

Reading Guide #13 - Two Dogmas
Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"

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1. What are the two dogmas? What are the effects of abandoning the two dogmas?
2. What is wrong with taking analytic statements to be those whose denials lead to a contradiction?
3. What was Kant's conception of analyticity? What are two shortcomings of that characterization?
How does Quine restate Kant's criterion?
4. Why isn't meaning the same as naming? How does this distinction fare for general terms?
5. "Meaning is what essence becomes when it is divorced from the object of reference and wedded to the word" (156). Explain.
6. Are there meanings? What might have led us to think that there have to be things called meanings?
7. What are the two types of analytically true statements? Characterize them. On what does the second type rely?
8. How does Carnap use state descriptions to flesh out 'analyticity'? What's wrong with this approach?
9. What are problems with saying that analytic statements are true 'by definition'?
10. How does explication differ from reports on usage?
11. Are there any cases in which synonymy derives from definition, rather than the other way around?
Explain.
12. What are two types of economy in language? How are they related?
13. Explain the correlative roles of definitions when translating between a language and a sub-language.
14. How might interchangeability explain synonymy? What are the problems with this attempt?
15. How might one appeal to the notion of a 'word' to block the above objections?
16. What are the two senses of 'synonymy'? Which one is important for founding analyticity? Why can't we presuppose analyticity in explaining synonymy?
17. How does circularity arise from using necessity to explain analyticity?
18. "Our argument is not flatly circular, but something like it. It has the form, figuratively speaking, of a closed curve in space" (160). Explain.
19. How is interchangeability in an extensional language different from the version we need to explain cognitive synonymy?
20. Why can't we explain analyticity merely by specifying the sentences of a language to which we apply the term. Are semantic rules helpful? Explain.
21. "It is obvious that truth in general depends on both language and extralinguistic fact...Thus one is tempted to suppose in general that the truth of a statement is somehow analyzable into a linguistic component and a factual component. Given this supposition, it next seems reasonable that in some statements the factual component should be null; and these are the analytic statements" (163-4). According to Quine, what is wrong with this argument?
22. What is the verification theory of meaning? How might it save analyticity?
23. What is the naive view of the relation between statements and confirmatory experiences? How is it ambiguous and vague? How can these problems be mitigated?
24. What was Carnap's *Aufbau* project? What was its ontology?
25. What's wrong with Carnap's treatment of physical space, according to Quine?
26. "The notion lingers that to each statement, or each synthetic statement, there is associated a unique range of possible sensory events such that the occurrence of any of them would add to the likelihood of truth of the statement..." (165-6). How does this come out of reductionism? What is Quine's counter-suggestion?

27. How are the two dogmas connected?
28. "The unit of empirical significance is the whole of science" (168). Explain.
29. What is total science? Why does Quine call experience boundary conditions on total science?
30. How can we hold to the truth of any statement, come what may? Explain.
31. How does Quine characterize the differences between peripheral statements and central ones?
32. On Quine's view, what are physical objects?
33. For Quine, how do we know about mathematical objects?
34. On what basis should we determine whether to admit sets into our ontology?
35. How are questions of the existence of classes (sets) and questions of the existence of houses different, for Quine?
36. What factors determine whether to accept a posit?

Secondary Reading:

Grice and Strawson, "In Defence of a Dogma"

1. How does Quine reject the analytic/ synthetic distinction? Be specific.
2. How does the history of philosophy support the distinction? How does present practice support it?
3. "For, in general, if a pair of contrasting expressions are habitually and generally used in application to the same cases... 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." (83) Explain. Is this really a sufficient condition? How might Quine reformulate the thesis to account for this criticism?
4. Grice and Strawson present an argument for the distinction from philosophical usage. How might Quine respond?
5. What other distinctions must Quine reject? Why?
6. Describe the 'paradox' which arises from the rejection of synonymy. What other notion does the rejection of synonymy force out?
7. "Instead of examining the actual use that we make of the notion of meaning the same, the philosopher measures it by some perhaps inappropriate standard... and because it falls short of this standard, or seems to do so, denies its reality, declares it illusory." Explain specifically how this is a criticism of Quine.
8. What two requirements does (better, would) Quine make of a satisfactory explanation of analyticity? What do Grice and Strawson make of these requirements?
9. Why might it be appropriate to hold the notion of analyticity (and related notions) to a higher standard than other terms, like 'wrong' and 'true'? Do Grice and Strawson think this is appropriate?
10. How do Grice and Strawson distinguish causal impossibility from logical impossibility? Does the distinction fulfill Quine's requirements on philosophical definition? What does this have to do with analyticity?
11. Why do Grice and Strawson think that Quine's comments on definitions created to be synonymous render his position incoherent?
12. Would elimination of 'analyticity' clear up all philosophical ambiguity? Explain.
13. Explain the two assertions that Quine thinks undermine the distinction, and which Grice and Strawson think support it. How do they connect with the distinction?
14. How might we revise the definition of 'synonymy', in light of Quine's thesis of the interconnectedness of statements of a theory? What would be the purpose of such a revision?
15. How can the revisability thesis be consistent with an analytic/synthetic distinction?