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EMPIRICIST COMMITMENT AND THE .CONCEPT OF NECESSITY

by

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ABSTRACT

A stock argument against empiricism is that it cannot account for our alleged knowledge of "necessary propositions," "necessary statements," "necessary truths," "truths of reason," "laws of thought," et al. Because empiricists allegedly cannot consistently account for such 'knowledge,' the fundamental empiricist tenet (that all knowledge is derivable from experience) is thought to be untenable. Although commentators are quick to point out the initial and obvious escape routes for the empiricist, they fail to comment on metaphors embedded in both positions.

After examining a number of passages from Descartes and Leibniz, I conclude that the rationalist cannot render intelligible his account of necessity because that account is viciously metaphorical. By criticizing the rationalist position in such a way, I am taking advantage of the tacit commitment all language-users make to an empiricist thesis. It is with this in mind that I proceed to answer some of the '*a priori*' complaints against an empiricist (or conventionalist) account of necessity.

The first of these complaints is the traditional one: how does the empiricist account for items of knowledge which are believed to be eternally true? I answer this question by denying that 'necessary truths' are either *true*

or *items of knowledge*. In fact, it is quite plausible to treat some 'necessary truths' (e.g., logical principles) as rules.

This leads to a second complaint which is formulated against any version of the view that necessity can be explained by rules, or rule-governed linguistic behaviour. The opponents in this case invoke a distinction between sentences and propositions. I argue that this distinction is obscure--it contravenes the requirements for minimal communication.

In the final chapter I outline the elements of the conventionalist viewpoint which I have been defending in the preceding chapters. I suggest that our actual language-use will sanction our employment of "necessary truth"; the recognition/adoption of necessary truth will, in effect, be contingent upon lexical fiat. I then propose ways of avoiding or meeting the sort of objections Quine has voiced against conventionalism.

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To Alice Mertens,

who continues to give me a very special inspiration.

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Chapter 1

There is a controversy between rationalism and empiricism concerning the differentiation of 'knowledge' claims.[1] Allegedly, the theoretic framework of one of these schools disallows the possibility of correctly accounting for different kinds of knowledge. It is claimed by the rationalist that the empiricist cannot account for *a priori* knowledge. Since such knowledge is allegedly genuine it follows that the empiricist framework must be augmented or enlarged. As I shall argue, this debate can be held only if we accept the vague and metaphorical descriptions (slogans?) of the rival positions.

Empiricism is usually described as the view that all knowledge is derivable from experience.[2] Rationalism, on the other hand, is often presented as the doctrine that reason is the source of knowledge.[3]

If we were to accept these 'descriptions' it would be easy to see why the empiricist's thesis would need modifying. If what we claim to know is somehow importantly related to experience, then experience should confirm or disconfirm all our claims. But since some knowledge does not need experiential confirmation and cannot be disconfirmed

it follows that it is not based solely on experience. 'Two plus two equals four' is a typical example of such an item of knowledge. As Russell says, " . . . we become able to 'see' the general principle that two and two are four; any one instance is seen to be 'typical' and the examination of other instances becomes unnecessary."[4] 'Items' like these which cannot be disconfirmed by experience have a variety of names, including 'necessary truths,' "truths of reason," "analytic statements," "*a priori* propositions," and "necessary propositions." To provide an explanation of just how we acquire this kind of knowledge has been the empiricist's alleged stumbing block.

Because attempted empiricist explanations of the acquisition of necessary truths are felt to be inadequate, and because the rationalist seems to avoid the problem altogether by postulating a faculty of *a priori* knowledge, some commentators[5] are tempted to reconcile empiricism with rationalism, hoping to salvage the best of the two positions. What is overlooked, however, is the viciously metaphorical nature of the rationalist's explanation of knowledge acquisition; he cannot eliminate the non-literalness of his description. But is this a serious complaint? Why should we try to eradicate all non-literal description?

The answer to the above questions lies in the relationship between description and communication. I will argue that the rationalist's description of our acquisition

of *a priori* knowledge is not really a description. In all cases where descriptions are necessarily non-literal, they are unintelligible. This can best be demonstrated by examining some passages from Descartes and Leibniz. I shall begin with Descartes.

The following selections are taken from *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, *Principles of Philosophy*, and *The Meditations*.[6] These passages are representative of Descartes' views on innate ideas and intuitive knowledge. The few remarks that I make refer to the directly preceding passage. In these passages, the italicizations are my own, and they indicate that the word is being used metaphorically.

> The mind *finds within* itself ideas of many things; and so long as it merely contemplates these, and neither assents or denies the existence of something like them *outside* itself, it cannot be in error. Further, it *finds* certain axioms, and from these it *makes up* various demonstrations; and so long as it *attends* to them, it is wholly convinced of their truth.[7]

> When we *recognize* the impossibility of *something coming out of nothing*, then we are *considering the proposition* 'nothing comes out of nothing' not as an existent thing, or an aspect of a thing, but as an eternal truth that *dwells* in our mind; we call such truths common notions, or axioms . . . . There is no doubt that these common notions can be *clearly* and *distinctly perceived*.[8]

What is it to recognize the impossibility of something's coming out of nothing? How do we perceive a notion or an axiom? How do we perceive a notion clearly?

> In primary knowledge there is only a *clear* and *distinct perception* of what I assert; now this would not be enough to make me certain as to the truth of the matter if it could ever happen that something clearly and distinctly *perceived* in this way should be false; so it

> looks as though I could lay down a general rule: whatever I *perceive* very *clearly* and *distinctly* is true.[9]

It seems to me that in this passage the perceptual metaphor breaks down. Descartes is talking about 'the that' which is perceived as being either true or false. However, the things which are actually perceived cannot properly be said to be either true or false--we do not see true things and false things.

> For a *perception* to be a possible *foundation* for a certain and indubitable judgement, it must be not only *clear* but also *distinct*. I call a *perception* 'clear' when, if the mind *attends* to it, it is *present* and *manifest;* just as we say we see clearly what is present to the gaze of our eye and has a sufficiently strong and manifest effect upon it. I call a *perception* 'distinct' if it is not only clear but also *precisely distinguished* from all others, so that it *contains* no *element* that is not clear.[10]

Here, Descartes is trying to render his view of intuition intelligible by explicitly comparing mental 'seeing' to seeing. This, it is supposed, justifies the epithets "clear" and "distinct." What would it be like to have a perception of, for example, a book which was "not only clear but also distinct"? Is there a difference between distinctly seeing a book and clearly seeing a book?

> As regards any *subject* we propose to *investigate*, we must inquire . . . what we can clearly and manifestly *perceive* by intuition or deduce with certainty. For there is no other way of acquiring knowledge.[11]

Apart from the further reference to the notion of perception by intuition, there is the notion of investigating a subject. Is it surprising that the mind should be

able to investigate subjects when it can see truths and, moreover, see them clearly and distinctly, find ideas, contemplate, attend, and reach conclusions?

> By 'intuition' I mean, not the wavering assurance of the senses, or the deceitful judgement of a misconstruing imagination, but a *conception, formed* by *unclouded* mental attention, so *easy* and *distinct* as to leave *no room* for doubt in regard to the thing we are understanding. It comes to the same thing if we say: It is an indubitable *conception formed* by an *unclouded* and attentive mind; *one* that *originates* solely from the *light of reason*, and is more certain even than deduction, because it is *simpler* . . . . Thus, anybody can *see* by *mental intuition* that he himself exists, that he thinks, ... [12]

In this passage we have the attempt to explicate intuition. "Intuition" means either (1) a conception formed by unclouded mental attention so as to leave no room for doubt in regard to the thing we are understanding, or (2) an indubitable conception that originates from the light of reason and is even more certain (indubitable) than deduction.

Although it is central to Descartes' epistemological views, his description of intuition is unintelligible. I need mention only the obscure expressions "conception," "indubitable conception," "formed," "originate from," "unclouded mental attention," "thing we understand," "light of reason."

> . . . whatever the *light of nature shows* me (e.g. that if I am doubting, it follows that I exist, and so on) is absolutely beyond doubt; for there can be no *faculty*, equally *trustworthy with this light*, to *show* me that such things are not true; . . . . [13]

This selection, as well as the following two, is included only as evidence that Descartes takes the metaphor of 'natural light' seriously.

> There is none of these points that is not obvious on careful *reflection, by the light of nature;* but when I *reflect less,* and the images of sensible objects *blind my mind's eye,* I cannot so easily remember . . . .[14]

> I could not but judge to be true what I *understood so clearly;* not because I was so compelled by any external cause, but because the *great illumination of my understanding* was followed by a great inclination of the will; . . . .[15]

> . . . before examining this more carefully . . . I wish to stay a little in the contemplation of God; to meditate within myself on His attributes; to behold, wonder at, adore the beauty of this immeasurable Light so far as the eye of my darkened understanding can bear it.[16]

This last passage could be almost a parody of Descartes' position. Before drawing any general conclusions, I will sketch Leibniz's account of *a priori* knowledge. With the exception of the entries "H" and "I," the following quotations are taken from *New Essays.*[17] To ease the reader's irritation, I have omitted italicizing the metaphors:

A. Ideas and truths may be divided into primitive and derivative; the knowledge of the primitive does not need to be formed; they must be distinguished only; . . . it suffices at last to recognize that there is an internal light born with us, which comprises all the intelligible ideas and all the necessary truths which are only a result of these ideas and need not experience in order to be proved.[18]

B. I admit that contingent truths, or truths of fact, come to us by observation and experience; but I hold that necessary derivative truths depend upon demonstration, i.e. upon definitions or ideas, united with primitive truths. And the primitive truths (such as

the principle of contradiction) do not come at all from the senses or from experience, and cannot be perfectly proved, but from the natural internal light, and this is what I mean in saying that they are innate.[19]

C. [Locke] has not sufficiently distinguished the origin of the necessary truths whose source is in the understanding, from the truths of fact drawn from the experience of the senses, ...[20]

D. We can then make for ourselves these sciences in our study, and even with closed eyes, without learning through sight or even through touch, the truths which we need; although it is true that we would not consider the ideas in question if we had never seen or touched anything.[21]

E. The mind is not only capable of knowing them, but further of finding them within itself; and, if it had only the simple capacity of receiving knowledge, . . . it would not be the source of necessary truths, as I have just shown that it is; for it is incontestable that the senses do not suffice to show their necessity, and that thus the mind has a disposition . . . to draw them itself from its own depths; although the senses are necessary to give it the occasion and attention for this . . . . You see . . . other very clever persons [Locke] had not thought enough upon the consequences of the difference which there is between necessary or eternal truths and the truths of experience . . . . The original proof of the necessary truths comes from the understanding alone, and the other truths come from experience or from the observation of the senses. Our mind is capable of knowing both; but it is the source of the former and, whatever number of particular experiences we may have of a universal truth, we could not be assured of it forever by induction without knowing its necessity through the reason.[22]

F. It is enough that what is in the understanding can be found there, and that the sources of original proofs of the truths which are in question are only in the understanding; the senses can hint at, justify, and confirm these truths, but cannot demonstrate their infallible and perpetual certainty.[23]

G. Innate ideas and truths cannot be effaced, but they are obscured in all men (as they are now) by their inclination toward the needs of the body . . . . These characteristics of the internal light would always be shining in the understanding and would give fervor to the will,

if the confused perceptions of sense did not engross our attention.[24]

H. It is also by this natural light that the axioms of mathematics are recognized . . . . It is upon such foundations that we construct arithmetic, geometry and the other demonstrative sciences; . . . in truth, the senses are very necessary, in order to have certain ideas of sensible things, ... But the force of the demonstrations depends upon intelligible notions and truths, which alone are capable of making us discern what is necessary . . . .[25]

I. But to return to necessary truths, it is generally true that we know them only by this natural light, and not at all by the experiences of the senses. For the senses can very well make known, in some sort, what is, but they cannot make known what ought to be or could not be otherwise.[26]

The foregoing is a scanty selection of quotations drawn largely from the first book of Leibniz's critique of Locke. I hope the selection outlines Leibniz's view. This is not to say that the view is intelligible. My present task is to show that it is not--that it suffers from being viciously metaphorical.

