Metaphysical Analyticity

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1 Introduction

The notion of truth in virtue of meaning has played a prominent role in the moderate empiricist account of the a priori. The central tenet of empiricism is the claim that sense experience is the only source of knowledge about the world. However, moderate empiricists also maintain that the way we know certain truths (viz., a priori truths) is different from the way we know empirical truths. In order to conciliate both these claims, empiricists try to show that a priori knowledge, though genuine enough in its own terms, is less substantial, less world-involving than knowledge acquired through experience – the notion of analyticity is used for such a purpose. But the notion of analyticity has been understood in many different ways, some of them unsuitable to be used in an account of the a priori, others more suitable.[1] This is not to say that these notions do not have anything in common. There is (or seems to be) a certain semantic phenomenon that they all endeavour to capture. Whether this phenomenon is real or merely apparent, or whether we manage to capture it with some notion of analyticity is not something I will explore here. My only purpose is to discuss a notion of analyticity that has played a prominent role in the moderate empiricist account of the a priori; namely the notion of truth in virtue of meaning – the so-called *metaphysical notion of analyticity*.[2] Here is how A. J. Ayer characterizes this notion of analyticity:

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[1] See Swinburne 1975 for a survey of some of such notions.

[2] The distinction between metaphysical and epistemological notions of analyticity has been introduced by Boghossian (1997).

> I think that we can preserve the logical import of Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions, while avoiding the confusions which mar his actual account of it, if we say that a proposition is analytic when its validity depends solely on the definitions of the symbols it contains, and synthetic when its validity is determined by the facts of experience. (1946: 33)

If there is such a thing as truth in virtue of meanings alone, and if a priori knowledge is merely knowledge of analytic truths (in this sense), the possibility of a priori knowledge becomes less mysterious: a priori knowledge is merely knowledge of semantic facts (or of conceptual relations between our concepts), and hence purportedly not as substantial or world-involving as empirical knowledge.

However, the metaphysical notion of analyticity has been under a cloud of suspicion ever since Quine (1951)[3] famously attacked its intelligibility. Such an attack has been reinforced by Boghossian (1997) and more recently by Williamson (2007). Nonetheless, the notion is still used in many philosophical circles. My aim is to reinforce this sceptical stance. The paper will proceed as follows. I start by briefly motivating the metaphysical notion of analyticity as well as the main reason to reject it. After this I consider the case of logical truths. I argue that the fact that logical truths are true under all interpretations that preserve their logical form does not in any way provide a reason to think that they are made true by their meanings alone, or that they are somehow less substantial than empirical truths. I then move on to paradigmatic cases of analytic truths, the so-called conceptual truths, to conclude that no reason has been given to regard them as true in virtue of meanings alone, and *a fortiori*, as less substantial or world-involving than empirical truths. I then consider and reject the claim that the analytic/synthetic distinction should instead be regarded as a distinction between two types of truth. I claim that if we are to make sense of the metaphysical notion of analyticity we have to have a less literal understanding of the notion of truth in virtue of meanings alone. I provide such an understanding by drawing from two-dimensionalist approaches to semantics, and I propose a new definition of analyticity according to which a statement expresses an analytic truth iff it remains true no matter how the actual world turns out to be. I argue that though perfectly intelligible, it is not

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[3] See also Quine (1935) and (1954).

clear whether this notion captures any distinctive semantic phenom-
enon deserving of the name 'analyticity', and that even if it does, this
in no way shows that analytic truths are somehow less substantial or
cognitively demanding than a posteriori truths – as most empiricists
have taken them to be.

2 Truth and meaning

In this section I outline the main reason to reject the metaphysical
notion of analyticity. But before we proceed let us star by briefly
motivating the notion. According to the metaphysical notion of ana-
lyticity a statement is analytic if and only if it is true in virtue of its
meaning alone. First, let us agree to put semantic scepticism aside.
Despite Quine's stance regarding meaning, I will assume, for the
sake of the argument, that statements have meanings and that they
express contents or propositions. Let us now take the following two
statements:

(1) Brutus killed Caesar or Brutus did not kill Caesar.
(2) Snow is white or snow is not white.

