synthetic distinction, consider the role it plays in philosophical arguments. Even those who reject the distinction presuppose the philosophical significance of the distinction, by granting that if there was such a distinction it would have implications for their arguments. For example, one of the chief arguments that Fodor and Lepore present against semantic molecularism is that it inevitably entails acceptance of the analytic/synthetic distinction (Fodor and Lepore 1992). The only force this argument has comes from their belief that such a distinction is untenable (although Fodor has granted there are analyticities, so he must consider these all to be of the "trivial" kind, and further, that semantic molecularism

must rely on the "consequential" kind of analyticities). It is obvious that Fodor and Lepore's argument is completely undermined if there is an account of analyticity that shows there are analyticities. Such an account of analyticity is presented in Chapter 6. Here, we have been concerned with showing that analyticities are hardly "trivial", given their considerable significance for a range of philosophical issues.

All the reasons cited make a compelling case for the philosophical significance of the claim that there is a legitimate analytic/synthetic distinction or that there are analytic truths (since almost all agree that there are synthetic truths). So, Fodor and Lepore are surely correct when they say that "[i]t would be ever so nice if there were a viable analytic/synthetic distinction" (Fodor and Lepore 2006, 114).

Chapter 2: Historical Background

I. Introduction

This chapter presents the historical background that is most relevant to the concepts and issues related to the analytic/synthetic distinction. As noted in the introduction, the long-standing distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions has had a storied and significant role in analytic philosophy. Even before Kant made it of primary importance by casting the question of how there can be synthetic *a priori* truths as the central issue of his transcendental epistemology, Hume and Leibniz had both granted the distinction a prominent role in their understanding of both metaphysics and the nature and kinds of knowledge. And, although Kant provides the clearest exposition of the distinction, and it is his formulation of it that has had the greatest influence on subsequent philosophers, we will see that an accurate assessment of the history of the analytic/synthetic distinction must give due consideration to the writings of Locke, Leibniz, and Hume.

This chapter will present a brief account of some of the major modern philosophers' views relating to the analytic/synthetic distinction. Though hints of the distinction are to be found in even the ancients, it is in this time period when the distinction comes to the fore. Thus, we will begin our excursion through the history of the analytic/synthetic distinction with Locke, and conclude it with Kant, leaving more contemporary philosophers for the next chapter. Though instructive and philosophically interesting in its own right, an examination of the views on, and versions of, the

distinction offered by the modern philosophers Locke, Leibniz, Hume, and Kant will hopefully provide not merely some historical background but also some insight into the intuitions that underlie the distinction that may still inform us today.

As an overview, the chapter includes an examination and discussion of: (1) Locke's view "Of Trifling Propositions", (2) Leibniz's distinction between "Truths of Reasoning" and "Truths of Fact", (3) Hume's distinction between "Relations of Ideas" and "Matters of Fact" in both A Treatise of Human Nature and An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, and finally, (4) Kant's presentation of the analytic/synthetic distinction in the Critique of Pure Reason.

II. Locke's View "Of Trifling Propositions"

The received opinion of the modern philosophers is that they are readily sorted into two basic philosophical camps: the (British) Empiricists and the (Continental) Rationalists. Kant is the notable exception, as although he is typically seen as attempting to respond to the problems he saw in both of these distinctly identifiable, mostly homogenous, schools of thought, he is also quite commonly classified as a Rationalist. The Rationalists (besides Kant, if he is to be included in this group) consist of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, and the Empiricists consist of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, with the latter trio also commonly seen as a sequence of increasingly more systematic – and increasingly more skeptical – philosophers, each extending the investigation of the implications of the empiricist tradition.

However, while this received opinion has much to recommend it, the general categories can obscure key differences between the members within each school of thought as well as similarities between members of different camps. This is especially

true of Locke's views as they relate to the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. Given the general disagreement between Rationalists and Empiricists, we might expect Locke and Kant to have divergent opinions, and also expect that, to the extent that he contributes to the development of the distinction, Locke's views would be the intellectual beginnings of the views of contemporary empiricists. However, as Katz notes, "The true story of analyticity is surprising in many ways. Contrary to received opinion, it was the empiricist Locke rather than the rationalist Kant who had the better informal account of this type of *a priori* proposition" (Katz 1992, 11). We shall set aside the question of who had the better account of analyticity and focus on how the actual history runs counter to received opinion in this section.

First of all, the actual history diverges from the more commonly accepted interpretations since Kant is often given the lion's share of the credit for formulating the analytic/synthetic distinction, and perhaps only a few Locke scholars are fully aware of the contribution that Locke made to the topic. So, even to acknowledge Locke's contribution will probably be a little unexpected to many philosophers. And secondly, Locke's contribution is surprising since, by most interpretations, his account sounds much like that of a rationalist (certainly by contemporary standards, and even by the traditional account of the emphasis of rationalists on "rational insight" or "the light of reason" or "bare intuition"). We shall be in a better position to assess just how much Locke contributed to the conception of analyticity after we have examined some of the particulars of his views relating to the subject, so let us now turn to these.

The easiest and perhaps most obvious entry point to this topic is Locke's discussion "Of Trifling Propositions" (Book IV, Chapter VIII of Locke's "Essay"). In

this section, Locke makes clear that he recognizes a class of propositions that “bring no increase to our knowledge” even though they are “universal”, “certainly true”, and of which we may be “infallibly certain” (Locke 1952, 345). The first general category of these “trifling” propositions is “identical” propositions, “when we affirm the said term of itself” (Locke 1952, 345). Locke claims that anyone “may make a million of propositions of whose truth he may be infallibly certain, *and yet not know one thing in the world thereby*” (emphasis added). The latter additional note strongly hints of a distinction between these trifling propositions (which would at least seem to fit most philosopher’s notion of analytic propositions – or at least those who accept that there are analytic propositions) and propositions that do contain information about “things in the world” (and would thus seem to fit the notion of synthetic propositions). As examples of these, Locke cites “a soul is a soul” and “a centaur is a centaur”, along with several others.

The second general category of trifling propositions that Locke identifies is “*when a part of the complex idea is predicated of the whole*; a part of the definition of the word defined” (Locke 1952, 346), and although the first part of the quote is italicized in this printing, for our purposes it is the reference to definitions that more clearly connects Locke’s conception of this class of trifling propositions with more contemporary notions of analyticity. For Locke, such claims as “a palfrey is an ambling horse” are “only about the signification of words” (Locke 1952, 346 – 347), and this would square quite nicely with the contemporary conception of analyticity as grounded in linguistic conventions (for more on that topic, see the next chapter). Finally, and providing more evidence of Locke’s empiricist leanings, Locke claims that “*General propositions concerning*

substances are often trifling”, and says such propositions, “if they are certain, are for the most part trifling; and if they are instructive, are uncertain, and such as we can have no knowledge of their real truth” (Locke 1952, 347). If we ignore whether “uncertain” claims can still provide “knowledge” (which would seem to say more about one’s criteria for bestowing the honorific title of “knowledge” than any actual diminution of confidence in the evidence one has for such claims), this position might be acceptable to a contemporary empiricist who cleaves analytic (but uninformative) truths from synthetic and informative (but uncertain) truths.

However, before we conclude that Locke is the intellectual ancestor of logical positivism, we should note the ways in which Locke’s views differ from theirs. To state just two of the more fundamental of these differences, a good case can be made for interpreting Locke as: (1) embracing *a priori* insight, and (2) accepting synthetic *a priori* truths, though the latter is more subject to debate, as we shall see.

The first fundamental difference between Locke and the logical positivists is that, although Locke refers to definitions and “verbal” propositions, for him, all knowledge is “the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas” (Locke 1952, 307), and this perception requires the intuitive power of the mind. This intuitive knowledge, which is, for Locke, the foundation of all our knowledge – “*It is on this intuition that depends all the certainty and evidence of all our knowledge*” (Locke 1952, 309), is thus grounded in the same kind of *a priori* insight that rationalists have traditionally appealed to.

BonJour, noting the historical lineage of this appeal to what he calls “*a priori* justification”, groups Locke with other notable rationalists: “the vast majority of historical philosophers, from Plato on down to Leibniz and Locke” (BonJour 1998, 2).

And, it is key that, even while appearing to acknowledge the analytic nature of some truths, Locke views the ground of even these “trifling” propositions to be in the *a priori* intuitive powers of the mind, and not the linguistic conventions themselves (for more on the attempt to ground the necessity of analytic truths in linguistic conventions, see the next chapter).

As noted above, the second fundamental difference between Locke and contemporary empiricists is his acceptance of synthetic *a priori* truths. Many philosophers would accept this interpretation. Arthur Pap, for instance, claims that “Locke anticipated Kant’s claim that the propositions of mathematics are *synthetic a priori* truths” (Pap 1958, 59). It should be noted that some Locke scholars (most notably, Lex Newman) reject this interpretation of Locke. Newman argues forcefully that it is “a mistake to see Locke’s trifling/instructive distinction as an anticipation of the analytic/synthetic distinction” since “[a] proposition may be analytic in the sense of idea-containment truth without being trifling in Locke’s sense” (Newman 2007, 338). However, even this interpretive dispute does not counter the basic claim that Locke differs markedly on this issue. For, although Newman’s “Analyticity Interpretation”, would reject the classification “synthetic” (due to a “broad notion of containment”, by which all knowledge essentially involves “containment”), it still casts Locke as accepting truths that, while analytic, are both grounded in rational *a priori* insight and “instructive” (in that they can provide us with knowledge about “the world without”). So, even if not deemed “synthetic” by Newman’s interpretation, this is a kind of knowledge which no logical positivist would have countenanced. As Arthur Pap puts it, “it is clear that modern empiricists cannot count the “empiricist” Locke among their ancestors”, and to

support this claim, Pap cites a key example of the kind of knowledge that Locke accepts but which “modern” (which Pap uses to refer to 20th century) empiricists reject: “Locke seems to have held that the axioms of Newtonian mechanics have the same sort of self-evidence as the axioms of Euclidean geometry” (Pap 1958, 58).

Having established that the role of Locke in the history of analyticity is at least surprising in some ways, let us conclude our discussion of Locke by a brief consideration of the connection between the views of Locke and Kant on the subject of analytic and synthetic propositions. To the extent that Locke can be seen as proposing a conception of analyticity, it is, as others have noted, a conception based on idea or concept-containment, and this conception seems to be very close to Kant’s. As Pap notes, “Kant’s conception of an analytic judgment as a judgment whose predicate is contained in the subject was clearly anticipated by Locke” (Pap 1958, 59). Katz echoes this view of Kant’s account, seeing it not only as derivative of, but also less satisfactory than, Locke’s account: “Kant’s account of analyticity, which received opinion tells us is the consummate formulation of this notion in modern philosophy, is actually a step backwards. What is valid in his account is not novel, and what is novel is not valid. Kant repeats Locke’s account of concept-containment analyticity, but introduces certain alien features” (Katz 1992, 12).

III. Leibniz’s Distinction Between “Truths of Reasoning” and “Truths of Fact”

If Kant’s account of analyticity as containment is apparently anticipated in Locke’s writings, the basis for Kant’s other criterion of analyticity, the law of non-contradiction, is obviously present in Leibniz’s philosophical works. As will be clear later, Leibniz also utilizes the concept of containment, though its precise role in those of

his views relating to a distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions is far less obvious, and has even led to considerable misunderstanding regarding Leibniz's positions.

At first glance it might seem obvious that Leibniz accepted a distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions, given his distinction between "Truths of Reasoning" and "Truths of Fact". In paragraph 33 of The Monadology, after having delineated the "two great principles" upon which our reasoning is based (the principle of Contradiction and the principle of Sufficient Reason) Leibniz states this distinction:

There are also two kinds of Truths: those of Reasoning and those of Fact. The Truths of Reasoning are necessary, and their opposite is impossible. Those of Fact, however, are contingent, and their opposite is possible. When a truth is necessary, the reason can be found by analysis in resolving it into simpler ideas and into simpler truths until we reach those which are primary. (Leibniz 1968, 258).

Although the exact wording might be different, this statement could be accepted by a logical empiricist of the 20th century. And so, it would seem we can identify Leibniz's "Truths of Reasoning" with analytic propositions, which are necessary and the ground (or "reason") "can be found by analysis". Logical empiricists would also accept "identical propositions" as examples of "Truths of Reasoning"/analyticity offered by Leibniz. And, they would agree with Leibniz's classification of the truths of mathematics as analytic, and would further acknowledge his references to the role of "Definitions, Axioms, and Postulates" (Leibniz 1968, 258) in these truths.

Leibniz also appears to accept the parallel distinctions of *a priori/a posteriori* knowledge and necessary/contingent truths, and like the contemporary empiricists, views these as converging with the analytic/synthetic distinction. That is, Leibniz claims that "Truths of Reasoning" are both necessary and knowable *a priori*, while "Truths of Fact"

are contingent and only knowable *a posteriori*. It is clear that Leibniz thinks truths of reasoning are knowable *a priori*, and, for Leibniz a truth of fact is, as Copleston puts it, such that “[w]e cannot deduce it from any *a priori* self-evident truth: we know its truth *a posteriori*” (Copleston 1960, 274).

However, there is a complication in Leibniz’s views such that we cannot so simply identify his “Truths of Reasoning” with analytic propositions and his “Truths of Fact” with synthetic propositions. For, Leibniz thinks that not only are “Truths of Reasoning” analytic, but so are the “Truths of Fact”: “for Leibniz contingent propositions or truths of fact are analytic in a sense ... If we are using his language, therefore, we cannot simply equate truths of reason with analytic and truths of fact with synthetic propositions” (Copleston 1960, 274).

But why does Leibniz consider truths of fact to also be analytic? Or, perhaps, this question should be put more cautiously as why do some commentators think it is reasonable to characterize Leibniz as classifying truths of fact as analytic? This caution might seem appropriate if only because Leibniz never uses the words “analytic” or “synthetic”, but also because the chain of reasoning that leads to this interpretation requires some less than obvious links. And, at least some of these links would seem to require some interpretative argumentation themselves. Given this, we are well advised to proceed carefully in making this chain of reasoning explicit.

It would seem that one important link in the chain of reasoning that would make this interpretation of Leibniz’s position plausible is the notion that, for Leibniz, an analytic truth is one that can be demonstrated to be true “by analysis” of the concepts involved in the claim. And, this link would also seem to be based on a position regarding

Leibniz's understanding of the logical form of propositions: "For Leibniz every proposition possesses the subject-predicate form or can be analysed into a proposition or set of propositions of this form" (Copleston 1960, 273). With this, we can then formulate what we might call the Containment Criterion of Analyticity: a proposition is analytic if and only if the predicate is contained in the subject. Thus, a key link for the interpretation that Leibniz considers truths of fact to be analytic appears to be the claim that Leibniz endorses this criterion of analyticity. Thus, let us examine the evidence that is given for this link in the interpretation.

Copleston provides a concise and insightful presentation of Leibniz in the chapters on Leibniz in his A History of Philosophy, and he is quite sensitive to the nuances of interpreting Leibniz on the topic of the analytic/synthetic distinction. And, more specifically, he even cautions against too quickly equating Leibniz's distinction between truths of reason and truths of fact with the analytic/synthetic distinction. However, Copleston appears to implicitly rely on the claim that Leibniz endorses the Containment Criterion of Analyticity when he reasons as follows:

Now, for Leibniz contingent propositions or truths of fact are analytic in a sense which will be explained presently. If we are using his language, therefore, we cannot simply equate truths of reason with analytic and truths of fact with synthetic propositions. But since what he calls 'truths of reason' can be shown by us to be analytic, that is, since in the case of truths of reason we can show that the predicate is contained in the subject while in the case of truths of fact we are unable to demonstrate that the predicate is contained in the subject, we can to that extent say that Leibniz's 'truths of reason' are analytic and his 'truths of fact' synthetic propositions. (Copleston 1960, 274 – 275)

The only explanation of the sense of analyticity that Copleston attributes to Leibniz that can be found in this passage appears to be the use of the phrase "the predicate is

contained in the subject”, and that, according to this criterion, truths of reason are analytic while truths of fact are synthetic.

There is, however, another issue that makes things even more complicated. It arises with Copleston’s use of the phrases “can be shown”, “we can show”, and “we are unable to demonstrate” in the preceding passage, and it has to do with the precise statement of the Containment Criterion of Analyticity. Apparently, some have interpreted Leibniz’s version to include the notion of demonstration such that we should get the revised Demonstration of Containment Criterion of Analyticity: a proposition is analytic if and only if the predicate can be shown to be contained in the subject. While there is textual evidence to support the view that Leibniz does indeed claim that we can show that the predicate is contained in the subject in truths of reason, while we cannot demonstrate this for truths of fact, it takes more than this to establish that Leibniz endorses this criterion of analyticity. We must keep in mind that Leibniz may claim a property to be true of the truths of reason without implying that he believes it to be definitive of that class of propositions or that the property makes them analytic. But, let us look more closely at this revised criterion of analyticity.

One of the claims that is made regarding this criterion is that it is “relative to human knowledge” (Copleston 1960, 281) – though it should be noted that although Copleston notes this “natural conclusion”, he does not endorse it himself. This would seem to be evident in the *Monadology* in paragraphs 32 and 33. There, Leibniz claims that, although the principle of Sufficient Reason warrants that every fact “has a sufficient reason why it should be thus and not otherwise”, “[m]ost frequently ... these reasons cannot be known by us” (Leibniz 1968, 258). However, for necessary truths (which are

the truths of reason), “the reason can be found” (Leibniz 1968, 258). Thus, Leibniz distinguishes truths of reason as those for which humans can “find the reason”, and it is not too great an interpretive step to infer that by this Leibniz implies that for these truths humans can demonstrate that the predicate is contained in the subject.

However, for Leibniz, the inability to demonstrate the containment for truths of fact appears to be only a limitation of humans, since he claims “every body responds to all that happens in the universe, so that he who saw all could read in each one what is happening everywhere, and even what has happened and what will happen” (Leibniz 1968, 265). And, clearly, Leibniz believes that God does have such knowledge. And, given this, some might conclude that Leibniz does embrace the Demonstration of Containment Criterion of Analyticity, and further, sees this as relative to our abilities. Thus, according to this interpretation, truths of reason are analytic since we humans can demonstrate that they contain their predicates in their subjects – Copleston refers to these as being “finitely analytic” (Copleston 1960, 277), and truths of fact are not analytic (and thus are synthetic) since we are unable to show their predicates are contained in their subjects.

However, there are some difficulties with this interpretation. First, it would construe Leibniz as conflating epistemological (or even psychological) and metaphysical/logical conceptions of analyticity, since, by “containment”, Leibniz would at least appear to be offering a logical criterion, but, by including the demonstration requirement, he introduces an epistemological criterion. And, this conception has problems, since by making it relative to human knowledge, it would seem that it would be relative to each individual human’s abilities, since whether something was capable of

demonstration would seem to be relative to the intellectual abilities of each individual. Even worse, the abilities of an individual vary over time, and so we have the at least awkward implication that analyticity is relative to a given individual at a given time.

However, let us set such concerns aside and instead focus on the key link that Leibniz endorses the Containment Criterion of Analyticity in any version. The reasoning seemed to be that, since containment plays a key role for Leibniz, it was a natural candidate for a criterion for analyticity (and, this is made more plausible, since Locke may be construed as accepting a containment conception of analyticity and Leibniz was familiar with Locke's works). But, since Leibniz appears to believe that the predicate is contained in the subject for all true propositions, this did not distinguish truths of reason from truths of fact, and this is problematic, since the truths of reason appear to have all the marks of the analytic, and the kinds of propositions Leibniz cites under each category (necessary truths of mathematics and logic are truths of reason, while contingent truths about particular individuals are truths of fact) would naturally fit a more contemporary classification of analytic and synthetic propositions. Thus, an amendment was needed to separate the truths of reason from the truths of fact, and this was found in the demonstrability criterion. We have just considered one set of problems this engenders, so let us revisit the concept of containment in Leibniz, since this may put us in a better position to judge whether he relies on it to distinguish anything that we might countenance as analytic and synthetic propositions.

A central origin of the problems that arise from Leibniz's claims about containment is article 13 of the Discourse on Metaphysics. There, he states: "As the individual concept of each person includes once for all everything which can ever happen

to him, in it can be seen, *a priori* the evidences or the reality of each event, and why one happened sooner than the other” (Leibniz 1968, 19). In explaining this claim, Leibniz adds: “in considering [the concept of an individual] one will be able to see everything which can truly be said concerning the individual, just as we are able to see in the nature of a circle all the properties which can be derived from it” (Leibniz 1968, 19 – 20). Leibniz claims that, although certain and knowable *a priori*, the events that ensue from the concept of an individual “are nevertheless contingent” (Leibniz 1968, 19). He recognizes that this appears to threaten the distinction between contingent and necessary propositions, but he answers by offering a distinction “between that which is certain and that which is necessary” (Leibniz 1968, 20). And, finally, “[i]n order to meet the objection completely”, he states:

the connection or sequence is of two kinds; the one, absolutely necessary, whose contrary implies contradictions, occurs in the eternal verities like the truths of geometry; the other is necessary only *ex hypothesi*, and so to speak by accident, and in itself it is contingent since the contrary is not implied. This latter sequence is not founded upon ideas wholly pure and upon the pure understanding of God, but upon his free decrees and upon the processes of the universe” (Leibniz 1968, 20).

In these passages we can see both the problem caused by Leibniz’s concept of containment and his proffered solution to that problem.

First, although it is not clear precisely what is meant by this conception of containment, it certainly is not limited to a narrow notion of logical containment exemplified by claims like “An equilateral rectangle is a rectangle”. In fact, if it is still best understood as a kind of logical entailment, it is not limited to the logical implications that can be derived from a concept alone, but would seem to include all the logical implications that can be derived from a concept even when additional propositions are

added to the proofs. Specifically, these may include propositions about God, his decrees, and the universe, since Leibniz claims that contingent claims are founded “upon his free decrees and upon the processes of the universe” (Leibniz 1968, 20).

Second, we should note that, in distinguishing necessary and contingent truths, Leibniz does not appeal to a difference in what humans can show or demonstrate regarding these two kinds of “connection or sequence”. Rather, regarding human knowledge, Leibniz notes the similarity between these two kinds of truths, claiming that for concepts of individual substances (for which the truths would be contingent), “one will be able to see” the implications of their concepts “just as we are able to see” the implications of general concepts like that of a circle (for which the truths would be necessary). This implies Leibniz does not acknowledge any difference in our ability to recognize or “demonstrate” the containment involved in these two kinds of truths, and thus this passage is extremely problematic for the interpretation of Leibniz as endorsing the Demonstration of Containment Criterion of Analyticity.

But lastly, and far more important, we see the true criterion Leibniz uses to distinguish truths of reason and truths of fact. Truths of reason are “absolutely necessary” since their “contrary implies contradictions” (Leibniz 1968, 20), and this is the best statement of a criterion of analyticity to be found in Leibniz: a proposition is analytic iff its contrary implies a contradiction. And, what had also seemed to be a criterion for analyticity, “containment”, is not sufficient to distinguish analytic truths from synthetic ones, since, for Leibniz, ultimately, all truths are such that their predicates are “contained in” their subjects, even the “contingent” truths of fact.

Though of course much more could be said of Leibniz's views on these and related matters, we shall end our discussion of Leibniz by noting that, as with Locke, Leibniz's views anticipate those of Kant. In fact, as we shall see, Kant seems to utilize both a notion of containment, which is present in both Locke and Leibniz, and Leibniz's criterion of a contrary implying a contradiction, in his conception of analyticity.

IV. Hume's Distinction Between "Relations of Ideas" and "Matters of Fact"

The clearest statement of Hume's distinction between "Relations of Ideas" and "Matters of Fact", which Antony Flew calls "Hume's Fork" (Flew 1997), is presented in Part 1 of Section 4, "Sceptical Doubts Concerning the Operations of the Understanding", of Hume's An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, and it will serve us well to repeat the first two paragraphs of this key passage here in our examination of the relationship between Hume's views and the analytic/synthetic distinction:

All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, *Relations of Ideas* and *Matters of Fact*. Of the first kind are the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic; and in short, every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain. *That the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the square of the two sides*, is a proposition, which expresses a relation between these figures. *That three times five is equal to the half of thirty*, expresses a relation between these numbers. Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is any where existent in the universe. Though there never were a circle or triangle in nature, the truths, demonstrated by Euclid, would for ever retain their certainty and evidence.

Matters of fact, which are the second objects of human reason, are not ascertained in the same manner; nor is our evidence of their truth, however great, of a like nature with the foregoing. The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction, and is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness, as if ever so conformable to reality. *That the sun will not rise to-morrow* is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction, than the affirmation, that it will rise. We should in vain, therefore, attempt to demonstrate its falsehood. Were it demonstratively false, it

would imply a contradiction, and could never be distinctly conceived by the mind. (Hume 1999, 108).

Many have noted this central passage and the standard interpretation of Hume is that Hume's Fork simply is the analytic/synthetic distinction, with Hume's "relations of ideas" corresponding to analytic propositions, and his "matters of fact" corresponding to synthetic ones. However, even though this interpretation is quite common, and even with the obvious importance of Hume's distinction to his philosophical positions and arguments, in Peter Millican's "Critical Survey of the Literature on Hume and the First Enquiry", he notes that "[t]hough fundamental to his philosophy, there has been relatively little detailed discussion of Hume's distinction between 'relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact'" (Millican 2002, 427). And, though we will not have time in this brief section for such a detailed discussion, we can note some of the relevant considerations regarding Hume's distinction.

First, there is an interpretive question of the relative priority of Hume's *Treatise* and his first *Enquiry*, and, if there are any differences in the positions presented in these two works, which is to be taken as definitive of Hume's thoughts. Many have diminished the status of the first *Enquiry*, considering it merely a watered-down, abbreviated, popularized version of the *Treatise*, as Flew notes in the introductory remarks of the first chapter of his seminal contribution to Hume scholarship regarding the first *Enquiry*, Hume's Philosophy of Belief: A Study of His First Inquiry: "This first Inquiry seems to be regarded generally as a rewritten, cut down, and popularized version of Book I of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. It is taken as if it were an abridged and cheapened second edition, which is to be read only as a handy introduction to the original, or for a few afterthoughts and re-statements" (Flew 1997, 1). This attitude would suggest that if the

Treatise differs from the *Enquiry* on a point, we should disregard the position presented in the *Enquiry*, or at least give prominence to the view presented in the *Treatise*.

However, others have argued that the *Enquiry* actually represents Hume's more mature philosophy, and that while it is considerably shorter, it is not merely an abbreviation or truncation of the *Treatise*. And thus, any alterations are not merely stylistic or for the sake of a chance at greater acceptance and popularity, but rather most likely represent a serious change in, and arguably a deepening of, Hume's understanding of the issue and his philosophical thoughts. To buttress this view of the *Enquiry*, we can refer to Hume's own stated position regarding the relationship of the *Enquiry* to the *Treatise*, and note, as Flew does, that Hume "insisted ... in public as previously in private, that it superseded that first work" (Flew 1997, 1). And, for more support, we can turn to Millican, who also notes Hume's own statements and requests to justify his contention that "the traditional view of the two works – according to which the *Treatise* gives the more faithful picture of his central philosophical position, and the *Enquiry* merely a more palatable selection – seems to me highly implausible" (Millican 2002, 40). As Millican points out, "Hume in his later life disowned the *Treatise* and requested ... that an 'Advertisement' should be attached to the volume containing his two *Enquiries* ..., stating that these works should 'alone be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles'" (Millican 2002, 40).

However, with the previous concern regarding the priority of these two works, we have neglected to yet consider whether there is even any disagreement between them. Thus, even granting the status of the first *Enquiry*, and also granting that it clearly appears that Hume does advocate a distinction that closely parallels the analytic-synthetic

distinction in that work, we can still raise the question whether the *Treatise* includes a similar distinction and also, if it does not itself offer such a distinction, whether it stakes out a position in any way contrary to the distinction presented in the first *Enquiry*.

Some would argue that not only does the *Treatise* not conflict with Hume's Fork as presented in the first *Enquiry*, it actually also offers the same distinction. And, while certainly not as clearly presented as in the *Enquiry*, there are passages in the *Treatise* that suggest a similar distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact. The first passage to be noted is in section 1.3.1, "*Of knowledge*", where Hume claims there are "seven different kinds of philosophical relations" and also claims these "may be divided into two classes; into such as depend entirely upon the ideas, which we compare together, and such as may be chang'd without any change in the ideas" (Hume 2001, 50). And, in 1.3.7, "*Of the nature of the idea of belief*", Hume refers to the conclusions of "reasonings from causes or effects" as "concerning matter of fact; that is, concerning the existence of objects or of their qualities" (Hume 2001, 65), and he also refers to "propositions ... that are prov'd by intuition or demonstration", contrasting them with "matters of fact", the former being such that their contrary is inconceivable, whereas with the latter "this absolute necessity cannot take place, and the imagination is free to conceive both sides of the question" (Hume 2001, 66). And, again in 1.3.11, "*Of the probability of chances*", Hume refers to a division of "human reason" into "*knowledge*" and "*probability*", with "the first to be *that evidence, which arises from the comparison of ideas*" (Hume 2001, 86).