Passage "A"

Line 1: the subject of this sentence is ideas and truths. Leibniz says ideas and truths have a common characteristic, viz., they both can be divided into two groups: primitive and derivative. Hence, ideas and truths are the kinds of things which can be divided or grouped. However, each of these operations (dividing and grouping) demands both a number of discrete objects, and that those objects be distinguishable. But how can we distinguish

differences (and this includes inscriptions) except by seeing, feeling, smelling, or hearing? It must be that truths and ideas, propositions and judgements, are things which can be either seen, smelled, heard, or touched.

We might also notice that the labels "primitive" and "derivative" are metaphorical. What is the test for whether one idea is derived from another more primitive idea? Is there such a thing as one idea? Can ideas be described?

Lines 3 to 7: the subject of this sentence is the eternal light. It allegedly comprises all the intelligible ideas. Perhaps "comprises" means comprehends, but it is hard to see how a light comprehends. It is also not clear what is external to this light, or for that matter what it is internal to.

Passage "B"

Lines 9 to 11: necessary derivative truths, Leibniz maintains, depend upon demonstration. The relationship between truth and demonstration is not clear. However, we are told what demonstration is--the uniting of definitions or ideas with primitive truths. Here we should note the interchangeability of definitions and ideas. Obviously these two things share some element so that, when either is combined with a primitive truth, it yields a demonstration. But what is common to both definitions and ideas? What can

be united with a definition?

Lines 12 to 15: this last sentence of passage "B" is meant to explain what Leibniz means by saying that primitive truths are called "innate." What is a primitive truth? The principle of non-contradiction, we are told, is a primitive truth. (Notice the important shift from "truth" to the word "principle.") What makes a truth a primitive truth? By saying that primitive truths are innate, Leibniz seemingly means that these things originate from a different 'place' from the truths of fact. The former comes from the natural internal light.

Notice that in these first two passages ("A" and "B") we find the following pairs of words conjoined: "ideas" and "truth," "definitions" and "ideas," "truths" and "proofs," and "principles" and "truths." Should the members of these pairs be treated indiscriminately?

Passage "C"

Lines 16 to 19: Leibniz's complaint here is that Locke fails to distinguish between the place of origin of necessary truths and the place of origin of contingent truths. Given my remarks about distinguishing (c.f. comments on passage "A"), we might conclude that Leibniz has senses which are more acute than Locke's. How else could we explain Leibniz's ability to distinguish different places of origin for each of these two kinds of truths when

Locke could not? Should not we be able to verify Leibniz's claim?

Passage "D"

Lines 20 to 22: the sciences referred to are geometry and arithmetic, both of which can be studied with closed eyes. This is a curious kind of studying. The point is that the truths needed for geometry are not learned by seeing, touching, or hearing. In fact, these truths are not learned.

Passage "E"

Lines 25 to 26: in this quotation we are told that the mind has a capability of finding things inside itself. No doubt these discoveries require natural light since it is difficult to see in total darkness.

Lines 26 and 27: here we have a conditional: if the mind had only the simple capacity of receiving knowledge then the mind would not be the source of necessary truths. Consider the antecedent "if the mind possessed only the capacity of taking delivery of knowledge." The consequent is equally obscure: "the mind would not be the source of necessary truths." If we could understand the mind being a source of necessary truths we might understand the mind not being a source. But what is a source?

Suppose we consider "source" in one clear context, for example, the source of a river. The source is the place

where the stream or river begins; the place where water collects, or 'issues forth' to become a river or stream. It is a causal word in the sense that the location (for example, valley bowl) may cause the water to *become* a river or stream. Clearly we can unpack the causal story built into a river's source, but we cannot do the same for a mental source. Once again we have a physicalistic description applied to something allegedly non-physical.

Lines 28 to 30: Leibniz says that he has shown that the mind is the source of necessary truths. This is a reference to: " . . . and in whatever manner it may be taken, it is always clear in all states of the soul that necessary truths are innate, and proved by what is within, it not being possible to establish through experience, as we establish truths of fact."[27] We shall see that this argument is repeated in lines 31 to 34. I will not consider the argument at this point since it will be the subject of Chapter 2.

The next part of the sentence tells us that the senses do not suffice to show the necessity of these truths. The obvious question is "their necessity for what?" To this point we have been treating "necessary truths" as a noun phrase, and such treatment is justifiable (see passage "C"). However, according to line 24 we should treat "necessary" as an adjective modifying the noun "truths"; that is, unless Leibniz would say ". . . do not suffice to show necessary

truths' necessity." Assuming that he would not say this, we have uncovered a puzzle.

If "necessary" modifies "truths" adjectivally, then "truths" should be followed by "for . . ." or "to . . . ." It is not followed by either, and yet Leibniz speaks of a truth's necessity. Is "necessary truths" an ellipsis for "necessarily truths," or "necessarily true," or what?

What is necessarily a truth? Or what does it mean to say such and such is true, and true necessarily? In other words, what is the purpose of the adverbial inflexion? I shall return to this point in Chapter 3.

Line 31: I need hardly comment on the mind's disposition to draw things from its own depths.

Lines 31 to 33: the mind can draw from its own depths only if the senses have given it the occasion and attention. How shall we understand "occasion"? Do 'the senses' give the mind the opportunity for searching in its own dark depths with its light?

Lines 33 to 35: the reference to consequences is a further reference to the argument that necessary truths are innate. Since I have chosen not to discuss this argument at present, I shall confine my comments to the expressions "necessary or eternal truths" and "truths of experience." The latter expression is as opaque as the former; however, we are making progress with the former--we are now told necessary truths can also be called "eternal

truths."

Lines 36 to 38: the original proof of 'eternal truths' comes from the understanding. Is "original" used for the purpose of contrast in this sentence--the (one and only) original proof, as opposed to the unoriginal proofs--or as opposed to the unoriginal non-proofs? The notion of the original proof is unintelligible. This point will be picked up again in Chapter 2.

Notice that, particularly in this sentence and the next, the word "truths" tends to be treated as a generic name. Hence, we might have a picture of a unified body of truths, all of which are known by the mind, but some arrive through the mind and some from elsewhere. Do we tend, by this use of the word "truths," to ignore noteworthy differences?

Lines 39 to 43: here, Leibniz seems to be saying that we do have particular experiences of a universal truth, but that these particular experiences cannot assure us of its necessity. The passage I quoted earlier from Russell makes a similar claim: "any one instance [of a general principle] is seen to be 'typical,' and the examination of other instances becomes unnecessary."[28] I find this notion of experiencing instances obscure, but I wish to postpone a discussion of it until the next chapter.

It should now be clear that the rationalist is not advancing a position which can be debated, since it is not

clear what the position is. It might be responded that empiricism suffers from the same flaw. After all, the description that all knowledge is based on experience is also metaphorical.

The empiricist metaphor, however, is both compatible with, and appropriate for, a constructive model of language acquisition. Our acquisition and maintenance of language is undeniably 'based on' experience. This cannot even be denied (or debated) without conceding the point. In order for there to be any sort of debate there must minimally be some way of recognizing assent and dissent. How else can recognition be accomplished except by verbal behaviour? To accept such a means of recognizing assent and dissent is to endorse the empiricist thesis.

Perhaps it would be argued that assent (or dissent) is not purely behavioural; that is, there is a distinction to be made between what is expressed by a sentence and the form of words used for expression. So, for example, we might say "I agree with what you are saying, but not with the way you said it." In cases like these, assent is being granted to *what* is said, but not to the linguistic performance. According to the empiricist, this should not make sense since there is only the linguistic performance.

My response is that there *is* only the linguistic behaviour. The dichotomy the rationalist wishes to introduce is bogus. Speaker B cannot assent to *what* was said by

speaker A without assenting to A's verbal performance--unless A is willing to promulgate an amended performance to which B would give assent. We are not dealing with two distinct categories (the verbal performance and its content); we are dealing with two rival verbal performances.

This line of defence will be sustained in Chapter 3. For the present, it is enough to establish the weak claim that the empiricist metaphor is not vicious. That a (minimal) relationship between communication and experience can (arguably) be specified in terms of assent, dissent, verbal behaviour, stimulus, and stimulus-response, is sufficient to show the non-vicious nature of the 'based on' kind of metaphor. The metaphor can be eliminated.

I am, therefore, justified in claiming that the debate is ill-conceived by most commentators. Not only is the rationalist position usually presented as a competing theory, but the onus is usually placed on the empiricist to provide an account of necessity which meets the rationalist's expectations. I have tried to show that this is a mistake. In being committed to communicating, it seems as though we must endorse some minimal form of empiricism. An entitlement is, therefore, secured for the empiricist thesis which is not available to the rationalist. On this basis it would seem as though the onus is on the rationalist to say what is wrong with the empiricist thesis--to show what aspects of the thesis we need not endorse over

and above our minimal commitment to effective communication.

In the following chapters I will be concerned with arguments which attempt to show why an empiricist account of necessity is (or must be) inadequate.

Footnotes to Chapter 1

[1]Single quotation marks indicate that I am withholding assent to the propriety of using the quoted word or phrase, or that briefly, they indicate a sneer quote. Double quotation marks indicate either a direct quotation, or that a word (expression, or phrase) is being mentioned. The ambiguity is resolved in the latter case both by context and the presence of a reference number. The following are examples of a sneer quote, a direct quote, and a mentioned expression:

> The 'truth' of the principle is impossible to doubt.
> It is obvious ". . . that these are the same proposition."[22]
> Notice the shift from [the word] "truth" to [the word] "primitive."

[2]For example, see the following authors: Bruce Aune, *Rationalism, Empiricism and Pragmatism: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 35-36, 86; A. J. Ayer, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1982), pp. 3-4, vi; Rudolph Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World* (trans. Rolf A. George, 1st English edition) (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1967); Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), pp. 40, 43; H. Titus and M. Smith (eds.), *Living Issues in Philosophy* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1974), pp. 237-238; W. H. Walsh, *Reason and Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), pp. 12-13, 106, 110.

[3]See references in note 2 above.

[4]Bertrand Russell, 1912, p. 43.

[5]In particular, W. H. Walsh, 1947.

[6]Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Geach (eds. and trans.), *Descartes' Philosophical Writings* (Middlesex: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1954).

[7]Ibid., p. 184.

[8]Ibid., p. 191.

[9]Ibid., p. 76.

[10]Ibid., p. 190.

[11]Ibid., p. 153.

[12]Ibid., p. 155.

[13]Ibid., p. 79.

[14]Ibid., p. 87.

[15]Ibid., p. 97.

[16]Ibid., p. 91.

[17]Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (trans. Alfred Gideon Langley) (London: Macmillan Co., 1896).

[18]Ibid., p. 21.

[19]Ibid., p. 22.

[20]Ibid., p. 71.

[21]Ibid., p. 78.

[22]Ibid., p. 80.

[23]Ibid., p. 81.

[24]Ibid., p. 98.

[25]Paul Edwards and Arthur Pap (eds.), *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy* (3rd ed.) (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 683.

[26]Ibid., p. 683.

[27]G. W. Leibniz, 1896, p. 80.

[28]Bertrand Russell, 1912, p. 43.

Chapter 2

One of the most common[1] initial moves against empiricism is to characterize knowledge acquired by experience as particular and disconfirmable. This raises the obvious problem for the empiricist--that of accounting for logical principles. Without such an account the fundamental empiricist tenet (that all knowledge is derived from experience) is thought to be untenable. In this chapter I shall try to point out the questionable assumptions involved in advancing such an argument.

In *The Problems of Philosophy*, Russell says:

> One of the great historic controversies in philosophy is the controversy between the two schools called, respectively, 'empiricists' and 'rationalists' . . . It has now become possible to decide with some confidence as to the truth or falsehood of these opposing schools. It must be admitted . . . that logical principles are known to us, and cannot be themselves proved by experience, since all proof presupposes them . . . . Thus, while admitting that all knowledge is elicited and caused by experience, we shall nevertheless hold that some knowledge is *a priori* in the sense that the experience which makes us think of it does not suffice to prove it, but merely so directs our attention that we see its truth without requiring any proof from experience.[2]

The following restatement of Russell's argument will be helpful for the ensuing discussion:

P1. Everything which is proven appeals to principles of inference.

P2. Principle of inference "a" is presupposed in all proofs.

(C1) Therefore, principle "a" cannot be validly proven.

P3. All principles which cannot themselves be validly proven cannot be proven by experience.

(C2) Therefore, principle "a" is not proven by experience.

P4. We have knowledge of principle "a".

P5. All knowledge which is acquired by experience is proven by experience.

P6. Principle "a" is not proven by experience.

(C3) Therefore, principle "a" is not known by experience.