Whatever is responsible for the truth of (1) seems to be what is
also responsible for the truth of (2). Since the only things that both
statements have in common are the logical words 'or' and 'not', it
is tempting to claim that the truth of such statements depends en-
tirely on the meaning of those words. Thus, we could claim that such
statements are clear cases of analytic statements in the metaphysical
sense: they are both true in virtue of their meaning alone.
     Now let us take the following statements:

(3) Bachelors are unmarried.
(4) Vixens are female foxes.

These statements are also thought to be true in virtue of their mean-
ing alone, but the reason for this is slightly different from the one
above. In this case, these statements are thought to be definitional
in nature in the sense of giving the meaning of a certain word. (3) is
supposed to give us the meaning of 'bachelor', and (4) the meaning

of 'vixen'. But if such statements only determine meanings, then it seems that they are in virtue of their meaning alone.

Now, the main reason to question the intelligibility of the metaphysical notion of analyticity is the fact that it seems to go against a central truism regarding the relation between truth and meaning. This truism can be stated as follows: for every statement S, S is true if and only if (i) S means that p (or expresses the content that p) and (ii) p is the case. We may call this the *Tarskian Truism*.[4] It is this apparent clash with the Tarskian truism – hereafter (TT) for short – that led Quine to claim that '(...) it is nonsense, and the root of much nonsense, to speak of a linguistic component and a factual component in the truth of any individual statement' (1951: 42). Meanings seem necessary for the truth of a statement. For instance, the statement 'Snow is white' is true, but if instead of expressing the content that snow is white it expressed the content that snow is blue, it would have been false. The problem here is with the claim that meanings *alone* make statements true. To say that the statement 'Snow is white' is true in virtue of saying that snow is white is just part of the explanation. For this statement to be true it also has to be the case that snow is white. The truth of a statement is a function of its meaning and the way the world is. Meanings do not seem to make things what they are, statements only express propositions that hold or not depending on the way things are. However, according to the metaphysical notion of analyticity, the way things are seems irrelevant to the truth of analytic statements. That is, the truth of such statements seems to be exclusively determined by what they express and independently of the things they express being or not the case. But, as Boghossian nicely puts it: 'How could the *mere* fact that S means that p make it the case that S is true? Doesn't it also have to be the case that p?' (Boghossian 1997: 335).

Despite this apparent clash with (TT), many still hold that there is nothing objectionable with this notion of analyticity. Those who maintain it are thus left with two options: either (i) reject (TT) or (ii) interpret the notion of truth in virtue of meaning in a way that does not violate (TT). I will assume that option (i) is not viable: without some independent and principled way of rejecting (TT) such

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[4] This is what Boghossian (1997) calls the 'meaning-fact truism'.

an option should be regarded as a non-starter. We are thus left with option (ii) if we want to defend the intelligibility of the metaphysical notion of analyticity. The question now is whether there is a way of making sense of this notion that does not violate (TT). My aim in the following sections is to explore such ways. I will argue that none is forthcoming.

3 Logical truths

Let us consider again statements (1) and (2) above. As we saw, (1) and (2) seem to be true in virtue of the same thing, namely, the meaning of the logical words 'or' and 'not'. But if they are both true in virtue of the meaning of the logical words, does it follow that both statements are about the same thing, namely the meaning of 'or' and 'not'? Remember that according to (TT), a statement S is true iff (i) S means that p (or expresses the content that p) and (ii) p is the case. But if both statements (1) and (2) are true in virtue of the same fact: the meaning of 'or' and 'not', then they should express the same proposition or content (the p must be the same). However, they are about different things – (1) is about Brutus and Caesar and (2) is about snow – and thus cannot express the same proposition (the same p). To claim that they are true in virtue of the same thing – viz. the meaning of the logical words – seems to be in clear violation of (TT); and we have agreed to rule out any attempt to make sense of the metaphysical notion of analyticity that violates (TT).