In Book II of the *Treatise*, Hume again alludes to a distinction suggesting the analytic-synthetic distinction, when he claims: "Truth is of two kinds, consisting either in

the discovery of the proportions of ideas, consider'd as such, or in the conformity of our ideas of objects to their real existence" (Hume 2001, 287). However, as Flew points out, "it is in Book III that the expression comes nearest to that finally achieved in the first Inquiry, and it is here too that the notion is most explicitly employed as the basis and framework of a whole discussion" (Flew 1997, 54). Flew is referring to the critical section of Hume's moral philosophy, 3.1.1, "Moral distinctions not deriv'd from reason", where Hume argues that if moral distinctions were "derived from reason" that "the character of virtuous and vicious either must lie in some relations of objects, or must be a matter of fact, which is discover'd by our reasoning" (Hume 2001, 298). Hume considers this "evident", since "the operations of human understanding divide themselves into two kinds, the comparing of ideas and the inferring of matter of fact" (Hume 2001, 298). In the same section, Hume adds that "no matter of fact is capable of being demonstrated" (Hume 2001, 298).

Flew's assessment seems accurate regarding the three books of the *Treatise*, however, in the Abstract, written after the first two Books of the *Treatise*, Hume appears to offer an even closer approximation to the distinction as presented in the *Enquiry*. Here, Hume refers to "demonstrations" and "matters of fact", with the former being "founded merely on the comparison of ideas" (Hume 2001, 410). And, Hume here makes the notion of the contrary of a proposition implying a contradiction the criterion for a "demonstration": "wherever a demonstration takes place, the contrary is impossible, and implies a contradiction" (Hume 2001, 410). And, in a key passage that neatly summarizes this criterion for the distinction, Hume states:

When a demonstration convinces me of any proposition, it not only makes me conceive the proposition, but also makes me sensible, that 'tis impossible to

conceive any thing contrary. What is demonstratively false implies a contradiction; and what implies a contradiction cannot be conceived. But with regard to any matter of fact, however strong the proof may be from experience, I can always conceive the contrary (Hume 2001, 411).

So, these passages, while perhaps not entirely convincing, can be referenced to make a fairly persuasive case that Hume is making a distinction similar to the analytic-synthetic distinction even in the *Treatise*. But, both Norton and Owen would caution us not to leap too quickly to this conclusion. In the Editor's Introduction to the *Treatise*, David Fate Norton comments on the distinction Hume makes in section 1.3.1 and his discussion of the "seven different kinds of philosophical relation", saying that "The precise distinction Hume means to make may be difficult to characterize, but for a start it is clear that the difference between the two types of relation does not, as some have supposed, reduce to the difference between a set of four logical, and another set of three factual or contingent, relations ... and hence we clearly need another description of the distinction Hume means to draw" (Norton 2001, I24 – I25). David Owen concurs with this assessment, claiming "one must resist the temptation to see Hume's distinction between these two sorts of relations as approximating to the analytic/synthetic distinction, or the necessary/contingent distinction" (Owen 1999, 84). Both Norton and Owen base their rejection of the assimilation of Hume's seven relations to the analytic/synthetic distinction on the fact that Hume groups the relation of "degrees in any quality" with the (supposedly) intuitive/demonstrative/certain/necessary/logical/analytic set of relations. But, as Owen points out, this would include comparisons between shades or hues of red, "a decidedly factual or contingent matter" (Norton 2001, I25).

So, there is an interpretive challenge to casting the entire *Treatise* as being in complete agreement with the Humean Fork used in the *Inquiry*. While not intended as a

complete resolution to this subtle issue of interpretation (if only because our discussion here is far too limited to do it justice), we might note first that even Norton's and Owen's cautionary note does not extend to the *Enquiry*, and is clearly limited to the *Treatise*. And thus, given our initial backing for viewing the first *Enquiry* as at least as definitive a representative of Hume's philosophical position as the *Treatise*, we would still be on reasonably solid ground to maintain that Hume makes a distinction similar to the analytic/synthetic distinction. And second, Norton's and Owen's comments might even be more narrowly limited to just section 1.3.1 of the *Treatise* and the rather specific set of "philosophical relations" Hume presents there. For, as early afterwards as 1.3.7 we find Hume seemingly leaving the distinction between these relations behind (or at least not invoking it) and instead invoking a distinction between "propositions that are prov'd by intuition or demonstration" and "matters of fact" and speaking from that point on, in both the *Treatise* and the *Abstract* in a manner quite readily viewed as consistent with the first *Enquiry*.

Now that we seem to at least have reason to consider Hume's Fork to be closely related to the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions, we might pause briefly to also note its importance. Georges Dicker puts this rather nicely when he states: "This division ... is fundamental both to Hume's empiricism and to the twentieth-century empiricism that it inspired" (Dicker 1998, 35). We can see part of that inspiration in Hume's classification of mathematical truths as "relations of ideas", a classification shared by positivists and logical empiricists, who also see this as the means for explaining how such truths can be knowable *a priori* (see the next chapter for more on this point). But before we give Hume too much credit (or blame) for the views of the

logical positivists, we should examine more closely the nature of the distinction he makes.

First, we should note again the criterion Hume ultimately relies upon for distinguishing propositions comprising the relations of ideas from those stating matters of fact. For Hume, the first class of propositions is necessary truths and these are knowable *a priori*. However, this stems from the more basic fact that the contrary of such a proposition implies a contradiction. It is because of the **logical** status and implications of such propositions that they have these other properties (in spite of the seemingly psychological references to “conceivability”, Hume does not actually rely on any facts of psychology to make the distinction). Flew notes the logical character of Hume’s criterion:

Hume’s Fork in its final form belongs indisputably not to psychology but to logic. It obtains between kinds of propositions not sorts of perceptions. The differentiae are that whereas one kind can be known *a priori* and cannot be denied without self-contradiction; the other kind can be denied without self-contradiction and can be known only *a posteriori* (Flew 1997, 54).

As noted previously, this is the same criterion of analyticity that Leibniz utilizes, and, as we shall soon see, one of the criteria employed by Kant.

Now we are in a better position to examine the relation between Hume’s distinction and the views of the positivists and the logical empiricists on the analytic/synthetic distinction. Millican comments that many have seen these as fundamentally the same: and they conclude that Hume is thus rightly seen as the intellectual ancestor of the positivists:

Most have instead taken Hume's Fork to correspond to the analytic-synthetic distinction as understood by the logical positivists such as Ayer, according to whom 'a proposition is analytic when its validity depends solely on the definitions of the symbols it contains [or in Humean language, the nature of the ideas], and

synthetic when its validity is determined by the facts of experience (Millican 2002, 428).

However, Hume nowhere places such an emphasis on the definitions of words nor states that he considers these to be the foundation for the truth of the propositions involving relations of ideas. We will have more to say of this appeal to linguistic conventions in the next chapter, but for now, we can note that there seems to be scant evidence for the claim that Hume held that linguistic convention was the ultimate foundation for analytic propositions.

The argument against interpreting Hume in this fashion is buttressed by a further consideration. Not merely the logical criterion he cites, but the corresponding epistemological status of propositions involving relations of ideas runs contrary to a central goal of the logical positivists, that of explaining knowledge of analytic truths without appeal to any rationalist notion of *a priori* insight. For, Hume appears to follow Locke in claiming that we can “just see” these truths, as they are “discoverable by the mere operation of thought” (Hume 1999, 108). Thus, not only does Hume’s distinction not rest on linguistic convention (which, would, after all, seem to be a “matter of fact”), but he could quite plausibly be interpreted as basing analytic truths on the very *a priori* insight that the positivists were so keen to avoid. This is not too surprising, since, even the empiricists of Hume’s era did not question that reason was able to supply us with truths.

What Hume rejects of rationalism is the claim that reason alone can supply us with truths “concerning matter of fact; that is, concerning the existence of objects or of their qualities” (Hume 2001, 65), and in this regard, he is an intellectual ancestor to both logical empiricism and positivism. Laurence Bonjour, in discussing the prior historical

dominance of the rationalist view and the key rationalist element in Locke and Leibniz (as well as Descartes, Spinoza, and, more surprisingly, Berkeley) of accepting *a priori* justification, notes that:

It is thus not until Hume that we find a major philosopher who clearly repudiates the rationalist capacity for insight into necessary truths pertaining to reality, insisting that a priori justification concerns only "relations of our ideas" as opposed to "matters of fact". (BonJour 1998, 17)

This is an important point to note, but for our purposes in delineating Hume's position on the analytic/synthetic distinction, it is equally important to note that Hume does accept the rationalist *a priori* justification of analytic propositions, or "relations of ideas".

V. Kant's View of the Analytic/Synthetic Distinction

This section of the paper will focus on sections IV and V of the *Introduction* to the Critique of Pure Reason, as these contain Kant's focused attention on the analytic/synthetic distinction, but even a cursory search of the text provides one with additional passages that offer insights into Kant's concept of analyticity or the synthetic or the distinction between them. I assume the reader is somewhat familiar with these sections of the Critique of Pure Reason, but I also highlight what I consider the key passages of the text¹.

In section IV, "The Distinction Between Analytic and Synthetic Judgments", of the *Introduction* to the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant first presents the analytic/synthetic distinction:

In all judgments in which the relation of a subject to the predicate is thought ..., this relation is possible in two different ways. Either the predicate B belongs to the subject

¹ All references to the Critique of Pure Reason are taken from Norman Kemp Smith's translation (St. Martin's Press, 1965). I shall refer to this text as CPR, and when citing page numbers will refer to the pagination of the English translation.

A, as something which is (covertly) contained in this concept A; or B lies outside the concept A, although it does indeed stand in connection with it. In the one case I entitle the judgment **analytic**, in the other **synthetic**. (CPR, 48)

In this initial statement, Kant identifies containment or “belonging to” as the essential feature of the distinction. As a criterion for distinguishing kinds of judgments, this conceptual containment has an intuitive appeal, and it does not seem difficult to come up with examples to illustrate the distinction using this criterion. “Tall dogs are dogs” would certainly seem to be analytic in virtue of the fact that the subject “tall dogs” contains the predicate “dogs”. And, conversely, “Dogs are tall” seems just as obviously synthetic according to the criterion, since the predicate “tall” is not contained in the subject “dogs”.

In continuing his exposition of the distinction in this same passage, Kant adds that “Analytic judgments (affirmative) are therefore those in which the connection of the predicate with the subject is thought through identity; those in which this connection is thought without identity should be entitled synthetic” (CPR, 48). At first glance, this is a puzzling statement, and might even be interpreted as claiming that all analytic judgments are judgments of identity (i.e., where the predicate is claimed to be identical with the subject). This would be much more restrictive than the initial criterion of containment, and if only for that reason, seems an implausible interpretation. What seems more reasonable is that Kant is referring (albeit rather indirectly) to a form of proof utilized by Leibniz (who also used the concept of containment), in which a proposition is analyzed into its components until an identity is reached. And, it should be noted that “A proposition expresses an identity, in Leibniz's terminology, if the predicate is explicitly either identical with or included in the subject” (Beaney 2003), and so, in this sense, if a

predicate is “thought through identity”, then it need not be identical to the subject, but merely contained in it.

Additionally, Kant notes that analytic judgments do not add anything to our knowledge of the subject, but merely “explicate” it, by making more explicit “those constituent concepts that have all along been thought in it” (CPR 48). Conversely, synthetic judgments do “add to the concept of the subject a predicate which has not been in any wise thought in it, and which no analysis could possibly extract from it; and they may therefore be entitled ampliative” (CPR 48).

Besides providing examples of both kinds of judgments (analytic: “All bodies are extended”, synthetic: “All bodies are heavy”), Kant also states that entire classes of judgments are synthetic. He claims that: (1) “Judgments of experience, as such, are one and all synthetic” (CPR, 49), (2) “All mathematical judgments, without exception, are synthetic” (CPR, 52) (though he later qualifies this claim), and (3) in arguing against the possibility of an ontological proof of the existence of a god, that “all existential propositions are synthetic” (CPR 504).

Kant makes several short comments throughout the Critique that either echo the thoughts presented in this initial characterization of the distinction or suggest additional points. For analytic judgments, “I do not require to go beyond the concept” (CPR, 48), but rather “I have merely to analyse the concept, that is, to become conscious to myself of the manifold which I always think in that concept” (CPR, 49). Kant also notes that “through analytic judgments our knowledge is not in any way extended” (CPR, 49) and that “An analytic proposition carries the understanding no further ... it is concerned only with what is already thought in the concept ... The understanding [in its analytic

employment] is concerned only to know what lies in the concept (CPR, 274).

Additionally, “analytic propositions ... can be produced by mere analysis of concepts” (CPR, 580).

However, one comment of Kant’s (also in his argument against the ontological proof) deserves more than a passing comment. Kant claims that analytic judgments (although he here refers to them as “propositions”) “cannot be rejected without contradiction” (CPR, 504), and that this is “a feature which is found only in analytic propositions, and is indeed precisely what constitutes their analytic character” (CPR, 504). Additionally, in a footnote, Kant appears to equate “the principle of analysis” with “the law of contradiction” (CPR 503n). Although this connection is not explicitly clear in the Critique, it is in the Prologomena, where he even has a section titled “The Common Principle of All Analytical Judgments is the Law of Contradiction”, in which he states:

All analytical judgments depend wholly on the law of Contradiction, and are in their nature *a priori* cognitions, whether the concepts that supply them with matter be empirical or not. For the predicate of an affirmative analytical judgment is already contained in the concept of the subject, of which it cannot be denied without contradiction (Kant 1955, 15).

Thus far, we have focused on Kant’s concept of analyticity, and, following Kant, we have allowed synthetic judgments to be defined as those that are not analytic.

However, Kant does provide a positive account of synthetic judgments. The first hint of this account is given when Kant notes that “in synthetic judgments I must have besides the concept of the subject something else (X), upon which the understanding may rely, if it is to know that a predicate, not contained in this concept, nevertheless belongs to it” (CPR 49). For synthetic *a posteriori* judgments, this X is empirical intuition, and for

synthetic *a priori* judgments, it is pure intuition, and Kant claims that “all thought must, directly or indirectly ... relate ultimately to intuitions” (CPR 65).

The idea that Kant believes that intuition plays a role in synthetic judgments is reinforced by his argument that “ $7 + 5 = 12$ ” is synthetic. He states that we must “call in the aid of the intuition” (CPR 53) to arrive at the sum of 7 and 5 and thus to see that it equals 12. Similarly, Kant argues that the “fundamental propositions of pure geometry” (CPR, 53) are synthetic, and claims that “Intuition, therefore, must here be called in; only by its aid is the synthesis possible” (CPR, 53). The “synthesis” that Kant here refers to is an act of synthesis, and so, as Sebastian Gardner puts it:

The term ‘synthetic’ as applied to judgments has, therefore, the double sense of connecting a predicate with a concept in which it is not contained, and of presupposing a corresponding act of synthesis or putting together on the part of the subject ... The two senses are connected because only an act of synthesis can make a non-analytic judgment possible” (Gardner 1999, 55).

Moreover, Kant sees the use of intuition in an act of synthesis as both necessary and sufficient for determining a judgment to be synthetic. He clearly sees it as necessary, for in a letter to Reinhold (in which Kant complains of Eberhard’s lack of understanding of Kant’s principle) Kant states his principle of synthetic judgment as: “*All synthetic judgments of theoretical knowledge are only possible through the relation of a given concept to an intuition*” (Allison 1973, 164). That Kant also sees it as sufficient can be seen in the fact that in arguing that judgments of arithmetic are not analytic, he implicitly assumes that it is sufficient to show that they involve a use of intuition. He reasons that since they do, they cannot be analytic. Note how this shifts the focus from analytic judgments to synthetic ones, as they become primary, and analytic judgments secondary. Allison agrees with this assessment, and he notes that what he calls “the second version”

of the analytic/synthetic distinction, “is greatly superior to the first because in it the notion of a synthetic judgment, the real focus of Kant’s concern” (Allison 1983, 75) is given the central role.

This use of intuition is the key distinguishing factor, as Kant claims that all judgments, even analytic ones, rely on an act of synthesis, though he believes the kind of synthesis involved is different. But then one could say that this is true of synthetic *a posteriori* judgments and synthetic *a priori* ones, i.e., they each rely on a different kind of synthesis. However, Kant would say they are similar in that both use a form of intuition - just different intuitions. And thus, what truly distinguishes analytic and synthetic judgments is not that one involves an act of synthesis, but rather that one (analytic judgments) is a mere relating of concepts to each other, whereas the other (synthetic judgments) includes intuitions. The role of intuitions in synthetic judgments would seem to entail that the distinction between concepts and intuitions is of fundamental importance for Kant, as it is at the root of the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments.

Similarly, though from a different perspective, the distinction between judgments that extend our knowledge and those that do not is also fundamental, and that “through analytic judgments our knowledge is not in any way extended” (CPR, 49). So, Kant supplies us with a separate criterion for synthetic judgments, whether they extend our knowledge. However, it is important to note that Kant believes that these criteria coalesce in his analytic/synthetic distinction. That is, for Kant, the very same judgments that use a form of intuition are the same ones that extend our knowledge. This ties back into Kant's distinction between concepts and intuitions, as he believes that concepts alone never extend our knowledge (“mere analysis of concepts”), but only intuitions.

This is why it is crucial for Kant to argue that those claims he considers synthetic involve intuitions and not merely concepts (e.g., Kant argues that space and time are intuitions, not concepts). If we look at Kant's examples we see that he claims that the judgments of arithmetic are synthetic. And so he argues that arithmetic judgments both involve the use of intuition (i.e., in the act of making such judgments, we must "call in the aid of intuition") and extend our knowledge.

Recall that Kant is responding to both the rationalists (most notably, Leibniz) and the empiricists (most notably, Hume). Regarding the analytic/synthetic distinction, Kant's argument against the rationalists is that analytic judgments do not extend our knowledge (or, equivalently, since he considers the distinction exhaustive of the possibilities - i.e., all judgments are either analytic or synthetic, only synthetic judgments extend our knowledge). This claim of Kant's can now be brought into greater focus, as it is merely the claim (given Kant's conception of the distinction) that judgments that involve only concepts, and not any intuitions, do not extend our knowledge (or, again, only judgments that involve the use of intuitions extend our knowledge). This claim seems sound, and certainly the empiricists would agree with it.

However, Kant must also argue the other side of the equation against the empiricists, that is, that all synthetic judgments extend our knowledge (or, once again, that all judgments that involve the use of intuition extend our knowledge). That this is the case for empirical intuitions is not at issue, and so Kant focuses on showing that we may have synthetic knowledge based on pure intuitions. From Kant's perspective, the empiricists would seem to have been closer to the truth on this matter, as they recognized the key element of extending knowledge. But, according to Kant, the empiricists were

mistaken in that they believed only synthetic *a posteriori* judgments, that is, judgments that involved sensible/empirical intuitions, did so.

Even though Kant's arguments for synthetic *a priori* knowledge have been challenged ever since their presentation, his distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments was widely adopted. It was seen as a clarifying account of the intuitions regarding the different kinds of judgments, and essentially taken for granted until the 20th century. And, now that we have seen the foundation and characterization of the distinction in Kant's thought as well as that of the related distinctions made by Locke, Leibniz, and Hume, we will next turn our attention to the most prominent contemporary views on the analytic/synthetic distinction.

Chapter 3: More Recent Historical Background

I. Introduction

This chapter will present the conventionalist account of analyticity. The view that analytic truths are “true by convention” had been the standard account of analyticity for much of the twentieth century (dominating the first 50 years, and although waning since then, it still had adherents into the 1970’s), but has now been rejected by most philosophers. While we must be careful not to reject the notion of analyticity in general, the arguments against the conventionalist account do seem conclusive. Still, as powerful as the objections to the conventionalist account are, they do not show that another, alternative account of analyticity might prove to allow for a viable distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. However, an alternative account shall have to wait until later chapters, while we focus in this chapter on first understanding what the conventionalist account consists of and why it had seemed so attractive, and then turn to the problems with conventionalist accounts.

When one thinks of the analytic/synthetic distinction and those who championed it in the 20th century, one typically thinks of the logical positivists. This much is not problematic, since many of those identified as logical positivists did both argue for the distinction and view it as providing an explanation of *a priori* knowledge, and in particular, our *a priori* knowledge of logical and mathematical truths. Further, many held that both the nature of analyticity and its explanatory power were derived from their account of analyticities as “true by convention”. As Thomas Uebel notes, “they all

agreed broadly that the ways of representing the world were largely determined by convention” (Uebel 2008).

However, as Uebel is keen to point out, the picture of the positivists as all being in lock-step agreement, such that their views can be reduced to one single position or argument, is simplistic and inaccurate. Even regarding the analytic/synthetic distinction, the logical positivists held a variety of views for a variety of reasons, and although in seeming agreement regarding the conventional nature of analyticity, “[a] multitude of ideas hide behind this invocation of conventionality” (Uebel 2008). While not doing justice to this “multitude of ideas”, I will at least note some differences in the positions taken on the analytic/synthetic distinction, and there are reasons for at least attempting to distinguish two versions of conventionalism regarding the basis of analyticity: (1) linguistic conventionalism and (2) pragmatic conventionalism. The first of these is more well-known, but as should become clear, at least a few who would embrace a spirit of conventionalism reject a strictly linguistic conventionalism as the ground of analyticity. However, as should also become clear, the boundary between these two versions is often blurred, and ultimately, there may not be much practical difference between them.

II. Linguistic Conventionalism

A. A. J. Ayer

In Chapter IV (“The *A Priori*”) of Language, Truth, and Logic (Ayer 1952), A.J. Ayer argues for “the empiricist contention that there are no “truths of reason” which refer to matters of fact” (Ayer 1952, 73). Ayer acknowledges the challenge that the propositions of logic and mathematics present to this position, since it at least appears

that they represent counterexamples, being apparently both necessary (and thus to be “truths of reason”) and informative (i.e., to be about the world, and thus refer to “matters of fact”). Thus, he believes the empiricist faces a dilemma: either deny that these propositions are necessary or claim they have no factual content. After dismissing Mill’s alternative (that of denying that such propositions are necessary and claiming they are merely extremely well-confirmed inductive generalizations - in that, for example, so far, every time we have counted two things and two more things we have come up with four things), Ayer grants that such propositions are necessary, but claims that they are only necessary because they are analytic.

Thus far in his account, Ayer is not committed to linguistic conventionalism (or any conventionalism for that matter), but, in his defense of the claim that logical and mathematical truths are analytic, he apparently relies on linguistic conventions as the ground of their analyticity. He claims that they are necessary “because we never allow them to be anything else”, and “the reason for this is that we cannot abandon them without contradicting ourselves, without sinning against the rules which govern the use of language” (Ayer 1952, 77). And he criticizes Kant’s “psychological criterion” (Ayer 1952, 78) of analyticity, offering instead the definition “that a proposition is analytic when its validity depends solely on the definitions of the symbols it contains” (Ayer 1952, 78).

Although clearly conflating epistemological issues more properly seen as relevant to determining whether a claim may be knowable *a priori* (e.g., “one need not resort to observation”) with determinations of analyticity, Ayer concludes that “analytic propositions are devoid of factual content” (Ayer 1952, 79). But, as Ayer recognizes, this

forces him to confront the other horn of the dilemma which he claims the empiricist faces (and with which he began his account of our *a priori* knowledge of logic and mathematics): given the analyticity of the truths of logic and mathematics, “he must explain how a proposition which is empty of all factual content can be true and useful and surprising” (Ayer 1952, 73).

Ayer responds to this challenge by claiming that although they are devoid of factual content, “there is a sense in which analytic propositions do give us new knowledge. They call attention to linguistic usages, of which we might otherwise not be conscious” (Ayer 1952, 79 – 80). In other passages, Ayer echoes this view as well and also indicates an emphasis on linguistic convention: “they do enlighten us by illustrating the way in which we use certain symbols” (Ayer 1952, 79), “calling attention to the implications of a certain linguistic usage” (Ayer 1952, 79), “thereby indicating the convention which governs our usage of the words” (Ayer 1952, 79), “the rules which govern our usage” (Ayer 1952, 80), “simply record our determination to use words in a certain fashion” (Ayer 1952, 84).

Ayer’s frequent references to the “linguistic conventions” in which the analytic truths are “recorded” seems to be the only basis for his claim that it is the fact that the truths of logic and mathematics are analytic that makes them knowable *a priori*. This move is apparent in his conclusion:

We see, then, that there is nothing mysterious about the apodeictic certainty of logic and mathematics. Our knowledge that no observation can ever confute the proposition “ $7 + 5 = 12$ ” depends simply on the fact that the symbolic expression “ $7 + 5$ ” is synonymous with “12”, just as our knowledge that every oculist is an eye-doctor depends on the fact that the symbol “eye-doctor” is synonymous with “oculist”. And the same explanation holds good for every other *a priori* truth (Ayer 1952, 85).

Ayer makes it clear that the ultimate basis for our *a priori* knowledge of the analytic truths of logic and mathematics (and, he should add, ordinary ones like “Every oculist is an eye-doctor” – unless Ayer considers this a “truth of logic”) is the linguistic conventions governing the usage of “symbolic expressions”. Although he does not make this explicit, he must (in order for his argument to be valid) also assume that we have *a priori* knowledge of these linguistic conventions, but this issue will be deferred until later.

B. Hans Hahn

Although Ayer is more frequently cited as a proponent of linguistic convention as the basis of analyticity (and as a prototypical positivist in general), Hans Hahn actually more explicitly embraces this account in his article, “Logic, Mathematics and Knowledge of Nature” (Hahn 1959). Like Ayer, Hahn is also motivated by the desire to show that “there is no *a priori* knowledge about matters of fact” (Hahn 1959, 152). And, also like Ayer, Hahn focuses on the propositions of logic and mathematics, and they both agree that Mill’s claim that such propositions are “mere facts of experience” (Hahn 1959, 152) is untenable. So, with that much already established, all that is needed is to demonstrate Hahn’s similar reliance on linguistic convention.

Hahn makes things even easier for us, claiming that logic treats “only of our way of speaking about objects; logic is first generated by language”, and that a logical truth “merely expresses a convention concerning the way we wish to talk” (Hahn 1959, 152). Hahn does emphasize one element that Ayer omits in his discussion, and that is the role of stipulation.

C. Carl Hempel

In his article, “On the Nature of Mathematical Truth” (Hempel 1972), Carl Hempel follows a path similar to that of both Ayer and Hahn in his attempt to address the same problem they addressed - the challenge of mathematical truths to empiricism. As they both did years earlier, he first rejects Mill’s solution to the problem, arguing that the truths of mathematics cannot be merely well-confirmed empirical generalizations based on past experiences, since this would make them susceptible of disconfirmation, which he believes they clearly are not.

Although not as obviously embracing linguistic conventionalism as Hahn, the following passages at least strongly hint at Hempel’s acceptance of a similar linguistic foundation for analyticity. Hempel’s reason for thinking mathematical truths are not susceptible of disconfirmation is a good place to start: “this is so because the symbols “ $3 + 2$ ” and “ 5 ” denote the same number: they are synonymous by virtue of the fact that the symbols “ 2 ”, “ 3 ”, “ 5 ”, and “ $+$ ” are *defined* (or tacitly understood) in such a way that the above identity holds as a consequence of the meaning attached to the concepts involved in it” (Hempel 1972, 36). This is a mixed passage, since it references apparently non-linguistic elements, in that the symbols are said to “**denote** the same number” (which would be a way in which language reaches out to the world, or at least beyond the mere circle of words to abstract objects, in this case, numbers) and that this “holds as a consequence of **the meaning** attached to the concepts”, which again indicates something beyond the mere words or symbols. But, on the other hand, reference is made to how the symbols are “**defined** (or tacitly understood)”, which suggests a linguistic conventionalism similar to both Ayer’s and Hahn’s.

It may be simply a locution of Hempel's to refer to "the meaning attached to the terms" (Hempel 1972, 36), as, through the course of the article, he repeatedly cites the role of "definition" and "stipulation", noting that mathematical truths are "true simply by virtue of definitions or of similar stipulations which determine the meaning of the key terms involved" (Hempel 1972, 36). This passage is especially noteworthy, given that, here, Hempel claims the definitions or "similar stipulations" **determine** the meaning. Hempel, extending his account of the analytic nature of mathematical truths to logical truths, then includes an example of a logical truth, and he claims that "identity is a transitive relation by virtue of its definition or by virtue of the basic postulates governing it" (Hempel 1972, 37). But, just as we might find the phrase "by virtue of its **definition**" to further cement our categorization of Hempel's account as a form of linguistic conventionalism, we should be alert to his reference to "postulates".

Matters of interpretation might seem to be settled when Hempel next explicitly states that "the validity of mathematics ... derives from the **stipulations** which **determine** the meaning of the mathematical concepts ... the propositions of mathematics are therefore essentially "**true by definition**" (Hempel 1972, 37). However, he immediately qualifies this statement (and his use of quotation marks should have already made the reader aware that he might be using the phrase in a qualified way) by saying "This latter statement, however, is obviously oversimplified and needs restatement and a more careful justification" (Hempel 1972, 37 – 38). Hempel clarifies his qualification, by claiming that mathematical truths are not derived solely from definitions, but also require "non-definitional propositions" (Hempel 1972, 38), which are the postulates of mathematics.

For others, these postulates have been viewed as “implicit definitions”, but Hempel rejects this position as “misleading”, and claims that in a mathematical system with such postulates, the truth of propositions in that system “flows not merely from the definitions of the concepts involved, but also from the postulates that govern these various concepts” (Hempel 1972, 39). The details of Hempel’s account of the postulates of Peano’s axiom system of mathematics are not our focus here, so we need only note that Hempel’s reason for emphasizing the role of postulates and for qualifying the claim that, in such a system, the propositions of mathematics are “true by definition”, is that Peano’s postulates require an interpretation. And, since logicism and the attempt to reduce mathematics to logic is also not our primary interest, we can also simply focus on Hempel’s acceptance of the claim that, given appropriate definitions, which “render precise and explicit the customary meaning of the concepts of arithmetic” (Hempel 1972, 46), Peano’s postulates are true (with the addition of Russell’s axiom of infinity).