P7. All knowledge claims are either acquired by experience or known *a priori*.

(C4) Principle "a" is known *a priori*.

There are three complaints which are generally applicable to this kind of argument: (1) that there is a tacit assumption about the relationship between the method of acquisition of a 'claim' and its classification: (2) that the argument depends on a generic sense of the word "know," and (3) that the expression "known by experience" is used equivocally.

Before examining these points I would like to

consider another complaint, specifically about Russell's formulation of the argument.

Russell implicitly accepts two notions of proof, experiential and deductive, thereby endorsing the rationalist tradition of treating reason and experience as distinct means of acquiring and justifying knowledge claims. To accept this tradition seemingly presents a problem for Russell's argument. If there are different kinds of proof then it does not (obviously) follow that logical principles cannot be proved by experience; cf. premise (3). Clearly, it depends on what is meant by "proved by experience." For example, experience might 'prove' the truth of a logical principle if induction counts as experiential proof. Hence, the problem for Russell is to demonstrate the acceptability of an equivocal use of "prove."

There is also the more important concern about the rationalist notion of a purely non-experiential proof. All proofs are 'experiential' in the sense that a proof is a quasi-physical object which must be checked and verified experientially. In this way, a deductive proof is exactly like, for example, proving that there are only black cars parked on the street--one must look and see. The point is that it is not clear what the expression "proved by experience" is being contrasted with.

To return to the more general complaints, firstly, it is tacitly assumed that the method of acquisition of a

knowledge claim can be inferred from the status of the claim. Is this assumption warranted? Why should the classification of a claim be strictly related to the route of its acquisition?

Russell is inferring, from the fact that a principle cannot be proved, that it must be acquired in a certain way. Leibniz makes a similar claim; so does Kant, except Kant's reasoning is based on the universality of a judgement.[3] In order for Russell's inference to be legitimate it must be assumed that (a) the method of acquisition somehow dictates how the claim can be classified, and (b) there could be more than one way of acquiring knowledge.

Neither of these assumptions can be well-defended. Is it not possible that there should be other considerations which dictate how a 'claim' must be classified? For example, could we not come to classify a claim like "all water boils at one hundred degrees centigrade" as being 'analytic' ('necessary' or '*a priori*') even though such a claim is usually thought to be acquired experientially? Obviously, the onus is on the rationalist to show what the strict relationship is between the status of a claim and its acquisition, that is, to show why classification is not a matter of convention.

It is not clear to me how the other assumption (that there could be more than one way of acquiring knowledge) could be justified. The usual explication of

alternative methods of acquisition is in terms of 'not being acquired by experience'; however, as Locke[4] has pointed out, the meaning of this expression is not clear.

The response, that knowledge is elicited by, but not confined to experience, is of no help. Incidentally, the usual examples of knowledge items offered in support of this modified thesis are not the kind of items that can be 'awakened' by an 'instance' of experience. Russell, for example, talks about experiencing an instance of '2 + 2 = 4.' What would it be like to experience an instance of this 'truth'? Am I, for example, experiencing an instance of 'Πd' when I look at the face of my watch? Other examples sometimes presented are the 'laws of thought.' Is it possible to experience an instance of 'whatever is, is'? Such 'claims' are not 'awakened' by an 'experiential instance'--they are not like seeing an 'instance' of a 22-pound cat.

To return to the main point, it is not clear what an alternative method for acquiring knowledge would be. In other words, the rationalist assumption about classification and acquisition of knowledge claims is unwarranted. Not only is there the possibility of explaining the status of knowledge claims without postulating other methods of acquisition, but it is also not clear what the alternatives could be.

I shall now turn to the second and third general complaints. It will be useful to symbolize part of the

argument in this connection:*

Px - x is a principle
Kx - x is known (and therefore x is an item of knowledge)
Xx - x is known by experience
Dx - x is proven by experience
a - principle of inference "a"

Premise to conclusion thus becomes:

P4 (Pa & Ka) - We have knowledge of principle "a".

P5 $(\forall x)$ ([Kx & Xx] $\rightarrow$ Dx) - All knowledge acquired by experience is proven by experience.

P6 (Pa & $\sim$ Da) - Principle "a" is not proven by experience.

C3 ($\sim$ Xa) - Therefore principle "a" is not known by experience.

One formal derivation of "$\sim$ Xa" is:

1.	Pa & Ka	Assumption
2.	$(\forall x)$ ([Ky & Xx] $\rightarrow$ Dx)	Assumption
3.	Pa & $\sim$ Da	Assumption
4.	(Ka & Xa) $\rightarrow$ Da	2 Universal Instantiation
5.	$\sim$ Da	3 Simplification
6.	$\sim$ (Ka & Xa)	4,5 Modus Tollens
7.	$\sim$ Ka o $\sim$ Xa	6 De Morgan's
8.	Ka	1 Simplification
9.	$\sim$ $\sim$ Ka	8 Double Negation
10.	$\sim$ Xa	9,7 Disjunctive Syllogism

This symbolization shows the importance of assuming logical principles are items of knowledge. Without this assumption we would be left with a dilemma: either it is

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*I have adopted the following convention: "&" is the symbol for conjunction; "$\forall$" stands for universal quantification; "$\rightarrow$" represents material implication; the tilde "$\sim$" is negation; "o" is the symbol for disjunction.

not the case that logical principles are items of knowledge, or it is not the case that logical principles are known by experience. It is only by assuming the negation of the former disjunct that allows us to infer the conclusion "Principle 'a' is not known by experience." We should, therefore, ask if the assumption "Principle 'a' is an item of knowledge," that is "P4," is well established. The question is, in what sense is a principle an item of knowledge? Is it even correct to say that a principle is an item of knowledge? Of course, even if it is correct to say that principles are known, it still does not follow that there is knowledge which is not known by experience. Clearly though, there is a temptation to infer this from the claim that logical principles are not known by experience. The mistaken inference is traceable to the equivocal use of the expression "known by experience." In one sense it means "proved by experience"; in another sense it means "not known *a priori*." Because of this equivocation, we can conclude that even if it were correct to say that principles are known (which is yet to be established), it does not follow that there are principles which are not known by experience (that is, in the sense of being known 'from the beginning').

What about the other and more important half of the question--whether or not a principle is an item of knowledge at all? Are logical principles genuine items of knowledge? To eliminate the metaphorical expression "items of

knowledge," the question ought to be reworded. To use the more neutral phrase "known to us," we might ask, "are logical principles known to us?"

Suppose someone asks me if I know the principle of implication. If I say "I know it," I may mean "I could recognize the principle," or "I could recite the principle," or "I could specify equivalent formulations of the principle," or "I could employ the principle." Each of these cases of 'knowing the principle' seems to be one of either of two sorts of knowing: knowing that such and such is a principle, or knowing how to use that principle.

If we now return to Russell's argument and substitute either a "knowing how" or "knowing that" phrase, the conclusion would seem to be a non sequitur. For convenience, I have provided the original passage on the left:

It must be admitted that logical principles are known to us, and cannot be themselves proved by experience, since all proof presupposes them.[5]	It must be admitted that logical principles are (1) known by us to be logical principles, and (2) known how to be used by us as logical principles, and this knowledge cannot be proved by experience since all proof presupposes this knowledge,
. . . thus . . . we shall hold that some knowledge . . . is *a priori* in the sense that the experience which makes us think of it does not suffice to prove it.[6]	thus, we shall hold that our knowledge [that principles are principles, or of how to apply principles] is *a priori* in the sense that the experience which makes us think of [principles as being principles] does not suffice to prove that principles are principles.

We may conclude that Russell is not necessarily considering

our knowledge of logical principles in the sense of "knowledge-that" or "knowledge-how."[7] We are, therefore, left with the original question of what it means to say "logical principles are known to us."

Perhaps it means to say that we are acquainted with logical principles, and that our knowledge of principles is direct. Some sense can be made of this suggestion. If principles are to be characterized as rules, proscriptions, or prescriptions, then there is a sense in which we are acquainted with them: we are acquainted with what is or is not a principle, and possibly we are acquainted with how to use them, or how to be guided by them. Again, these cases do not support the inference that some knowing is *a priori*. Perhaps an unquestioned assumption has been revealed, that principles may be characterized as rules, proscriptions, or prescriptions.

What is a logical principle? That is, how is the expression "logical principle" properly used? It seems plausible to interpret the expression as I have. That is to say, by applying or employing a principle (rule) one is assured of the validity of an inference. However, Russell also talks about the truth of a principle[8] and remarks that general principles are necessities to which all things actual and possible must conform.[9] We would not expect Russell to make either remark--if principles were rules, since rules, *prima facie*, cannot be true and, therefore,

cannot legislate for reality. What could be meant by saying that principles are true?

It might be helpful to consider a particular principle. Does it make sense to say that the principle of non-equivocation is true? That is, does it make sense to say "it is true that a symbol must be used univocally throughout an argument"? Recall that in the argument we have just considered, Russell does use symbols equivocally. We can, then, conclude that it is simply not true that a symbol *must* be used univocally, and so forth. Can we therefore infer that the principle of non-equivocation is false, and that, therefore, there are false principles? Of course not. Russell's argument does not illustrate a counter example to the principle. What has happened is that the principle is no longer being construed as a sufficient condition for the validity of an argument.

Russell's invalid argument is not a counter example to the principle because it ought to be qualified as follows: (R) it is a necessary condition that all symbols must be used univocally throughout the expression of an argument *if that argument is to be valid.* Now it is certainly *true* that R is a necessary condition, but is the condition itself either true or false? Perhaps the reason why it is tempting to say that principles are true (or false) stems from using locutions like "the principle states that"[10] or "the principle tells us."[11]

If principles state what is true then one might argue that the principle itself is true, or conversely, if the principle tells us what is false then the principle itself is false. This may be the rationale behind predicating truth of principles but it is certainly not a justification. It does not follow from the fact that we can specify conditions for a valid inference and thereby logical truth that the conditions are themselves true (or valid). A principle, rule, or condition may be adequate or correct relative to a given purpose, or 'truth preserving,' or well formulated, or difficult to specify, but it is not itself valid, true, difficult, or correct. It seems improper, therefore, to say that principles, rules, or conditions are either true or false.

Another reason for saying that logical principles are true might be because they are thought to be descriptions which truly apply to all reality.[12] In somewhat the same way that a description can be said to be true or false depending on whether it corresponds to the world, principles can be said to be true because the world must correspond to them. Take, for example, the 'general principle that two and two are four':

> . . . it cannot easily be doubted that logic and arithmetic will apply to things [of which we have no experience]. We do not know who will be the inhabitants of London a hundred years hence; but we know that any two of them and any other two of them will make four of them. This apparent power of anticipating facts about things of which we have no experience is certainly surprising.[13]

Apart from the oddity of claiming that facts are things of which we have no experience, and that this is no *mere* fact (but a necessity to which all inhabitants actual or possible must conform),[14] Russell is surely mistaken in thinking that this is a 'truth' which 'applies' to reality.' The surprising power of anticipation, that Russell claims we have, is contingent upon: (1) whether or not London exists a hundred years hence; (2) whether or not there are four inhabitants; (3) whether or not there are inhabitants in our sense of "inhabitants"; and (4) whether or not there is someone who is (a) capable of counting correctly (in our sense), (b) capable of correctly identifying inhabitants (and four of them), and (c) capable of doing the computation without error. If these conditions were met we could say that there would be four inhabitants of London a hundred years hence. Plainly, we cannot be sure these conditions will be met, therefore, we do not have the surprising power Russell thinks we have. Inhabitants, no matter how they are to be reckoned, do not conform to arithmetical equations, nor, for that matter, to logical principles.