To make this point a bit more vivid, let us consider the following Portuguese statement:

(2') Ou a neve é branca ou a neve não é branca.

This statement has the same meaning as (2) above, and it would be plainly wrong to translate it as having the same meaning as (1). In this case, statements (2) and (2') are clearly true in virtue of the same thing, for they express the same content (the same p), and p is the case. But since (1) expresses a different proposition or content from the one expressed by (2) and (2'), it cannot be true in virtue of the same p obtaining, on pain of violating (TT).

At this point, a natural move to support the claim that logical

truths are true in virtue of their meaning alone would be to appeal to the standard model-theoretic account of logical truth as truth under all interpretations that preserve logical form. We could then agree that (1) and (2) have different meanings, and maintain that what makes them true is the very same fact: the meaning of the logical words alone.

However, the fact that some truths are true under all interpretations that preserve their logical form does not show that what makes them true is the meaning of the logical words as opposed to the world.[5] For, as we saw, (1) and (2) have different meanings, thus expressing different contents, and so, by (TT), must be true in virtue of those contents obtaining.[6] Moreover, the fact that statements like (1) and (2) both share the following logical form,

(*) P or not P[7]

provides no reason to think that what makes then true is their logical form as opposed to the world. After all, logical forms can also tell us something about the world. For example, (*) could tell us that the world cannot be such that things could happen and not happen at the same time, or that we could have a certain fact and not have it at the same time. In this way we could claim that logical forms, somehow, represent the logical structure of the world.

To make this point vivid, take the following statement:

(5) Schrödinger's cat is dead or is not dead.

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[5] See Williamson 2007:64 for a similar claim.

[6] This is not to say that we cannot have different statements with different contents being true in virtue of the same thing. For example, the statements 'Snow is blue or water is H_2O' and 'Snow is green or water is H_2O' express different propositions, but are both true in virtue of the same thing: water being H_2O. But this is no counter-example to my claim, for they are still true in virtue of their contents obtaining.

[7] Notice that we cannot say that what is true in virtue of its meaning alone is the general schema (*) rather than its instances, for (*) is not a statement and thus does not have a meaning.

It is because (5) says something about the world that it poses a problem for our interpretation of quantum mechanics. Nevertheless, (5) is also an instance of (*), and so something that would be true, according to the metaphysical notion of analyticity, in virtue of its meaning alone. And if it were true in virtue of its meaning alone we would not even consider what it says about Schrödinger's cat to determine its truth. Its truth would immediately follow from the meaning of its logical words. This is not, of course, to say that (5) could be false. We still think (or at least most of us) that (5) must be true. But this is not because of the meaning of its logical words, but rather because its logical form mirrors a certain modal structure of the world. Or consider Graham Priest's dialetheism[8] — i.e., the view that there are true contradictions. Priest appeals to several examples to argue that some statements of the form 'Q and not-Q' might be true. The intelligibility of his arguments crucially depends on the fact that the truth or falsity of logical statements is not entirely determined by the meaning of the logical words, but rather depends on the uniform assignment of meaning to each word in a statement in a given context. The fact that some truths are true under all interpretation (or false under all interpretation) that preserves their logical form does not show that what makes them true (or false) is the meaning of the logical words as opposed to the world.

Moreover, as Williamson 2007:64 notes, from the perspective of compositional semantics synthetic truths such as,

(6) Kripke is a philosopher or Kripke is not a man.

are true in the same way as logical truths like (1) and (2) are. Namely, they are true because one of the disjuncts is true. So, if a statement like (1) were truth in virtue of the meaning of its logical words alone, so would (6). But (6) is clearly not true in virtue of the meaning of its logical words alone. Thus, (1) is also not true in virtue of the meaning of its logical words alone. What makes us think that it is true in virtue of its meaning alone is the fact that, contrary to (6), (1) expresses a necessary truth. But the fact that a statement expresses a logically necessary truth in no way entails that it is true in

[8] See, e.g., Priest 1998.

virtue of its meaning alone.[9] Statements that express a logically necessary truth (in the narrow sense) are statements that are true under all interpretations that preserve their logical form, and if this latter property cannot be used to elucidate the notion of truth in virtue of meaning alone, neither can the former.