Next, with these qualifications explicated, Hempel can claim that, since mathematics (limited thus far to arithmetic) “can be derived from logic” (Hempel 1972, 47), “the propositions of the system of mathematics as here delimited are true by virtue of the **definitions** of the mathematical concepts involved, or that they make explicit certain characteristics with which we have **endowed** our mathematical concepts by **definition**” (Hempel 1972, 47). Thus, for Hempel, since the propositions of mathematics have the same analytic status, they “have, therefore, the same unquestionable certainty which is typical of such propositions as “All bachelors are unmarried” (Hempel 1972, 47).

Finally, responding to the same concern that Ayer had that at least many analytic truths at least appear to be informative, Hempel offers a similar reply. These analytic

truths simply make explicit the content that is already contained in whatever concepts we are using: “Mathematical as well as logical reasoning is a conceptual technique of making explicit what is implicitly contained in a set of premises” (Hempel 1972, 48). So, although such content may be “psychologically new”, it is not “theoretically new” (Hempel 1972, 49).

With the qualifications addressed, and noting the differences between arithmetic and other branches of mathematics (with only the former being capable of being given formal definitions “in terms of purely logical concepts” (Hempel 1972, 50)), Hempel can at last conclude unreservedly that the postulates (and thus all the propositions) of arithmetic are “unconditionally true by virtue of these definitions” (Hempel 1972, 50). And thus, though his treatment of the analytic nature of mathematics is arguably more nuanced than Ayer’s and Hahn’s, Hempel would also appear to embrace a form of linguistic conventionalism.

Lest we think of the linguistic conventionalism account of analyticity as a long-forgotten doctrine of the positivism of the 1930’s and 1940’s, we should note it has had more recent adherents. We shall, however, return to these after first covering (following a more or less chronological order) C.I. Lewis’s pragmatic conventionalism.

III. Pragmatic Conventionalism: C. I. Lewis

Let us now turn to pragmatic conventionalism as represented by C. I. Lewis. In his delineation of the various criteria that have been used for *a priori* knowledge, Moser attributes to the pragmatist position the claim that “[a] true proposition can be known *a priori* if and only if it describes only a human intention to employ a certain scheme of

classification for the ordering of human experience” (Moser 1987, 7-8). And, in his summary of C.I. Lewis’s article, “A Pragmatic Conception of the *A Priori*”, he claims “C. I. Lewis presents a pragmatic conception of the *a priori*, according to which *a priori* knowledge is knowledge of one’s intent to employ a certain (conceptual) scheme of classification for the organizing of experience” (Moser 1987, 9 – 10).

While this may sound similar to linguistic conventionalism, there are at least two points of difference worth noting. First, we should note that Lewis is not talking simply about the way words happen to be used, for he emphasizes our intentions, and the role of the mind in choosing to organize its experiences in one way rather than another: “The *a priori* represents an attitude in some sense freely taken, a stipulation of the mind itself” (Lewis 1987, 15). Lewis repeatedly stresses “the uncompelled initiative of mind” (Lewis, 1987, 16) in his account of our ability to have *a priori* knowledge (which goes hand in hand with his account of analyticity, at least in his early article), claiming it is our choosing to employ a classification scheme that creates analytic truths. Speaking of the laws of logic, Lewis claims they “make explicit our general modes of classification” (Lewis 1987, 16), and that, to take one example of such a law, the law of excluded middle “formulates **our decision**” and “declares **our purpose**” (Lewis 1987, 16) (emphasis added) to sort our experience into two categories (rather than three or more, as we might have chosen to do). Further, he claims this decision is based “on pragmatic grounds of conformity to human bent and intellectual convenience” (Lewis 1987, 17).

Second, Lewis is also not talking about our decision merely to use words in a certain way, but rather our decision to use a particular classification scheme. For Lewis, “all bachelors are male” is true not because of the linguistic conventions regarding the

use of the words “bachelor” and “male”. But rather, the proposition expressed by these words is true because we have, for our own pragmatic reasons, intentionally adopted a classification scheme such that we will organize all our experiences of things into the male and not-male categories and we have also adopted the classification scheme whereby anything that is not-male we will exclude from the category of bachelors and instead assign it to the not-bachelor category. In a brief paragraph on definitions in “A Pragmatic Conception of the *A Priori*”, Lewis hints of an acceptance of linguistic conventionalism by acknowledging propositions that are “true by definition”. However, he still emphasizes the “categorical attitudes of mind” by claiming: “Mind makes classifications and determines meanings; in so doing it creates the *a priori* truth of analytic judgements” (Lewis 1987, 17).

Lewis’s rejection of the linguistic conventionalist account of analyticity is made most explicit in Chapter VI of An Analysis of Knowledge & Valuation, “Linguistic Meaning and Sense Meaning” (Lewis 1946). He begins that chapter by noting that “[t]he original determinations of analytic truth, and the final court of appeal with respect to it, cannot lie in linguistic usage, because meanings are not the creatures of language but are antecedent, and the relations of meanings are not determined by our syntactic conventions but are determinative of the significance which our syntactic usages may have” (Lewis 1946, 131). And again, in a slightly later passage (and one quoted by Bonjour in noting Lewis’s rejection of linguistic conventionalism), Lewis says:

The manner in which any truth is to be told by means of language, depends on conventional linguistic usage. But the truth or falsity of what is expressed, is independent of any particular linguistic conventions affecting the expression of it. If the conventions were otherwise, the manner of telling would be different, but what is to be told, and the truth or falsity of it, would remain the same. That is something which no linguistic convention can touch. (Lewis 1946, 148)

Lewis's article, "A Pragmatic Conception of the *A Priori*", follows a pattern similar to that of Ayer, Hahn, and Hempel (or, rather, their articles follow Lewis's pattern, since Lewis's was published first), in that he also addresses our *a priori* knowledge of mathematics. Lewis also rejects Mill's position ("Mill was quite mistaken") and instead claims that the truths of mathematics are analytic and *a priori* because "they are compatible with anything which happens or could conceivably happen in nature", and "[t]hey would be true in any possible world" (Lewis 1987, 18). Lewis uses Mill's own example to illustrate his point about the truths of mathematics being independent of experience. Let us suppose that every time we attempt to add two things with two other things we always come up with five (Mill's original example supposed that a demon introduced the fifth). Lewis claims that "In such a world we should be obliged to become a little clearer than is usual about the distinction between arithmetic and physics, that is all" (Lewis 1987, 18). Lewis sums up the reason for this as well:

It is because we shall always separate out that part of the phenomenon not in conformity with arithmetic and designate it by some other category - physical change, chemical reaction, optical illusion - that arithmetic is *a priori*. (Lewis, 1987, 18 - 19)

Lewis would have been clearer if he had said "that part of the phenomenon that **appears** to be not in conformity with arithmetic", for no phenomenon can actually fail to be in conformity with arithmetic. In fact, that is Lewis' point, as he states elsewhere.

Lewis next addresses what he calls "the *a priori* element in science and in natural law" (Lewis 1987, 19). He emphasizes the role that classification plays in the development of a conceptual framework without which we could not even make sense of

our experience to formulate scientific laws: “We cannot even interrogate experience without a network of categories and definitive concepts” (Lewis 1987, 22).

Although this is far too brief an account to do justice to the richness of Lewis’s conceptualistic pragmatism, it should serve our purposes to introduce the notion of a pragmatic conventionalism distinct from the linguistic conventionalism that was far more common. We can see that, although Lewis rejects the linguistic conventionalists’ attempts to ground analyticity in the mere usage of words, his pragmatic approach to analyticity is still properly understood as a form of conventionalism, as it makes the truth of analytic claims dependent upon human intentions and decisions, which are similarly conventional in nature. Thus, while eschewing as a foundation for analyticity the intention to use words according to a particular convention, Lewis attempts to base analytic truths on our pragmatically chosen classification schemes, which share the same essential features as stipulative definitions, and are judged by much the same pragmatic criteria. We shall have the opportunity to revisit Lewis’s views in our assessment of how they fare against the criticisms that have been leveled against conventionalist accounts of analyticity.

IV. More Recent Conventionalism

Before we end this section on conventionalism, we should note that support for conventionalism did not end with Lewis and Hempel. Considerably later, and even after Quine’s sustained attack on analyticity, other philosophers still advocated a conventionalist account of analyticity, and even one that views linguistic stipulation as

key to this account. For example, Wesley Salmon cites “linguistic stipulation” as the foundation for analyticity:

After some exposure to formal logic one can see without much difficulty how linguistic stipulation can yield analytic statements that hold in any possible world. It is easy to see that “Snow is white or snow is not white” is true simply because of the meanings we attach to “or” and “not”. (Salmon 1967, 39)

And, in his article “The *a Priori* and the Analytic”, Anthony Quinton also argues for the conventionalist view:

A statement is a necessary truth because of the meaning of the words of which it is composed. The meaning that words have is assigned to them by convention. Therefore it is linguistic convention that makes a form of words express a necessary truth. (Quinton 1972, 97)

As becomes clear in the continuation of this same passage, Quinton’s view bears some similarities to Lewis’s pragmatic account, at least to the extent that he also notes the role of “human decision” and the attitudinal stance of refusing “to let any falsification occur”:

This Hobbesian view makes necessity unmysterious by treating it, not as something objectively discoverable in the nature of things, but as a matter of human decision. The impossibility of falsification that is characteristic of necessary truths is not a brute ontological fact; it is brought about by our refusal from the start to let any falsification occur. (Quinton 1972, 97)

Now that we have examined the two versions of conventionalism, we will now turn to an examination of the problems with conventionalist accounts of analyticity.

V. Problems with Conventionalism

Quine presented criticisms of linguistic conventionalism in his 1936 article, “Truth by Convention”, and although his arguments did not prove to be extremely influential at the time, they are now recognized as pointing out an inherent and devastating flaw in linguistic conventionalism. In the article, Quine begins by

considering logicism, the attempt to reduce mathematics to logic, and in particular the role that definitions were thought to play in such a reduction. But while logicism may provide part of the motivation for the linguistic conventionalist, Quine rightly recognizes their ultimate aim as the elimination of “any a priori principles at all which are independent of convention” (Quine 1976, 87). And so, Quine (temporarily) grants the logicist position, and turns to the more fundamental question of whether “all those logical principles to which mathematics is supposed to reduce are likewise true by convention” (Quine 1976, 87).

Quine argues that the attempt to show that logical truths are also conventional cannot be based on (ordinary) definitions, since these “are available for transforming truths, not for founding them” (Quine 1976, 88), but must rely on some other form of convention. Thus, he considers the role that has been claimed for postulates, also known as “implicit definitions”, which are claimed to have the capability of “generating truths rather than merely transforming them” (Quine 1976, 88). However, while Quine grants that the use of such postulates may “determine meaning for the initially meaningless marks ‘if’, ‘then’, ‘ \sim ’, and the rest”, and allow us to create many true logical statements, and we may even utilize “supplementary conventions” (Quine 1976, 91) for statements that “involve some non-logical expressions”, “the number of such statements is infinite” (Quine 1976, 91), and so there is no hope of generating all logical truths by any simple listing of postulates for each such statement. Thus, he considers the possibility of a finite set of rules that are capable of generating an infinite set of true statements.

In the course of Quine’s discussion, this method is apparently successful, and thus all of logic and mathematics would appear to be true by convention. Quine next

considers the possibility that “the method can even be carried beyond mathematics, into the so-called empirical sciences” (Quine 1976, 100). And, in a move foreshadowing his later views in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, Quine claims that there is no fundamental distinction between the “empirical” sciences and logic and mathematics, and that all that is needed to proceed with the same method is a similar set of postulates for the “empirical” primitives. In this fashion, these postulates would allow us to make the truths of science into conventional truths as well.

However, Quine claims that in the application of the method to logic itself, “a difficulty remains to be faced” (Quine 1976, 103), and “the difficulty is that if logic is to proceed *mediately* from conventions, logic is needed for inferring logic from the conventions” (Quine 1976, 104). This presupposition of the very truths of logic, for which the linguistic conventions were intended to provide the foundation, vitiates the entire linguistic conventionalist program. In his discussion of “The Linguistic Explanation of Apriori Knowledge”, Soames echoes this problem: “However, in order to derive this apriori knowledge from our linguistic knowledge, one has to appeal to an antecedent knowledge of logic itself” (Soames 2003, 265). Though this single objection would certainly seem to be decisive against the position, in his book In Defense of Pure Reason, BonJour provides a range of criticisms against linguistic conventionalism, so we will turn to these next.

BonJour addresses the conventionalist account in both section 2.5, “The Idea of Implicit Definition” and section 2.6, “The Appeal to Linguistic Convention”, seeing implicit definition as “basically a special case of the appeal to linguistic convention” (BonJour 1998, 50). As usually presented, and as Salmon’s view implies (though

perhaps not quite what the pragmatic account espouses), the conventionalist position is that analytic statements are true because of conventions that have been adopted regarding the usage of words and expressions, i.e., “because of the meanings we attach to” words.

However, although this view has been commonly held, as BonJour and Harman both note, it is not clear how a linguistic convention can, by itself, make a statement analytic. BonJour claims “how such conventions are supposed to account for the truth or, especially, the epistemic justification of *a priori* justifiable propositions or even statements is anything but obvious” (BonJour 1998, 51) (here, I will set aside BonJour’s concern for the epistemological issue of providing justification for *a priori* propositions).

BonJour cites several objections (including that it seems completely implausible to believe that we have made an explicit convention for the infinite set of analytic propositions – and that to rely on logical implications is to yet have analytic truths that are not accounted for by linguistic convention). But, arguably the most central objection to the conventionalist account of analyticity, and the one I shall focus on here, is that it simply does not account for how the analytic propositions are true. To put this more pointedly, it fails to account for **what makes the propositions true**. BonJour includes this as one of his criticisms, and to me it seems the most central problem for the conventionalist account of analyticity.

As somewhat of a tangential point, it might be that a focus on the epistemological issues explains why this point has been under-appreciated. Since, if we are asking how could we know that a claim is true without any appeal to the way the world is, then an appeal to our knowledge of the meanings of words (which at least appears to be appropriately “internal” – though this point itself could be challenged if we view the fact

that words have the associated meanings they do in light of public, empirically verifiable conventions adopted by communities of language users – though the conventionalist has a possible response in that the individual can still claim to know what she means by the words she uses) offers a tempting candidate for the grounds for such knowledge. But, this overlooks the more basic question of what makes such claims true. We might think it plausible that we can explain how we know them to be true because we have some kind of direct, internal, non-*a posteriori* access to the meanings of the words we use, but we cannot explain how they are true because we know them to be true. They first have to be true for us to be able to know them at all.

Returning to the primary objection to the conventionalist account of analyticity, this argument against conventionalism runs as follows. While it is certainly true that words have the meanings they do by convention, it does not follow that the propositions expressed by sentences using those words are true solely in virtue of these conventions. This can be seen rather straightforwardly, since if this were all that were necessary to make a proposition true, then all sentences would be analytic (and, even more oddly, analytically true), since all sentences are composed of words that have their meanings due to these same linguistic conventions. The sentence “Bachelors are male” includes the words “bachelors”, “are”, and “male”, each of which has the meaning it does in virtue of the linguistic conventions that have been adopted regarding their use in the English language. But, if the fact that the words in this sentence have their meanings due to these conventions were all it takes to make the proposition expressed by this sentence analytically true, then the sentence “Bachelors are tall” would also be analytically true,

since the words in this sentence have had their meanings established by the same sort of linguistic conventions.

A natural response at this point is to note that the difference between the two sentences is due to the fact that the meanings of the words “bachelors” and “male” are such that “Bachelors are male” must be true, but this is not the case for the meanings of “bachelors” and “tall” and the sentence “Bachelors are tall”. However, this is not a move the conventionalist can make, for the distinction between the two sentences and the meanings of their constituent words relies on more than just the linguistic conventions that imbue these words with meanings. What distinguishes the two sentences is the different relations between the meanings associated with these words. It is the relation between the meanings *bachelors* (again adopting the convention that meanings will be indicated by the use of italics) and *male* (and *are*) that makes the proposition (i.e. *bachelors are male*) expressed by “Bachelors are male” true. And the reason that “Bachelors are tall” is not analytic is because *bachelors* and *tall* do not have the kind of relation to each other that would by that relation alone be sufficient to make the proposition *bachelors are tall* true.

BonJour notes that the kind of linguistic convention involved in the words composing the sentence “Bachelors are male” “merely reflects the prior and independent *a priori* insight” (BonJour 1998, 54), and he quotes Butchvarov as follows:

one could gladly admit that the sort of rules [thus suggested] are indeed present in language, explicitly or implicitly, and then one would point out that the obvious reason such rules are adopted is the necessary truth of the corresponding propositions. For example, one would admit that there is the rule “Don’t say of anything that it is both red and green all over!” but would point out that the reason the rule is accepted is the necessary truth of the proposition “Nothing is both red and green all over”; one would admit that there is the rule “Don’t contradict yourself!” but would point out that the rule is accepted only because of the

necessary truth of the principle of noncontradiction. (Butchvarov 1970, 126 – 127)

BonJour's focus at this point is to note that if Butchvarov is correct, then linguistic conventions "cannot provide the sort of deflationary explanation of *a priori* knowledge and justification that the moderate empiricist is seeking" (BonJour 1998, 54). However, even setting aside BonJour's concerns for the epistemic role of explaining *a priori* knowledge, the challenge to the conventionalist account of analyticity is clear.

The problem for the conventionalist stems from a failure to understand the nature and role of linguistic conventions, so let us examine it in a little more detail here. The situation with respect to linguistic conventions seems to be the following. We adopt conventions to associate expressions in a natural language like English with meanings in what, to simplify things, we may call the "Language of Meanings". For example, it is a convention of ours that "bachelor" is associated with (and here we might say "means", but, though a natural enough thing to say, also seems somehow odd) *bachelor*. However, it is not by convention that *bachelor* means what it means (and this may also seem odd, since we are used to saying that words have meaning - if so, perhaps it would be less confusing to say *bachelor* is the meaning that it is). But by this account, the truth of "Bachelors are male" is based on, or grounded in, the truth of the proposition *bachelors are male*. And, the truth of this proposition is not in virtue of any convention, linguistic or otherwise, but rather is determined by the logical relations between the meanings of which the proposition is composed.

Our final question in this section is to determine whether these considerations undermine the pragmatic conventionalism outlined earlier. And, it seems obvious that this objection does apply to Lewis's pragmatic conventionalism just as much as any more

straightforwardly linguistic conventionalist account of analyticity. For, just as we can ask why we adopt the linguistic conventions that we do, and see the only plausible answer in the “prior and independent *a priori* insight” into the relations between the underlying meanings, we can also ask why we adopt the attitudinal stances we do. Why do we refuse to allow any evidence to count against the claim that “Bachelors are male”, except that we recognize the independent logical relation between the meanings associated with these words? And thus, in both cases, it is not the convention or attitudinal stance that makes the sentence true, but rather the independent logical relations of the constituent elements of the proposition expressed by the sentence.

While this objection should be sufficient for us to reject Lewis’ pragmatic conventionalist account of analyticity, we may also note in passing some other objections that might be made to this account. First, as with linguistic conventionalism, there is a problem in accounting for the infinite number of analytic claims (e.g., there are an infinite number of tautologies that consist of a conditional with a consequent that includes the antecedent as one of its disjuncts: $P \rightarrow (P \vee Q)$, $P \rightarrow (P \vee (Q \vee R))$, $P \rightarrow (P \vee (Q \vee (R \vee S)))$, ...). How could it be that they are all analytic because we decide, in each case, to hold them true no matter what? It is impossible for us to deliberately adopt such a stance for each analytic claim, and yet if this is the source of analyticity, then we cannot account for their status. Second, the pragmatist account is not faithful to “the feel of things”. Although this may seem rather vague, consider that the pragmatist is asking us to use as a criterion the attitudinal stance an individual takes towards a sentence. So, it seems fair to include in our assessment of the account whether this is faithful to how we in fact feel towards purportedly analytic claims. Do we feel like we are deliberately

choosing to hold these sentences true? On the contrary, at least with respect to many claims we are disposed to label “analytic” it feels more like we are compelled to hold them true. Moreover, this feeling of compulsion seems to stem from a desire to avoid contradiction. But, if our attitudes determine whether the claim is analytic or not, they should also determine whether there is any contradiction, and so, we should not feel any “external” sense of contradiction that needs to be avoided, as our internal attitudes are what determine the presence of absence of contradiction, and we would always be capable of simply changing our attitude so that there is no contradiction. Third, the account presupposes a prior acceptance of logical truths, and thus cannot be used to account for all analytic truths. The account presupposes the truths of logic in that it uses notions such as “potentially conflicting evidence”, but how do we even recognize that something is even potentially in conflict with our claim? We have to already have an understanding of logical contradiction for us to recognize the possibility that something might "count against" our claim for us to adopt the attitude of not allowing anything to count against it. Fourth, and finally, the pragmatist account still seems (like all conventionalist accounts) to at best account for how we could know something is true, rather than for what makes the claim true. Along this line, we might think we can know that a sentence is true simply because we have adopted the requisite attitudinal stance, which has the same effect as adopting the linguistic convention to use the words in the sentence in such a way “to make the sentence true”. But, we have seen there are good reasons for thinking this description of the relation of the meanings of the words to the truth of the sentence to be incorrect. We can steadfastly hold that a sentence is true no matter what, but this is tantamount to adopting a linguistic convention regarding the

words in the sentence, and we have seen that such a linguistic convention does not “**make** the sentence **true**”. Rather, this merely indicates our decision to associate words with meanings that, quite independently of our conventions (or attitudinal stances), are such that the proposition expressed by the sentence is true. And, even the claim that we can know which claims are true using this account of analyticity can be challenged. For, how do we know which claims to stubbornly hold onto no matter what? What criteria do we use to identify them and distinguish them from those we will give up? Do we not, ultimately, have to provide some other criterion for determining which claims are analytic? And if so, it is this criterion, and not linguistic convention or attitudinal stance, which allows us to know which claims are analytic.

VI. Limitations of the Problems with Conventionalism With Regard to Analyticity

The problems with a conventionalist account of analyticity are quite serious, and the criticisms of any such account appear to be devastating. And, from my personal perspective, linguistic conventionalism involves a serious misunderstanding of the nature of analyticity, the role of language, the status of linguistic conventions, and the relationship between language and meaning. However, with that said, none of the problems with conventionalism are inherent in analyticity itself, but rather, only affect an account of analyticity that relies on conventions. Thus, while devastating for such accounts, they have no impact whatsoever on an alternative account that does not attempt to found analyticity on conventions. Later, we will examine such an alternative account of analyticity, and at that point we will be in a better position to see how it avoids the problems that plague conventionalist accounts.

This concludes our examination of conventionalist accounts of analyticity and the major problems inherent in such accounts. In the next chapter we will begin our examination of other arguments against analyticity, beginning with those presented by Quine in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (Quine 1953).

Chapter 4: Arguments Against Analyticity, Part I

I. Quine's Problems with Meaning: Part 1 – Two Dogmas

Although, as noted above, Quine presented criticisms of the conventionalist account of analyticity as early as 1936, in “Truth By Convention”, those criticisms were clearly restricted to the attempt to base analyticity on linguistic conventions (and its role in the attempt to reduce mathematics to logic), and did not imply a rejection of the concept of analyticity itself. And, in fact, in a key passage in “Truth By Convention”, Quine appears to embrace the analytic/synthetic distinction, conceding that “this contrast retains reality as a contrast between more and less firmly accepted statements” (Quine 1976, 102). Granted, this does not sound too far removed from the later Quinean depiction of a “web of belief”, with no firm distinction between analytic and synthetic statements, but only a difference of degree of willingness to cling to or reject a statement in the light of “recalcitrant experience” (Quine 1953, 43). However, Quine goes further, and grants that “There are statements which we choose to surrender last, if at all” (Quine 1976, 102), which still emphasizes his view that it is a choice (based on pragmatic grounds) as to which statements to modify or reject. However, in the same sentence, Quine appears to go even one crucial step further, and acknowledges that “there are some [statements] which we will not surrender at all” (Quine 1976, 102). Further, Quine claims that “these statements are destined to be maintained independently of our observations of the world” (Quine 1976, 102). The first of these last two claims could have been made by C. I. Lewis, since it seems to accept his notion that it is an attitudinal stance of ours not to “surrender” such statements. And, the last claim would be embraced by both Lewis and a

positivist like Ayer. So, it would seem that Quine's early work did not involve a rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction per se, but only the linguistic conventionalism which has already been noted to have serious problems. For Quine's criticisms of the distinction itself, we will need to turn to his arguments in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" and Word and Object. We will take these in order, beginning with the arguments presented in "Two Dogmas".

A. Quine's "No Acceptable Explanation" Argument

The first argument we will examine is Quine's argument against the analytic/synthetic distinction, based on the claim that there has been no acceptable explanation of the notion of analyticity. This argument is presented in the first four sections of "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", and has sometimes been referred to as "The Circularity Argument" (cf, Chapter 16 of Soames' Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century, Volume 1). As I think will become clear, Quine's main claim is that analyticity has not been given a satisfactory explanation, and the charge of circularity is actually just one way in which the various attempts to explain analyticity have failed. Despite the attention Quine's "Two Dogmas" has received, and the undeniable influence it has had, the actual arguments it presents are not always clearly understood. In fact, it is almost taken as an article of faith (a "dogma", if you will) that Quine demonstrated in "Two Dogmas" that there is no legitimate distinction between analytic and synthetic statements, although many would be hard pressed to say just how the argument that is supposed to have established this goes. Thus, it will be worth our while to devote some time to a fairly close sketch of this argument.

Section 1 begins with some brief historical background and the first attempted account of analyticity that Quine addresses: “analytic statements defined as statements whose denials are self-contradictory” (Quine 1953, 20). In his response to this proposed definition of analyticity, Quine presents the essence of his criticism of all the accounts he considers (and, he apparently thinks any account will have the same problem): “But this definition has small explanatory value; for the notion of self-contradictoriness, in the broad sense needed for this definition of analyticity, stands in exactly the same need of clarification as does the notion of analyticity itself” (Quine 1953, 20).

Quine shall repeat this theme multiple times, for other proposed definitions and accounts of analyticity, but first he considers Kant’s second criterion of analyticity, that of conceptual containment. For this account, Quine simply echoes two common criticisms: (1) it is limited to claims that may be put in a subject-predicate form, and (2) the notion of containment is metaphorical, and overly vague. However, Quine proceeds to construe Kant’s intent to be to subscribe to a conception of analyticity in terms of meaning, whereby “a statement is analytic when it is true by virtue of meanings and independently of fact” (Quine 1953, 21).

After three paragraphs discussing the distinctions between meaning and naming (for singular terms), and meaning and extension (for general terms, or predicates), Quine briefly considers the “Aristotelian notion of essence” (Quine 1953, 22). Although Morton G. White sees a close connection between the “dualisms” of the analytic/synthetic distinction and the distinction between essential and accidental properties (White 1970), Quine claims there is “an important difference between this attitude and the doctrine of meaning” (Quine 1953, 22). Taking the example of the

(purportedly) essential property of rationality and the (clearly) accidental property of two-leggedness, he argues that while the Aristotelian essentialist will claim there is a fundamental difference between the relations of these two properties to the individual man, the modern-day empiricist (the target of Quine's criticisms of analyticity) cannot make such a claim. Quine concludes that "from the point of view of the doctrine of meaning it makes no sense to say of the actual individual, who is at once a man and a biped, that his rationality is essential and his two-leggedness accidental or vice versa" (Quine 1953, 22). This much appears to be correct, for the proponent of "the doctrine of meaning" is not claiming that it is "essential" (analytic) of the individual entity that it is either rational or two-legged. Rather, the analytic claims in this example are about the relations between the various meanings involved, and not the individual. However, while Quine is right to note a difference between the two distinctions of essential/accidental properties and analytic/synthetic claims, it does not follow that a proponent of the doctrine of meaning cannot also hold to the distinction between essential and accidental properties. In fact, one might see a rather close connection between the analytic/synthetic distinction and a form of sortal essentialism. Further, while Quine's main point is that the Aristotelian essentialist is not talking about the relations of meanings to other meanings, but the relation between properties and things, it does not follow that the proponent of the doctrine of meaning may not also distinguish these relations. To take Quine's example, one might say that while the individual is both a man and a biped, the individual could lose the property of two-leggedness and yet retain their identity, they could not lose the property of rationality and remain the same individual, even though the

relations between the meaning of 'man' and rationality and the meaning of 'biped' and two-leggedness are both analytic.

Quine next turns to the question "what sort of things are meanings?". Although seemingly disconnected at this time, and with no specific target cited for his criticism, Quine again refers to a confusion between meaning and reference, as if to imply that anyone who accepts the doctrine of meaning must be mistakenly thinking that all meaning is reference, and that this is the only reason for having a "felt need for meant entities" (Quine 1953, 22). He hastily leaps to the so-called "short step" of "recognizing as the primary business of the theory of meaning simply the synonymy of linguistic forms and the analyticity of statements; meanings themselves, as obscure intermediary entities, may well be abandoned" (Quine 1953, 22). That there might be more to meaning than the two functions cited by Quine will be dealt with later, but for now, we can at least note the gap in Quine's argument from the recognition of a difference between meaning and reference to the dismissal of meanings altogether.

Having (to his satisfaction at least) dismissed both essences and meanings, Quine makes a key move in his overall argument against the analytic/synthetic distinction. He distinguishes between two classes of (generally accepted as) analytic claims, and this passage is central enough to warrant including it here in its entirety:

Those of the first class, which may be called *logically true*, are typified by:

(1) No unmarried man is married.