Perhaps it is tempting to treat arithmetical 'truths' as being 'about' the world because of the mistaken identity of arithmetical expressions with their corresponding natural language reading. But what is the proper reading of, for example, "2 + 2 = 4"? Russell read it as

both "two and two are four" and "two and two makes four." Moore read it as "two and two is four,"[15] and Ramsey's reading was, in effect, "two and two entails four."[16] No doubt it is also read as "two and two equal four," and "two and two equals four." Possibly these are all correct readings of "2 + 2 = 4." If so, it should be sufficient reason for dismissing arithmetical equations as meaningless. The expression "two and two is four" is not standardly correct in English unless it is construed along the lines of "two things and two other things are four things."[17] Is this what "2 + 2 = 4" means? I do not think so. The expression "2 + 2 = 4" is not about particular things. If it were, then it would depend upon those things whether or not two of them 'added to' two of them 'made' four of them. I point this out because of the seeming temptation to treat natural language readings of "2 + 2 = 4" as somehow being about the world:

> If we know that two and two always make four, and we know that Brown and Jones are two, and so are Robinson and Smith, we can deduce that Brown and Jones and Robinson and Smith are four.[18]

The obvious question is "what does it mean to be four?" Will two people 'and' two people always 'make' four people? Is "2 + 2 = 4" the same as "two and two always make four"? Ramsey implies that they are:

> Thus '2' occurs not merely in '2 + 2 = 4', but also in 'It is 2 miles to the station', which is not a meaningless formula, but a significant proposition, in which '2' cannot conceivably be a meaningless mark. Nor can

> there be any doubt that '2' is used in the same sense in the two cases, for we can use '2 + 2 = 4' to infer from 'It is two miles to the station and two miles on to the Gogs' that 'it is four miles to the Gogs via the station', so that these ordinary meanings of two and four are clearly involved in '2 + 2 = 4'.[19]

This argument never gets going if we demand well-formed and idiomatic English sentences.

The moral to be drawn is that it is important not to confuse "two" with "2," "+" with "and," or "=" with "is" and "are"; or, more generally not to treat arithmetic or logical 'truths' as instances which can be experienced. Brown and Jones are not an instance of '2;' nor is the distance to the Gogs an instance of '2 + 2 = 4.'

The sense in which an arithmetical formula 'applies' to reality is the sense in which it is no longer a purely arithmetical formula. Insofar as the formula is not now purely arithmetical, it can be recast as a standard, idiomatic English sentence. In that case, there may be a sense in which this redescribed formula expresses something which is true or false. Thus, there may be a sense in which such a quasi-formula can be said to be true or false, but this in no way substantiates the claim that purely arithmetical formulas are true.

It may be remembered that this discussion stems from a consideration of how logical principles should be characterized. The need for such a consideration arose from my claim that the rationalist ignores the different senses of

"know." The *way* in which we know principles does not justify an *a priori* knowledge claim. Without some reason for denying that logical principles function as rules, there is no reason to withdraw this charge. In the remainder of the thesis I raise issues which bear on the characterization of principles as rules, but at this stage it is fair to conclude that our 'knowledge' of general 'truths' is not a knock-down argument against empiricism.

Footnotes to Chapter 2

[1]This form of argument can be found explicitly in the following places: R. I. Aaron, *The Nature of Knowing* (London: Williams and Norgate Ltd., 1930), p. 74; B. Blanshard, "The Philosophy of Analysis," *The Proceedings of The British Academy*, Vol. 28, 1952, pp. 52-53; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (trans. Norman Kemp Smith), (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1929), pp. 43-44; Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (trans. Alfred Gideon Langley) (London: Macmillan Co., 1896), pp. 43-44; W. H. Walsh, *Reason and Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), p. 13. The following authors also acknowledge this kind of argument: Bruce Aune, *Rationalism, Empiricism and Pragmatism: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 122-129; A. J. Ayer, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1982), p. 3; Rudolph Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World* (trans. Rolf A. George, 1st English edition) (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1967), p. vi.

[2]Bertrand Russell, 1912, p. 42.

[3]See references in note 1 above.

[4]See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (in two volumes, collated and annotated by Alexander Campbell Fraser) (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), passim, Book I, especially Book I, Ch. I, para. 17.

[5]Russell, 1912, p. 41.

[6]Ibid., p. 41.

[7]The expressions "knowledge that" and "knowledge how" are taken from Gilbert Ryle's article "Knowing How and Knowing That," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series Vol. xlvi, 1946.

[8]"In fact the truth of the principle is impossible to doubt," Bertrand Russell, 1912, p. 40.

[9]Ibid., p. 43. When speaking of 'the general principle that two and two are four,' Russell says: "In any possible world . . . we feel that two and two would be four: this is not a mere fact, but a necessity to which everything actual and possible must conform."

[10]Ibid., p. 40. "Thus our principle states that if this implies that . . . ."

[11]Ibid., p. 42. "[Our *a priori* principles] tell us that if one thing . . . ."

[12]This view can be found in the following works: R. I. Aaron, 1930, pp. 72-76; B. Blanshard, 1952, p. 40; B. Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought* (Vols. I and II) (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1939), Vol. II, p. 412; A. C. Ewing, "The Linguistic Theory of *A Priori* Propositions," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series Vol. 40, 1940; Douglas Gasking, "Mathematics and the World," *Logic and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953); W. Kneale, "Truths of Logic," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series Vol. xlvi, 1946, p. 234.

[13]Bertrand Russell, 1912, p. 48.

[14]Ibid., p. 42. " . . . we feel that two and two would be four: this is no mere fact but a necessity to which everything actual and possible must conform."

[15]G. E. Moore, *The Commonplace Book of G. E. Moore* (ed., Casimir Lewy) (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1962), p. 169.

[16]F. P. Ramsey, *Foundations* (ed., D. H. Mellor) (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 153.

[17]We can also salvage the singular form of the verb by a more sophisticated rendition along the lines of "the conjunction two with two yields four." Of course we do not conjoin objects except in a metaphorical sense.

[18]Bertrand Russell, 1912, p. 44.

[19]F. P. Ramsey, 1978, p. 153.

[20]It is significant that "=" can be construed as a singular or plural.

Chapter 3

There are several views about the data to be analysed when we attempt to give an analysis of necessity, for example, inscriptions, utterances, speech acts, sentences, statements, and propositions. Conventionalism is roughly the view that the indefeasibility of 'necessary truths' can be explained by the use-rules for the words or sentences which are related to the expression of these truths. This kind of analysis makes essential reference to sentences with implied reference to words, phrases, or expressions. However, there is allegedly an *'a priori'* objection to be made to all forms of conventionalism. This is that the proper rendition of necessity cannot be in terms of sentences, but must be in terms of some meanings or propositions expressed by those sentences. I shall call proponents of this latter view "realists" (in the Platonic sense). In this chapter I will be concerned with the realist's implicit distinction between sentences and propositions.

I shall argue that the difference between proposition-talk[1] and the propositional idiom is that the former is obscure and unjustified while the latter may be

convenient but possibly dispensable. I shall try to show how this supports the conclusion that any satisfactory account of necessity will be conventionalist in the sense that it takes sentences or sentence-uses as its datum since there are no other data. This is not to say that there are no other objections to conventionalism. There are, and in the next chapter I shall sketch an account and test it against some other kinds of objections.

Presently, it is in order to consider the problem facing conventionalism as a result of treating of words rather than propositions. The nature of this problem (or problems) is fairly clearly indicated by the following passages:

> The proposition that 2 + 2 = 4 is not itself a set of symbols, although we must use symbols from some language in order to refer to it.[2]
>
> But even if people did use symbols in a way different from the present one [convention], the fact which we now express by '7 + 5 = 12' would still be true. No change in our language habits would ever make it false.[3]
>
> . . . it is surely plain that some *a priori* propositions, e.g., ... all three-sided rectilinear figures have three angles, could be seen to be true without the use of language.[4]
>
> When I assert the analytic truth itself, "all triangles have three corners," my assertion is not about linguistic usage . . . . Hence no change of linguistic usage can change the truth-value of the statement we intended to make when we said "all triangles have three corners."[5]
>
> It is obviously possible that the *sentence* "there is nobody who is a brother and is not male" should have been used to express a contingent proposition and not a necessary one. But, if it had been so used, it would

> follow that it was not used to express the proposition that there is nobody who is a brother and is not male.[6]
>
> . . . to have a concept of a vixen is to know something essential about vixens, or to know something about the essence referred to in English by the name "vixen". This is not just knowledge of the use of a word, but rather knowledge of something about the essence to which a word refers.[7]
>
> I do not find [Strawson's] account of the linguistic nature of modal propositions acceptable. One reason is that I do not think that propositions to the effect that something is (logically) necessary or impossible are propositions *about* language at all.[8]
>
> The sentence '9 is odd' is a necessary truth; still, that the form of words '9 is odd' means what it does, and is thus true at all, is only a contingent fact of social usage.[9]
>
> . . . we know that the color green is an entity quite different in nature from the word "green" and that the shape square [sic] is an entity quite different in nature from the word "square" . . . . we know upon reflection that the existence of a square spot does not depend upon the existence of the word "square" nor any other word . . . . we know that there is no dependence, de facto or logical, between the patch's being green or square and the applicability of certain words to it.[10]
>
> From the prop. that the moon is round it does not follow that the sentence "the moon is round" expresses any true prop.; *nothing* follows about the *sentence* "the moon is round" or about any word or sentence whatever.[11]

By grouping these passages together I do not wish to imply that these authors share some common view of necessity, or of propositions, or of necessary propositions. However, there is evidence of a common commitment in each of these quotations. This is, that which is expressed by a sentence is distinct and separable from the sentence itself. It is supposed by the realist that this 'dichotomy' could be used to undermine the conventionalist thesis.

In the first instance, they can 'explain' why necessary truths are eternally true--necessary truth is a property of unchanging entities, that is, propositions. The conventionalist, on the other hand, is committed to saying that "is necessary" is not a time-independent predicate[12] since, on his account, we must look to language use which could, and probably will, change. This is one problem for conventionalism.

It would be a mistake to take this problem too seriously. What necessity is, and what "is necessary" is to be predicated of, are the questions under dispute. It would therefore be question-begging to say that conventionalism must fail because it is a contingent fact that we use the words we do use in the sense in which we use them. Obviously if, from their point of view, "necessary" is supposed to exclude "contingent," we are simply saying that conventionalism fails because my reduction sentence would not accommodate the predicate "is necessary." But the dispute is over the use of the word "necessary"; hence, this is an unfair complaint. To put the point differently, it is unreasonable to demand[13] that the analysans is itself necessary when we do not yet know what the predicate "is necessary" means.

Furthermore, to complain that this predicate cannot be time-independent on the conventionalist's model is equally question-begging since it presupposes that 'time

independence' is a property of propositions. Surely we can accommodate the realist's superficial distinction between time-dependent predicates and time-independent predicates. This does not mean the ascription of any predicate (which is a verbal performance) is time-independent. To illustrate, we can say of sentences like "It is raining" and "All brothers are male siblings" that assent to the promulgation of the former depends on the time and place of the promulgation; whereas time and place are irrelevant (or at least only non-critically relevant) to one's assent to the latter. Of course, both assents are contingent upon linguistic conventions. If the English language changes then perhaps assent will not be granted to the promulgation of "It is raining," even though this sentence is being promulgated at a time and place where we would (currently) think it proper to say "It is raining." Somewhat analogously, perhaps "brother" might come to be used in such a way that we would not assent to the promulgation of "All brothers are male siblings."

In spite of this possibility of language changing, there remains the sharp contrast between these kinds of sentences as they are currently used. So, it is question-begging for the realist to complain that a conventionalist account of necessity will not be time-independent since the complaint presupposes a view of necessity. However, this is not the only complaint generated by the

sentence-proposition dichotomy.

Consider the following two sentences:[14]

A. "Vixen" means the same as "female fox."

B. A vixen is a female fox.

If we endorse the distinction between sentences and propositions, we might argue as follows: the word "vixen" might have meant what is now meant by "white horse,"[15] in which case the proposition expressed by the first sentence may or may not be true. It would depend on whether "female fox" meant the same as "vixen." However, no matter what the words "a," "vixen," "is," "a," and "female fox" mean, and no matter what syntactical and structural criteria are satisfied, the proposition expressed by the second sentence cannot be false. The proposition expressed by the second sentence is not about language, it is about something else. 'This' proposition happens to be expressed by the English sentence "a vixen is a female fox," but the truth of this proposition in no way depends on how the words in this sentence are used. Even if there were no language this proposition would be true.[16] Its truth can be ascertained by reflection alone,[17] and is therefore unlike the proposition expressed by the first sentence. The truth of the alleged proposition putatively expressed by (B) depends upon a fact about language rather than a fact about animals, or a 'fact' about concepts.

Briefly, the problem facing the conventionalist is

that the realist can show that these two sentences do not stand and fall together by making a distinction between sentences and propositions, thereby allegedly individuating propositions as a function merely of the presence or absence of quotation marks in the expressing sentence. Without the sentence-proposition dichotomy, the realist could not make the strong claim that one could dissent to the promulgation of the first sentence while assenting to the promulgation of the second. To emphasize the point, it is the sentence-proposition dichotomy which is pivotal to the realist position.