What makes a statement true or false is what the statement is about. Or to use Aristotle's famous dictum about truth: 'to say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true.' Statements (1), (2), (5) and (6) are clearly about different things. Thus, they have different truth conditions. Their truth must, therefore, depend on whether such conditions are met. All statements are true, when they are, because their truth conditions are satisfied. And such truth conditions result from a uniform assignment of meaning to each word in the statement in a given context. Logical truths are no different in this respect. The only difference is that logical truths are true under all interpretations that preserve their logical form. But this in no way means that they are true in virtue of the meaning of the logical words alone. Such truths are as much about the extra-linguistic world as any other truth – or at least as any other truth that is not explicitly semantic in nature.

Despite Quine being credit as the first to reject the metaphysical notion of analyticity, Bertrand Russell had already objected to a similar notion. In Russell's time the focus was not so much on meanings but rather on truths of thought, but the intuition was the very same – which is also the intuition present in Hume's distinction between 'relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact'. The way Russell expresses his concern about this divide neatly illustrates the upshot so far:

> The belief in the law of contradiction is a belief about things, not about thoughts. It is not, e.g., the belief that if we *think* a certain tree is a beech, we cannot at the same time *think* that it is not a beech; it is the belief that if a tree *is* a beech, it cannot at the same time *be* not a beech.

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[9] The claim that necessary truths were true in virtue of their meaning alone was endorsed by the logical positivists, and rejected by Quine. But the logical positivists did not have independent means to show why this was so. The only reasons given to support such a claim result from their account of the a priori as knowledge of analytic truths, and of their subsequent identification of the concept of a priority with that of necessity.

(…) and although belief in the law of contradiction is a thought, the law of contradiction itself is not a thought, but a fact concerning things in the world. (Russell 1912: 50)

4 Conceptual truths

What about the paradigmatic examples of analytic truths, the so-called conceptual truths, like 'All bachelors are unmarried', are such statements true in virtue of their meaning alone? The argument here seems to be even more straightforward than the argument regarding logical truths. If the statement 'All bachelors are unmarried' is about bachelors and the property of being unmarried, how can it be true in virtue of its meaning alone?

Consider the following sentences:

(7) All bachelors are unmarried.
(8) All bachelors are healthy.

According to the metaphysical notion of analyticity, (7) is true in virtue of its meaning alone, and (8) is true in virtue of both its meaning and the world (assuming that it is true). In both statements the word 'bachelors' refers to bachelors, and not to the meaning of 'bachelors' (whatever that might be). And it is because the word 'bachelor' refers to bachelors that (7) is about bachelors. But, by (TT), for (8) to be true in virtue of its meaning alone, the statement could not be about bachelors but about the meaning of 'bachelors'. A statement in a context is about whatever its constituent terms refer to in that context. But there is no relevant difference that would make 'bachelors' refer to bachelors in (8) and to the meaning of 'bachelor' (whatever that might be) in (7). But if (7) is about the fact that bachelors are unmarried, such a fact, no matter how trivial it might be, must be what makes it true.

Now contrast (7) with:

(9) 'All bachelors are unmarried' means that all bachelors are unmarried.

If (7) were true in virtue of its meaning alone, the very same fact that made (7) true would made (9) true. But contrary to (7), (9) expresses a semantic truth, and thus must be about a different thing. But if these statements are about different things, by (TT), they cannot be true in virtue of the same thing, namely the meaning of 'All bachelors are unmarried'. Therefore, (7) cannot be true in virtue of its meaning alone.