The relevant feature of this example is that it not merely is true as it stands, but remains true under any and all reinterpretations of 'man' and 'married'. If we suppose a prior inventory of *logical* particles, comprising 'no', 'un-', 'not', 'if', 'then', 'and', etc., then in general a logical truth is a statement which is true and remains true under all reinterpretations of its components other than the logical particles.

But there is also a second class of analytic statements, typified by:

(2) No bachelor is married.

The characteristic of such a statement is that it can be turned into a logical truth by putting synonyms for synonyms; thus (2) can be turned into (1) by putting 'unmarried man' for its synonym 'bachelor'. (Quine 1953, 22 – 23)

There is actually more than one reason why this passage merits close scrutiny. The first of these reasons we shall deal with presently.

First of all, this distinction is key for Quine since he acknowledges the first class of “logical truths” as legitimate analytic statements, while ultimately rejecting the second class. Second, his reason for rejecting the second class is his primary reason for rejecting the notion of analyticity in general. This reason becomes apparent as Quine continues in this passage:

We still lack a proper characterization of this second class of analytic statements, and therewith of analyticity generally, inasmuch as we have had in the above description to lean on a notion of 'synonymy' which is no less in need of clarification than analyticity itself. (Quine 1953, 23)

So, just as Quine deemed the notion of self-contradictoriness to be inadequately clarified, and thus insufficient to explain the concept of analyticity, he also rejects the notion of synonymy for the same reason.

Quine briefly considers Carnap's “state-descriptions”, which consist of an “exhaustive assignment of truth values to the atomic, or noncompound, statements” (Quine 1953, 23) of a language. Under this account, a claim that was true under every state description would be analytic. However, as Quine points out, this account of analyticity cannot help us with regard to the second class of analytic claims, since if ‘John is a bachelor’ and ‘John is married’ are treated as atomic statements, then it would allow a state description in which both are assigned the value “true”. It is only our knowledge of the relationship between the meanings of ‘bachelor’ and ‘married’ that prevents this, and if we appeal to this kind of relationship in limiting the possible state

descriptions, we will be relying on a notion of meaning that Quine considers as much in need of clarification as analyticity itself. So Quine concludes, “the criterion of analyticity in terms of state-descriptions serves only for languages devoid of extra-logical synonym-pairs, such as ‘bachelor’ and ‘unmarried man’” (Quine 1953, 23). And thus Quine turns to the next candidate for a basis of analyticity, definitions.

Definitions have often been appealed to as the basis of analytic truths, and Quine, recognizing the temptation to think they are a serious contender for such a role, devotes an entire section to them. However, given our previous discussion of the problems with linguistic conventionalism, of which the appeal to definitions is a primary case, we should not be surprised if both Quine rejects such an account, and that we find his case rather convincing. However, although Quine had previously successfully criticized linguistic conventionalism in his article “Truth By Convention”, he does not simply restate that criticism in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”. In “Truth By Convention”, his argument was that linguistic conventions cannot provide the foundation of logical truths because they rely on the very logical truths they would be attempting to be the basis of. But in section 2 of “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, “Definition”, Quine’s target is instead the notion that definition can serve as an account of the analyticity of the second class of analytic statements, not as a basis of logical (or mathematical) truths.

Quine rejects definitions as providing an explanation of synonymy (and thereby of analyticity in general), since, as he claims, definitions do not create or provide the basis of synonymy, but rather, rest on the “antecedent facts” of “pre-existing synonymies” (Quine 1953, 24-25). For Quine, the standard dictionary definitions amount to “reports upon usage” (Quine 1953, 25), which reflect the lexicographer’s belief that a

relation of synonymy exists between the definiens and the definiendum. His report on his belief in a relation of synonymy, Quine argues, cannot be the basis for the synonymy. As Quine puts it: “Certainly the “definition” which is the lexicographer's report of an observed synonymy cannot be taken as the ground of synonymy” (Quine 1953, 24).

Having thus dealt with standard definitions, Quine briefly considers “a variant type of definitional activity”, “explication”, in which “the purpose is not merely to paraphrase the definiendum into an outright synonym, but actually to improve upon the definiendum by refining or supplementing its meaning” (Quine 1953, 25). However, Quine claims explication, while not relying on a direct synonymy of the term being explicated, “does rest nevertheless on *other* pre-existing synonymies” (Quine 1953, 25), and thus also cannot serve as the original basis for synonymy in general.

Finally, Quine turns to “an extreme sort of definition which does not hark back to prior synonymies at all; namely, the explicitly conventional introduction of novel notations for purposes of sheer abbreviation” (Quine 1953, 25 – 26). Quine’s views on such stipulative definitions are problematic, and following all their implications will take us beyond this section. Thus, since neither Quine’s position on stipulative definitions, nor our discussion of them is directly connected to Quine’s central “No Acceptable Explanation” argument, or even Quine’s discussion of other kinds of definitions, we shall defer our examination of Quine’s comments on stipulative definitions until the next chapter.

Having dealt with definitions, Quine next takes up the suggestion that “the synonymy of two linguistic forms consists simply in their interchangeability in all contexts without change of truth value” (Quine 1953, 27). Quine first notes that

“bachelor” and “unmarried man” (his prime example of a candidate for synonymy) are not “everywhere interchangeable *salva veritate*” (Quine 1953, 28). Providing examples of phrases like “bachelor of arts” and uses within quotations, he concedes that these may be avoided by limiting our criterion of interchangeability *salva veritate* to only whole words and not mere fragments of words.

Even restricting our criterion further to purely *cognitive* synonymy, which does not encompass “complete identity in psychological associations or poetic quality” (Quine 1953, 28), Quine still claims that this concept of cognitive synonymy must be explained without presupposing analyticity. Quine presents an argument that purports to show that “such interchangeability is a sufficient condition for cognitive synonymy” (Quine 1953, 29), but finds that the argument relies on the adverb “necessarily”, and to suppose that this adverb is sufficiently understood “is to suppose that we have already made satisfactory sense of ‘analytic’” (Quine 1953, 29). But, this explanation would be circular. For, in attempting to explain synonymy, we appealed to interchangeability *salva veritate*, but in showing that this was a sufficient condition for cognitive synonymy, we had to appeal to a conception of necessity that presupposed analyticity. And, this presupposition is circular since we were attempting to explain analyticity in terms of synonymy.

Quine examines the possibility of an extensional language, a language without “debatable devices such as contrary-to-fact conditionals or modal adverbs like ‘necessarily’” (Quine 1953, 30). However, he finds that in such a language “interchangeability *salva veritate* is no assurance of cognitive synonymy of the desired type” (Quine 1953, 30), since many expressions (e.g., “creature with a heart” and “creature with kidneys”) agree in their extension, but it is clear to us that they are not

cognitively synonymous. The apparent failure to explain analyticity in terms of synonymy prompts Quine to abandon this approach and return to analyticity itself.

Quine next considers artificial languages and the semantical rules such as those provided by Carnap. These rules explicitly delineate which statements of the language are analytic. However, Quine claims these can only explain what it is for a statement to be analytic for a given language, and not analyticity in general. And, repeating his previous criticism of rejecting an explanation of analyticity if it relies upon a concept as much in need of explanation as analyticity itself, Quine claims “Still there is really no progress. Instead of appealing to an unexplained word 'analytic', we are now appealing to an unexplained phrase 'semantical rule'” and, without an account of what constitutes such rules, “[s]emantical rules are distinguishable ... only by the fact of appearing on a page under the heading ‘Semantical Rules’; and this heading is itself meaningless” (Quine 1953, 34). Thus, Quine’s criticism is the same here as it was for previous accounts, which, according to Quine, rely on concepts “as much in need of clarification” (Quine 1953, 34) as the concept they are intended to explain.

While Quine recognizes that he has not examined all the possible accounts of analyticity, he does believe he has canvassed a sufficient number and range of the most commonly proposed accounts, and that similar arguments will apply to any possible account of analyticity: “Not all the explanations of analyticity known to Carnap and his readers have been covered explicitly in the above considerations, but the extension to other forms is not hard to see” (Quine 1953, 36). Thus, finding all the proposed explanations wanting, Quine concludes: “a boundary between analytic and synthetic

statements simply has not been drawn”, and “[t]hat there is a distinction to be drawn at all is an unempirical dogma of empiricism, a metaphysical article of faith” (Quine 1953, 37).

B. Quine’s “Difficulty in Applying the Distinction” Argument

Quine’s “No Acceptable Explanation” argument is clearly the central argument of “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, and the one most philosophers focus on (though as noted before, it often is called his “Circularity” argument), but it is not his only argument against the analytic/synthetic distinction in the article. Although presented at the beginning of his section on “Semantical Rules”, and thus in the midst of the presentation of his “No Acceptable Explanation” argument, Quine offers a significantly different argument against analyticity. This argument is not based on a charge of circularity or lack of sufficient explanation, but rather on a purported “difficulty in separating analytic statements from synthetic ones” (Quine 1953, 32).

Given the brevity with which Quine treats this argument, we can present it in its entirety here:

I do not know whether the statement 'Everything green is extended' is analytic. Now does my indecision over this example really betray an incomplete understanding, an incomplete grasp of the "meanings", of 'green' and 'extended'? I think not. The trouble is not with 'green' or 'extended', but with 'analytic'. (Quine 1953, 32)

With this brief passage, Quine argues that since there are (apparently) cases in which we have difficulty applying the analytic/synthetic distinction, that the distinction is not legitimate. Although not entirely clear, Quine appears to be claiming that it is because the concept of analyticity is not well enough understood that we are unable to determine its applicability to cases like ‘Everything green is extended’. After all, this would seem to be the point of his claiming that the “trouble” is with the word ‘analytic’. Later, we

shall assess the merits of this argument, but for now, it seems straightforward enough that we may continue with the exposition of another of Quine's more peripheral arguments in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism".

C. Quine's "Meanings are Unnecessary Intermediary Entities" Argument

The rejection of meanings, arguably a key move in Quine's overall argumentative strategy, is done in a brief, casual manner. In one short paragraph, Quine dismisses meanings, and again, given its brevity, we can include this paragraph in its entirety:

For the theory of meaning a conspicuous question is the nature of its objects: what sort of things are meanings? A felt need for meant entities may derive from an earlier failure to appreciate that meaning and reference are distinct. Once the theory of meaning is sharply separated from the theory of reference, it is a short step to recognizing as the primary business of the theory of meaning simply the synonymy of linguistic forms and the analyticity of statements; meanings themselves, as obscure intermediary entities, may well be abandoned. (Quine 1953, 22)

This is all that Quine has to say about this topic in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", but he adds a footnote at the end of this paragraph, citing passages in two other articles in From a Logical Point of View.

Following one of these citations takes us to a passage in "On What There Is" in which Quine is arguing against the views of a philosophical protagonist he refers to by the name "McX". McX represents a form of Platonism which posits an "ontology of universals". Quine again criticizes this position as being based on a confusion of meaning with naming. However, he considers a variation of this view that distinguishes meaning from naming and recognizes that predicates are not names of attributes, but still claims that predicates have meanings, and that "these *meanings*, whether they are *named* or not, are still universals" (Quine 1953, 11). But, Quine rejects this position as well,

granting that “the only way I know to counter it is by refusing to admit meanings” (Quine 1953, 11).

However, Quine does not feel that rejecting meanings is giving up anything of significance (as inconsistent as that may sound). For, he believes that he may still make sense of all the linguistic practices and talk that ordinarily would appear to require references to meanings without them. As he puts it, he claims that even though he rejects meanings, “I do not thereby deny that words and statements are meaningful” (Quine 1953, 11). On the contrary, he believes that any “useful” way we appear to talk so as to commit us to meanings can be done without them. This is an important move for Quine, since the strongest argument in favor of countenancing meanings would appear to be based on the claim that we cannot account for at least some of the things we want to say without appealing to meanings.

Quine presents his argument that we need not rely on meanings in the following paragraph:

The useful ways in which people ordinarily talk or seem to talk about meanings boil down to two: the *having* of meanings, which is significance, and *sameness* of meaning, or synonymy. What is called *giving* the meaning of an utterance is simply the uttering of a synonym, couched, ordinarily, in clearer language than the original. If we are allergic to meanings as such, we can speak directly of utterances as significant or insignificant, and as synonymous or heteronymous one with another. The problem of explaining these adjectives ‘significant’ and ‘synonymous’ with some degree of clarity and rigor – preferably, as I see it, in terms of behavior – is as difficult as it is important. But the explanatory value of special and irreducible intermediary entities called meanings is surely illusory” (Quine 1953, 11- 12)

Putting this argument more formally we get the following:

- (1) There are only two ways in which we “usefully” talk about meanings: (a) claiming that an utterance is significant, and (b) claiming that two utterances are synonymous.
- (2) Both of these two ways of talking about meanings may be faithfully represented directly, without any appeal to meanings.
- (3) Therefore, meanings are unnecessary to account for the “useful” ways we talk about meanings.

This argument is what makes Quine conclude that “we can view utterances as significant, and as synonymous or heteronymous with one another, without countenancing a realm of entities called meanings” (Quine 1953, 12).

Tracing Quine’s second citation, we find this view is echoed in the article “Meaning in Linguistics”, where he claims we can treat contexts in which we refer to meanings in the two “useful” ways delineated above “in the spirit of” two words. For the context, ‘alike in meaning’, we treat the context “in the spirit of” the word ‘synonymous’, and for the context, ‘having meaning’, we treat the context “in the spirit of” the word ‘significant’. These “maneuvers” keep us from “being tempted to seek meanings as intermediary entities” (Quine 1953, 48) and allow us to “continue to turn our backs on the supposititious entities called meanings” (Quine 1953, 48).

D. Quine’s Rejection of the Verification Theory of Meaning and Reductionism

In section 5 of “Two Dogmas”, Quine takes up the verification theory of meaning and reductionism, as he considers these to be “intimately connected” to the analytic/synthetic distinction. For Quine, the analytic/synthetic distinction is connected

to the verification theory of meaning in that the verification theory can be used to underwrite the notions of analyticity and synonymy. For, since the verification theory states that “the meaning of a statement is the method of empirically confirming or infirming it” (Quine 1953, 37), two statements will be seen to have the same meaning, i.e., will be synonymous, “if and only if they are alike in point of method of empirical confirmation or information” (Quine 1953, 37). Alternatively, we can define analyticity in terms of empirical confirmation: “An analytic statement is that limiting case which is confirmed no matter what” (Quine 1953, 37). So, clearly for Quine, the verification theory is relevant to his attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction, since he believes that “if the verification theory can be accepted as an adequate account of statement synonymy, the notion of analyticity is saved after all” (Quine 1953, 38).

However, as quickly becomes apparent, Quine has misgivings about the verification theory of meaning. In particular, he questions the relationship “between a statement and the experiences which contribute to or detract from its confirmation” (Quine 1953, 38). Pursuing this question leads Quine to what he terms “radical reductionism”, which is the view that every meaningful statement can be translated (or “reduced”) into “a statement (true or false) about immediate experience” (Quine uses the singular here, though many would also countenance as reductionist a view that held that it may also be multiple statements, so long as they are all about immediate experience). In this sense, more abstract statements like “Jones owns a house” are “reducible” to statements about the Register of Deeds Office having filed a piece of paper that says “Deed” on it, with Jones’ name following the word “Owner” (or whatever would be considered suitably “immediate” – and of course that is a very difficult problem for reductionism).

Citing Carnap's serious attempt to carry out such a reduction in Der Logische Aufbau der Welt, Quine notes not merely its sketchiness but, more importantly, its falling short even in principle of reducing statements about physical objects to statements in "Carnap's initial language of sense data and logic" (Quine 1953, 40). Carnap himself even appears to have eventually concluded that such reductionism is untenable, since he abandoned the project. For Quine, the absence of even a sketch of how a successful reduction could be undertaken is sufficient to deem the continued (albeit often implicit) acceptance of reductionism as a "dogma". And, in rejecting the "subtler and more tenuous form" of this dogma, i.e., that for every synthetic statement there is a set of observations that would help to confirm or disconfirm the statement, Quine claims that it is not individual statements, but only entire theories that "face the tribunal of sense experience" (Quine 1953, 41). For Quine, it is the dogma of reductionism that supports the analytic/synthetic distinction, since even in its "attenuated form", it allows for the confirmation and disconfirmation of individual statements, and thereby creates the logical space for "a limiting kind of statement which is vacuously confirmed, *ipso facto*, come what may; and such a statement is analytic" (Quine 1953, 41). Thus, Quine rejects both the analytic/synthetic distinction and the notion that individual statements have the kind of logical connection to observations that reductionism asserts. Instead, he claims: "The unit of empirical significance is the whole of science" (Quine 1953, 42).

Finally, in section 6, "Empiricism without the Dogmas", Quine presents his positive views on the relationship between observations and our beliefs. However, these views have much more in common with Quine's later arguments against analyticity involving

indeterminacy, semantic holism, and meaning skepticism, and so they will be treated in the next chapter.

II. Replies to Arguments

We will now turn to replies to each of the arguments against analyticity presented thus far. This will include Quine's central argument in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", his argument that the analytic/synthetic distinction must be rejected since we have no acceptable explanation of the concept of analyticity. In addition, we will also assess two secondary arguments that Quine makes in passing in "Two Dogmas", the first based on a supposed difficulty in applying the analytic/synthetic distinction, and the second which urges the rejection of entities since they are peculiar entities. Finally, we will examine Quine's view on stipulative definitions in some detail. Even though this last section is not *per se* regarding a reply to an argument against analyticity, it should still aid us in both understanding Quine's views and possible objections to those views.

A. Quine's "No Acceptable Explanation" Argument

The conclusion of Quine's "No Acceptable Explanation" argument, at least as it is stated at the end of section 4, seems appropriately cautious: "a boundary between analytic and synthetic statements simply has not been drawn" (Quine 1953, 37). Given that his argument does not show there is no distinction, but merely that the concepts that are typically offered in explaining analyticity lack sufficient clarification, he concludes that we simply do not know what constitutes analyticity, and thus do not have an adequate

basis to ground a distinction between analytic and synthetic statements. So much for Quine's conclusion, now let us turn to his argument.

It might be helpful to actually explicitly construct Quine's argument. For all his discussion of the various attempts to explain analyticity, the overall structure of Quine's argument is extremely simple and straightforward:

(1) There is no acceptable account of analyticity.

(2) Absent an acceptable account/explanation of analyticity, the analytic/synthetic distinction should be abandoned

Therefore, (3) the analytic/synthetic distinction should be abandoned.

Now, let us consider the possible replies to this argument.

First, it should be noted that Quine really is arguing that there is no acceptable explanation, and not just that some explanations have failed to be acceptable. As noted previously, others have called Quine's argument his "Circularity" argument. But, while it is certainly true that Quine claims that many of the accounts of analyticity offered presuppose notions that seem similar to the key concept of analyticity, even this is only "circular" in a very broad sense, and his main charge even for these sorts of explanations is not circularity, but rather that they presuppose notions "just as much in need of explanation" rather than that they presuppose analyticity itself. Further, not all accounts are even rejected for this reason. In rejecting Kant's second account, which "appeals to a notion of containment" (Quine 1953, 21), Quine criticizes it not for any form of circularity, but rather for being limited to statements of a subject-predicate form and for being too metaphorical. One would think Quine considers the latter criticism the more essential, since, even if he is right about the first limitation, if it were the only problem,

then, while Kant's notion of containment might not account for all the statements that are typically considered to be analytic, it still would account for some, and this would seem to be sufficient to ground a distinction between analytic and synthetic statements.

But even if Quine has shown that none of the accounts he surveyed provide an adequate explanation of the concept of analyticity, how can he conclude that there is no acceptable explanation? A fairly obvious response, if this is the gist of Quine's argument, is that, while none of the accounts he examined were found by him to be satisfactory, it does not follow that there are none. And, since there are other explanations that Quine did not cover, he cannot conclude that there is no acceptable explanation. So, one response to Quine's argument is to challenge premise (1).

More force can be put behind this challenge by noting actual alternative accounts of analyticity that Quine did not address. In particular, consider Benson Mates' proposal of "a condition of adequacy for definitions of "synonymity"" (Mates 1970, 103), or Grice and Strawson's account of logical impossibility (Grice and Strawson 1970), either of which would, if successful, refute premise (1) of Quine's argument (since Quine grants that these concepts are in the same set of closely related concepts as analyticity, and upon which we could base an account of analyticity proper). And even if Quine perhaps would not find these accounts acceptable, then we could argue that another account could still be found/constructed.

Another response to Quine's demand for an explanation of analyticity is to claim that even if we cannot provide the kind of formal account he appears to be demanding, we do have an informal, but still perfectly adequate account of analyticity and the other concepts Quine challenges. Grice and Strawson make this point in noting that their

account of logical impossibility “does not yield a formal statement of necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of the notion concerned” (Grice and Strawson 1970, 67). Yet they believe that the distinction they offer, “that between not believing something and not understanding something” (Grice and Strawson 1970, 67), while informal, and such that further clarification would be desirable, is still sufficient to establish that there is a distinction to be made.

Mates makes a related and important point when he notes how we must have at least some conception of these concepts to even attempt to apply them and determine whether a given criterion adequately captures them:

Yet it is important to observe that this very research could hardly be carried out unless we possessed in advance a sufficiently precise characterization of synonymy to enable us to decide under what conditions we would regard two expressions as synonymous for a given person. (Mates 1970, 102)

This might even be thought to pose a more serious problem for Quine, since it could be argued that he presupposes the very concepts he calls into question when he argues that a given account does not accurately reflect our semantic intuitions. For example, when Quine recognizes that “extensional agreement falls far short of cognitive synonymy” (Quine 1953, 31), and cites the extensional agreement of “creature with a heart” and “creature with kidneys”, he must have some idea of what cognitive synonymy is to even reject extensional agreement as a criterion of cognitive synonymy.

Nevertheless, this general line of response could encourage us to agree with Grice and Strawson’s conclusion:

In the face of the availability of this informal type of explanation for the notions of the analyticity group, the fact that they have not received another type of explanation (which it is dubious whether *any* expressions *ever* receive) seems a wholly inadequate ground for the conclusion that the notions are pseudo-notions,

that the expressions which purport to express them have no sense. (Grice and Strawson 1970, 67)

Before turning to other responses, we might pause at this point to consider how Quine can argue for premise (1)? How could he show not merely that the accounts he has considered have been found (by him at least) to be inadequate to explain the concept of analyticity (or any of the closely related concepts), but that there is no such account? In order to do this, it would seem that he would have to argue that such an account is impossible. But then, we would naturally want to know what kind of claim this would be? Quine seems very much committed to adhering to a naturalistic approach, yet the rejection of the possibility of an adequate explanation of analyticity as impossible **in principle** has a very *a priori* sound to it.

All that Quine provides for guidance on this question seems to be that, while he recognizes there may be other explanations of analyticity, he believes that his arguments against the accounts he has examined are such that “the extension to other forms is not hard to see” (Quine 1953, 36). This lends credibility to the interpretation that Quine thinks not merely that there happen to be no acceptable explanations of analyticity, but that there can be none. This would also seem plausible given that his arguments against the accounts he does consider focus on the issue that (nearly) all of them appear to presuppose a concept that at least Quine considers to be too closely related to analyticity (and thus involve a form of “broadly circular” explanation) or invoke concepts that are “no less in need of clarification than analyticity itself” (Quine 1953, 23). This, coupled with Quine’s comment about “the extension to other forms”, would lead one to believe that Quine is arguing that there can be no acceptable explanation of analyticity, because all even seemingly plausible accounts will always involve one of the other concepts in the

“family-circle” of concepts. Grice and Strawson use the phrase “family-circle, and although Quine does not, it is a convenient way to refer to the set of concepts Quine appears to have in mind, and which would enable us to understand why he would think the treatment of the accounts he does consider could be extended to other accounts. So long as these other accounts appeal to any concept that is a member of the family-circle of concepts, they will, or so Quine would argue, be just as susceptible to the charge that they are broadly circular or rely on concepts that are just as much in need of explanation as analyticity (or both).

This would allow us to construct, on Quine’s behalf, the following argument in support of premise (1):

(1a) All (apparently plausible) explanations of analyticity ultimately rely on concepts in the family-circle of concepts.

(1b) Any explanation of analyticity that relies on a concept in the family-circle of concepts is either broadly circular or relies on concepts that are just as much in need of explanation as analyticity (or both) – and is thus unacceptable.

Therefore, (1) there is no acceptable account of analyticity.

One could question both (1a) and (1b), and, in fact, Grice and Strawson do just that, claiming that their account of logical impossibility “breaks out of the family circle” (Grice and Strawson 1970, 67). However, even Grice and Strawson’s account could be claimed to rely on a member of the family circle, since their distinction between not believing and not understanding is actually a distinction between not believing and not understanding what someone **means**, i.e., not understanding the **meaning** of the words someone is using. Grice and Strawson’s description of their own example, in which an

individual, Y, makes the claim “My neighbor’s three-year-old child is an adult”, has us questioning what Y **means** by this claim, and eventually imagines us concluding that we do not understand what Y means and even “to suspect that he just does not know the **meaning** of some of the words he is using” (emphasis added). So, it seems clear that their account relies on meaning, and Quine has certainly indicated that, for him, this is not an acceptable basis for analyticity. In this case, Quine’s criticism of meaning as a basis for analyticity would not be due so much to a charge of circularity, even the broad kind, but rather because for him meaning is a concept that is just as much in need of explanation as analyticity.

However, in looking for an account of analyticity that does not rely on members of the family circle, we do not need to rely solely on Grice and Strawson’s example. In fact, the attempt to ground analyticity in the notion of “containment”, limited as it is to statements of subject-predicate form in Kant’s treatment, and even given Quine’s qualms about its metaphorical nature, does not appear to rely on any members of the family-circle of concepts. And, lest we think analyticity as grounded in containment is merely a historical notion, Jerrold Katz champions it to this day. Katz distinguishes concept-containment from logical containment, and gives credit for it to Locke (and even earlier, Arnauld and Nicole), not Kant. While arguably well worth pursuing, we shall not address these questions further here. Instead, let us move on to other considerations and responses to Quine’s overall argument.

Although there is reason to think the above is Quine’s argument (or at least one he would endorse), a plausibly more charitable interpretation views Quine as claiming that it is sufficient that, since (in his view) we currently lack an acceptable explanation of

analyticity, we are not now entitled to avail ourselves of the analytic/synthetic distinction. But even this more charitable reading is open to the responses cited above, i.e., that there are (currently) acceptable explanations of analyticity, either of the formal or less formal variety, and thus that even this slightly revised argument fails to establish its less ambitious conclusion.

Rather than challenge premise (1) of Quine's "No Acceptable Explanation" argument, we could challenge premise (2):

(2) Absent an acceptable account/explanation of analyticity, the analytic/synthetic distinction should be abandoned

This is the tactic of one of the responses of Grice and Strawson, for they argue that, given what Quine apparently has in mind as criteria for a satisfactory explanation:

"It would seem fairly clearly unreasonable to insist in general that the availability of a satisfactory explanation in the sense sketched above is a necessary condition of an expression's making sense" (Grice and Strawson 1970, 63). Miller joins with Grice and Strawson in questioning Quine's requirement for, and criteria of, an "acceptable" explanation (Miller 2007). Calling the assumption that "a putative concept is not fully intelligible unless it admits of an explicit non-circular definition" (Miller 2007, 133), "Quine's Socratic Assumption" (Miller 2007, 134), Miller concludes that "Quine's Socratic requirement on the legitimacy of concepts appears to be unreasonable and unmotivated" (Miller 2007, 136). So, while one may question whether Quine is correct in claiming that there is no acceptable explanation, even granting that, one can reject his argument by rejecting premise (2) and his criterion of the legitimacy of concepts.

Though not required to reject Quine's premise (2), we might even investigate further the reasons why analyticity does not appear to be susceptible of the kind of explanation Quine requires. One fairly obvious possibility is that analyticity (and what Quine considers its corresponding concepts: self-contradictory, sameness of meaning, essence, synonymy, definition, modal concepts like necessity, contrary-to-fact conditionals, intension, semantical rule, etc.) is a **primitive** concept (somewhat ironically, one might even give credit to Quine for suggesting this route, given the thoroughness of his rejection of any of the candidates in the family-circle). Thus, while it cannot be explained in terms of any concept that does not belong to the same set of "associated notions" – which Grice and Strawson refer to as "a certain circle or family of expressions" (Grice and Strawson 1970, 62) – it, like other primitive concepts, does not require such an explanation. Moreover, to demand such an explanation for primitive concepts is misplaced and shows a lack of understanding of the role of such concepts in our overall conceptual framework. Further, as Grice and Strawson point out, we do not require such an explanation of other primitive concepts, so Quine owes us an argument for why such an explanation is required for analyticity, and why our failure to provide one thus far is sufficient grounds for rejecting the analytic/synthetic distinction. Miller interprets what I have called Quine's "Difficulty in Applying the Distinction" argument as an attempt by Quine to provide such an argument, i.e., that its role is to show why analyticity requires the kind of explanation he has argued it lacks in his "No Acceptable Explanation" argument. This makes it all the more important that we examine the merits of the former argument, as we shall do in the next section. However, before leaving

criticisms of and responses to Quine's "No Acceptable Explanation" argument, we will present two additional criticisms of this argument and his treatment of analyticity.

A noteworthy aspect of Quine's examination of the concept of analyticity, is that in his search for acceptable explanations of analyticity, Quine only considers "equivalence" type relations, such as synonymy and interchangeability. There are other relations, such as meaning inclusion and antonymy, which would certainly appear to provide a basis for analytic claims. Thus it is quite remarkable that Quine never even mentions these relations. However, Quine is not alone in this oversight, as nearly all who write on analyticity, including defenders of the analytic/synthetic distinction, focus almost exclusively on equivalence relations. Their discussion often centers on synonymy, and the debate revolves around whether there are any two expressions that are synonymous, i.e., whether any two expressions have meanings that are identical. In and of itself, this would not be particularly problematic, except that, all parties to the debate implicitly assume that, if no expressions are found to have identical meanings, then there are no analytic claims, which clearly does not follow.