Of course, one might argue, independently of a commitment to propositions, that these two sentences are significantly different. For example, their translations into French would have different semantical implications for unilingual French speakers, but this hardly justifies the claim that a speaker of English could assent to one and not to the other.

I have mentioned that the realist needs, as well as the proposition-sentence dichotomy, a strict adherence to the rules for using and mentioning expressions. In criticizing the realist position I will focus mainly on these two areas--the sentence-proposition dichotomy, and the rules for use and mention.

Before taking these up, I should like to comment on some claims which were just made in sketching the

argument against conventionalism. To begin with, it was claimed that sentence (B) "A vixen is a female fox" is not about language but about something else. There is a sense in which this remark is perfectly clear. This sense is brought out by Quine's 'Boston' example:[18]

C. "Boston" is disyllabic.

D. Boston is populous.

In somewhat the same way that (C) is about the word "Boston," (A) is about the expressions "vixen" and "female fox." However, sentence (D) is clearly not about the word "Boston"; it refers to the population density of Boston (the capital of Massachusetts). Analogously, we might say (B) is about an animal from the genus *Vulpes*. More specifically, we might say (B) is about[19] two different names for the same animal. In this sense (B) is different from Quine's (D). The kind of consideration which would make it acceptable to dissent from the promulgation of "Boston is populous" is not available in the case of "A vixen is a female fox." One might tour Boston and conclude that it really is not populous, but there could be no test for something's being a vixen which is not also a test for something's being a female fox--that is, as long as "vixen" and "female fox" are maintained as labels for the same animal. The population density of Boston is not arbitrary in the way that labelling is. Boston's population is an empirical matter, but the reference of "vixen" and "female

fox" is a matter of convention. However different sentences (B) and (D) may be, my present concern is only to try and distinguish between sentences like (C) and (D). The obvious difference is that (C) is about a word while (D) is about a city. If this is the kind of distinction the realist wishes to make, in saying that (B) is not *about* language (that is, (B) is not *about* language in the same way that (A) is about language), then this is an uncontroversial claim.

However, some philosophers[20] have a further distinction in mind when they claim that sentences like (A) are unlike (B). Although in my view talk about the names sanctions reference to animals, and vice versa, they would reject my suggestion that (B) is 'about' two names for one animal, since to accept this would point to the eventual reduction of talk about the animal to talk about names. Therefore, from their point of view, "vixen" and "female fox" cannot simply be two names for one type of animal. Rather, they say that the word "vixen" denotes the concept of a vixen or the concept of vixen, and "female fox" denotes the concept of a female fox or the concept of female fox. Therefore, sentence (B) is equisignificant with the following, or as they would say, the proposition expressed by (B) is the same as the proposition expressed by:

E. The concept of a vixen is the same as the concept of a female fox.

Of course, for them the concept of a female fox has nothing to do with the expression "female fox." The truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence "A vixen is a female fox" lies in the relationship between the concepts, and not in the relationship between words. We need not verify the truth of this proposition empirically; we need only reflect on the concepts. It is here that they would detect the alleged difference between the propositions putatively expressed by sentences (A) and (B). Sentence (A) expresses something about words, sentence (B) expresses something about the concept of a species of animal; sometimes even about the animal itself.[21]

In response, I would object that concept-talk is obscurantist. First of all, there is no way of introducing 'concepts' so that one could differentiate between the concept of being a vixen and the concept of being a female fox (unless of course these concepts were [*per impossibile*] individuated by means of recourse to expressions). On what occasion could I be introduced to the concept of a vixen and not to the concept of a female fox (barring equivocal use of the words[22])? Both Moore[23] and Lewy[24] would agree that, on the one hand, there could be no way of distinguishing between (in their idiom) the proposition expressed by "X is a vixen" and the proposition expressed by "X is

a female fox" since these different subordinate sentences express one and the same proposition. That is, according to Lewy, "the second proposition contains no concept which is not contained in the first."[25] On the other hand, they also felt that there was a sense in which these were not the same proposition[26]--that one "explicitly mentions concepts which the other does not."[27] Following Moore, Lewy attempts to justify talk of the individuation of concepts by asking us to 'entertain[28] the following propositions':

> John is my elder brother.
> John is my brother.
>
> Rain is good for the crops.
> If anyone were to broadcast that rain is good for the crops he would be right.[29]

In each of these two 'pairs of propositions' one member 'explicitly mentions more concepts'[30] than the other. "The proposition 'John is my elder brother' contains a concept not contained in 'John is my brother' but the latter proposition contains no concept not contained in the former."[31] It is also obvious, says Lewy,

> . . . that if a man is familiar with all the concepts contained in the proposition "rain is good for the crops" it by no means follows that he is also familiar with the concept of broadcasting which is contained in the proposition "If anyone were to broadcast that rain is good for the crops he would be right."[32]

How does Lewy know that the 'latter proposition' contains the concept of broadcasting? It must have something to do with the occurrence of the word "broadcast"

in the sentence which allegedly expresses this proposition --or so it would seem. Lewy has allegedly individuated and identified two pairs of propositions by directing our attention to two pairs of sentences. One sentence in each of these pairs contains one or more words that is not contained in the other. One such word is "broadcast"; Lewy's conclusion is that the concept of broadcasting is 'contained in the proposition' expressed by the sentence in which this word occurs and not by the other sentence of the pair. If his conclusion is not based on the occurrence of the word "broadcast" then the whole procedure is mysterious. The only relevant difference is the occurrence or absence of a word, but if this difference is irrelevant, Lewy has not introduced a means of individuating concepts.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Lewy is individuating concepts by means of the presence or absence of words in the sentence which expresses the proposition. In that case, the proposition expressed by "X is a vixen" is not the same as the proposition expressed by "X is a female fox." That is, a vixen need not be a female fox. Surprisingly, both Moore and Lewy[33] would agree that there is a sense in which the propositions expressed by the sentences "X is a vixen" and "X is a female fox" are different. What I have tried to show is that the only way in which we can make sense of their program is by individuating concepts by recourse to the expressions. They come near to

acknowledging this both explicitly and implicitly.[34] If the only way of individuating concepts is by recourse to expressions, then the distinction between (for example) the concept of a vixen and the word "vixen" cannot be made on their terms.

If the realist's distinction between word and concept cannot be sustained then it exploits the Quinean-type distinction--the intelligible distinction--between the first and second sentence (that is, sentences (A) and (B)). The Boston example does not show that (B) cannot be translated, or rendered transformationally into (A), but by means of the alleged identity between the proposition expressed by (B) and the proposition expressed by (E), the realist can support the Quinean distinction and then claim that because (E) is not reducible to (A) neither is (B). However, while the distinction between (A) and (B) is clear, the alleged relationship between the proposition expressed by (B) and the proposition expressed by (E) is, as I have tried to show, obscure. In fact, one might argue that if the only way to individuate concepts is by means of expressions then the proposition expressed by (B) is very different from the 'one' expressed by (E). Not only does sentence (E) explicitly mention more concepts, but the proposition which (E) expresses is arguably false. This is incidental to the point I am trying to make: the acceptable distinction--the Quinean one--is exploited by

the realist.

Finally, to say that the truth of 'the proposition' expressed by (B) can be ascertained by reflection alone is another example of a vicious metaphor. There is nothing to be reflected, nor any surface from which 'it' could be reflected. This metaphor is reminiscent of Leibniz and Descartes: the natural light of reason, the internal light; mental intuition, and the mind's eye. What is reflection, and what is reflection with respect to 'the proposition' expressed by (B)? While I would agree that we could describe a recollection (and a remembered rationale thereof) of the distinguishing features of, for example, the Felidae family, as a process of reflection, there seems to be no analogous description in the case of vixens and female foxes. In reflecting on the former, one might be weighing and balancing the advantages of including or excluding a trait for certain zoological classificatory needs. For some purposes it may be desirable to broaden or narrow the criteria to include or exclude various species of cats. Such a process might meaningfully be called "reflecting." Consider another example: one might reflect on whether axioms are postulates. Here, we might recall Russell's axiom set for *Principia*, or Huntington's postulates for Euclidian geometry. The concern will be with remembering the differences, if any, that are generated by using "axiom" rather than "postulate" and the justification for stating

these differences. Or we might, to choose a related example, reflect on whether the axiom set of *Principia* is redundant. In this case, we might calculate how, if at all, one axiom could be derived from another; or perhaps we might re-calculate an alleged proof that the axiom set is redundant. None of these cases is like reflecting on the 'truth' of a 'necessary proposition.' What is there to be done with 'the proposition' expressed by "A vixen is a female fox?" There are no calculating, classifying, or purposeful considerations. Our historical acquisition of the words "vixen" and "female fox" disallow the very kind of reflective process I have been suggesting. There are no criterial differences which would allow one to reflect on whether a vixen is, or is not, a female fox.

One last comment about the sketch of the typical realist's position concerns their counterfactual "even if there were no language, this proposition would be true." It is not clear to me what one would be committed to in holding this position. Apart from there being no way of verifying such a claim, I do not know what we are supposed to imagine ourselves as quantifying over in the absence of language. What would it be like to quantify, or not quantify, over anything without language? In short, this counterfactual seems to be nonsensical.

To summarize the main points so far: the question of what a sentence is 'about' is very important; the

postulating of concepts does not clarify what a sentence is 'about,' nor does it explain the different verification procedures for 'necessary' and 'contingent' 'propositions'; I have agreed that Quine's 'Boston' example shows one difference between use and mention; however, I have not conceded that this kind of example defeats conventionalism; finally a commitment to propositions as entities which subsist apart from language is unintelligible.

This brings me to the two main subjects of the present chapter: the proposition-sentence dichotomy, and the realist's appeal to use and mention. I shall begin with sentences and propositions.

What seems to be ignored by some proponents of the propositional thesis is the difference between the propositional idiom and the notion of 'a' proposition or 'the' proposition. Pap,[35] for example, argues that the question of the existence of propositions can be decided by an appeal to the indispensability of the idiom. I shall argue that there are two discrete questions here. Whether or not the idiom is eliminable is irrelevant to the justification of talk of propositions as abstract entities. This can be shown by tracing the method of introducing the expression "the proposition."

We might agree with Pap that "proposition" can be introduced as the accusative of verbs like "believe," "assert," "entail," and "imply":

> . . .sentences are simply the wrong kind of values (or names of sentences the wrong kind of substituends) for the variables "X" and "Y" in the context "X entails Y", in just the same way as sentences are the wrong kind of value for "X" in the contexts "I believe X" or "X is possible" . . . entailing such and such consequences is, like the property of being true, not a property of sentences as such, but only of sentences as meaning such and such propositions . . . .[36]

Moore[37] has also suggested a similar means of introduction, and one could argue that Church[38] commits himself to the same sort of view. However, it should be clear that the expression "the proposition" is redundant in these contexts (that is, in contexts like "we believe the proposition that . . ." and so on). It might, therefore, be more appropriate to call the expression an "anacoluthic accusative" since it has no grammatical function or critical occurrence in these contexts. Clearly, this means of introduction does not justify the postulation of abstract entities.

It might be granted, in response, that the accusative "the proposition" is redundant and yet argued that the idiom itself is indispensable. This is largely the thrust of Church's argument against Carnap. In indirect speech, Church claims, it is insufficient to mention the actual sentence which was used. In addition, one must add that the sentence was used to assert what is asserted by using that sentence. However, to add this last remark is simply to re-introduce the propositional idiom via the word "what."

Whether or not Church is right in his claim that sentence-mentioning is an unsuccessful way of indirectly

reporting is presently beside the point. The fact that we can make sense of the distinction between mentioning the actual words which are used and the reporting of what was said testifies to there being a difference. To say what was said is not to be committed to mentioning the words which were actually used. In fact, the point may often be to avoid the specificity of mentioning the original words. This point can, perhaps, be further drawn out by the following example:[39]

F. I said "Russell was a brother" but I did not say "Russell was a male sibling."

G. I said that Russell was a brother but I did not say that Russell was a male sibling.

The reason why (G) would be an odd thing to say is because there is no difference between saying that Russell is a brother and saying that Russell is a male sibling; whereas in the first case it is understood that the speaker is referring to the words he actually used. Briefly, the difference is that the propositional idiom (as exemplified by (G) does not commit the speaker to any one set of words, whereas the commitment to words (as exemplified by (F)) cannot be avoided when an expression is mentioned.