I submit that if there is no other way of making sense of the metaphysical notion of analyticity such a notion should be rejected as incoherent. In the next section we will look at another way of understanding the metaphysical notion of analyticity.

5 Types of truth

A possible way of understanding the metaphysical notion of analyticity would be to claim that the notion of truth in virtue of meaning alone is not so much about the truth-makers of analytic statements — meanings as opposed to 'the facts' — but about a special type of truth. In this way, claiming that analytic statements are true in virtue of their meaning alone and synthetic statements true in virtue of the facts is to be understood as a claim regarding two different types of truth. So the question that we have to face now is whether there is such a thing as analytic truth and synthetic truth.

Williamson 2007:54-8 has presented a simple and very compelling argument to show why there cannot be two distinct types of truth.

Williamson's argument goes roughly as follows. If there were two distinct senses of truth, how could we determine the truth-value of, for example, a conditional in which the antecedent and the consequent were both synthetic truths? We could say that in such cases the statement that would result from this application would also be synthetic and so true in the synthetic sense. But consider the following statements:[10]

(10) Barbara is a barrister.
(11) Barbara is a lawyer.

[10] I am using Williamson 2007 own examples.

(10) and (11) are clear examples of synthetic truths, if true. Now imagine that Barbara is in fact a barrister, and consider the following conditional:

(12) If Barbara is a barrister, then Barbara is a lawyer.

If there are analytic truths, (12) should be one of them — 'barrister' means a lawyer with special qualifications. However, (12) is composed of two synthetic truths. Does this mean that whenever we have a conditional with a synthetic truth for the antecedent and a synthetic truth for the consequent the result is an analytic truth? This is clearly false, as can be easily illustrated:

(13) If Barbara is a barrister, then Barbara is married.

What this shows is that if there are two senses of 'true' it would be impossible to work out the truth-table for something as simple as the material conditional. Whether a conditional is analytically true or synthetically true is not a function of its parts being analytically true or synthetically true. The best we could do is to claim that the material conditional would be analytically or synthetically true. But this would defeat the whole idea of distinct notions of truth. That is, we would in effect be claiming that there is such a thing as absolute truth.

As Williamson 2007 also shows, we would have the same problem when considering the notion of truth-preservation. Valid arguments preserve truth from premise(s) to conclusion. But if there are two distinct notions of truth, what type of truth is preserved? For example, we could have a valid argument with a synthetically true premise and an analytically true conclusion like the following:

Snow is white.
∴   Snow is white or snow is not white.

It thus seems that we have once more failed to make sense of the metaphysical notion of analyticity. Is there any other way of making sense of this notion? In the next section I will consider one last idea.

6 Analyticity and two-dimensionalism

Let me tentatively suggest a final way of making sense of the metaphysical notion of analyticity.[11] The two-dimensional framework approach to semantics has been understood and used in many different ways, but there are some intuitions that seem common to all of them.[12] One such intuition is the following:

> (…) the truth value of an utterance will depend on facts in two different ways: first, the facts determine what is said; second, the facts determine whether what is said is true. (Stalnaker 2006: 295)

By accepting that the facts also determine whether what a statement says is true, the two-dimensional theorist embrace (TT), as they should. The claim that non-semantic facts also determine what is said is the one that I would like to focus on. Let us see if this could be used to make sense of the metaphysical notion of analyticity.

If we think of a possible world as a complete description of the facts, Stalnaker's quotation above might be understood as referring to the two possible roles a possible world might play: that of (i) determining what is said; and that of (ii) determining whether what is said is true. Now, a world that plays the role of determining what is said is considered to be the *actual world*. A world that is not actual is considered as *counterfactual.* The actual world is normally understood as 'our world' — that is, the way things are. And what determines the truth-value of a statement is the way things are. But there are ways things could have turned out so that what is true might have been false.

Consider the following example of a statement that expresses a contingent truth:

(P) Plato is the author of *The Republic*.