First, and most obvious, the very fact that two expressions are not synonymous is itself analytic, since it presumably rests upon the meanings of the two expressions and the relation these meanings have to each other. So, it is analytic that the meaning of "bachelor" is not synonymous with the meaning of "male". The **non-identity** of meanings is itself a meaning relation, just as much as the identity of meanings. To put this in terms of mathematical relations, if, as many, including myself, would claim, $4 = 3 + 1$ is analytic, so is $4 \leftrightarrow 4 + 1$. This point should be obvious, but it is so often overlooked that it is essential to note its implications for the debate on analyticity. For, if

we can, as Quine is clearly capable of doing, recognize that two expressions are not synonymous, then we have countenanced analyticity.

I would argue this would be sufficient even if these were not “extra-logical” in Quine’s use of that expression (though I would also argue that, ultimately, Quine has no basis for distinguishing the “logical” from the “extra-logical”), but we need not rely on that further point, for it is clear that Quine (and everyone else, for that matter) grants that there are “extra-logical” non-synonym-pairs, such as ‘bachelor’ and ‘male’ (or ‘cat’ and ‘dog’, ‘tall’ and ‘right-handed’, etc.). So, Quine finds himself (and so does everyone else) in the position of “leaning on a notion” of non-synonymy, which is all that is needed to establish that there are analytic claims. And, of course there are still synthetic claims, since it is a synthetic claim to say that an individual is male or is a bachelor, or that a dog is tall. So, we should not confuse the point that claims of non-synonymy are analytic, which is obviously true, with the claim that all claims involving non-synonymous expressions are analytic, which is obviously false. Thus, since there are both analytic claims and synthetic claims, we (like Quine and everyone else) must grant that there is a legitimate analytic/synthetic distinction. So, ironically, we can follow Quine’s advice and “turn our backs on the problem of synonymy” (Quine 1953, 32), for non-synonymy is all we need to ground a distinction between analytic and synthetic claims.

And, non-synonymy is but one of the meaning relations that we might appeal to. Realizing that we need not be searching for biconditional relations, as Quine limits his search, we need not find cases of both necessary and sufficient conditions, but merely necessary, or merely sufficient will suffice. Thus, cases of what we might call “meaning inclusion”, as opposed to “meaning identity” will also be sufficient to establish that there

are analytic claims. This is related to Locke's and Kant's concepts of "containment", but what matters to us is that we all recognize the distinction between claims like all tall men are men and claims like all tall men are rich, the former being such that the predicate is contained in the subject, whereas with the latter this is not the case.

We might anticipate the reply by Quine that a sentence like "All tall men are men" is a logical truth, and he has already granted these. And, for Quine, who thinks that what matters are the so-called "extra-logical" relations, this would not appear to be a problem. However, this response is flawed in two ways. First, we can appeal to cases of meaning inclusion involving Quine's purportedly "extra-logical" relations, such as "All bachelors are males". Notice that, with the question of synonymy not involved, how easy it is to recognize that such a claim is analytic. But, secondly, and more damaging to Quine's overall position, we can note that we cannot determine that statements like "All tall men are men" are logical truths simply by an appeal to syntax alone. That this is the case can be seen by considering other cases that fit this same syntactic pattern, but have a different logical status. For example, "All toy guns are guns", "All paper tigers are tigers", and "All counterfeit twenty-dollar bills are twenty-dollar bills" all have the same syntactic pattern as "All tall men are men". But, we can clearly see that the three former cases are not analytically true, whereas the latter is. This is only possible because we know the semantics of the words "tall", "toy", "paper", and "counterfeit". This is a point obscured by the emphasis on syntax, which often makes people think they get semantics for free. Thus, when properly understood, Quine's so-called "logical" truths actually also presuppose semantic knowledge. This same point can also be seen by considering cases like "Enough is enough", which, although syntactically a trivially true claim, and even a

“logical” truth by a Quinean, purely syntactic analysis, is clearly not used to express a mere logical tautology.

This is true even when we have put the statements in a symbolic notation, for the formula “ $(P \ \& \ (P \rightarrow Q)) \rightarrow Q$ ” is only a theorem if we assume that the propositional variables ‘P’ and ‘Q’ represent the **same** proposition in each of their occurrences in the formula. But, this is an assumption about the **semantics** of these propositional variables, and in fact presupposes synonymy and analyticity. More will be said about this presupposition in a later chapter.

Finally, regarding this general line of response to Quine, antonymy was mentioned as another meaning relation that grounds analyticity. In his article “Meaning Relations and the Analytic” (Sommers 1963b), Fred Sommers presents a penetrating analysis of both Quine’s predicament and the relations of antonymy and synonymy. He asks us to consider the sentence “No bachelor is married”, in which we can see that the proposition expressed is analytic because of the antonymous, and thus incompatible, relation between ‘bachelor’ and ‘married’. Sommers concludes that “*antonymy and not synonymy is the relation that is fundamental for the empiricist*” (Sommers 1963b, 529). Sommers also argues that Quine has already granted “extra-logical information” even in countenancing the “un” of “unmarried” in his sentence “No unmarried man is married”, and that an assumption of univocity, which is “but a special sort of synonymy” (Sommers 1963b, 531), vitiates Quine’s attempted distinction between his so-called “logical truths” and his “second class” of analytic statements.

The last of the criticisms and responses to Quine’s “No Acceptable Explanation” argument is that, since Quine grants logical truths, he cannot claim there is no distinction

between analytic and synthetic claims, for the logical truths are analytic, and he distinguishes them from all other statements. Thus, how can Quine argue that there is no acceptable explanation of analyticity while he acknowledges that the members of his class of “logical truths” are analytic? So, even though Quine separates these truths out for the wrong reasons, simply by distinguishing them from other statements, he presupposes some conception of analyticity.

The relation between Quine’s views on logical truths in “Truth by Convention” and “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” would no doubt take some time to sort out, but would probably be a worthwhile endeavor. For now, let us be satisfied with asking some questions and raising some issues worth considering. While Quine clearly rejects linguistic conventionalism in “Truth by Convention”, it is unclear what the implications are of his views of the status of logical truths and stipulative definitions in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”. Is Quine ultimately guilty of committing the same mistake as the linguistic conventionalists? Where are his criticisms of linguistic conventionalism when he considers stipulative definitions?

Now, one could claim the issue is different in “Two Dogmas” than in “Truth by Convention”, since in the latter Quine was merely arguing that not all truths of logic could be accounted for via conventions, whereas in the former he is arguing that there are no such things as analytic truths. But, how does this help Quine? For this would still have him committed to a class of logical truths that are analytic, a method of creating synonymy (and thus analyticity), i.e., stipulative definitions, and yet also committed to the claim that there are no analytic statements. The most we could say is that, at least his views in the two articles need not be seen as inconsistent with each other, since in “Truth

by Convention” he does not claim that no truths of logic can be accounted for by convention, just that they cannot all be accounted for in this manner.

Thus, we have seen that there are serious problems not only with Quine’s “No Acceptable Explanation” argument, but also with his overall position in light of the problems with that argument. Our responses not only showed that the premises of the argument can be challenged, but also its underlying assumptions appear to be fundamentally mistaken. With that assessment, let us now turn to the remaining arguments of the first five sections of “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”.

B. Quine’s “Difficulty in Applying the Distinction” Argument

Although Quine's argument appeared straightforward enough earlier, perhaps we would still be well served to attempt to state it explicitly. On a first pass, we get the following premise and conclusion for his argument:

(1) The analytic/synthetic distinction is difficult to apply.

Therefore, (2) There is no distinction between analytic and synthetic statements.

But this does not make Quine's argument entirely explicit, for there is a missing, unstated premise:

(0) Any distinction that is difficult to apply does not exist.

The conclusion is noteworthy as well, since it is not entirely clear what Quine thinks we should conclude from these premises. Does he believe it follows that there is no distinction between analytic and synthetic statements? Or, does he think a difficulty in applying a distinction merely shows the concepts upon which the distinction is based are incompletely understood? The stronger claim clearly seems overstated, since, although

many take Quine to have shown there is no distinction between analytic and synthetic statements (and the interpretation that at least he thinks he has done so has evidence to support it, especially given his arguments in section 6 of "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"), he does not draw that conclusion at the end of section 4. As the conclusion stated there follows Quine's "Difficulty in Applying the Distinction" argument, it would seem to represent the conclusion he believes he can draw from the reasons he has given up to that point, or at least it would be unfair to commit Quine to a stronger conclusion than the one he offers there. However, Quine is committed to rejecting the analytic/synthetic distinction in at least some sense, so the minimum it seems we can commit Quine to, is that the distinction should be abandoned. Thus, we get the more modest, and at least slightly more reasonable, conclusion:

(2') The analytic/synthetic distinction should be abandoned.

And, therefore we need a correspondingly more modest unstated premise:

(0') Any distinction that is difficult to apply should be abandoned.

Thus, restating the entire argument, we get:

(0') Any distinction that is difficult to apply should be abandoned.

(1) The analytic/synthetic distinction is difficult to apply.

Therefore, (2') The analytic/synthetic distinction should be abandoned.

Now we should be in at least a slightly better position to evaluate Quine's argument.

With this formulation of the argument, we can see two obvious responses: (1) reject premise (0'), and (2) reject premise (1), and we shall examine each of these responses next.

As Miller notes (Miller 2007), Grice and Strawson supply a convincing response to Quine's "Difficulty in Applying the Distinction" argument. They attack Quine's argument on two fronts. First, they provide an argument for rejecting premise (1). For, if Quine were correct that there is considerable "difficulty in separating analytic statements from synthetic ones" (Quine 1953, 32), then we should expect to find widespread disagreement over its application, with a large number of cases of statements which many individuals classify as analytic and yet many other individuals classify as synthetic. But, this just is not the case. Instead, as Grice and Strawson point out, the notable fact is that there is **general agreement** as to which claims are analytic and which are synthetic: "those who use the terms "analytic" and "synthetic" do to a very considerable extent agree in the applications they make of them" (Grice and Strawson 1970, 58). Moreover, as they also note, this agreement is not merely among philosophers, whose intuitions might be suspect, given their exposure to philosophical "dogmas", but also among non-philosophers. For, even with ordinary expressions like "means the same as" (and, just as relevantly, "does not mean the same as"), there is general consensus of application. Finally, Grice and Strawson also note that such concepts and distinctions can be taught and applied to novel cases. And, this last point they consider rather decisive in establishing the legitimacy of the distinctions: "For, in general, if a pair of contrasting expressions are habitually and generally used in application to the same cases, *where these cases do not form a closed list*, this is a sufficient condition for saying that there are kinds of cases to which the expressions apply; and nothing more is needed for them to mark a distinction" (Grice and Strawson 1970, 58).

Second, Grice and Strawson also argue that cases which might appear to be cases in which there is a difficulty in applying the analytic/synthetic distinction are actually not due to “an incomplete understanding, an incomplete grasp” of the concept of analyticity, but with the other concepts in the claim:

If, as Quine says, the trouble is with “analytic”, then the trouble should doubtless disappear when “analytic” is removed. So let us remove it, and replace it with a word which Quine himself has contrasted favorably with “analytic” in respect of perspicuity – the word “true”. Does the indecision at once disappear? We think not. The indecision over “analytic” (and equally, in this case, the indecision over “true”) arises, of course, from a further indecision: viz., that which we feel when confronted with such questions as “Should we count a point of green light as extended or not?” As is frequent enough in such cases, the hesitation arises from the fact that boundaries of application of words are not determined by usage in all possible directions. But the example Quine has chosen is particularly unfortunate for his thesis, in that it is only too evident that our hesitations are not here attributable to obscurities in “analytic”. ... the hesitation would be sufficiently accounted for by the same or similar kind of indeterminacy in the relations between the words occurring within the statement” (Grice and Strawson 1970, 69)

We might interpret this argument as implicitly recasting Quine’s argument as follows:

(0’’) Any distinction that is difficult to apply is due to a concept within the distinction that is incompletely understood.

(1) The analytic/synthetic distinction is difficult to apply.

Therefore, (1.1) The analytic/synthetic distinction is based on a concept that is incompletely understood.

(1.2) Any distinction that is based on a concept that is incompletely understood should be abandoned.

Therefore, (2’) The analytic/synthetic distinction should be abandoned.

And, with this recasting, Grice and Strawson can then be seen as rejecting premise (0’’), since, as they point out, the problem in applying the analytic/synthetic distinction in the case of ‘Everything green is extended’ is not due to a lack of understanding of the

concept of analyticity, but rather with the relation between the meanings of “green” and “extended”.

This latter argument might be interpreted as also implicitly challenging premise (0'), since, it at least appears that “true” is just as difficult to apply as “analytic”, and even Quine would not wish to reject the true/false distinction, so we can reject the premise that **any** distinction that is difficult to apply should be abandoned. And, absent any reason why the analytic/synthetic distinction is to be singled out, we have no more justification for abandoning it than the distinction between true and false statements.

I would add one more criticism of Quine’s argument. For, even if there were widespread difficulty in applying a distinction, it would not follow that there was no distinction. It might be very difficult to gather the requisite information to determine whether a given case met the criteria for one side of a distinction or the other, but that would not mean there was no distinction, or even that the criteria were somehow deficient. Such epistemological concerns should not be confused with issues that ultimately reside with matters of fact, metaphysics, or, in the case of the analytic/synthetic distinction, the relations between meanings. With these considerations and the challenges to the premises of his argument, we can conclude that Quine’s “Difficulty in Applying the Distinction” Argument is far from successful in providing a sufficient ground for rejecting the analytic/synthetic distinction.

C. Quine’s “Meanings are Unnecessary Intermediary Entities” Argument

The straightforward response to Quine’s “Meanings are Unnecessary Intermediary Entities” argument is to challenge the premises of his argument and the

charge he makes that the appeal to meanings is based on a confusion between meaning and naming. Let us examine the latter charge first, since it can be dismissed rather easily. First, it is unclear even why Quine would make any such claim, since he acknowledges that there is no necessary connection between claiming there are meanings and confusing meaning with naming or claiming that all meaning is essentially a form of naming. For, in his discussion in “On What There Is”, Quine even presents the possibility of his McX claiming there are meanings even while recognizing that words can have meaning without functioning as names. Further, as this would seem to be a much more common view than one that claims that all meaning is naming, Quine would appear to be attacking a straw man by continuing to criticize the position that there are meanings as being based on a “failure to appreciate that meaning and reference are distinct” (Quine 1953, 22), as this just is not the case.

Now, let us consider Quine’s more substantial argument that meanings are unnecessary to account for the “useful” ways we talk about meanings. Recall that we cast Quine’s argument as follows:

- (1) There are only two ways in which we “usefully” talk about meanings: (a) claiming that an utterance is significant, and (b) claiming that two utterances are synonymous.
- (2) Both of these two ways of talking about meanings may be faithfully represented directly, without any appeal to meanings.
- (3) Therefore, meanings are unnecessary to account for the “useful” ways we talk about meanings.

Fortunately for us, making Quine's argument explicit makes it clear that we can readily challenge the premises of this argument. For, both premise (1) and premise (2) are quite questionable, as we shall soon see.

Premise (1) can be challenged as Quine overlooks several meaning relations that we typically countenance as "useful". First, there is a predication relation, in which we predicate one meaning of another. Second, we can assess whether one meaning may be meaningfully predicated of another meaning – what Sommers calls the "predictability" relation. Though similar to Quine's notion of "significance", it would seem that Quine understands this adjective to apply to individual "utterances", and not as a relation between "utterances" (I use "utterances" in quotes to indicate that it is only applicable to utterances in an extended sense, being primarily a relation between meanings). Thirdly, there is the relation of antonymy, in which we judge that two meanings are incompatible. But lastly (which is only to say it is the last one we will consider, not that we have exhausted the "useful" ways we ordinarily talk about meanings that Quine has omitted), and arguably most damaging for Quine, on one interpretation, he has omitted the key notion of **having a meaning**. It should be clear that the notion of mere "significance" is insufficient to account for explaining our ordinary notion of the meaning of an expression. For, we could know that a term is significant without knowing **which** meaning it has. And, there is certainly much more to the meaning of an expression than merely that it is significant, as merely failing to be meaningless does not account for the full meaning of an expression. If simply being meaningful (as opposed to being meaningless) were sufficient for delineating the meaning of an expression, then all meaningful expressions would have the same meaning. But, many expressions are

meaningful, but have different meanings. So, the question arise what distinguishes their meanings? And, it is clear that it must be something other than merely being significant. So, Quine has either miscast one of the "useful ways" we speak of meaning too narrowly by his notion of "significance", or he has omitted a most important way of talking about meanings. For, while we do say: (1) an expression is meaningful, we also refer to (2) the meaning of an expression, and it is typically (2) that people refer to when saying that an expression "has" a meaning, so "the having of meanings" is usually not confined to (1). Thus, there must be more to our talk of meaning than the two useful ways Quine countenances, for, if we knew all there was to know about "significance" (i.e., meaningfulness) and synonymy, it would fail to even get us started, since we would not know what any individual expression actually means. Suppose we know that "green" is meaningful and we know all the synonyms of "green". Does that tell us all there is to know in order to know what "green" means? Clearly not, for we also have to know: (3) what "green" may be meaningfully predicated of, and (4) what conditions must obtain for it to be true that something is green. So, Quine is clearly mistaken when he claims that talk of an expression "having a meaning" is nothing more than saying that the expression is meaningful or "significant", as this does not capture all that is meant by saying that an expression has a meaning. Knowing that an expression is significant or meaningful does not tell us **which** meaning it has, but only that it has **a** meaning.

And, we can also challenge premise (2) of Quine's argument, since it is far from clear that we can even dispense with meanings and yet make sense of the two "useful" ways of talking about meaning that Quine does accept. While one could argue that, ultimately, we cannot make sense of "significance"/meaningfulness without relying on

the notion of meaning, let us set that question aside, as it will be sufficient to challenge Quine's other "useful" way of talking: synonymy. First, Quine has spent a great deal of effort arguing that synonymy is not well enough understood to serve as a ground for analyticity, and so, if he is right, then it hardly seems he can use it as a primitive concept upon which to base talk of meaning. And, this problem is not avoided by Quine's vague reference to "[t]he problem of explaining these adjectives" (Quine 1953, 12), even if this is supposedly possible "in terms of behavior" (Quine 1953, 12). It is unclear how Quine thinks it is possible to "view utterances ... as synonymous or heteronymous with one another" (Quine 1953, 12) without an appeal to meanings. For, this will surely require the notion of sameness of meaning, and thus the notion of meaning itself. Much more can be said on this topic, but as this is closely related to issues that arise in Quine's later arguments (in Word & Object), it will suffice for now to note that Quine would need to supply us with an account of synonymy that did not rely on sameness of meaning rather than simply assume one is possible. And, it does not help his case that he rejected all accounts of synonymy that he considered on the grounds that they presuppose one of the members of the family-circle of concepts.

D. Quine's Rejection of the Verification Theory of Meaning and Reductionism

As should be clear, Quine's rejection of the verification theory and reductionism does not constitute an argument against analyticity *per se*. This should be clear, but sadly it has not proven to be so, for the conflation of the analytic/synthetic distinction and these other "dogmas" of empiricism (although Quine actually only refers to reductionism as a "dogma", the verification theory of meaning is distinct from reductionism, and most

philosophers came to see it as a dogma to be rejected as well) has been of considerable influence in the widespread rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction. And, Quine certainly shoulders much of the blame for this conflation, since he claims that the analytic/synthetic distinction and reductionism “are, indeed, at root identical”. Still, he nowhere shows this to be the case, and, in fact, all he even argues for is that both the verification theory of meaning and reductionism, if true, would provide support for the analytic/synthetic distinction. But, from this it obviously does not follow that if we reject either or even both of these theories that we must reject the analytic/synthetic distinction. As a matter of logic, the only way that such a rejection is even relevant is if these theories were the only plausible reason for holding to the distinction, and thus our rejection of them would remove that reason, leaving the distinction with no support. And, even in that case, we would not have an argument that the distinction was nonsense or that there are no analytic propositions, but we would merely have no positive reason for thinking there are.

E. Quine on Stipulative Definitions

Before turning to criticisms of Quine’s view on stipulative definitions, let us first attempt to explicate them. In the brief passage (only one paragraph) in which Quine discusses stipulative definitions, Quine does not even refer to them by that name. But I shall use that title rather than his phrase, “the explicitly conventional introduction of novel notations” (Quine 1953, 26), which he nearly repeats verbatim in the only other reference to them outside of the initial paragraph in which the topic is introduced, the summary of the section on “Definitions”. Quine claims that stipulative definitions create

synonymy rather than relying on it, and thus he see no problem with them serving as grounds for synonymy. Unfortunately, although Quine calls this “a really transparent case of synonymy created by definition” (Quine 1953, 26), it is far from clear precisely how he thinks synonymies are created by stipulative definitions. And, perhaps more importantly, it is less clear how he thinks this is possible, while thinking an ordinary conventional definition always “rests on synonymy rather than explaining it” (Quine 1953, 26). We will turn to attempting to explicate Quine’s views on this difference now.

Why does Quine think a stipulative definition creates synonymy? Or, as Grice and Strawson put it, we would like to ask Quine “what state of affairs he thinks is brought about by explicit definition, what relation between expressions is established by this procedure” (Grice and Strawson 1970, 68)? All that he offers as a reason for this view is that he thinks that in such cases “the definiendum becomes synonymous with the definiens simply because it has been created expressly for the purpose of being synonymous with the definiens” (Quine 1953, 26). But, although this may answer the “why”, it does not answer the “how”. How does Quine think such creative acts of definition create synonymies? To answer this question, which should also shed more light on our first question, we might do better to seek an answer to the following: what does Quine think is different about the case of stipulative definitions?

To answer this question, we would be well served to return to Quine’s comments on ordinary conventional definitions. There, he considers synonymy a rather mysterious notion, but he does find some ground for it in the linguistic practices of a community of language users:

Just what it means to affirm synonymy, just what the interconnections may be which are necessary and sufficient in order that two linguistic forms be properly

described as synonymous, is far from clear; but, whatever these interconnections may be, ordinarily they are grounded in usage. (Quine 1953, 24 – 25)

Regarding this passage, we may first note the apparently epistemological aspect to Quine's concerns about the synonymy of "two linguistic forms" (that he is focused on the linguistic forms at all will be dealt with later), as he considers what it would take for them to be "properly described" as synonymous. Second, and more obviously, Quine considers usage to be key to synonymy, and so he apparently thinks that if two words have the same usage, i.e., if they are used the same by a community of language users, then the two words are synonymous. Thus, taking usage as the criterion of synonymy, and considering the epistemological issue of determining usage, it would seem at least initially plausible to interpret Quine as believing the difference between stipulative and conventional definitions is that we can determine the usage of the former but not the latter. Quine's argument for this difference could be put as follows:

- (1) Synonymy is "grounded in usage"
- (2) The usage of stipulated definitions (unlike ordinary linguistic conventions by groups of language users) can be determined

Therefore:

- (3) Stipulated definitions can serve as a basis for synonymy (and conventional definitions cannot)

But, this argument rests on at least one problematic premise. For now we shall set aside concerns about premise (1), and focus our attention on premise (2).

Premise (2) has two components: (2.1) the usage of stipulative definitions can be determined and (2.2) the usage of conventional definitions cannot be determined. Let us examine the issues related to (2.2) first. (2.2) involves knowing the meanings of two

expressions and also knowing that these two meanings are the same. For Quine, since the meanings are apparently simply the actual usage of the two expressions, this amounts to knowing the usage of each expression and being able to determine that these expressions are used the same way.

Given this, it seems Quine has two options. First, he can merely make the epistemological claim that we can never know whether two expressions have the same usage in a given language community. And this would explain why Quine distinguishes between stipulative definitions and conventional ones, since the former at least appear to only require some kind of first-person awareness of one's own intentions. Thus, this option would boil down to granting stipulative definitions as a basis for synonymy since we (or at least the one individual who makes the stipulation) can determine that the definiendum has the same meaning as the definiens, since this amounts to determining no more than that the definiendum is used the same as the definiens, and this is what is being stipulated, i.e., that it is being used the same.

Second, we might interpret Quine as claiming not that we simply cannot know whether two expressions have the same usage, but rather, that, as a matter of empirical fact, no two expressions actually have the same usage. This, also, would provide a means for Quine to distinguish stipulative definitions from conventional definitions, since stipulative definitions would only involve one usage, and thus they could serve as a ground for synonymy while conventional definitions, which involve the usage of two expressions, and these, according to this hypothesis, are never the same, could not. Now, of course, there would be a problem for Quine to claim both of these, since we would have to know what the usages are to determine that no two are the same, and this would

undermine the claim that it is impossible to have the appropriate epistemological access to determine that two expressions have the same usage.

Evidence that the first option (the epistemic one) might well be the one Quine intends can be found in Quine's references to "pre-existing synonymies" (Quine 1953, 25), for why would Quine refer to such synonymies if he thought there in fact were none (or, even stronger, that there could not be any)? Also, Quine's initial response to the proposal that conventional definitions might be the basis of synonymy, is to ask "Who defined it thus, and when?" (Quine 1953, 24), suggesting that an inability to settle such questions would prevent such definitions from being a legitimate ground of synonymy, and hence to make such epistemological concerns part of the criterion of synonymy.

Now let us take a moment to examine these two options and evaluate them for their merits. For the first option, one problem is that since it is merely that we cannot know that two expressions have the same usage, it leaves open the possibility that two expressions do have the same usage. And in that case, the two expressions would be synonymous, and thus a statement equating these two expressions would be analytically true; we just would not know that it was. This would hardly seem sufficient to support Quine's rejection of analyticity, unless he were to make the further argument that analyticity is an inherently epistemological concept, and that, if we never have sufficient evidence for a claim's analyticity, we must reject the analytic/synthetic distinction.

However, a second question that arises with this option may present even more difficulties for Quine, and that is the question of why we should think we can never know that two expressions have the same usage? Perhaps a consideration of the possibilities for a claim of the form "X means the same as Y" will prove helpful in examining this

question. It would seem that there are only 4 possibilities (and only 3 if we ignore the case where X has a prior meaning, but Y does not, which is a bit of an odd case):

- (1) X and Y both have no prior meaning
- (2) X has no prior meaning, but Y does
- (3) X has a prior meaning, but Y does not
- (4) X and Y both have a prior meaning

Cases (2) and (3) are essentially the same, since we would then take it that the stipulation in case (3) is the same as in case (2), but merely with the order reversed, i.e., that Y is now to be taken as having the same meaning as X. And, if that is not the intention, but rather that X is being stipulated to have the same meaning as Y, when Y has no meaning, then X's prior meaning can be ignored (since we are stipulating a new meaning for the expression "X"), and then case (3) would devolve into case (1).

Now, we will consider these cases. Let us start with case (4). This is either a case of ordinary definition, such as "'Bachelor' means the same as 'unmarried man'" (and Quine clearly thinks this relies on antecedent synonymies, rather than creating one, since it is a report on usage). Or, it is a case where we are stipulating that, even though an expression has a prior meaning, we are stipulating a new meaning for it, and this will fall under the next category of cases, since it is irrelevant that the expression had a prior meaning as the new stipulation is replacing that meaning.

For cases (2) and (3) (the categories of cases in which one expression has a prior meaning, and another expression is being stipulated to now have that same meaning), we are clearly relying on prior usage, since we cannot say that X has the same meaning as Y's prior meaning, unless we have at least some idea what Y's prior meaning is. For

example, if I stipulate that "frachelor" means the same as "female bachelor" (i.e., the same as "bachelor", but with "female" replacing the "male" component of "bachelor" - which, for anyone but Quine, would just be "unmarried female"), I have to know the prior meaning of "bachelor". And, if I do not, then this case will just devolve into case (1), which we will deal with next.

But first, make sure the point about this kind of case is not overlooked, since it is arguably the one Quine most likely has in mind in his references to the "explicitly conventional introduction of novel notations". "Frachelor" would be a novel notation, and it could be introduced simply to avoid having to say either "unmarried female" or "female bachelor". The latter is perhaps to be avoided since it has an initial air of inconsistency, an air that dissipates when one recognizes the intent to replace the inconsistent "male" aspect of "bachelor" but retain all other aspects - i.e., the requirement of being unmarried. This is actually a relatively common speech pattern. For example, consider "manwhore" or other slang terms that are introduced, often to make parallel comments about the gender opposite to a term's conventional application.

But, how is it that Quine can think that such a case as "frachelor" can be taken as the ground of synonymy whereas the ordinary definition of "bachelor" cannot? For both rely on prior meanings, which, for Quine, must be based on antecedent facts of linguistic usage. In both cases, we have to already previously know what the meaning of an expression is, either "unmarried male" or "unmarried female". Thus there would appear to be no relevant difference between the two cases in terms of the epistemological requirements. And, as noted previously, if Quine thinks that we need not have

knowledge of the prior usage of the expression, then this case would devolve into case (1), which I shall address now.

Now we will consider case (1), in which neither expression has a prior meaning. To aid in our discussion, consider the example "'gloop" means the same as "gleep"', where we are supposing that we have no prior meaning associated with either "gloop" or "gleep". But, in just stating the case, we can see the problem: nothing has been stipulated! There is no meaning for us to stipulate that a new term has, and thus this is just an empty phrase. No one, including ourselves, would understand anything to have been stipulated of either "gloop" or "gleep", except possibly the extremely minimally informative claim that, whatever the meaning of "gleep" is, consider "gloop" to have that same meaning. But, absent any prior knowledge of that meaning, we cannot say any more about what "gloop" (or "gleep" for that matter) means. And, thus, this can also not be the ground of synonymy.