Now it seems as though some philosophers[40] think that this does justify talk of propositions as entities which are distinct from their means of expression. If what was said can be said in many different ways (in many

different languages) and still be the same 'what,' then there must be some 'what' which can be expressed by all these sentences. This seems to be the reasoning. It is easy to see the further move to claiming that the conventionalist has the wrong object for analysis--expressing a necessary truth does not commit one to any set of words.

This, as far as I can see, is the only argument for justifying the move from the idiom to propositional entities. That is to say, one acknowledges the existence of a 'what,' 'that,' or 'that which,'--an entity--which is common to a number of sentences when one endorses the propositional idiom. If this is the justification for a commitment to propositions there are at least two responses.

It might be argued that the propositional idiom is reducible to some other idiom. In this case the realist's argument is completely undermined, since without the idiom we would not be committed to using "the that," "the that which," and "the what" as abstract nouns. However, it would be a lengthy undertaking to show that the idiom is reducible. An equally effective alternative is to show that the realist has not proven that the idiom is irreducible. Toward this end I would like to consider Church's[41] arguments which allegedly show the idiom is irreducible in the case of indirect speech.

It seems paradoxical to claim (as Church is committed to claiming) that one can only report an 'assertion'

indirectly. Perhaps it seems less paradoxical if we take the word "assertion" to mean something 'over and above' the words so-and-so actually used. However, if we maintain that assertion is related to verbal performance[42] then it is certainly surprising to claim that we cannot report what so-and-so asserted by repeating his verbal performance. Of course, if the original performance were made in a foreign language, then repeating it would not convey the assertion to a unilingual speaker. To use Church's example, we cannot report to a unilingual English speaker what Seneca asserted by saying "Seneca uttered the sentence *'Rationale enim animal est homo'*" because he would not know what the mentioned sentence means. Supposing we attempt to correct this deficiency in the following way: Seneca uttered the sentence *"Rationale enim animal est homo"* and this sentence as a sentence of Latin, is correctly translated into English as "Man is a rational animal." To this proposal, there is the following complaint. It would do no good (to paraphrase Church) to use this rendition to report Seneca's assertion to another English speaker because he could not infer what Seneca asserted (viz., that man is a rational animal) without making use of the item of factual information (sic) not contained (in our rendition) that "Man is a rational animal" means in English that man is a rational animal.[43] (Church also has another argument which I shall consider on p. 59.)

The question is whether or not Church's rejoinder has any plausibility. Is this really an item of 'factual' information? Under what circumstances would it be informative to tell someone that the sentence "Man is a rational animal" means that man is a rational animal? If anyone could understand this remark then they must already understand the sentence "Man is a rational animal." This is why Strawson says 'statements' of this sort are "no use for telling us what the quoted sentence means . . . one cannot *state* what a sentence means without the help of another sentence."[44] Moore also says that it would be quite useless to use this type of sentence to give the meaning of the mentioned English sentence since nobody could possibly understand the English sentence unless he already knew what it meant. We all see at once that we could not possibly convey any information to anybody by saying these words.[45]

Furthermore, what would be the verification procedure for the claim that the mentioned sentence ""Man is a rational animal"" means the same as "Man is a rational animal"? In claiming this is an item of 'factual information,' Church implies there is need for verification. However, he does not supply any verification, or argument, for the claim that this is what this sentence means. What argument could he supply? If he appealed to ordinary usage then his major thesis--that we cannot infer what Seneca asserted--is mistaken. That is, if the test for the meaning

of the sentence "Man is a rational animal" is an appeal to usage and it turns out that what this sentence means is that man is a rational animal (this is an *ad hominem* and the onus is not on me to explain this locution), then any speaker of the language could infer what Seneca asserted. Hence, if this is the verification for this item of 'information' (and it is not clear what else it could be), then our analysis of Seneca's assertion is satisfactory.

One last comment about Church's claim: if it is always necessary to say what a mentioned sentence means, then the direct mode of speech ought to be redundant. Clearly it is not. When someone is directly reported there is no need to 'interpret' the sentence for speakers of the same language. This is because the original utterance was (presumably) a proper way of asserting something to other speakers of the language. Therefore, to repeat the performance with the added information that so-and-so was the author must be sufficient for 'conveying' the original assertion. If this were not sufficient then nothing could be, since the person who is doing the reporting must take the original utterance as the datum for his report. In other words, if the original utterance is insufficient for 'conveying' an assertion to other speakers of the language, then we would be involved in an infinite regress where we always owe an 'interpretation' of our last utterance. This is essentially the point brought out by Cohen and Lloyd[45]

in distinguishing between logico-semantical systems and natural languages.

Earlier I mentioned that Church has another argument for the indispensability of the idiom. This is the so-called translation argument. The two following sentences are, respectively, Seneca's assertion and the proposed sentence-mentioning analysis:

H. Seneca asserted that man is a rational animal.

I. Seneca uttered the sentence *"Rationale enim animal est homo"* and this sentence, as a sentence of Latin, is correctly translated into current English as "Man is a rational animal."

If we translate these into French they become:

H*F*. *Seneca a asserté que l'homme est un animal rationnel*.

I*F*. *Seneca a émis la phrase "Rationale enim animal est homo" et cette phrase latine est traduite correctement en anglais par la phrase* "Man is a rational animal."

The French sentences allegedly reveal the inadequacy of (I) as an expression of what Seneca asserted. A French speaker who knew no Latin or English could understand (H*F*) but not all of (I*F*). Therefore, if (H*F*) and (I*F*) have different meanings, then so must (H) and (I) since these are proper translations of each other. The point is that in order to report Seneca's assertion we must use the propositional idiom since directly reporting the sentence carries a different meaning.

Since I am committed to the view that this conclusion is paradoxical, I owe an explanation of why these two

pairs of sentences appear to mean different things.

I have already argued that an English speaker must infer what Seneca asserted from the promulgation of (I). The translation argument discredits this conclusion by introducing (in this case) a third language speaker, and a method of translation which leaves the mentioned Latin and English phrases invariant throughout the translation. I do not want to claim that this is an incorrect method of translation.[47] Nor can I deny that there could be a difference for the French speaker between (H*F*) and (I*F*). This means that if (I) does not fail as conveying what Seneca said, then it must be the case that either (H) and (H*F*), or (I) and (I*F*) do not mean the same things to their respective language communities. Of these two alternatives I would favour the latter. Presumably the response to this is that they ought to mean the same things because they are translations of each other. This seems to be a suppressed premise in the translation argument. But why should not (I*F*) be a proper translation of (I) and yet have different significance for French speakers from what it has for English speakers? What is the logical force of translation? Church is, in effect, assuming that what (I) and (I*F*) express enjoys the same logical status because (I*F*) is a translation of (I). I am denying this assumption--(I*F*) and (I) are not equisignificant even though they are translations of each other. If they are not equisignificant

then there may be a difference between (I*F*) and (H*F*), and yet no corresponding difference between (I) and (H). This would explain why the translated sentences are different without abandoning a sentence mentioning analysis of what Seneca said. The question is--why should (I) and (I*F*) be non-equisignificant given that they are translations of each other?

The answer is, that while (I) and (I*F*) both say something 'about' the relationship between two sentences (namely *"Rationale enim animal est homo"* and "Man is a rational animal") the English speaker comes to understand the meaning of the Latin sentence via the English translation, whereas the French speaker comprehends only that the latter sentence is a translation of the former. Clearly, if this is the case, (I) and (I*F*) are not, in all senses, equisignificant. Therefore, the translation argument does not show in this case that (I) is an inadequate transform of (H), rather it shows that (I*F*) is an inadequate transform of (H*F*) for someone who speaks only French.

There is another more general complaint about the translation argument. This is that the whole Church-type position is ill-conceived. Why should we regard translation as being a better indication of the equisignificance and significance of two sentences than consideration of the circumstances under which the two original sentences are, or can be, used? The translation argument is compelling

because the translations cannot be used under the same circumstances. Why should we therefore not reject these alleged translations? The proponents of the translation argument already 'know' that the original sentences and their translation express the same proposition and it is this that forbids that possibility. I will return to this point in the second part of this chapter.

Since the translation argument and the 'factual information' argument are the only arguments Church brings against the kind of sentence mentioning analysis I have been considering, it is fair to conclude that he has not shown the indispensability of the propositional idiom. This is one way of arguing that the realist's move from the idiom to individual propositional entities is unwarranted.

Regardless of whether the idiom is dispensable, there is another complaint against propositions. This is that proposition-talk depends on an unspecified test for individuation. One way in which a commitment to propositions is supposed to be justified is by the same thing's being said in different ways, but how do we determine what the 'it' is that is being said in order to compare 'it' with the 'other things' which were said? There are no objects to compare. Our data are two or more verbal performances. We can never inspect the propositions and can only (allegedly) express the proposition by iterating or

replicating the verbal performance in a certain way. There is, therefore, no test for individuating propositions except by the verbal performance. This makes proposition-talk redundant. This is not to say the idiom is redundant.

The propositional idiom is useful because it allows us to choose from a variety of variously related verbal performances. There may often be some reason for choosing one sentence over another; for example, differences of attitude, linguistic sophistication, memory or verbatim vs. non-verbatim speech reports, and so on. However, one is still committed to some verbal performance and the question of whether the same thing has been said will vary with the context (it may be correct to say to a child that the king is dead, and pointless to say that the male monarch is deceased). The point is that the notion of 'saying the same thing' is flexible and open to revision. The procedure for revision, however, is not to examine the 'thing' which was said (since this is not available), but to question whether one verbal performance is an acceptable substitute for another in a specified context. The metaphor "substitute" is not vicious. By "substitute" I mean that what is promulgated by one verbal performance could be used instead of what is promulgated by another verbal performance. Substitutability is determined by function. Therefore, although proposition-talk depends on our being

able to recognize when the same thing has been said, the test for 'the same thing' is not to examine the 'thing'--the proposition--but to rely on the ordinary language notion of saying the same thing. But the appeal to the ordinary notion of saying the same thing does not justify the view that there are individual subsistent entities which transcend language. The idiom sanctions no more than to speak of 'the what,' 'the that,' or 'the thing,' which was said, in reference to some verbal performance. So not only is there no one fixed 'what' which is said (as evidenced by the flexibility of 'saying the same thing'), but also there is no intelligible way of separating the 'what' which is said from the words used to express the 'what'--the question of what was said may finally be resolved only by repeating the original verbal performance as accurately as possible. Hence, the idiom does not sanction the realist's talk of propositions.

If talk of propositions is obscure and unjustified, then *a fortiori* so is talk of necessary propositions. Assuming the word "proposition" is used in the sense of "the what which is said when it is said that etc." (that is, the sense of the propositional idiom), then the adjectival modifier "necessary" must be an ellipsis for the adverbial phrase "necessarily true," since presumably the realist is not claiming that what someone said is necessary. (This would invite the question "necessary for what?")

This leaves us with the expression "necessarily true proposition," or "the *what* which is said when it is said that etc. is necessarily true."[48] By shifting to the adverbial phrase, the realist's position may seem to be strengthened. "Being true," says Pap, "is not a property of sentences but only of sentences meaning such and such propositions."[49] It may seem as though the realist position could be made less obscure by shifting to "necessarily true" because truth (or so it is claimed) can only be predicated of propositions. Hence, if being 'necessarily true' is anything like being true, then proposition-talk, although obscure, may be unavoidable.

From my point of view, 'being necessarily true' is not anything like 'being true.' However, even if it were this would not avail the realist. Why should we quantify over propositions even if it is agreed that sentences are neither true nor false? What is gained as a result of treating truth as a property of propositions? There is no way to examine propositions to determine which possess this property, or why any proposition should possess this property.

Furthermore, it can be argued that 'the what,' 'the that,' or 'the that which,' of which truth is predicated (apropos the use of "is true" in the propositional idiom), can be avoided by reducing the idiom and thus eliminating a commitment to an abstract entity. Here, I am not

suggesting that truth need be predicated of sentences, simply because "is true" functions as a grammatical predicate, rather I am suggesting that the 'predicate' "is true" functions in at least one of its senses, as exhibiting an explicit endorsement of the propriety of a verbal performance. I take it that this is Strawson's point in comparing "is true" with "ditto" and "yes."[50] My purpose in mentioning this alternative is to counter the proposal that proposition-talk is unavoidable.