[11] I am grateful to David Papineau for pressing me to think about how the two-dimensional account could be used to make sense of the metaphysical notion of analyticity.

[12] It is not my purpose here to articulate and defend any two-dimensional approach, only to see if we can use some of its ideas to give a coherent account of the metaphysical notion of analyticity. For a discussion of the different interpretations of the two-dimensional semantics apparatus, see Stalnaker 2006 and Chalmers 2006.

By prefixing (P) with the 'Actually' operator we get the following statement:

(PA) Actually Plato is the author of *The Republic*.

The resulting sentence, (PA), now expresses a necessary truth – it is true at every possible world in which Plato is the author of *The Republic* at the actual world. This is the standard way of understanding the 'Actually' operator.

But it seems that there is a sense in which (PA) is not really necessary, that there is something contingent about it. This is the intuition that the two-dimensional theorists want to capture, namely that 'it is a contingent matter which possible world is actual' (Davies 2006: 143). Had a different possible world been actual (PA) could have expressed a falsehood. If another world in which Plato is not a philosopher had been actual, (PA) would have been false.

Now consider the statement,

(W) Water is H_2O.

Following Kripke 1980 and Putnam 1975 we can claim that (W) expresses a necessary truth, because 'water' and 'H_2O' both refer rigidly to the same substance. However, had a different possible world been actual, (W) could have been false. For example, if instead of Earth we had Twin-Earth playing the role of the actual world, then 'Water' would rigidly refer to that watery stuff that plays the water-role on Twin Earth. 'Water' would then rigidly refer to XYZ, and (W) would have been false. So with Twin-Earth playing the role of the actual world, (W) is false.

Now consider the statement,

(WW) Water is water.

Contrary to (W), this statement (WW) is true no matter what world is considered as the actual world. For, even if we had Twin Earth playing the role of the actual world, it would still be true that water is water — for XYZ is XYZ.

Corresponding to these two ways of understanding what is said

are said to be two distinct dimensions: on one dimension we have (A) different worlds considered as actual determining what is said; and on the other we have (C) different worlds considered as counterfactual determining what is said. Dimension (C) corresponds to what David Chalmers calls 'secondary intension', and dimension (A) corresponds to he calls 'primary intension'.[13]

Let us now see if this apparatus could help us make sense of the metaphysical notion of analyticity.

According to the metaphysical notion of analyticity a statement is true if and only if it is true in virtue of its meaning alone. We saw that two-dimensionalism embraces (TT): a statement S is true iff S means that p and p. However, if some statements are true no matter what world is considered actual, then, it might be claimed, they are somehow true in virtue of their meaning alone. After all, if a statement is true regardless of how the world happens to be (regardless of which facts obtain), it seems that it is in some sense true in virtue of its meaning alone (though not literally so).

I submit a slightly modified version of the traditional metaphysical notion of analyticity, one that seems similar in spirit but without its shortcomings. Here is such a notion:

> A statement is analytic (in the metaphysical sense) if and only if it is true at a world *w* regardless of whichever world is labelled as the actual world.

In the useful terminology of Martin Davies and Lloyd Humberstone 1980, analytic statements have, thus, the property of being Fixedly Actually true.

Since a necessary truth, in the standard sense, is one that holds at all possible worlds, we might think that all necessary propositions are analytic in this metaphysical sense of analyticity, and, thus, that (W) is analytic, rendering this definition of analyticity unsuitable. However, this is not so. Statement (W) is not fixedly actually true: it does not hold at the actual world, regardless of whichever world is labelled as the actual world. But (WW) is fixedly actually true, and so analytic — and a priori —, as it should.

We could then claim that the only statements that are analytic in

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[13] See, e. g., Chalmers 2006.

this new metaphysical sense of analyticity are those that are knowable a priori.[14] Truths of mathematics and logic are all true in respect to the actual world, whichever world is labelled as actual. The same can be said of the paradigmatic examples of analytic truths, the so-called conceptual truths. So, so far, so good.