Recall that we have been exploring the first option for Quine, given that he rejects conventional definitions, but accepts stipulative definitions as a ground of synonymy, which is that we can never know that expressions have the same usage. However, thus far, we have not found an epistemic difference in the two kinds of definitions, since both appear to require knowledge of prior meanings of expressions. The only case of stipulative definitions that seemed a viable option still required knowledge of the prior meaning of one expression, and while standard definitions require us to know the meanings of two expressions, merely needing to know two rather than just one meaning hardly seems sufficient to warrant Quine's claims for these two kinds of definitions.

However, it should be noted that Quine does have a potential response to this challenge. For, although it does seem like there is no difference between stipulative definitions and ordinary definitions, in that both require knowing a prior meaning, for ordinary definitions there is an additional element. Let us use the following notation to aid our examination of this difference:

Let X and Y be the expressions

Let [X] and [Y] be the meanings associated with X and Y respectively

And we should note that this need not be taken to indicate a reliance upon meanings as entities, for even if one thinks (as Quine does) that there are no such entities, there still is something that the words are associated with, even if it is just the linguistic behaviors of speakers of the language containing X and Y. With this notation, we can distinguish the cases of stipulative and ordinary definitions. For stipulative definitions, where we are stipulating that X has the same meaning as Y, we are relying upon a prior meaning for Y, i.e., [Y]. For ordinary definitions, where X and Y both have prior meanings, we have the following:

- (1) We must know the meaning of X, [X]
- (2) We must know the meaning of Y, [Y]
- (3) We must know that [X] = [Y]

So, though it would seem a very meager difference upon which to make such a major distinction between ordinary and stipulative definitions to say that ordinary definitions require one to know two meanings rather than just one, it seems at least initially more promising to cite (3) as a difference between the two kinds of definitions.

For, Quine might grant that we can satisfy both conditions (1) and (2), but deny that we can ever satisfy condition (3).

Still, it is difficult to understand how we could know [X] and [Y] and not be able to determine whether or not $[X] = [Y]$. This is similar to a point made by Grice and Strawson in their article "In Defense of a Dogma" (Grice and Strawson, 1970). There, they argue that meaningful talk of sentences having meanings would seem to make it meaningful to ask whether these meanings could be the same and thus talk of synonymy is also meaningful:

For if it made sense to talk of a sentence having a meaning, or meaning something, then presumably it would make sense to ask "What does it mean?" of a sentence, then sentence-synonymy could be roughly defined as follows: Two sentences are synonymous if and only if any true answer to the question "What does it mean?" asked of one of them, is a true answer to the same question, asked of the other. (Grice and Strawson 1970, 61-62)

Here, the point would be that if one can know two meanings, one should also be in a position to determine whether those two meanings are the same. At the least, Quine owes us an explanation as to how we can know [X] and [Y] but cannot ever know that $[X] = [Y]$ or an argument why this is not possible. For, if meaning is grounded in linguistic usage, and we can determine the meanings of two expressions by determining the usage of those two expressions, why should we not also be able to determine that the usage is the same for those two expressions?

But this brings up yet another option for Quine. Perhaps he wants to make the distinction between stipulative and ordinary definitions not because we can determine the usage for the former and not the latter, but rather because, while he believes ordinary definitions are grounded in usage, somehow stipulative definitions are not. This would allow him to claim that usage can never be determined, which, in turn, would bar

conventional definitions from serving as a basis for synonymy, and yet allow him to claim that stipulative definitions can provide such a basis.

Again, however, we can question the plausibility of this option. To be clear, this option would require Quine to claim both: (1) ordinary definitions are grounded in usages which can never be sufficiently determined to serve as a basis for synonymy, and (2) stipulative definitions are not grounded in usage and also are such as to provide a basis for synonymy. At the very least, such an interpretation of Quine's position would explain his rejection of linguistic conventionalism, as it views ordinary definitions as fundamentally the same as stipulative definitions, with both being grounded in linguistic practices that may be sufficiently determined to provide a foundation for synonymy and thus, analyticity.

While we will not be able to give more than a brief examination of the issues involved in these claims, we can at least note the challenge for Quine to establish (1), once he has granted that stipulative definitions can create synonymies. For, even if no one recorded the linguistic history of the word "bachelor", so that the answer to Quine's question who defined it to have the same meaning as "unmarried man" is lost in the sands of time, it is still not implausible that it did have such an origin. And we might ask Quine why it is relevant to the question of whether we can know the usage of the term now whether we can identify the particular individual who first defined it. Next, suppose that we can supply that individual and can cite the event at which a word's usage was defined. Would Quine concede that if we can provide the actual linguistic history of the usage of a word from its inception into the language, that then, although it now has an established

usage, and thus its definition would now not be considered stipulative, its definition can serve as a basis for synonymy?

Could we not imagine a scenario in which some one individual stipulates that an expression will have a certain meaning (i.e., stipulates that an expression has the same meaning as another expression), and then another individual adopts that same definition for the new term. For example, suppose I introduce the term "frachelor" as meaning the same as "unmarried female", and then someone else adopts the same convention. Is this somehow inherently impossible? It would hardly seem so. And, if one person can do it, why not another? And then, still another? Until, one by one, an entire linguistic community has adopted my original convention. At that point, it would be a conventional definition, and yet how could Quine say that there was no way to determine its usage?

And yet Quine is not alone in thinking that stipulative definitions are special. Others have also considered them to be "epistemologically special" (Gupta 2008) and we appear to have privileged first-person epistemic access to them that is not possible for conventional definitions. It at least seems that I can know my own stipulated definitions for words, i.e., I can know how I will use the words I have stipulated definitions for without appealing to anything outside of my own mental states. In fact, we might even want to characterize these stipulations as intentions. By my stipulating a definition, I am expressing an intention of mine to use a word a certain way. If so, these would seem to be knowable *a priori*, since it seems I can know these just by having access to my own intentions. This apparent special epistemic status might be what motivates Quine to distinguish stipulative definitions from conventional ones. And, if the point had been to

find a ground for *a priori* knowledge, then if we have special epistemic access to stipulative definitions, this might serve as a ground for synonymy (and thus analyticity), and explain how we have *a priori* knowledge of these synonymies. However, there are difficulties with this view.

First of all, since the purported privileged epistemic access only applies to the first-person perspective, it is only those stipulated definitions of one's own that would have this status. The stipulated definitions of others, even if I am a witness to the initial stipulation would still only be knowable *a posteriori*, and of course could not be certain, since I do not have any privileged epistemic access to anyone else's intentions. Another person may say that they intend to use a word or expression a certain way, but they could be lying and thus not really have that intention.

Second, it hardly seems to be an analytic claim to say that I have a particular intention, regardless of the epistemic access I may have to my own intentions. So, if stipulative definitions are forms of intentions, then, like all intentions to perform actions, they would be contingent synthetic claims that depend for their truth upon a person actually having the relevant mental state that constitutes having the intention. And, given this connection with intentions, one could even question whether stipulated definitions are truth-claims. For, taking a cue from the prescriptivist analysis of moral language, they may be properly analyzed as expressions of intention, and not reports about intentions, where it is only the latter that are clearly truth-claims.

Third, while it may seem that we can have *a priori* knowledge of our own stipulated definitions, recall our previous discussion of the nature of such definitions. For, unless we are just stipulating that two expressions will be used the same, neither of

which has a prior meaning, then we still must know the meaning of one of the expressions. And, according to Quine, this amounts to knowing the usage of the expression, and this can only be known *a posteriori* through observation of the linguistic behavior of speakers of the language. So, even if we do have special epistemic access to our own intentions regarding how we will use words, if these intentions are to use a new word the same way as another expression is already being used by speakers of the language, then we cannot know the significance of our own intention without knowing certain contingent facts about the world, in particular, how other people in fact use the expression, and we certainly cannot know this *a priori*. Fortunately, we need not resolve these questions here, and can satisfy ourselves with merely presenting some of the challenges faced by Quine's position on stipulative definitions.

Besides the concerns that have been raised in attempting to explicate Quine's position, two additional criticisms can be raised regarding Quine's view that stipulative definitions create synonymy (and thus would serve as the basis for at least some analytic statements): (1) the problems with linguistic conventionalism we noted previously (which Quine also notes in "Truth By Convention") would seem to apply to stipulative definitions as well as any other linguistic conventions, specifically the problem that no definition, no mere convention of word usage creates synonymy, rather all rely on a logically prior synonymy, (2) if Quine allows stipulative definitions, then without a principled distinction between stipulative definitions and conventional definitions, he opens the door for all conventional definitions to serve as the basis for synonymy. We will briefly elaborate these criticisms next, beginning with the second criticism.

As noted previously, Quine exempts stipulative definitions from his criticisms of the other attempts to explain analyticity. He claims that stipulative definitions create synonymy rather than relying on it, and that there is thus no problem with stipulative definitions. Yet Quine fails to recognize that this one case is enough to show that there can be a distinction of kind between analytic and synthetic statements. Stipulative definitions, even if they were the only analytic statements, would be different in kind from ordinary observation statements.

Quine takes himself to be furthering the work of C. I. Lewis, but it seems that we can use Lewis' view to criticize Quine. Quine rejects analyticity, but allows stipulative definitions. However, Lewis claims that all analytic truths have the status of stipulative definitions, and so it seems that we could rescue our ordinary account of the analytic/synthetic distinction from Quine's criticisms. Lewis argues that the analytic is "independent of experience" (Lewis, 221) in that it represents an attitude towards experience. A stipulative definition represents the attitude of an individual towards experience. For example, if I stipulate that a "gleep" is anything with four legs, then I have adopted as a rule that I shall call anything with four legs a gleep. For Lewis, this is not a synthetic claim, and I do not have to check experience to see whether it always holds true. Lewis claims that ordinary analytic truths are those in which the linguistic conventions, adopted as rules by a group of language-users, create analyticity. So, if Quine allows individually stipulative definitions, then, via a Lewis-style argument (in which all definitions are seen as having the same status of attitudinal stances adopted for pragmatic purposes, whether done by a single individual or a group of language users),

we can argue that he must also grant conventional definitions, and thereby analyticity in general.

While the second criticism argues that, in order to be consistent, Quine must also grant conventional definitions as a basis for synonymy, the first criticism would instead argue that Quine should not allow any form of definition as a foundation for synonymy. Instead, as this criticism goes, synonymy is a relation between meanings and not merely an empirical claim about how people, whether as individuals or as groups of language users, use words. Stipulative definitions of even the most extreme sort rely on the identity of meanings, since this is what makes them true. “All gleeps are gloops” is true not just because I may have decided to use “gleep” to mean the same thing as “gloop”, but also because the proposition expressed by the sentence is true, and its truth is a matter of the relation of meanings, in this case, the relation of identity, which holds that all meanings are identical to themselves. And this is why the proposition is true, and thus why any sentence that expresses that proposition is true.

Though this will be addressed in more detail later, the real problem here is a failure to distinguish sentences and propositions (or perhaps on Quine’s part, to acknowledge propositions). For, when we are clear about this distinction, we see that it is actually still an empirical question whether two words are being used the same, whether it is stipulated to be so by a single individual or a convention established by the linguistic practices of a group of language users. That “gleep” is associated with the same meaning as “gloop” is an empirical matter. And, even if I am the individual who has stipulated that I shall associate them with the same meaning, this act (mental or otherwise, since I might write it down, but we at least are inclined to think this is preceded by my decision to do

so) is a matter of fact like others. Though we might find it hard to imagine circumstances in which I could be mistaken about my own stipulations, the claim that a word has the same meaning associated with it as another word, whether made by the same individual who initiated the word/meaning associations or not, has the status of an empirical fact. There is a time at which the association took place, and prior to that it was not in effect. Though, like other mental acts, it might be difficult to be observed by others, and might lend itself to an air of first-person infallibility (always a notoriously tendentious area), the nature of the kind of claim being made is still that of a claim about the way the world is, and not merely a matter of the relations of meanings. To sum it up, I shall argue at least, that how words happen to be used is always contingent, synthetic, and only knowable *a posteriori*. But, less arguably, and perhaps more importantly for our present discussion, stipulative definitions cannot be the basis of synonymy or analyticity since they presuppose it. I presuppose the notion of sameness of meaning to even describe such stipulations. In an act of stipulative definition, one decides to associate two expressions with the same meaning, but this clearly presupposes the notion of sameness of meaning, i.e., synonymy. Once we see that analyticity is a property of propositions, and not of sentences, this sort of confusion is easier to avoid. So, albeit somewhat ironically, we can take Quine's advice: "Recognizing then that the notion of definition does not hold the key to synonymy and analyticity, let us look further into synonymy and say no more of definition" (Quine 1953, 27).

Chapter 5: Arguments Against Analyticity, Part II

I. Quine's Problems with Meaning: Part 2 – Epistemological Holism, Indeterminacy of Translation, and Semantic Eliminativism

A. "Empiricism without the Dogmas" - Epistemological Holism

In section 6 of "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", "Empiricism without the Dogmas" (Quine 1953), Quine presents what Grice and Strawson refer to as "Quine's positive theory of the relations between the statements we accept as true or reject as false on the one hand and the "experiences" in the light of which we do this accepting and rejecting on the other" (Grice and Strawson 1970, 69). While Grice and Strawson are correct in noting that Quine's sketch of this positive theory begins in section 5, we will focus our attention on Quine's comments in section 6, as these flesh out the implications of the theory for the analytic/synthetic distinction more fully.

It will, however, be worth our while to glance back at section 5, as it is there that Quine offers the clearest statement (in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", at least) of what has come to be known as his "epistemological holism". Also known as "confirmation holism", Quine's view is that no single statement can be tested against experience in isolation, but rather "our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body" (Quine 1953, 41). This view is in contrast with reductionism, which holds that all statements can be translated ("reduced") into statements that can be tested for truth or falsity directly with observations. For Quine, it is not individual statements, but rather entire theories, that are confirmed or infirmed by experience. Having stated his position in section 5, Quine

draws out the implications of his epistemological holism for the analytic/synthetic distinction in section 6. To see these implications more clearly, let us flesh out the positivists' view of the relationship between individual statements and experience.

With their acceptance of both reductionism and the verification theory of meaning, the positivists believed they could distinguish statements that could be shown (albeit via the process of reduction) to have connections to observations and those that had no such connections. The former, given their connections to experience, were thought to make claims about how the world is, and could not be held true if observations were made that conflicted with these connections. That is, if we made observations that implied the world were not as such a statement claimed, then we would have to reject the statement as false. These statements were classified as synthetic. Alternatively, or so the positivists held, some statements were not connected to experience in that they made no claim about how things are in the world, and so these statements could be held true "come what may". Also, since they did not make a claim that was connected to any possible experience, these statements were immune to revision in that no observation could possibly be made that would require us to reject a statement of this kind as false. These statements were classified as analytic. In this manner, the positivists' distinction between analytic and synthetic statements was closely connected to their doctrines of reductionism and the verification theory of meaning.

Quine recognized this connection in the positivists' views, and in particular saw the implications of his epistemological holism for their view of the analytic/synthetic distinction. Where they saw this distinction as one between statements that could be held true come what may and those that cannot (or conversely, between those that are immune

to revision and those that are not), Quine denies there can be such a distinction. For, according to his epistemological holism and its holistic relationship between statements and experience:

it becomes folly to seek a boundary between synthetic statements, which hold contingently on experience, and analytic statements, which hold come what may. Any statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system. Even a statement very close to the periphery can be held true in the face of recalcitrant experience by pleading hallucination or by amending certain statements of the kind called logical laws. Conversely, by the same token, no statement is immune to revision. (Quine 1953, 43)

Thus, Quine's positive doctrine presents another challenge to analyticity, or at least to the positivists' version of the analytic/synthetic distinction.

B. Word and Object - Indeterminacy of Translation and Semantic Eliminativism

In chapter II of Word and Object, "Translation and Meaning", Quine presents his thesis of the indeterminacy of translation: "manuals for translating one language into another can be set up in divergent ways, all compatible with the totality of speech dispositions, yet incompatible with one another" (Quine 1960, 27). Using the methodology of what he calls "radical translation", "i.e., translation of the language of a hitherto untouched people" (Quine 1960, 28), Quine argues that all of the available behavioral data, both linguistic and otherwise, will be insufficient to determine whether we have correctly translated words in the natives' language into our own. And, Quine claims, this is not merely an epistemological problem. For it is not just that we cannot know whether our translation manual is correct but rather Quine claims that there is

nothing to be correct about, i.e., as it is often put, there is **no fact of the matter** whether our translation manual is correct.

But this is just the beginning of the significance of the thesis of the indeterminacy of translation. For, if there is no fact of the matter whether our translation manual is correct, then there can be no fact of the matter whether two expressions have the same meaning, and this would finally imply that there is no fact of the matter as to what a given expression means. While some might call this “meaning skepticism” (Miller 2007, 141), I will follow Soames and refer to this as “semantic eliminativism” (Soames 2005), since Quine’s goal is to eliminate talk of meanings altogether. And, of course, if we were to do so, we would clearly need to abandon any conception of analyticity involving statements being true in virtue of meanings alone, which would require us to reject the analytic/synthetic distinction. So, Quine’s thesis of the indeterminacy of translation presents yet another challenge to the analytic/synthetic distinction.

II. Replies to Arguments

A. Epistemological Holism

In this assessment of Quine’s epistemological holism, we will focus our attention on the following two claims of Quine: (1) any statement can be held true come what may, and (2) no statement is immune to revision. These claims represent a direct challenge to the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements, since, for the positivists and others who accept the distinction, only analytic statements can be held to be true “come what may”, and are thus immune to revision, whereas synthetic statements are not immune to revision, since they must be rejected as false if there is sufficient evidence

contrary to their observable implications. So, in defending this distinction, it will be worth our while to examine these two claims more closely.

Let us take (1) first. By claiming that "Any statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system" (Quine 1953, 43), Quine implies that synthetic claims are no different than analytic ones, since both are such that they can be held true "in the face of" "recalcitrant" experience. However, there are several problems for Quine's claim.

First, the "what" that "may come" is presumably an experience that conflicts with the statement. But what can it possibly mean for Quine for an experience to "conflict" with a claim, given Quine's rejection of the notion of contradiction as failing to have a clear definition? In rejecting analyticity (and all the other members of the family-circle), Quine can no longer consistently avail himself of any notions of contradiction or "conflict" between experience and a claim. But, if there is no notion of conflict which Quine can use, then he cannot even make his claim. And we can only make sense of Quine's claim if we presuppose the very notions he has been arguing against.

Second, how are we even able to identify which statement the experience conflicts with? For Quine, it is our entire "web of beliefs" that must face the "tribunal of experience" (and, again, what sense can Quine give to such a "tribunal", absent any notion of contradiction), but his claim that any statement may be held true come what may presupposes that we can identify individual statements that a particular experience conflicts with. And, this would only seem to be possible if individual statements have the kind of logical connection to experiences that the positivists claim but that Quine denies.

Third, the qualifying phrase “if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system” (Quine 1953, 43) appears to be critical. So, one possible response to Quine is to simply amend the criterion of analyticity from being a statement that can be held true come what may to being a statement that can be held true come what may **with no adjustments needed elsewhere in the system**. That would give us a criterion by which to distinguish analytic and synthetic statements, since synthetic statements can only be held true “come what may” so long as some adjustment is made in the system, while analytic statements can be held true with no adjustments in the system at all.

Fourth, it is entirely unclear how Quine thinks any experience can even be in conflict with an analytic statement. So, why not just classify as analytic those statements that have no conflict with experience? In fact, this is why they can be held true “come what may”. It is not because we are always able to resolve the conflicts that do arise that we are able to hold analytic statements to be true, but rather because whatever experiences we encounter can never be in conflict with them in the first place. This point will be echoed later in our discussion of the second of Quine’s claims. So, with these problems noted for Quine’s first claim, let us now turn to his second claim.

Recall that Quine’s second claim is that “no statement is immune to revision”. Where defenders of the distinction would claim that analytic statements are immune to revision (and synthetic statements are not), and this would serve to distinguish analytic statements from synthetic statements, Quine denies this. Thus, Quine’s second claim also challenges the analytic/synthetic distinction, by once again claiming that analytic and synthetic statements are on equal footing, in this case, that both are susceptible to revision.

Obviously, a key notion in both the defenders' claim and Quine's is the notion of "revision". For Quine to be disagreeing with the defenders of the analytic/synthetic distinction, he must be using the same notion of revision that they are using when they say that analytic statements are immune to revision. So, then, what do defenders of the distinction mean by "revision"? There seem to be two candidates for this concept of "revision": (1) rejection of the statement as false, or (2) revising the meaning of the statement (presumably by revising the meaning of at least one of the expressions of which the statement is composed). Clearly, defenders of the distinction cannot mean (2) by "revision", since both analytic and synthetic statements can be "revised" in this way. But, they could make a distinction between analytic and synthetic statements based on the notion of revision as rejection as in (1), since they could claim that while synthetic statements may be rejected as false, analytic ones can never be rejected as false. So, now let us see if Quine is using "revision" in this same sense.

Quine made his claim regarding immunity from revision in the context of presenting his view of the relationship between beliefs and experience, and so a closer examination of his account of this relationship should prove helpful in understanding what Quine means by "revision". Quine first describes the "totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs" as "a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges" (Quine 1953, 42), but then shifts his description to that of a "field of force whose boundary conditions are experience" (Quine 1953, 42). According to Quine, all statements are located within this field, although we are to picture logical truths as being closer to the center of the field than ordinary observation statements.

In continuing his account of the relationship between our beliefs (which, for Quine, are taken as a whole in this relationship, and not individually), Quine claims that a “conflict with experience” “occasions readjustments”, but what he means by “conflict” is far from clear, given his rejection of the notion of contradiction and his denial that individual statements have logical connections to experiences. Further, his use of the word “occasions” leaves the situation less than clearly described. Does he mean that “readjustments” just happen? Is Quine simply describing the situation from a naturalistic perspective in terms of what happens to occur? Are these readjustments simply phenomena that he has noticed, or, are they requirements of logical consistency? And, without attempting to settle those questions, but turning to others more directly connected to our present concern, what does Quine mean by “readjustments”?

Our best hope of an answer seems to lie in the next few sentences where Quine claims:

Truth values have to be redistributed over some of our statements. Reevaluation of some statements entails reevaluation of others, because of their logical interconnections ... Having reevaluated one statement we must reevaluate some others, which may be statements logically connected with the first or may be the statements of logical connections themselves. (Quine 1953, 42)

In saying that truth values have to be “redistributed”, it would seem most plausible to interpret Quine as saying that a statement that had the truth value “true” would have to be changed (“redistributed”) to have the truth value “false”. And, correspondingly, “reevaluation” would apparently mean reevaluation of the truth value of the statement, since it is the truth value of the statement that would be “logically connected” to the truth value of other statements. And, we could also note that in this passage Quine uses the normative phrases “have to be” and “must”, rather than the descriptive-sounding phrase

“occasions”, the former fitting the kind of logical compulsion he appears to be depicting. Thus, the account Quine presents is that we “must”, on pain of otherwise being inconsistent, “adjust” the truth-values of some of the statements in our set of beliefs, in the face of “contrary” experience. This suggests that, although Quine uses the words “readjustments”, “redistributed”, and “reevaluation”, he simply means finding statements to be false.

More evidence for this interpretation comes in the next paragraph, where Quine makes the two claims under consideration, and in fact, the statement of the first claim is itself a significant clue to Quine’s meaning of the word “revision” in the second claim. In the first claim he refers to a statement’s being “held true”, and, the second claim is prefaced with the phrase, “Conversely, by the same token”. Thus, it would seem that the kind of “revision” Quine must mean is that of no longer holding a statement to be true, i.e., rejecting it as false.

Additionally, in the paragraph that follows Quine’s claim that no statement is immune to revision, he refers to “revision in the event of recalcitrant experience” (Quine 1953, 43) and “reevaluating” statements, and this, too, is consistent with the interpretation that he means finding the statements to be false (where the statements had previously been held to be true). He cites as examples, “reevaluating” “the statement that there are brick houses on Elm street” (presumably after finding out the houses are not actually made of brick, or the brick houses we had in mind are not on Elm street), and “reevaluating” “the statement that there are no centaurs” (presumably after having sufficient “recalcitrant experiences” to warrant concluding that there are centaurs). Both of these examples would seem to be appropriately described (albeit in less florid

language than Quine's) as rejecting a statement as false that was previously held to be true. Thus, this would seem to be the best hypothesis as to what Quine means by "revision". But the mere fact that we even had to engage in such an interpretive endeavor should make us at least slightly wary as to Quine's use of the word. However, let us now proceed with our assessment of Quine's claim that no statement is immune to revision.

We should note first that the only occasion for revision that Quine considers is a "revision in the event of recalcitrant experience" (Quine 1953, 43). We could again question what Quine, with his rejection of contradiction (for, since he rejects self-contradiction, and we can always simply conjoin two contradictory statements to form a self-contradictory statement, and he would seem to have no logical space with which to countenance contradiction, as it would allow all the other members of the family-circle in its wake), can mean by an experience being "recalcitrant". But the more important question is what experience he thinks could even possibly conflict with a statement such as " $2 + 2 = 4$ "? Recall the discussion (in chapter 3) of C. I. Lewis's response to Mill, which makes a compelling case that no experience can conflict with this claim.

But what of Quine's claim that no statement is immune to revision? It would seem if Lewis is correct, that we can never reject an analytic claim. But does this not happen quite often? Think, for example, of the definition of "fish". It may have been true at one time that a whale is a fish, according to the classification scheme for fish then in use². We no longer accept that a whale is a fish, and we now classify whales as

² The history of the classification of whales and other aquatic mammals such as dolphins is illustrative of both the interplay and the distinction between the analytic and the synthetic. Although Aristotle classified whales as mammals and not as fish, his classification was not widely adopted, and it was not until Linneaus' taxonomy was published in the 18th century that it was more widely accepted. And, Melville's references to whales as "fish" in Moby Dick suggest the re-classification was stubbornly resisted in some quarters for many years.

mammals. This would seem to support Quine's claim, but we need to make a distinction here. We do not use the same meaning for the word "fish" in both cases.

When we say that whales are mammals and not fish, we are using a different definition of "fish" than when people used to say that whales are fish. The old classification scheme that grouped whales with other creatures of the sea focused on the features whales have in common with other fish (the general fusiform, fish-like shape, having fins, living in the water, etc.). And, it is not the case that everyone who preferred this classification scheme was simply unaware of the features that Aristotle (and later Linneaus) focused on in their alternative classification scheme. Although we no longer use the old classification scheme, this does not mean that we have found it to be false, but rather simply less useful for our purposes. A distinction needs to be made: it is one thing to alter the meanings of terms and adopt a new classification scheme, and it is another thing to find a statement to be false (with the same meanings for all of its terms).

With the old classification scheme, "A whale is a fish" would have once been a true sentence (better put, it would have expressed a true proposition - that a whale has a certain fusiform - aka "fishlike" - appearance, and that a whale lives in the water). But, with our current classification scheme, this proposition, while still true, is not as significant for our purposes, and we consider it more important to note the similarities of whales to other animals that suckle their young, etc., so that now a whale is classified as a mammal and not a fish. But the important point is that our "revision" in such a circumstance does not entail the denial of the proposition expressed by the use of the sentence "A whale is a fish" under the old classification scheme. This is a change of meaning, not a change of belief. And, even if new facts helped prompt our adoption of

this new classification scheme (though, in historical fact, those facts were well known for many years, and the adoption of the new system was much more involved than the fable of a supposedly ignorant people finally finding out the "true" nature of whales - such a slight to the ancients is sadly all too typical of those overly immersed in their own time and overly impressed by modern technological advances), we can still sort out the changes that are conceptual from those that involve a change of belief regarding matters of fact.

It is only by implicitly rejecting this distinction (which amounts to begging a very important question) that we can make plausible either Quine's claim that no statement is immune to revision or his other claim that we can hold any statement to be true no matter what. True, Quine does qualify his claim with the phrase "if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system" (Quine 1953, 43). However, these "adjustments" cannot take the form of changing the definitions of terms in the statement in question, or else it cannot be said that we have held one and the same statement to be true (or, conversely, that we have "revised" one and the same statement). Moreover, it seems that if we will make "drastic" enough changes, then we may quite possibly end up turning what was a synthetic statement into an analytic statement. According to defenders of the analytic/synthetic distinction, analytic statements are those we can never call false (keeping in mind that we may, for reasons of utility, use the terms differently, but that it is never the same statement found to be false) and hence no experience can count against its truth. It seems clear that there is a difference between finding evidence that convinces one that a claim is false and deciding that a particular definition for a word is no longer useful. And, this difference is *prima facie* evidence for a distinction for which Quine's

position can give no straightforward account. And, while Quine might reject this response, he cannot simply assume that there is no such distinction, since this would be to just beg the question on this issue, and leave Quine with no argument for his position.

It would seem our only alternative is to view Quine as equivocating between the two meanings of “revision” that we identified initially. To appear to be making a significant claim, and the one that would be the denial of the claim made by the defenders of the analytic/synthetic distinction, he must be using “revision” in the sense that analytic (for Quine, purportedly analytic) statements are not immune to revision in that they may be rejected as false. But, in order to make a claim that has any plausibility to it, Quine must switch to the weaker meaning of “revision” as changing the meaning of the statement (and then finding the different proposition that the statement would then express to be false). Although perhaps a case could be made for a third alternative, that of simply no longer using a classification scheme, that too will not suffice for Quine as the discussion of the “whale”/“fish” example illustrates.