In the previous chapter I pointed out that one alleged species of necessary truth, namely logical principles, cannot properly be said to be true. If logical principles are representative of the class of necessary truths in being neither true nor false, then 'necessary truth' is not a subclass of truth; in which case the realist's suggestion that we are committed to proposition-talk is mistaken.

Finally, the shift from "necessary" to "necessarily" can be used to the detriment of the realist if this shift is construed as a transformation of the formal mode:

> At last Wittgenstein gave tongue and the quarry went away to the notes of 'Don't ask for the meaning (analysis) ask for the use', and the transformations of the formal mode--transformations such as these: 'X in saying that S is P is asserting a general proposition' means 'X in saying that S is P is using the sentence "S is P" generally' . . . .[51]

In our case the transformation would be: "X in saying that S is P is asserting a necessary proposition" means "X in

saying that S is P is using the sentence 'S is P' necessarily." This transformation shifts our attention from the proposition to the use of a sentence. In so doing, we are confronted with the question of what it is to use a sentence necessarily, rather than the question of what makes a proposition necessary. There is at least promise of an answer to the former question:

> . . . if we permit ourselves to imagine vividly the talkers and the occasions when sentences of the sorts in question are used and then describe the talkers by setting down a lot of that about them which makes us say that they are using sentences 'generally', 'ethically', ['necessarily'] . . . then we shall have descriptions of all talkers which, though very long and still incomplete, involve nothing but talk, nods, smiles, and surprises.[52]

Presumably, the answer to our question will be found, if at all, in such verbal behaviour. The point is that the transformation from "necessary" to "necessarily" (or "necessarily truly") is a liability for realism, since we will not be inclined to look for a 'proposition.'

To summarize my discussion to this point: it was claimed by the realist with respect to sentences (A) and (B)* that one could dissent to what is promulgated by the first and yet assent to what is promulgated by the second. This claim was supposed to be justified by the proposition-sentence dichotomy and the logical implications of *use* and *mention*. I hope I have shown that the *proposition-sentence*

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*These were: A. "Vixen" means the same as a "female" fox."
B. A vixen is a female fox.

and *concept-word* dichotomies are obscurantist and unjustified.

I shall now consider what I take to be another major weakness in the realist position. This is the realist's view of the implications of using or mentioning an expression. Earlier I agreed that Quine's Boston example* shows that there is a clear sense in which a sentence containing a mentioned expression is different from one which does not. However, this does not mean that (D) cannot be used to express something about the words "Boston" and "populous." Surely our assent to what is promulgated by this sentence depends on what it expresses. What it expresses depends (minimally) on what "Boston" refers to, and how we use "populous." What is Boston proper (as opposed to the suburbs)? Is a populous city one which is densely populated? Obviously our assent depends on these considerations.

Our assent to (C) is also contingent upon similar considerations. Our assent is contingent upon the phonetic structure of the word "Boston," or perhaps upon some other test for the number of syllables--obviously it depends on how we use "disyllabic." The point is that assent will be granted or withheld on the basis of how words are used. All sentences *can* be said to express something 'about' language in the sense that what is expressed by that

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*This was: D. Boston is populous,
C. "Boston" is disyllabic.

sentence depends upon how the words in that sentence can be used. What is expressed is determined by the means of expression. It is not surprising, therefore, that a question of what is expressed is often explicitly reduced to a question about usage--"well if you mean so and so by 'such and such' then of course you are right."

More generally, we can say of Quine's example, that our assent in both cases depends upon our conventional use of words and our conventions for using words. I point this out in order to show that it is irrelevant to the distinction noted earlier (p. 44) between a sentence which is about a word ("Boston") and a sentence which is about Boston.

Obviously our conventions for using words will govern the propriety of granting assent to any promulgation of any sentence. However, there is an important difference between sentences like (C) and (D). Sentence (D) tells us about a city; (C) tells us about a word. The considerations for justifying our assent to a claim about a city are not (usually) like those for our assent to a claim about a word. The justification for our assent or dissent in the latter case may ultimately depend on our acquisition of the words. Of course our assent to the former will also partially depend on our acquisition of the words, but as well, the number of people living in Boston will be important--and this has nothing to do with

linguistic acquisition.

To take a more extreme example: there is nothing linguistic about seeing Naples. As Quine says:

> It is no wonder that ontological controversy should tend into controversy over language. But we cannot jump to the conclusion that what there is depends on words. Translatability of a question into semantical terms is no indication that the question is linguistic. To see Naples is to bear a name which, when prefixed to the words 'sees Naples', yields a true sentence; still there is nothing linguistic about seeing Naples.[53]

Here we have something undeniably non-linguistic: seeing Naples. Here *seeing Naples* is akin to being Boston. The only difference is that we come to consider Boston's population by means of a sentence, whereas in the latter example Quine has intentionally eliminated the linguistic element. The two examples can be drawn closer by introducing the linguistic element into the latter; that is, by saying that we see Naples. As soon as we say something about Naples we have introduced a linguistic element. However, this is not the point. There is an empirical consideration in both of these examples which has nothing to do with language, viz., the number of bodies living in Boston, and the blocks and slabs that make up Naples. There is no such counterpart when competent speakers talk about the phonetic features of a word in their language.

Although I am defending a distinction between a claim about a word and a claim about an object, I would not defend the realist thesis that this distinction should

hold for all putatively similar claims. For example, what would be the difference between saying (D) "Boston is populous" and (J) "Boston" denotes a populous city."? Could one of these claims (expressed by (D) and (J)) be verified while the other is falsified? I do not think so. Perhaps it might be suggested, if there were no word such as "Boston," that (J) could be meaningful, but what it would express would be false, while (D) would be nonsense. To this I would respond that in any circumstances in which either (D) or (J) were promulgated it would be appropriate to substitute (J) or (D) respectively. So, if someone promulgated (D) and there was no such word as "Boston," our reply would be the same as if (J) had been promulgated, viz., that "Boston" does not mean anything; that is, "Boston" does not denote a populous city because "Boston" does not denote anything.

Consider another example. Is there a difference between:

This is red.

This is "red." (that is, this is what is called "red.")

If there were a difference what would it be? Obviously there may be a preference for one rather than the other, but could one be used to tell us something that the other could not? By learning what is called "red" one learns what is red. It would, therefore, be surprising if one

could say "this is called "red," but this is not red." If something cannot properly be called "red" then it is not red. To say "this is red" is to endorse the propriety of calling that object "red."

The purpose of these examples is to show that there is not always a clear distinction to be made between a sentence which putatively expresses something about a word (because it explicitly mentions a word) and a sentence which allegedly does not. The distinction which I was trying to defend in the other examples does not hold in these cases. There seems to be no difference between what these last two pairs of sentences could tell us. This should make us suspicious of the realist's use-mention distinction.

The presence of quotation marks in these latter cases is not a sufficient reason for dividing the class of sentences into two (viz., those that mention words and those that do not). If the presence of quotation marks is insufficient to justify this distinction, their absence is equally so. The following seven examples ((K) - (Q)) suggest that it would be a mistake to expect that all sentences which could be used to say something about a word contain quotation marks:

K. This is a disaster, but they are not calling it one.

If we say, "This is a disaster" then we imply that it can be called a disaster. In fact it normally would not make any sense to say "This is a disaster, but it cannot be called one." I add the word "normally" to accommodate the fact that in certain instances a disaster is genuinely a disaster but might not be reckoned as such, viz., the case in which a governor appeals to the president for aid. This represents a two-tiered use of "disaster." Still, in the majority of cases, if it cannot be called a "disaster" then it is improper to say "this is a disaster." Therefore, in order to make sense of (K) there must be an equivocation on the word "disaster." That is, two senses of the word "disaster" are being contrasted and there is, therefore, an implicit mentioning of the word "disaster."

A similar sort of example is:

L. The whale is often called a fish, but it is not one.

Again, there is an implicit mentioning of "fish." If the whale is called a fish, but it is not really a fish, then it is improper to call it a fish. But if it is improper to call it a fish, (L) exemplifies two rivalling views of the appropriacy of the label "fish."

M. Strictly speaking this is not a desk, it is a table.

This example is like the previous two in that it is a recommendation for adopting one form of words over another. Unlike the two previous examples, (M) explicitly

makes reference to sayings by the phrase "strictly speaking." Contrary to the spirit of Quine's remark (re Naples) that ontological questions need not depend on language, this example shows that what there is, as with what we say there is, may be determined by our speech habits. This, strictly speaking, should be called a "table," that is to say, is a table.

N. The moon can properly be said to be round.

Again, there is the explicit reference to a saying. It may be arguable whether the saying which is mentioned is "round" or "the moon is round." It would depend on whether (N) was equisignificant with:

N_a. The moon can properly be called "round."[54]

or

N_b. It is proper to say that the moon is round.

It is unimportant for my purpose whether we accept (N_a) or (N_b), since they both mention an expression.[55]

O. Giorgione was so called because of his size.[56]

In this example there is a reference both to the man called "Giorgione" and the derived meaning of the word/name "Giorgione." This sentence would, incidentally, be much longer if we were strictly to observe the Quinean rules of use and mention.

P. It is not a Zenith till the name goes on.

Presumably this means "This appliance does not deserve to be called a "Zenith" until we confer the label

"Zenith" upon it, and we would not do such a thing unless etc." If this is what (P) means, "Zenith" is implicitly mentioned twice.

Q. I did not hear of S's death until January.[57]

Here, the clue is the reference to hearing. What would it be like to hear of S's death? More poignantly, what would it be like to hear that S is dead. That S is dead is a proposition. Hence, Moore's query "Can You Hear A Proposition?."[58] The answer to Moore's question is that the reference is to hearing someone tell of S's death--a reference to what is promulgated by saying "S is dead."

In each of these examples at least one expression is quasi-mentioned, that is, each sentence expresses something about a name, label, saying, or 'hearing,' and yet none of them contains any quoted expressions. What is also noticeable in these examples, specifically, (K), (L), (M), (N), is the relevance of the saying for the truth or falsity of the claim, or of the implied claim. For example, if the whale is not a fish, then to call it a "fish" would be incorrect--it would be a 'mistake' to call a whale a "fish"; it would be untrue to say that a whale is a fish.

Perhaps a more explicit example of this relationship between sayings and truth is "the moon can be properly said to be round." This is another example taken from Moore. "From (a) "The moon can be properly said to be round" it

seems to follow that (b) the moon *is* round."[59] Moore goes on to reject the converse of this relation: "(b) does follow from (a), but (a) does not follow from (b)."[60] The reasoning for this last remark is:

> From the prop. that the moon is round, it does not follow that the sentence "the moon is round" expresses any true prop.; *nothing* follows about the *sentence* "the moon is round" or about any word or sentence whatever.[61]

If we object that Moore has not shown us a proposition, but only directed us to the what which is said when it is said that the moon is round, then Moore's reason for rejecting the inference from (b) to (a) disappears. In order to say that the moon is round, one must use some form of words. In promulgating a form of words, one implies that that form of words is proper for the asserting of what is asserted by that form of words. So, by saying that the moon is round one commits oneself to a sentence which is synonymous with "the moon is round"; one implies that this is a proper locution to use in describing the moon; hence, one is committed to endorsing the locution "the moon can be properly said to be round." This is not a surprising inference. I am simply saying that from the promulgation of a sentence we can infer that that sentence is, in the opinion of the speaker, a proper way of asserting what is asserted by using that sentence. Whether we would assent to what is asserted is a different question. Whether it is true that the moon is round is irrelevant to the

relationship between (a) and (b). *If* it is true that the moon is round then the moon can properly be said to be round, and if it is not true that the moon is round then the moon cannot properly be said to be round. Conversely, if the moon cannot properly be said to be round then it is not true that the moon is round, and if the moon can properly be said to be round then the moon is round. Whether the moon is actually round (or I could have said "whether the moon can properly be said to be round") has something to do with the shape of the moon.

Consider a scientist's denial that the moon is round:

> R. The moon is said to be round, but it is really elongated about its equatorial axis.

This is not a counter example to the thesis I am defending. The scientist is making a recommendation for the revision of other people's speech habits. (He is also in a sense denying that the moon is round.) We might argue to the contrary that the moon is the very kind of thing which we call "round." This option is available. What I am pointing out is that the debate could make sense only if it is given that there are two language communities. It would make no sense for the scientist to say, "The moon is round, but it is really not round." This is because by saying "the moon is round" the scientist is implicitly endorsing the promulgation of this sentence.