Now, if an analytic statement in this metaphysical sense is one that is true no matter how the world turns out to be, it might seem that they do not impose any constraints on the world, and that is why we can know them to be true without having to look at the world — that is, a priori. Synthetic truths, on the other hand, do impose constraints on the world, and so they are somehow more world-demanding than analytic ones. It thus seem that we have finally found a robust enough notion of analyticity to be used in the empiricist account of the a priori. In the next section we will see why this is not so.

6.1 Is this new notion any good?

The first worry I would like to consider regarding this revised notion of metaphysical analyticity is whether it truly captures some special semantic phenomenon deserving of the label 'analyticity'.

The analytic/synthetic distinction is a semantic distinction. The analytic statements, in the metaphysical sense, are the ones that are said to be true for semantic reasons alone, the synthetic statements the ones that are true for non-semantic reasons — they are supposed to be true in virtue of extra-linguistic facts, for they express, in Humean terms, 'matters of fact'. Now, according to this revised notion of analyticity, analytic statements hold (when they do) in virtue of the facts, just as any other statement does. The difference is that they are true at every possible world considered as actual. Given this, one could claim that these statements are such that their meaning somehow guarantees their truth, and hence that they are, to a certain extent, true in virtue of meaning (though not in a literal sense). How-

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[14] Peacocke 2004 claims that all propositions that are knowable a priori — those that are 'contentually a priori' in his terminology — are fixedly actually true. Notice, however, that Peacocke strongly rejects the metaphysical notion of analyticity as spurious.

ever, this is not clearly so. The property that a statement has of being true no matter how the actual world turns out to be does not seem to be a purely semantic property, as the property of truth in virtue of meaning clearly is. It seems that if the phenomenon at stake in this new notion of analyticity were semantic, the same would be true of synthetic statements. Analytic statements *are* true no matter how the actual world turns out to be; and synthetic statements are *not* true no matter how the actual world turns out to be. But both statements are true in virtue of their disquotational truth conditions obtaining. The difference is that analytic statements, in this sense, will always have their truth conditions fulfilled and synthetic statements will have them only sometimes fulfilled. But then what is at stake here is a distinct type of necessity, rather than a distinct type of analyticity. And in fact, the 'Fixedly Actually' operator was introduced by Davies & Humberstone 1980 to express a different notion of necessity, what was called 'deep necessity' as opposed to 'superficial necessity', and not a notion of analyticity. The fact that a statement always manages to have their disquotational truth-conditions fulfilled does not show that the phenomenon behind it is merely semantic.

A second worry closely related to this one concerns the role that this purportedly metaphysical notion of analyticity can play in the empiricist account of the a priori. A priori knowledge is knowledge that is, in some suitable sense, independent of the subject's sense experience. If possible, the a priori has the puzzling feature of providing us with knowledge about the world without causally relating us to it. The moderate empiricist way out of this puzzle is to claim that a priori knowledge, thought genuine enough in its own terms, is somehow less substantial or less world-involving than a posteriori knowledge. A priori knowledge is then said to be merely knowledge of analytic truths, and analytic truths understood as semantic in nature, as true in virtue of meaning alone, and so less substantial and cognitively demanding than synthetic truths. The problem, as we saw, is that understood literally, we have to agree with Quine and reject this notion of analyticity. But understood less literally, as statements that are true no matter what world plays the role of the actual world, it is not at all clear that the notion can do the job the empiricists need it to do. For example, mathematical truths are true regardless of how the actual world turns out to be. But this fact does not provide any

reason to regard these truths as somehow less substantial than truths that do not hold fixedly actually, unless we already had independent reasons to think that all truths that hold fixedly actually are not substantial, or that mathematical truths are not substantial. Moreover, if we had independent reasons to think that mathematical truths were less substantial than empirical truths, or that truths that hold fixedly actually were less substantial than those that don't, what would be doing the explanatory work would be such reasons themselves, and not this revised notion of metaphysical analyticity.