So, we are only able to make Quine’s claim plausible if we treat “revision” as involving a change of meaning, which reduces Quine’s claim to the trivial one that we can always choose to use words differently. And, clearly, this trivial claim does not contradict the claim made by the defenders of the analytic/synthetic distinction, so it can simply be ignored. This is the same point that Grice and Strawson are making when they argue that:

Acceptance of this doctrine is quite consistent with adherence to the distinction between analytic and synthetic statements. Only, the adherent of this distinction must also insist on another; on the distinction between that kind of giving up which consists in merely admitting falsity, and that kind of giving up which involves changing or dropping a concept or set of concepts. Any form of words at one time

held to express something true may, no doubt, at another time, come to be held to express something false. But it is not only philosophers who would distinguish between the case where this happens as the result of a change of opinion solely as to matters of fact, and the case where this happens at least partly as a result of a shift in the sense of the words. (Grice and Strawson 1970, 72)

This concludes our assessment of Quine's two claims, neither of which ultimately presents a significant challenge to the analytic/synthetic distinction. However, before leaving this section, I would like to further elaborate and press home one point that arose in this assessment because I believe it strikes at a central problem for Quine's overall depiction of the relationship between beliefs and experiences.

Remember that Quine claims that our beliefs are organized in a "web" pattern, with statements more directly connected to observations at the outer edges of the web, and truths of logic at the center, and, in general with more abstract statements closer to the center. For Quine, this is still all mutable, as there is no absolute distinction between these statements. But, the question arises, how can we accept this organizational picture and still make sense of the notion of "conflicting evidence"? And, it should be noted, such evidence, or "recalcitrant experiences" are a key component of Quine's overall view of the relationship between the web of beliefs and experience. He, rightly, takes it as a given that our beliefs will often fail to square with our experiences, and "readjustments" will have to be made.

Why is the notion of "contrary experience" so problematic for Quine? Because, in order to make sense of this notion, we must presuppose the notion of logical inconsistency. If not, then we could not even identify any experiences as contrary or conflicting with our beliefs, and thus there would not even be a hint that anything was amiss in our beliefs and that any statement might need revised or reevaluated. But this

means that the basic principles of logic are interwoven into the very fabric of the system of beliefs, and thus they are not, as Quine claims, merely some relatively more centrally located beliefs in the system. Rather, logical truths are presupposed as fixed and immutable, one should even say “necessary”, truths that are presupposed by any possible web of beliefs we might construct.

The very notion of a “web” of beliefs, with some beliefs more directly “answerable” to sensory experiences presupposes the truths of logic. For, what is it for a belief to be “answerable” to evidence except in some logical relation it has to this evidence? Thus, Quine’s positions, both the specific one that no statement is immune to revision, and the more general claim that beliefs form a web with logical truths varying only by degree from more peripheral beliefs, are ultimately self-refuting, since they presuppose the truths of logic in the relationship between beliefs and experiences.

Further, Quine’s claim that no statement is immune to revision leads to absurd consequences. For example, suppose, as Quine is committed to allowing, we reject the law of non-contradiction. Then, we can no longer even have a functioning web of belief. For, any belief could be added to our web, no matter its inconsistency with other beliefs in the web (or even the new belief’s own internal inconsistency, for that matter). And, we could no longer even organize our beliefs into a “web” pattern (i.e., with some beliefs closer to the outer edge of the web than others), since this presupposes that some beliefs are more likely to be rejected in the face of (conflicting) sensory observations. And, again, we should note that these must be conflicting observations, since we make no sense of rejecting a belief in the light of confirming or even unrelated observations. But, again, the notion of “conflict” here presupposes the logical principle of non-contradiction

that we are, according to Quine, allowed to reject. Thus, the very concept of a web of belief itself requires the law of non-contradiction, and so, Quine's conception of a holistic web of beliefs that all only vary by degree of likelihood of revision, with pragmatic considerations playing a central role, is self-refuting. And, as I shall argue shortly, a similar problem vitiates Quine's conception of radical translation as well.

B. Indeterminacy of Translation and Semantic Eliminativism

Rather than provide a detailed, point-by-point assessment of Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of translation and the merits of the arguments he provides for his thesis, we will instead connect the charges made in the previous section to Quine's conception of the methodology of radical translation. We will argue that the same problem of presupposing the very notions he intends to undermine and reject undercuts Quine's entire project of semantic eliminativism.

At the very outset of describing the process of radical translation, Quine relies on the concepts of assent and dissent. He apparently simply takes these concepts as basic, as all that he considers worth questioning is how we are to determine whether an individual assents or dissents, asking of the linguist, "how is he to recognize native assent and dissent when he sees or hears them?" (Quine 1960, 29). Further, Quine takes this to be only a minor problem, which can be dealt with by making preliminary hypotheses, and then testing these against actual observations.

However, the problem that is completely overlooked by Quine in this methodological approach of radical translation is how he can even avail himself of the concepts of assent and dissent in the first place. For, these concepts are clearly connected

to the law of non-contradiction and the law of excluded middle, since Quine takes it for granted that the native cannot both assent and dissent to the same statement at the same time. By assuming assent and dissent to be mutually exclusive responses, Quine has presupposed the laws of logic. Now, why is this problematic for Quine? Because he has argued that the laws of logic are on the same epistemological footing as any other statement. But, they cannot be if they are presuppositions of the very process of radical translation. If we must presuppose the laws of logic at the outset, then no evidence we can obtain through the process of radical translation can ever lead to revising these laws. In general, the activity of interpreting the behavior (linguistic and otherwise) of individuals presupposes they are bound by the law of non-contradiction if only to the extent that they cannot intend to assent and dissent to one and the same statement at a single instant.

To continue with this problem from another perspective, consider how we could engage in radical translation without such presuppositions. What strictly behavioral evidence could possibly warrant the hypotheses necessary to even get the process of radical translation off the ground? How could we ever know that a speaker of a language was consistent in either her beliefs or her use of words? Quine merely offers the example of a linguist interrogating a native and getting the responses 'Evet' and 'Yok' in varying circumstances. He then surmises that these correspond to 'Yes' and 'No' in English. But, without the presupposition of conformity to the law of non-contradiction (presumed by the use of the notion of assent and dissent), how could the translator rule out the possibility of a native saying **both** 'Evet' and 'Yok'? Or, though this is a slightly different point, using 'Evet' and 'Yok' to mean different things at different times? We

are clearly forced to assume other explanatory hypotheses (e.g., about the natives' adherence to rules of logic) to even begin the process of translation.

But what permits the linguist to assume that the native even has the concept of assent and dissent, and that the native, like us, cannot both assent and dissent to the same statement? This is what the whole process takes for granted, and for which no behavioral evidence would ever be sufficient to establish. And, this presupposition is not like the other "analytical hypotheses" (Quine 1960, 68) that the translator may utilize for testing the synonymy of particular utterances, for it is an inherent presupposition of the activity of translation itself.

The problem for Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of translation may be summarized as follows: (1) the thesis of the indeterminacy of translation relies upon the methodological processes of translation, (2) the methodological processes of translation presuppose the laws of logic, and (3) the laws of logic presuppose the semantic/intensional concepts that Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of translation is intended to argue against. Thus, Quine's project of semantic eliminativism cannot get off the ground as it presupposes the very semantic/intensional concepts it intends to eliminate. I take it that, in this chain of reasoning, (1) is more or less obvious, and (2) has been argued for in this section. And, finally, (3), which has been hinted at previously, shall be argued for more fully in the next chapter. In fact, it is a cornerstone of the positive argument for analyticity. But, that will have to wait, as next we will address some of the prevailing attitudes held by philosophers who reject the analytic/synthetic distinction.

III. Prevailing Attitudes Against Analyticity – and Responses to Those Attitudes

Although the radical meaning skepticism of Quine (upon which his rejection of analyticity was based) has been widely rejected, his rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction has somehow been widely accepted. So, it will be worthwhile to attempt to delineate what actual arguments are doing the work of sustaining this rejection of analyticity in the absence of meaning skepticism. These often do not even take the form of arguments, but are what I call “Prevailing Attitudes Against Analyticity”. These include the general view that philosophy has failed to give definitive, reductive analyses of key philosophical concepts and this failure is taken as evidence that there are no analytic propositions. Following Margolis and Laurence, I will call this “The Retreat From Definitions” (Margolis and Laurence 1999, 14). It also seems clear that the analytic/synthetic distinction suffers from a form of “Guilt by Association” in that less discriminating individuals, eager to show their rejection of all things positivistic, throw out the analytic baby with the verificationist bath water. Finally, those not inclined to slog through the actual arguments and evaluate the merits (or lack thereof) in Quine’s copious writing have apparently settled for the accepted wisdom that “Quine showed that the analytic/synthetic distinction was illegitimate, didn’t he?”

A. “The Retreat From Definitions”

The first commonly-held negative attitude we will address will be referred to as “the Retreat from Definitions”, as it involves a rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction on the ground that uncontroversial definitions of concepts seem to be hard to

find. Such definitions would involve both necessary and sufficient conditions, and, ideally, also provide a form of decomposition of a more complex concept into a set of simpler concepts. One of the most commonly cited examples is the definition of “bachelor” as an unmarried male. But, even as seemingly straightforward and simple a definition as this has been challenged. What about male infants? Many would find it odd to classify them as bachelors. To see why this case and others like it appear to some to threaten the analytic/synthetic distinction, it may help to have a little more background on the role of definitions in what Margolis and Laurence refer to as the “Classical Theory of Concepts”.

In Chapter 1, “Concepts and Cognitive Science”, of Concepts, Margolis and Laurence present what they refer to as the “Classical Theory of Concepts”, and a key element of this theory is that “most concepts ... have definitional structure” in that they “encode necessary and sufficient conditions for their own application” (Margolis and Laurence 1999, 9). Margolis and Laurence point out that this theory has been incredibly influential and that “most theories of concepts can be seen as reactions to, or developments of” (Margolis and Laurence 1999, 8) the Classical Theory. And although the Classical Theory is strictly a theory about concepts, it has been closely associated with the concept of analyticity and the analytic/synthetic distinction (recall how the issue of definitions played such a significant role in Quine’s account of analyticity). Thus, it should not be too surprising that criticisms of this theory are often taken as criticisms of the analytic/synthetic distinction.

Hopefully, with those brief comments we can better understand how apparent problems with definitions of terms like “bachelor” could lead some to reject the

analytic/synthetic distinction. For, arguably the most damaging criticism of the Classical Theory is that “for most concepts, there simply aren’t any definitions” (Margolis and Laurence 1999, 14), or at least “there are few, if any, examples of definitions that are uncontroversial” (Margolis and Laurence 1999, 15). This has certainly been the case with philosophical concepts, as proposed definitions of epistemic concepts like knowledge and truth, and moral concepts like good and ought have all been subject to criticism, and there seems to be precious little general agreement on the definitions of such concepts even after repeated attempts to define them. Margolis and Laurence note that “Ordinary concepts have resisted attempts at definition as well” (Margolis and Laurence 1999, 15), and they cite Wittgenstein's argument that the everyday concept of a game resists definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions.

That many have been influenced by these problems with definitions to reject the analytic/synthetic distinction is fairly clear. But, what is far less clear, is exactly what form they take the argument from the “Retreat from Definitions” to have, since it is almost never made explicit. Thus, let us see if we can construct a version of this argument that would do justice to the intuitions at work in the argument. To be valid, the argument would have to assume that the failure of definitions is total, since if there were even one successful definition, that would be sufficient to establish that there was an analytic truth. Also, the argument must assume that only definitions can provide analytic truths, or else the lack of adequate definitions would not be problematic for the analytic/synthetic distinction. Thus, the following seems to be at least a plausible version of what those who accept the “Retreat from Definitions” argument are committed to:

- (1) There are no successful definitions of concepts.

(2) Only definitions can provide analytic truths. (or, alternatively, the only way of representing an analytic truth is in the form of a definition).

Therefore, (3) there are no analytic truths.

We could supplement this argument with an inductive argument for premise (1), which would be based on the past failures to define concepts (and the citing of cases of failed definitions of words like “bachelor” does lend this argument an inductive character).

And, actually, premise (1) would really need to be the stronger claim that there cannot be any successful definitions, as the weaker claim that there are not any might just show our failure up to now to construct one (though, a critic of the analytic/synthetic distinction might be satisfied with saying that so long as we have not constructed a successful definition, then we have no reason to claim there are analytic truths).

To be fair to Margolis and Laurence, their criticisms of the Classical Theory of Concepts do not commit them to this argument, as they are merely pointing out problems with it as a theory of concepts and in their discussion they make no clear indication of accepting the rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction as an implication of rejecting the Classical Theory. They do, however, note the necessary connection that “Without analyticity, there is no Classical Theory” (Margolis and Laurence 1999, 18). But, regardless of Margolis’s and Laurence’s view on the matter, as others often cite the failure of definitions in the context of their rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction, this argument needs to be addressed.

Like so many arguments, once the “Retreat from Definitions” argument has been made explicit, its weakness as an argument is all too apparent. And, the response to the argument is obvious: **not all analyticities are definitional in form**. So, even conceding

the controversial premise (1), and granting that there are (and even can be) no successful definitions (merely for the sake of argument, as there is actually good reason to think there are many successful definitions – and one could cite stipulative definitions, as there is no reason to preclude them from this argument), premise (2) is blatantly false. Even if there were no definitions, no conditions that were both necessary and sufficient for the application of a concept, there clearly are conditions that are necessary and there are also other conditions that are sufficient.

For example, even if one quibbles with the definition of “bachelor” as “unmarried male”, it is still clear that in order to be a bachelor, one must be unmarried, and this truth is analytic. And, should one balk at that example, take the case of the sentence “All unmarried males are male”. Surely, this, though obviously not a definition, is analytic. For, while being male is not both necessary and sufficient for being an unmarried male, it is certainly necessary. So, even if there were **no** analytic definitions, there would still be analyticities, and thus the “Retreat from Definitions” argument fails. That it has ever been taken seriously can only be due to an undue emphasis on definitions (and synonyms) in considerations involving the legitimacy of the analytic/synthetic distinction.

B. “Guilt by Association”

As flawed as the “Retreat from Definitions” argument is, the “Guilt by Association” argument is even worse. Still, no matter how weak this argument is when seen in the light of day, it has been (unfortunately, and embarrassingly) influential. The associations can be presented in a more or less nuanced fashion, and teasing out all the

threads can be difficult (and a bit tiresome), but the gist of the argument is that analyticity has been tied to the positivist program, and we all know what evil ne'er-do-wells they were. So, it is concluded, the analytic/synthetic distinction must be rejected along with anything else associated with positivism.

The easy response to this argument is that we can clearly accept the analytic/synthetic distinction without adopting the rest of the positivist program. More specifically, there is no implication from accepting analyticities to being committed to other positivist claims. This may be, at least in part, a confusion of necessary and sufficient conditions, for, while a distinction between analytic and synthetic statements is **necessary** for the positivists' attempt to ground all of *a priori* knowledge in analyticities conceived of as mere linguistic conventions, it certainly is **not** the case that such a distinction is **sufficient** for achieving this goal. One can even reject the conventionalist account of analyticity that is at the heart of the positivists' program to eliminate the need for appeals to rational insight to explain our apparent *a priori* knowledge of logic and mathematical truths, and still retain a robust sense of analyticity. Thus, while some positivist claims require the analytic/synthetic distinction, it does not require them. As Margolis and Laurence put the situation:

So the positivist program falls flat. But the notion of analyticity needn't be tied to this explanatory burden. Analyticity simply understood as *true in virtue of meaning alone* might continue to be a viable and useful notion in describing the way that natural language and the human conceptual system works. (Margolis and Laurence 1999, 20)

And, as we will see in the next chapter, my account of analyticities clearly rejects the positivist account of analyticity and its role in *a priori* knowledge, while maintaining a significant role for the analytic/synthetic distinction.

C. Quine Showed that the Analytic/Synthetic Distinction was Illegitimate, Didn't He?

Lastly, there appears to still be a great deal of confusion about not only the merits of Quine's arguments, but even what those arguments are, and what they establish, if successful. Unfortunately, there is the vague notion that whatever his actual arguments were, if Quine did anything, he showed that the analytic/synthetic distinction was illegitimate. And, this attitude is based primarily on perceptions formed regarding "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", and not as much on Quine's later works (especially since many reject Quine's more radical semantic holism and semantic skepticism/eliminativism). As I hope to have established by a fairly rigorous delineation and assessment of Quine's arguments in "Two Dogmas", this view is clearly unsupported by a critical reading of those arguments.

Thankfully, the tide is turning, and more and more commentators have recognized the shortcomings of Quine's assault on the analytic/synthetic distinction. As Grice and Strawson noted almost from the outset: "Quine's case against the existence of the analytic-synthetic distinction is not made out" (Grice and Strawson 1970, 74). And, as Scott Soames more recently concludes:

From our present perspective, Quine doesn't attempt, let alone succeed, in giving a general argument against analyticity. At most he succeeds in undermining a particular conception of analyticity, and a particular set of theses that the positivists, and others, held regarding it. (Soames 2003, 361)

In an even slightly later assessment, Alexander Miller concurs with these estimations of Quine's arguments: "Quine's general line of argument in the first four sections of "Two Dogmas" fails to show that analyticity and its cognate concepts are unintelligible" (Miller

2007, 136). And, as we have argued above, his arguments in sections 5 and 6 fare no better.

This concludes our examination and assessment of the arguments against analyticity. Having found none of these arguments successful in providing sufficient grounds for rejecting the analytic/synthetic distinction *per se* (though granting that there are quite compelling reasons for rejecting the conventionalist accounts of analyticity that prior versions of the distinction were based on), we can now turn to an alternative account of analyticity and the arguments in favor of a distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions based on that account.

Chapter 6: An Alternative Account of Analyticity

I. Introduction

In this chapter I present an alternative account of analyticity that (1) accounts for many of our pre-theoretic intuitions about meaning, (2) avoids the problems of previous accounts of analyticity (most notably the problems with conventionalist accounts), and (3) allows for a philosophically significant role for analyticity. Having responded to the arguments most commonly proffered against analyticity and providing an account that avoids the problems with conventionalist accounts would make a strong *prima facie* case for the analytic/synthetic distinction. However, I also present additional positive arguments for the distinction based on the account of analyticity presented in this chapter.

Gilbert Harman claims that the conventionalist account is “the only serious attempt” to explain analyticity and how the analytic status of a claim makes the claim knowable “by virtue of knowledge of meaning” (Harman 1999, 120). And thus, believing it to be the only account of analyticity worth considering, and having noted the problems with the conventionalist account, Harman rejects analyticity. Laurence Bonjour is also very critical of conventionalist accounts, and shares Harman’s skepticism of what Harman calls “a full-blooded theory of analytic truth” (Bonjour 1998, 73), which includes the claim that analytic truths are true “in virtue of meaning”. However, it should be noted that although Harman and Bonjour both reject the conventionalist account of analyticity, while Harman concludes that we should reject the analytic/synthetic distinction entirely, Bonjour is merely arguing that one cannot explain our *a priori* knowledge of analytic statements by an appeal to linguistic conventions. Thus, Bonjour,

contrary to Harman, leaves open the possibility of a legitimate account of analyticity, even favorably citing the Fregean conception of analyticity “as reducibility to logical truth via substitution of synonyms”, and ultimately based on the concept of sameness of meaning (BonJour 1998, 72). In this chapter I offer an alternative account of analyticity that does not rely on conventionalism, but is also not based on logical truth as the Fregean conception of analyticity is. I will argue that this account of analyticity is “full-blooded” in that it makes it possible for us to know a claim to be true in virtue of the meanings involved in the claim, and that the analytic/synthetic distinction can be made and can be grounded in our rational insight into the relations between meanings (which also accounts for our *a priori* knowledge).

Following a presentation of analyticity along the lines sketched above, I will then argue that this account is in no way susceptible to the criticisms of the conventionalist accounts of analyticity. BonJour, a harsh critic of the conventionalism of what he calls the “moderate empiricist” position regarding analyticity, points out its failure to provide “an unproblematic explanation of *a priori* justification” (BonJour 1998, 28). But, this is not an essential feature of analyticity, and BonJour himself allows that it is possible to provide an adequate account of analyticity. As he states in his reply to Quine’s challenge to find “a viable entry into the “circle of terms”” (BonJour 1998, 71) (and, as BonJour notes, Quine’s argument can only be made plausible by following Quine’s “casual dismissal of the idea of meaning” (BonJour 1998, 71)), “the Fregean conception [of analyticity] in particular seems to survive unscathed” (BonJour 1998, 73). BonJour even outlines the key steps in arriving at this conception of analyticity: “the most natural and

obvious course of explanation is to explain synonymy as sameness of meaning and then explain analyticity in terms of synonymy in the Fregean way” (BonJour 1998, 71).

Although this explanation of analyticity seems quite appropriate in responding to Quine’s challenge for a way to break into the "circle of terms", as noted earlier, sameness of meaning is just one of the relations that can make a proposition analytic (which is not to suggest that either Frege or BonJour would disagree with this point). It is nonetheless worth noting as many critics of analyticity often focus solely on cases of purported sameness of meaning (cf. all the attention paid to whether "bachelor" means the same as "unmarried male"). However, much more problematic for this Fregean account is that, as commonly understood, it attempts to derive analyticity from logical truth. And this is problematic since, as will be argued later in this chapter, logical truth presupposes analyticity. So, while similar to the account offered here in that it recognizes the role of synonymy and its grounding in sameness of meaning, the Fregean account ultimately appears to suffer from the same mistaken syntactic conception of logic that Quine and the positivists held, and the belief that we can somehow distinguish the so-called “logical truths” from other analytic claims and derive all analytic claims from a syntactically sanctioned set of propositions with no reliance on semantic concepts like meaning.

After demonstrating that the account of analyticity offered here avoids the problems of the conventionalist accounts, I will then discuss the proper relationships between analyticity and necessity, and analyticity and *a priori* knowledge. I will argue that, although not providing the kind of account the positivists had hoped for, an understanding of the true nature of analyticity does provide a ground for the intuition of a close tie between these concepts. Further, I will examine how the account of analyticity

offered here provides a means by which to clarify the relation between the analytic and the *a priori*.

II. Statement of the Account

A. Propositions, Meanings, and Relations of Meanings

Let us begin with a statement of analyticity: a sentence (or, more accurately, a proposition) is analytic iff its truth or falsity is due solely to the logical relations of the expressions (again, more accurately, the meanings) of which it is composed, along with the relations the sentence (proposition) claims to obtain between these expressions (meanings). It is in this sense that the proposition is true “in virtue of the meanings”, for it is not dependent for its truth value upon any state of affairs in the world. Or, if one considers meanings to be part of the furniture of the world, then they can feel free to alter this to “any state of affairs in the world other than the meanings and their logical relations”. But, contra Harman, I find it more useful to distinguish knowledge of meanings and their logical relations from knowledge about the world, which is why, to answer Harman’s question³, it does not involve knowing something about the world to know that copper is copper). Given the emphasis on meanings and their relations, it seems appropriate to call this account a “Semantic Account” of analyticity. This may

³ Harman groups “Copper is a metal” and “Copper is copper” in the same class of (for him, purportedly) analytic statements, and asks how the truth of these claims can be independent of the way the world is (Harman 1999, 120). Some might think the first statement is synthetic, but setting that concern aside, the main point here is that the relations between meanings are fundamentally different than the physical relations that obtain between physical objects, and the claims made regarding these different kinds of relations are also fundamentally different, as are the kinds of knowledge we may have of these relations. So, it seems quite appropriate to distinguish these kinds of claims by saying that one is “about the world” while the other is not.

also serve to distinguish it from an “Epistemological” or “Epistemic” account of analyticity, such as that offered by Boghossian (Boghossian 1996).

A little background might help clarify this account. Many take sentences to express propositions and further note that a proposition is what is in common to two (or more) different sentences that say the same thing (and this “thing” that they express is what is called a “proposition”). For example, "Snow is white" and "Schnee ist weiss" are taken to express the same proposition. And, my claim is that just as sentences express propositions, constituents of sentences, i.e., expressions, express something as well, and that something is meanings. That is, the initially intuitive description of meanings is that we use words (or expressions) to express meanings. And, just as with sentences and propositions, different expressions can express the same meaning. In fact, to take the words from our two sentences, "Snow" and "Schnee" both express the same meaning.

This last point highlights another important point about meanings (and another aspect to the analogy between meanings/expressions and propositions/sentences): propositions are composed of meanings. This should not be surprising since sentences are composed of expressions, sentences express propositions, and expressions express meanings. And, this suggests another significant point about meanings and propositions. Propositions are not merely "composed" of meanings if by this all one means is that there is a list of meanings strung together and the only relation between the meanings in the proposition is one of juxtaposition. No, meanings are related in propositions in much more significant ways. By far the most common way (or is it ultimately the only way?) in which meanings are related to each other in propositions is via the predication relation in which one meaning is predicated of another. For example, in the proposition

expressed by "Snow is white", the meaning expressed by "white" is predicated (not in the more common linguistic sense of "predicate", but in a more fundamental, even Aristotelian, sense) of the meaning expressed by "Snow".

Now, given that propositions involve predicating meanings of meanings (note that it is not necessary that this is true of all propositions, but merely of all analytic ones, though it is hard to conceive of a proposition that does not involve such a relation of meanings), the analytic propositions are those for which the logical relation of the meanings determines its truth-value. This is perhaps easiest to see in cases of identity, when the same meaning is predicated of itself (e.g., *bachelors are bachelors* - note: again, I will use italics to indicate propositions and meanings rather than the words used to express these), but the same principle applies for other logical relations between meanings (e.g., meaning-inclusion, as in *tall dogs are dogs*). And, conversely, when the logical relations of the meanings are not sufficient to determine the proposition's truth-value, the proposition is synthetic (e.g., *dogs are tall*). Finally, note that some propositions are analytically false (e.g., *unmarried males are married*).

B. Relation to Previous Accounts

This statement of analyticity might initially appear very familiar and others have certainly embraced the notion of statements that are true "in virtue of the meanings", and this is no accident, since I firmly believe it is this very notion of analyticity that many other philosophers were grasping, even if incompletely understanding its true nature and full implications. Thus, while recognizing the importance of the analytic/synthetic distinction, and even seeing its essential feature as involving the relations of meanings, a

failure to understand the precise manner in which a proposition is true in virtue of meanings, and mistakenly seeing the only viable option as the conventional associations of meanings with the words used in sentences, previous accounts could not avoid the pitfalls of conventionalism. Being clear on the distinction between sentences and propositions, and keeping in mind that analyticity is a property of propositions, and not sentences, makes it easier to avoid these pitfalls. More will be said about this distinction in the next section.

Thus, the difference between this account and the most commonly championed accounts is quite radical, and here, as in so many cases in philosophy, little things mean a lot. For, what might seem like a slight shift from this statement to one emphasizing the meanings of words and the linguistic conventions that imbue these words with meanings, can make a very large difference indeed. This is not a conventionalist account, and no appeal is made to linguistic practices to create the truth-value of analytic propositions. Further, no attempt is made to explain our *a priori* knowledge of these truths by a mere awareness of linguistic conventions or pragmatic stipulations and to thereby avoid any appeal to the mind's ability to grasp the logical relations of meanings. But, since these logical relations are grasped by our reasoning faculty, they are properly called by Hume's designation, "truths of reason", and, to give Hume even more credit, if we replace his psychologistic notion of "ideas" with that of meanings, although all propositions involve relations of "ideas"/meanings, analytic propositions are those in which there are special "relations of ideas".

Special recognition must be granted to the relationship between this Semantic Account and the views of C. I. Lewis. Although Lewis's pragmatic conventionalism has

been severely criticized, and it shares many of the problems of linguistic conventionalism, Lewis had a much deeper understanding of the issues related to analyticity than any of his contemporaries. And, in his later work he made many statements that would fit nicely with the Semantic Account offered here. Without going into detail, here are a few passages from An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation (Lewis 1946) that illustrate the similarities regarding his view of the nature of analyticity, our knowledge of analytic propositions, and its fundamental relation to meanings:

“what is analytically true is a question of direct insight” (Lewis 1946, 111)

“this appeal to discernment of a meaning as something essential for determination of analytic truth in general” (Lewis 1946, 112)

“it is either true or false according as the meanings in question do or do not have the relation which it asserts” (Lewis 1946, 112)

“the determination of analytic truth in general which depends upon recourse to meanings” (Lewis 1946, 112)

C. Propositions, Not Sentences

A key element in this semantic account of analyticity is that analyticity is a property of propositions, not sentences. Strictly speaking, since propositions are the primary bearers of truth values, it is only propositions that can be true or false, much less analytically true or false. There is no harm in speaking of sentences as true or false, so long as we are clear that this is true only indirectly and derivatively, and that ultimately it is the proposition expressed by a sentence that is true or false. However, there are problems that arise if we mistakenly think that it is the sentences themselves that have

these semantic properties. Although we shall have more to say later regarding the shortcomings of a nominalistic approach which places undue faith in syntax as a ground for logic (and as a stand-in for semantics in general), and it is a short step from an emphasis on sentences to embracing such an approach (as illustrated so starkly by Quine), for now we can merely make the cautionary note that it is hard to see how sentences themselves could ever be thought to contain the whole story of semantics. We will also simply note for now (and address more fully in the next section) that treating analyticity as a property of sentences rather than propositions would seem to have significant implications regarding the status of analyticity.

Thus the claim made by this whole-heartedly semantic account of analyticity is that one cannot capture analyticity with just sentences, and that we ultimately need to appeal to propositions. One can try to follow Quine's attempt to find a substitute for propositions (cf. his "eternal sentences" (Quine 1960)), or one can try to lean on pure syntax, but these will not work (which, I would argue is evident from his failure to find a place for so basic a concept as analyticity in his philosophical system). To account for analyticity, we need semantic concepts, which is to say we need propositions and we need meanings. Oddly enough, there are those who have no trouble granting propositions, but balk at accepting meanings, as if there were any significant difference between the statuses of these entities. Further, it would seem that any argument that can be made for granting propositions can readily be employed to grant meanings, with only the most minor of modifications. Finally, we might add that, granting propositions, and granting the principle of semantic compositionality, would also seem to commit one to

granting semantic sub-components of propositions. And, what are these sub-components of propositions out of which propositions are semantically composed except meanings?

III. Status of Analyticity

A. Not an Empirical Question

Having provided a statement of the Semantic Account of analyticity, we shall next examine the status of analyticity according to this account of analyticity. The first thing to note is that it is not an empirical question whether or not a proposition is analytic (or synthetic, for that matter). In fact, on this semantic account of analyticity, it is analytic whether a proposition is analytic or synthetic, for whether a proposition is analytic or synthetic is purely a matter of the relations between the meanings of which the proposition is composed and the predication relations claimed for these meanings in the proposition.

For example, *a green chair is a chair* is analytic because it predicates the meaning *chair* of the meaning *green chair* and the relation between these two meanings is such that the proposition must be true. Similarly, *a bachelor is married* is analytic because it predicates the meaning *married* of the meaning *bachelor* and the relation between these two meanings is such that the proposition must be false (which shows how antonyms are sufficient to establish analyticity, and illustrates an analytically false claim). Finally, *a chair is green* is synthetic because it predicates the meaning *green* of the meaning *chair* and the relation between these two meanings is such that the truth value of the proposition is not fully determined by the relations between these meanings.

The main point is of course not the status of these particular propositions, but rather that the analytic/synthetic status of any proposition is itself a matter of the relations of meanings of which the proposition is composed along with the relations the proposition claims to obtain between these meanings, and that makes the proposition that a proposition is analytic (or synthetic) itself an analytic proposition. However, as will become clear shortly, this does not make this proposition (i.e., that the original proposition is analytic), or the original proposition, obvious. But, before leaving this section, it will be worth noting the connection between the status of analyticity and the issue of whether it is a property of sentences or propositions, as the full implications of this important distinction are rather significant.

Many of the misunderstandings regarding analyticity can be cleared up if this is kept clearly in mind, and much of what is said about analyticity when it is thought that it is a property of sentences is not true of this account of analyticity. Moreover, many worries regarding analyticity are no longer of concern when it is understood to be a property of propositions and not sentences. For our purposes in this section, it is most important to note that while it is not an empirical question whether a proposition is analytic, it is an empirical question whether a sentence is analytic. For, even if the analytic/synthetic status of the proposition expressed by the sentence is not an empirical question, it is an empirical question whether a given sentence expresses a particular proposition, and one that is determined by consulting linguistic usage.

Both proponents and critics of the analytic/synthetic distinction have held that analyticity is a property of sentences, and also held that it was an empirical question whether a given sentence was analytic. Morton White provides one of the clearest

statements of this position in a key passage of his essay “The Analytic and the Synthetic: An Untenable Dualism”:

it is obvious that if the problem is set in the manner outlined, then the statement "All men are rational animals' is analytic" is itself empirical. For to decide that the statement is analytic we will have to find out whether "man" is in fact synonymous with "rational animal" and this will require the empirical examination of linguistic usage. (White 1970, 81)

And, as noted previously, this view (that sentences, and not propositions, are to be the focus for deciding the analytic/synthetic distinction, and that this is an empirical question) is held by those who defend the distinction as well. Benson Mates, a supporter of the analytic/synthetic distinction, claims in his article, "Synonymity", that "We need empirical research regarding ordinary language in order to determine which expressions are in fact synonymous" (Mates 1970, 102).

Since both sides of the debate had either expressly stated or implicitly assumed that analyticity is a property of sentences, and since the status of sentences certainly seems to be an empirical question (which highlights again Quine's interest in stipulative definitions, and would explain his concern over their status), the conclusion they drew was that the analytic/synthetic distinction is an empirical issue. For, what any sentence means, and thus, whether any sentence is analytic or synthetic, is an empirical issue. This is another reason why it is such an insidious mistake to treat analyticity as a property of sentences. For, it is only a short step from claiming that analyticity is an empirical question to claiming that it is one that cannot be determined, and thereby to challenge the analytic/synthetic distinction. Granted, it is a much bigger step - nay, even a leap - to follow Quine and claim that there is no fact of the matter whether a sentence is analytic,

but even this view appears to be grounded on the initial assumption that analyticity is a property of sentences, and not propositions.

Additionally, since the meanings of sentences are determined by convention, it is easy to see the roots of linguistic conventionalism in this view. So, the flaws in the positions of both proponents and critics of analyticity can plausibly be seen to originate in the mistaken view that analyticity is a property of sentences. By recognizing that analyticity is properly understood as a property of propositions, we can avoid these confusions and the dire consequences of either attempting to ground the analytic/synthetic distinction in conventions or of rejecting the distinction entirely.

B. Not Psychologically Obvious

Another mistaken conception about analytic claims is that they must be psychologically obvious. Given this Semantic Account of analyticity, there is no necessary connection between the analyticity of a proposition and its being obvious to us. In fact, many analytic claims are not psychologically obvious, and, we may need to work through a complex demonstration involving a series of calculations, computations, or proofs to see that a claim is analytic. And, as with the notion that analyticity is a property of sentences and is therefore an empirical issue, the mistaken intuition that analytic claims must be obvious appears to lie behind many false claims about analyticity, and even doubting that there are analyticities seems to be often driven by this intuition. For example, the argument that because no definitions are "uncontroversial" or "obvious", there are no analyticities, is clearly based on this mistaken belief.

To be fair, there is some reason behind the intuition that analytic claims should be psychologically obvious. For, if analyticity is a matter of the relations of meanings, and we have access to meanings (in a kind of internalistic way), then it would seem that we should be able to intuit or “just see” that a proposition is analytic. Further, this certainly is the case with many analytic propositions. For example, the proposition *no bachelors are married* is analytically true and is readily recognized to be true. But, not all analytic propositions have truth values that are so obvious to us. For example, for many it is not obvious whether the proposition *there is a barber who shaves all and only those who do not shave themselves* is true or false. We could cite additional examples of propositions with a complicated logical structure whose truth values require a careful analysis of the components and their logical relations, and anyone who has taught a beginning logic class will attest that there are those who do not find even relatively simple propositions to be initially (or even eventually) obvious.

This should be sufficient to establish that not all analytic propositions are psychologically obvious and that doubtfulness is not a sign of a lack of analyticity. For, the complete logical implications of the relations between meanings are often far from obvious. Even Quine’s own example of the statement ‘Everything green is extended’ might be used to serve our purposes. For, as most people understand the example, any puzzle about its status has to do with the relation between the meanings involved, and the fact that individuals attempt to come up with counterexamples, rather than showing that the proposition is synthetic, instead shows they are attempting to delineate the logical implications and logical “boundaries” of these meanings. One last historical note worth mentioning is that in the intuitions on the topic of psychological obviousness we might

find evidence of the influence of Leibniz's views regarding our ability to demonstrate or show that analytic propositions are true.

C. Not Necessarily Uninformative

Next, given the nature of analytic propositions, many think they cannot be informative. This was even a point of emphasis in the positivist's position, since they wanted to distinguish between synthetic truths which were "about the world" and analytic truths which were not about the world and hence considered to be uninformative, merely expressing our linguistic conventions. However, as Ayer and others were keen to point out, any complete account of analyticity, especially as it pertains to the truths of mathematics, "must explain how a proposition which is empty of all factual content can be true and useful and surprising" (Ayer 1952, 73). And so, even those embracing the linguistic conventionalism account of analyticity offered an explanation of how analytic propositions could be informative.

The positivists were right to acknowledge the informative aspect of analytic propositions, but on this Semantic Account of analyticity, the information contained in analytic propositions is not about our linguistic conventions, but rather it is about the logical implications of the relations between meanings. On this account, we may even need to discover analytic truths. For example, a logic student may need to learn the logical implications of the meanings *and* and *or* and thereby discover DeMorgan's Laws to be true. We will have more to say regarding logic (and mathematics) and analytic propositions in the next section on the implications of the Semantic Account of analyticity.

IV. Implications of the Semantic Account of Analyticity

A. Not Just Synonyms are Analytic

One clear implication of this Semantic Account of analyticity is that analytic propositions are not restricted to statements of synonymy. For, as noted previously, there are relations between meanings other than identity, notably meaning-inclusion and antonymy. This may seem a minor point, but it is one that is often overlooked, with unfortunate consequences. Some critics of analyticity focus on synonymy as if it were the only way in which there could be analyticities, when it should be clear that something can be analytic without it including both a necessary and a sufficient condition. A merely necessary or a merely sufficient condition will do. For example, *a tall man is a man*, *a green door is green* are analytic, as is *only dogs are poodles*.

Various forms of meaning-inclusion might come to mind more readily, but antonymy is a key relation between meanings, and one that can ground analytic propositions. Fred Sommers makes the case for antonymy in his article, "Meaning Relations and the Analytic" (Sommers, 1963b). In that article, Sommers argues that antonymy is actually a more central relation between meanings than synonymy for establishing the analytic/synthetic relation, and it is unfortunate that this classic article has not received more recognition in the discussion of analyticity.

So, even if Fodor and others so desperately opposed to analyticities can claim that "bachelors" and "unmarried males" are not really synonyms, since, e.g., a baby boy is an unmarried male, but few would feel comfortable calling him a "bachelor", this is far from sufficient for proving their point that there are no analyticities. And, in particular, it does

not show that the claim that there are no married bachelors is not analytic. Thus, Sommers' point about antonymy is especially germane, and would require critics of analyticity to come up with an alternative response.

B. Math and Logic are Analytic

With this Semantic Account of analyticity, all the propositions of mathematics and logic are analytic, since they are all claims regarding the relations of meanings. In fact, there is no fundamental difference between the so-called "truths of logic" and any other analytic propositions. The propositions of mathematics may be distinguished from other analytic truths by their subject matter, but they are not different in kind, sharing the same essential characteristic of all analytic truths, having their truth-value determined by the relations between the meanings in the proposition and the relations the proposition claims obtains between those meanings.

Looking at the truths of logic first, we have already noted that De Morgan's laws are analytic. These should be understood as stating the meaning relations that hold between the meanings *conjunction*, *disjunction*, and *negation*. Other rules of logic codify the meaning relations between other meanings of particular interest to logicians, like *all* and *some*. Though espousing a form of pragmatic conventionalism, C. I. Lewis always seemed to understand the relationship between analyticity and logic. This is most clearly stated in his classic work, An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation (Lewis 1946), where he devotes considerable attention to the subject. Much of what he says applies to this Semantic Account of analyticity (which should not be surprising, given Lewis's focus on meanings/intensions). First, Lewis agrees with the general analytic nature of the propositions of logic: "The principles of logic are analytic in this sense: their truth is

certifiable by reference to intensional meanings involved in the statement of them”

(Lewis 1946, 38). Next, he agrees with the relationship between the propositions of logic and other analytic propositions, even offering a pragmatic criterion for distinguishing the principles of logic from the rest:

There is, however, no way of distinguishing fundamentally between principles of logic and other analytic truths. Such distinction is conventional, in the sense that it turns upon relative importance for the critique of inference, and upon comparative generality. (Lewis 1946, 38).

This pragmatic criterion is echoed again later:

Statements belonging to logic are marked off as a class from other analytic statements only by having a certain kind of generality making them specially useful for the critique of inference (Lewis 1946, 97).

Given the importance that has been placed on the propositions of mathematics historically and their role in the debate over analyticity, they deserve additional discussion apart from the propositions of logic, even though their status as analytic propositions is grounded in precisely the same manner. For example, consider the meaning of an expression like "53", and then think of the relation between that meaning and the meaning of the expression " $(5 * 10) + 3$ ". Certainly $53 = (5 * 10) + 3$. And, this certainty is due to the analytic nature of this proposition. That the fact that the propositions of mathematics are all analytic has ever been doubted would seem to be due to one or more of the mistaken conceptions of analyticity that have already been discussed. Prime candidates are the notion that analytic truths are created by convention (and thus how could all the infinity of mathematical truths be analytic, since there is no explicit convention for each of them?) and the mistaken conception that analytic propositions must be psychologically obvious. This latter misconception might seem too

insignificant to do such damage, but it has lingered on from Leibniz and Kant to the present day. For there are those who would suppose that some truths of mathematics are analytic because they require no calculation and their truth can be seen at a glance, but that others, like $1024 = 2^{10}$, are somehow synthetic since many individuals would have to perform calculations and would need to discover the truth of the equation. But, can there be any doubt that there is no fundamental difference between $53 = (5 \cdot 10) + 3$ and $1024 = 2^{10}$? To think otherwise is to seriously conflate semantics and epistemology.

C. Avoids the Problems of Conventionalist Accounts

As stated in Chapter 1, and as can be seen from the statement of the Semantic Account, it clearly avoids the problems with the conventionalist accounts of analyticity. This should be obvious, since the primary problem with these accounts is that they take for granted the very *a priori* knowledge of principles of logic that their account of analyticity was intended to dispense with. Their goal was to show that conventions could create analytic truths that we could come to know with no reliance on rational insight, but were based merely on our knowledge of the conventions themselves. Since this Semantic Account does not even intend to dispense with rational insight into *a priori* truths, it in no way risks the inconsistency of relying on the very *a priori* insight it is intended to dismiss, as in the conventionalist accounts of analyticity.

Additionally, there is no problem with an infinity of analytic truths in this account as there is in the conventionalist account, since these are clearly granted in this Semantic Account, given the infinity of meanings and thus the infinity of the relations these

meanings have to each other (which is not say there is an infinity of types of relations, but merely that there is an infinity of values of the relations between meanings). The full implication of the difference between this Semantic Account and the conventionalist accounts on the relation between analyticity and *a priori* knowledge should become clearer in the next section, as it addresses the relationship of this account of analyticity to a priority and necessity.

D. Relationship Between Analyticity, A Priority, and Necessity

Given that this Semantic Account of analyticity avoids the problems of conventionalist accounts and fully accepts the role of rational insight in establishing *a priori* knowledge, it would seem that Bonjour would have no essential complaint with this account of analyticity. However, we have still not addressed his concern about the relation between analyticity and the *a priori*. I address that concern by simply making no claim for this account to ground all *a priori* knowledge. For, like Bonjour, I find it difficult to account for how we could know that a proposition is analytic without appeal at some point to what he calls “rational insight”. The most obvious question about this account is by virtue of what mental capacity do we come to “grasp” (and our use of such metaphorical language is often a clue that we lack anything approaching an adequate explanatory model of the concepts and processes involved) meanings? Further, how do we recognize the logical relations between meanings? However, Bonjour argues rather forcefully that the purported mysteriousness of rational insight is exaggerated (Bonjour 1998) and that everyone, even the most ardent empiricist, must ultimately rely on such insight. If he is correct, then although it would still be desirable to have a more complete

account of rational insight, a failure to provide such an account need not be viewed as a serious defect in a conception of analyticity.

BonJour (BonJour 1998) makes a sustained critique of the failure of moderate empiricists to recognize their implicit reliance on principles of logic in their accounts of analyticity. He argues that this reliance commits them to some other foundation for the epistemological role of analytic claims, since “the *a priori* status of these logical relations ... cannot itself be accounted for by those same conventions, on pain of obvious circularity” (BonJour 1998, 57). And, although, BonJour has made his point in this passage with regard to the conventionalist account of analyticity, it would apply equally to the account offered here. But, this concern is not applicable so long as there is no claim that this account of analyticity somehow provides a means for explaining all *a priori* knowledge without appeal to any rational insight. Rather, the account relies on something very much like BonJour’s conception of rational insight to even explain how we can know that a proposition is analytic. But, and this might be of no small significance, the account of analyticity offered here does provide a means by which to clarify the relation between the analytic and the *a priori*.

Recall that a proposition is analytic simply in virtue of the logical relations of the meanings included in the proposition and the logical relations the proposition claims for these meanings (i.e., it is not just that the meanings have the logical relations they have to each other, but also the logical relation that the proposition is claiming that they have to each other, that determines the proposition’s truth-value). A key thing to note about this conception of analyticity is that it makes the analytic/synthetic distinction dependent solely upon meanings and not upon our understanding of meanings or any other

epistemological notions. It is not because the propositions are “obvious” or that we “cannot conceive” their truth-value to be other than it is that makes the propositions analytic. It is, in this sense, a non-epistemological account of analyticity. It thus allows us to make a clear distinction between the analyticity of a proposition and whether or not we can know it *a priori*. But, granted this essential separation between these two concepts, the account suggests that, although the analytic/synthetic status of a proposition is independent of our knowledge (or even awareness) of the proposition, this status is knowable *a priori*, since the only plausible explanation for how we come to know this status is via rational insight. So, when we, through rational insight, grasp the meanings in a proposition, and the logical relations claimed of them, and we thereby come to know the claim’s truth-value, we both know that the claim is analytic, and we know its truth-value *a priori* (note that for synthetic claims, we also come to know *a priori* that they are synthetic, but we are unable to know their truth-value *a priori*, which is, ironically enough, to say that we know *a priori* that we cannot know their truth-value *a priori*).

Ultimately, analyticity is at least in one sense more basic than our *a priori* knowledge, since the logical relations of meanings that make a proposition analytic are independent of our knowing the proposition *a priori*. And, even though no claim is made here that these are the only propositions that can be known *a priori*, one can see how the relationship between the analytic and the *a priori*, though incompletely understood in the past, made it tempting for philosophers to think that this is the case. And, one might venture to suppose that the only thing we can know *a priori* is the logical relations of meanings, but these are the essence of the analytic. Thus, this account might provide support for the first thesis BonJour attributes to moderate empiricism, “that genuine *a*

priori justification is restricted to analytic propositions” (BonJour 1998, 29). But, this in no way satisfies the moderate empiricist’s second goal of providing an account of the *a priori* (or the analytic, for that matter) that “can be understood epistemologically in a way that does not require the sort of allegedly mysterious intuitive capacity advocated by rationalism and thus is epistemologically unproblematic from an empiricist point of view” (BonJour 1998, 29).

Chapter 2 presented Kant’s account of the analytic/synthetic distinction, and one additional comment regarding Kant’s conception of the distinction is in order here. A clarification that the Semantic Account of analyticity offered here provides is the separation between the non-epistemological status of the analytic/synthetic distinction and the epistemological status of the *a priori* / *a posteriori* distinction. And, given this separation, we can now see how Kant’s examples and his account of them confused epistemological issues with issues more properly understood in terms of the logical relations of meanings. This is perhaps most clear in his positive account of synthetic judgments as ones that extend our knowledge, which makes the distinction relative to our epistemological state. And, even worse, this could make the distinction relative to a given individual's epistemic state, since a judgment might extend one person's knowledge but not another. Consider the case of mathematics, where one person might be able to "just see" that $7 \times 9 = 63$, whereas another, perhaps a child just learning the multiplication tables, might have to do a calculation. And so, it would seem that for the more knowledgeable mathematician, the judgment does not extend their knowledge, and hence is analytic, but for the child it does extend their knowledge, and so is synthetic for them. Hence the distinction would be relative to the individual who makes the judgment. We

might also think of cases of additions that one just has never considered before, but that are obvious once one has considered them (e.g., $3,124,567,892 + 1$).

Returning to Kant's claim that $7 + 5 = 12$ is synthetic, we can now see that the proposition is analytic because of the relations between the meanings which are the component parts of the proposition. And the same is true for much larger numbers, since the epistemological issue that it might be more difficult for us to tell or that we might have to do some calculations to prove to ourselves that it is true has no bearing on its underlying analytic nature. The proposition's truth is determined by the logical relations of the meanings, and whether we can recognize its truth by a single flash of rational insight (as opposed to a series of logical/mathematical calculations - each of which is itself based on rational insight - see BonJour's comments on the nature of logical proofs w.r.t. this point (BonJour 1998, 131-133)) is irrelevant to the proposition's analytic status.

So, although this account of analyticity does not even attempt to have it play the role of explaining all our *a priori* knowledge in a manner amenable to the philosophical goals of the logical positivists, it does not follow that it cannot further our understanding of the nature of analytic propositions and how we are able to know their truth-values. Thus, while not playing the same explanatory role as was once thought, it is my position that a proper understanding of the nature of analyticity is closely connected to any explanation of how we can have *a priori* knowledge of analytic truths and why they are necessary.

V. Arguments for the Account

A. A Prima Facie Case for Analyticity

In this section I will conclude by briefly laying out some of the arguments that can be offered in support of analyticity given this account of it. One of these arguments derives from being able to provide satisfactory responses to the arguments against analyticity that have been noted in the previous chapters. This cause is aided considerably by offering an account of analyticity that does not rely on linguistic conventions as the ground of analyticity, as we avoid the most damaging criticisms of previous accounts of analyticity (certainly those presented by Quine in “Truth by Convention”). Also, we have provided responses to what are considered the most serious objections to the notion of analyticity, those offered by Quine in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (Quine 1953). And so, by responding to all the notable objections and by (presumably) exhibiting the basic intuitive plausibility of the notion in the form of an alternative account of analyticity that relies solely on the logical relations of meanings, we now have a prima facie case for analyticity that at least should shift the burden of proof to those who reject the notion.

B. Another Prima Facie Case for Analyticity

As noted previously, one reason the analytic/synthetic distinction is significant is that it would provide an explanation of our pre-theoretic intuitions. Thus, another prima facie case for analyticity can be found in the fact that we at least appear to be able to make the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions and to teach this distinction to others. That we even tend to be able to recognize the same propositions as

analytic is a fact that requires an explanation and shifts the burden onto those who reject the analytic/synthetic distinction to provide a suitable explanation. If there were nothing to the distinction at all, then why would we all seem to come up with the same examples, and why would these examples even tempt us into thinking they were analytic? Georges Rey calls this convergence (i.e., “the patterns and projections in people’s judgments”) “the analytic data” (Rey 1993, 83), and he argues that it provides a prima facie case for analyticity. In addition to these appeals to our ordinary intuitions of analyticity, there are more formal, linguistic studies that also provide evidence of such convergence. Katz (Katz 1972) points out that these studies show subjects to be in significant agreement about analytic relations.

C. The Argument from Presupposition: General Form

While the ability to explain the analytic data is one argument in favor of the notion of analyticity, another, stronger argument can be found in the fact that we presuppose analyticity in so much of our mental life. I will call this argument the “Argument from Presupposition”. In ordinary, daily conversations, whenever we talk about topics with other individuals, we presuppose that we can talk about the **same** thing. And, when we disagree with another person, we take it for granted that our disagreement is substantive, but, this is only possible if we are capable of **meaning the same** thing by the words we use to express our thoughts.

For example, if two people disagree about which team will win an upcoming basketball game, the very ability of them to have a substantive disagreement about this presupposes that they are able to express the same meaning by their words. But this is

sufficient to establish that there are analyticities, since, if two expressions have the same meaning, then the proposition that predicated one of these meanings of the other would be analytically true (as identity of meaning is one of the logical relations that make a proposition true). Hence by such mundane daily acts of communication, we presuppose the concept of analyticity. I shall call this the “General Form” of the argument from presupposition. We cannot even be said to agree or disagree about something unless we can make sense of talking about the same thing, which presupposes sameness of meaning and thus analyticity.

D. The Argument from Presupposition: Special Case of Logic

Although perhaps not ultimately amounting to a different argument, there does seem to be a finer point to be made by focusing on the presuppositions of logic, argumentation and other more technical forms of reasoning rather than the less formal day-to-day communication. However, the case here is the same with regard to the presupposition of analyticities. We presuppose in our formal, logical arguments that terms in our arguments have the same meaning. The act of symbolizing two expressions with the same propositional variable presupposes we can make sense of the expressions’ having the same meaning. Categorical syllogisms require there to be three and only three terms that are each used twice in the syllogism, and it is assumed by this that these terms have the same meaning in their separate occurrences.

For example, consider the classic syllogism:

All men are mortal
Socrates is a man
∴ Socrates is mortal

which is standardly symbolized in Aristotelian logic notation as:

A all (men) some (mortal)
A all (Socrates) some (men)
∴ A all (Socrates) some (mortal)

However, to arrive at this symbolization, one must assume that the two occurrences of “mortal” should be represented by the same term, which is to say that they have the same meaning. Similarly for “Socrates”, and things get slightly messier for the last term, since we have to take the occurrence of “men” in the first sentence and equate it with the occurrence of “man” in the second sentence. But, what licences equating these? Only our understanding of the meanings, for there are clearly cases in which simple syntactic similarity (or even syntactic equality) is not sufficient to guarantee that two syntactic units represent the same meaning and thus should be symbolized in logical form as the same predicate or the same variable or name (e.g., "Enough is enough" is not a logical truth, but more likely a statement of exasperation) - and anyone who has attempted natural language processing is keenly aware of the challenges presented by lexical ambiguity.

This highlights a point that was noted earlier about Quine’s attempted distinction between two classes of statements, the “logically true” statements and the (for him, purportedly) analytic, but not logically true, statements. Some (cf. Miller 2007) have noted problems with this attempted distinction of Quine’s, but even if viewed as an inconsistency of Quine’s, it is seen as a minor problem. I would argue that it is indicative of a much more fundamental misconception than most realize. That misconception is the belief that logic is purely syntactic, and that in logic (and in other areas) we can get all the benefits of semantics without any commitment to meanings.

Taking Quine's own example, Quine is not rigorous enough in his restriction of "logical truths". He countenances "No unmarried man is married", but "unmarried" is not purely syntactically related to "not married", and we require an understanding of the semantics of "unmarried" to see that it is synonymous with "not married". This cannot be purely syntactic, since it is not strictly of the form " $\sim P$ ". Although this is a small point, and Quine could simply be more careful to avoid it, it does show just how little we can do with pure syntax.

And this leads to the larger point: syntax alone does not get us any of the logical truths. We need to invoke the semantics of the so-called "logical particles" (and I emphasize the "so-called", since there is nothing truly distinctive about these words from any others). We have to know what "not", "or", "and", "if", "then" mean to know that they warrant the various analytic claims we accept. Another way to put this point is that there ultimately is no distinction between the supposedly syntactic truths and the non-syntactic ones. All analytic truths rest on the notion of meaning equally, even the "narrow syntactic notion of self-contradiction" (Miller 2007, 128). So, instead of somehow being based on pure syntax, logic, when properly understood, provides one of the strongest arguments for a commitment to meanings and analyticity, in that it presupposes both.

E. The Argument from Presupposition: Special Case of Action Theory

Ironically, Fodor, a passionate critic of analyticity, provides another circumstance in which we presuppose analyticity. In discussing propositional attitudes and their logical form, Fodor presents an argument based on the role propositional attitudes play in

the theory of action/decision theory, more specifically, in our explanatory models of the relations between an individual's mental states and their actions. After arguing

(a) that any decision theory we can now contemplate will surely look like this one in that (b) it will entail generalizations about the causal relations among content-related beliefs, utilities and intentions; and (c) such generalizations will be specified by reference to the form of the propositional attitudes (Fodor 2002, 545),

Fodor claims:

we can't state the theory-relevant generalization that is instantiated by the relations among John's mental states unless we allow reference to beliefs of the form if X then Y, desires of the form that Y; intentions of the form that X should come about; and so forth. (Fodor 2002, 545)

But the key point in this passage comes when Fodor (rightly) recognizes that "[v]iewed one way (material mode) the recurrent schematic letters require **identities of content** among propositional attitudes" (Fodor 2002, 545, emphasis added).

Although put in terms of content, this argument could easily be put in terms of meaning, and would work just as well to show that in providing an account of a person's actions, we presuppose that there are relations of identity between the meanings associated with the components of their beliefs, desires, and intentions. Thus, in order to make sense of someone's behavior, we presuppose that components of their propositional attitudes have the same meaning and thus presuppose analyticity.

F. Not Just Synonymy Implies Analyticity

So that there is no confusion, and also to make clear the full extent of the implicit reliance on analyticity, although the cases cited above were all about presuppositions of sameness of meaning, it is not just synonymy or sameness of meaning, but every relation

between meanings that presupposes analyticity. Discourse and argumentation that rely on the logical relations of inclusion between meanings or antonymy also presuppose analyticity. For example, if in their claims about the upcoming basketball game, one individual claims one team will win and another individual claims that same team will lose, they (and we) still acknowledge their disagreement, and in doing so presuppose the analyticity of the relation between the meanings of “lose” and “win”. And, if one person refers to a film star as an attractive actress, and another person infers that the film star is an actress and that she is a woman, this also presupposes the analyticity of the relation between the meanings of the expressions “attractive actress”, “actress”, and “woman”.

G. Concluding Remark

In conclusion, I would like to draw a connection between an argument of BonJour’s in his In Defense of Pure Reason (BonJour 1998) and my own. BonJour forcefully argues that our use of logic presupposes a reliance upon *a priori* justification, and I would argue that ultimately, this form of *a priori* justification is founded upon our rational insight into the logical relations of meanings, which is to say, our ability to recognize analyticities. Just as BonJour argues that the empiricists who deny *a priori* justification must rely on it in their very arguments against it, the same is true of those who attempt to deny analyticity. And so, I would agree with BonJour’s assessment that “the repudiation of all *a priori* justification” (and, I would argue, this includes analyticity) “is apparently tantamount to the repudiation of argument or reasoning generally, thus amounting in effect to intellectual suicide” (BonJour 1998, 5).

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