The dialectic so far is pretty straightforward. Either this purported notion of analyticity fails to capture a semantic phenomenon deserving of the name 'analyticity' or if it does capture it, it fails to do the explanatory job it was supposed to do. In either case, it should be rejected. This is not to say that the notion of fixedly actually true is irrelevant or philosophical uninteresting, quite the contrary. My only contention is in taking it as capturing a metaphysical notion of analyticity that could be used in an account of the a priori.

It is also worth noting that the identification of the notion of the a priori with this purportedly metaphysical notion of analyticity could lead us to prejudge some important questions. For example, someone could claim that the truth expressed by the statement 'I exist' is not a priori, say, because to know to exist I need to resort to some sort of introspective thought process that seems too analogous to sensory experience for it to be regarded as an a priori source of justification. But, if we were to identify the a priori with this purportedly metaphysical notion of analyticity, instead of addressing the question of whether we can know to exist through some a priori source of justification, we would claim that since this is fixedly actually true it must be a priori. But surely this is not the right way to go about determining the epistemic status of a statement.

For example, Chalmers takes 'I exist' to express an a posteriori truth. However, it is fixedly actually true, and so, it should count as a priori on this approach:

> If S_2 is 'I exist', then any utterance of the same expression with the same meaning will be true, so S_2 has a necessary linguistic and semantic contextual intension [it holds Fixedly Actually]. But (somewhat controversially) S_2 is a posteriori, justifiable only on the basis of experience. [...] All these cases are counterexamples to the Core Thesis [the thesis that identifies what is Fixedly Actually true with the a priori].

> All of them are a posteriori and cognitively significant, and many of them seem to be as cognitively significant as paradigmatic expressions of empirical knowledge. (Chalmers 2006: 70)

My concern here is not so much with whether we should count 'I exist' as expressing an a priori truth — for I think that it does. My concern here is with what two-dimensionalism has to offer as an explanation of the a priori. The aim is to explain the a priori. We do that by claiming that what is a priori is analytic in the sense of holding fixedly actually. We are then faced with what seems to be a counter-example, something that we take to be knowable a posteriori but that is fixedly actually true. We then go on to adjust the theory in order to get a notion of analyticity that is coextensive with the notion of the a priori. Such an adjustment shows that we are using the a priori to test our notion of analyticity. And this is exactly the contrary of what we should be doing if the aim were to explain the a priori with the analytic.

Furthermore, it is not clear that we always know the proposition expressed by a statement that is fixedly actually true. For example, what is it that we know when we know that we exist? The statement 'I exist' is true at every possible world, no matter what world plays the role of the actual world. But what I know when I know that I, myself, exists is not something that holds fixedly actually true. If I am right about this, this means that the identification of the a priori with this purported notion of analyticity is not only problematic but false, as there are things that hold fixedly actually that are not knowable a priori. Of course, one could claim that all a priori truths are fixedly actually true – and that might well be true – but we would also need the converse to hold.[15] That is, we would need all truths that hold fixedly actually to be knowable a priori for this notion to be coextensive with the a priori, as any purported notion of analyticity needs to be.

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[15] See, for example, Peacocke 2004, who claims that all a priori truths are necessary in this special sense, though not necessary in the metaphysical sense.

7 Conclusion

I have explored several ways of making sense of the notion of truth in virtue of meaning (i.e., the metaphysical notion of analyticity); I argued that understood literally, the notion should be rejected. I then purposed a less literal way of understanding it. However, though in perfectly good order, it is not clear that this purported new notion of metaphysical analyticity captures a purely semantic phenomenon deserving of the label 'analyticity'. And even if it does, it does not do the explanatory work required by the moderate empiricists. So, even if this new notion does capture a purely semantic phenomenon, this is not the kind of phenomenon that the metaphysical notion of analyticity is supposed to capture. Therefore, in either case, we should follow Quine in his repudiation of the metaphysical notion of analyticity. This notion might well be the last dogma of empiricism.[16]

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