The point is, one can make recommendations about the speech habits of others, but one standardly does not do this in one's own case (in the present tense). I am, therefore, not committed to saying that if someone promulgates a sentence we must accept what is said as true (we may dissent to another's promulgation of an utterance). However, from the promulgation of a sentence which expresses what (we think) is true, we are justified in making an inference about a proper saying (and vice versa). Since we ordinarily expect others to be promulgating sentences which express what they think is true, we are ordinarily entitled to assume that they think their sayings are proper (that is, properly express what they believe to be true).

I have been trying to justify two claims: firstly, that examples (K) - (Q) quasi-mention expressions, and secondly, that a question of proper sayings can equally well be a question of true sayings. I would now like to consider two more objections which might be made by the realist to the second claim.

Firstly, it might be suggested[62] that the examples I have cited [(K), (L), (M), (N)], can be transformed into one of the two discrete idioms that are acknowledged by the realist. So, for example, (N) might mean either of two things:

S. The moon can be properly (truly) said to be round. (That is, it is true to say that the moon is round.)

T. It is correct (that is, grammatical) to say "The moon is round."

Clearly we cannot argue from (T) "It is grammatical to say "The moon is round"" to (S) "It is true to say that the moon is round." However, we can argue that (S) implicitly mentions a phrase, and from here we can (as I have tried to demonstrate) argue to the relationship between the propriety of sayings and truth. Unless the realist can deny that (N) expresses something 'about' a saying, we can argue that there are more than two discrete idioms. Since I can see no way of denying either that (N) expresses something about a saying, or that "properly be said to be" is a proper locution, I shall proceed to the next objection.

It has been claimed by several philosophers[63] that a sentence which contains a mentioned expression has a different standard employment (in their idiom, properly expresses a different proposition) from one which does not. In support of such a claim they use the translation argument. If they are right, then we would have to force examples like (N) into one of two discrete idioms (viz., (S) or (T)) and then deny in the case of (S) that there is an implicit reference to a saying (since it is the reference to a saying which cuts across the distinction the

realist is making).

To have to deny the propriety of intermediary idioms between (S) and (T) is more evidence that the program of translating sentences (in order to demonstrate a difference of meaning) is ill-conceived. It is a mistake to treat translation as a test for equisignificance (synonymity). Earlier I said that the translation argument is compelling because we can clearly see that the translated sentences do not have the same significance for their community as the original sentences have for theirs. The point I was trying to make was that we are ultimately acknowledging the significance of a sentence. Once this is realized, it is tempting to say that any difference of significance in the translated sentences is an indication of poor translation rather than a difference of significance in the original sentences. I pointed out that it is the realist's commitment to propositions which leads to the rejection of this last suggestion. How does the realist know that, for example, *"J'ai faim"* and "I am hungry" express the same proposition? It is only after we provide a translation between French and English that we can make sense of "the same proposition." The field linguist who first translates French into English glosses *"Je"* as "I" not because these words name the same concept, but because there is evidence that these words have the same significance (cf. Quine's stimulus-response situation[64]) for their respective

communities. I do not want to explain this use of "significance," rather I am arguing that this is a more fundamental notion than translation.

I can now add that it is a mistake to assume that when a sentence is used, in which a word or expression is named, called, or mentioned, there must be some syntactical indication or quasi-formal index (like quotation). This means that the procedure of treating each sentence to be translated as one of either of two types is also mistaken. So, not only is translation subordinate to our concern for significance (whatever that may be), but the procedure for translation advocated by the realist is based on a simplistic view of use and mention--on the Boston kind of example. Hence, we have two good reasons for rejecting the translation argument.

To conclude, the realist's claim that one can assent to the promulgation of "A vixen is a female fox" and yet consistently dissent from the promulgation of ""Vixen" means the same as "female fox"" is unjustified.

Footnotes to Chapter 3

[1]My criteria for identifying proposition-talk is the commitment to quantifying over propositions; that is, the commitment to there being propositions which we can allegedly individuate and identify. As I shall argue, one need not be committed to proposition-talk (to quantifying over propositions) by using the propositional-idiom --by using "that," "what," or "that which" in contexts like the following:

What did Seneca say?

Seneca asserted that man is a rational animal.

Is that which Seneca asserted true?

[2]W. C. Kneale, "Are Necessary Truths True by Convention?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplement (21) 1947, p. 122.

[3]Douglas Gasking, "Mathematics and the World," *Logic and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), p. 209.

[4]A. C. Ewing, "The Linguistic Theory of *A Priori* Propositions," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series (40) 1940, p. 217.

[5]Arthur Pap, *Semantics and Necessary Truth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1958), p. 104.

[6]Casimir Lewy, "Entailment and Necessary Propositions," *Philosophical Analysis* (ed., Max Black) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 199.

[7]Stanley Rosen, *The Limits of Analysis* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1980), p. 48.

[8]G. H. Von Wright, *Logical Studies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 178.

[9]W. V. O. Quine, *Theories and Things* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 114.

[10]Charles Landesman, *Discourse and Its Presuppositions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 136-137.

[11]G. E. Moore, *The Commonplace Book of G. E. Moore* (ed., Casimir Lewy) (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1962), p. 312.

[12]This expression is taken from Arthur Pap, 1958, p. 122. For example, he says "but while the predicate 'expresses a necessary proposition,' is clearly time-independent, 'necessary' as predicated of propositions is just as clearly time-independent." A further discussion of this expression begins on the next page.

[13]Authors who make this demand are: A. C. Ewing, "The *A Priori* and the Empirical," *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy* (3rd ed.) (New York: The Free Press, 1972), pp. 737-738; Casimir Lewy, *Meaning and Modality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), Ch. 1; Arthur Pap, 1958, p. 119; G. H. Von Wright, 1957, p. 179.

[14]I am referring here to the sentence in the sense of the sentence as used by a speaker. In this sense, one sentence can be equisignificant or synonymous with another.

[15]This argument is adapted from Casimir Lewy, 1976, p. 10.

[16]See above page 38 of Chapter 3: "some *a priori* propositions . . . could be seen to be true without the use of language" (for reference see note 3). Moore comes near to saying this when he says "It is certain that the moon might have been round, and yet that there might have been *no proper way of saying* that it was." (G. E. Moore, 1962, p. 312.)

[17]"If all of this is correct, then we come to the conclusion that there is no way of improving on the definition of 'a priori truth' which constituted our starting point; viz., a true statement whose truth is ascertainable by reflecting on its meaning alone, or by logical deduction from statements of this sort." (Arthur Pap, 1958, p. 119; see also same work, p. 126.) Lewy also says "so far as I can see, in order to find out whether (A) is true, there is no need to make an empirical inquiry; we can find out the truth of (A) simply by *reflecting* on (A)--just as we can find out the truth of (B) by reflecting on (B), and the truth of *any* necessary proposition by reflecting on that proposition." (Casimir Lewy, 1950, p. 198) I trust the reader recognizes that Lewy's (A) and (B) are not my (A) and (B); his (A) and (B) are propositions--mine are sentences.

[18]W. V. O. Quine, *Mathematical Logic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940), p. 23. I have altered the labelling for my exposition.

[19]By "about" I mean (in this instance) that this sentence could be used to tell us that there are two different names for one animal.

[20]I have in mind particularly Moore and Lewy. For example, see G. E. Moore, "Russell's Theory of Descriptions," *Philosophical Papers* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1977). See also Casimir Lewy, 1955, pp. 223-233.

[21]For a discussion of the relationship between "a vixen" and "the concept of a vixen," see G. E. Moore, "A Reply to My Critics," *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore* (ed., P. A. Schlipp) (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1942), p. 664.

[22]One should not have to add "the use of words" but some writers (for example, Moore and Lewy) speak of equivocal concepts. The word "equivocal" means "equal vocables" --there is an implicit reference to a vocable.

[23]G. E. Moore, 1977, pp. 179-181.

[24]Casimir Lewy, 1955, pp. 230-233.

[25]Ibid., p. 231.

[26]It is, incidentally, these considerations which led to Moore's paradox of analysis.

[27]Casimir Lewy, 1955, p. 231. The view that there is a sense in which these are not the same proposition can also be found in G. E. Moore, 1942, p. 666, and C. I. Lewis and C. H. Langford, *Symbolic Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1932.

[28]The locution "entertain the following propositions" is an adaptation of a remark made by Lewy in "Equivalence and Identity," p. 230: ". . . or to put it differently, unless anybody who is considering (or entertaining or contemplating) the proposition that p must be considering the proposition that q and vice versa."

[29]See Lewy, 1955, p. 231. The reader should note that I am not committed to saying that I have listed, exhibited, or individuated propositions, I have merely iterated some of Lewy's sentences.

[30]Consider the co-relative of "explicitly mentions concepts," namely "implicitly mentions concepts." What would it be like to implicitly mention a concept given the absence of criteria for determining when a concept has been explicitly mentioned? What is "explicitly" being contrasted with?

[31]Casimir Lewy, 1955, p. 231.

[32]Ibid.

[33]See note 20 above.

[34]Explicitly, when Moore says: ". . . if 'To be a brother is the same thing as to be a male sibling' is true, yet nevertheless this statement is *not* the same as the statement 'to be a brother is to be a brother' one *must* suppose that both statements are in some sense about the expressions used as well as about the concept of being a brother." (G. E. Moore, 1942, p. 666.) Notice that Moore uses "statement" here rather than "proposition." One might argue that both Moore and Lewy implicitly acknowledge the role of expressions by using locutions like "the sentence explicitly mentions more concepts."

[35]Arthur Pap, 1958, p. 194: "The question whether abstract entities exist is not indeed decidable empirically, but it is nonetheless a cognitive question: it is decidable the way questions of semantic analysis are decidable, by examining whether proposed translations into a language with a specified primitive vocabulary preserve the meanings of the translated statements."

[36]Ibid., pp. 199-200.

[37]G. E. Moore, 1962, p. 374.

[38]Alonzo Church, "On Carnap's Analysis of Statements of Assertion and Beliefs," *Analysis*, 10(5), 1950.

[39]This example is taken from Gordon Greig's "Moore and Analysis," in *G. E. Moore Essays in Retrospect* (eds., Alice Ambrose and Morris Lazerowitz) (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), p. 267.

[40]Again I have specifically in mind Moore and Lewy. See G. E. Moore, 1977, p. 174; Casimir Lewy, 1976, p. 8.

[41]Alonzo Church, 1950, pp. 97-98.

[42]Even if we distinguish between the act of asserting and what is asserted we are still committed to a verbal performance since what is said is a by-product of the performance.

[43]"For it is not even possible to infer (1) as a consequence of (6) on logical grounds alone--but only by making use of the item of factual information, not contained in (6) that 'Man is a rational animal' means that man is a rational animal." (Alonzo Church, 1950, p. 98.)

[44]P. F. Strawson, "Truth," *Analysis*, 9, June, 1949, pp. 264-265.

[45]This paraphrase is taken from G. E. Moore, 1979, p. 174.

[46]L. J. Cohen and A. C. Lloyd, "Assertion Statements," *Analysis*, 15, 1954.

[47]Those who are tempted to reject this method of translation include Strawson and Geach. See P. F. Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory* (London: Methuen and Co., 1967), p. 11; and P. T. Geach, *Logic Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 167.

[48]For a fuller discussion of this method of eliminating "the proposition" see Greig's article cited in note 39.

[49]Arthur Pap, 1958, p. 199.

[50]P. F. Strawson, 1949, p. 269.

[51]John Wisdom, *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), p. 117.

[52]Ibid., p. 118. Of course I would not wish to sanction the uncritical employment of "necessarily" as in "this sentence is used necessarily." This locution requires explicative analysis.

[53]W. V. O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 16.

[54]The example is from G. E. Moore, 1962, p. 312.

[55]Of course (N_b) does not contain quotation marks and in this way is different from (N_a). However, (N_b) implicitly mentions a saying. I am implying that implicit mention is really mention.

[56]Quine, 1953, p. 140.

[57]This example is similar to Moore's in the entry "Can You "Hear" a Proposition?" (Moore, 1962, p. 362.)

[58]Ibid., p. 362.

[59]Ibid., p. 312.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid.

[62]This suggestion is adapted from A. R. White's criticism of Norman Malcolm's interpretation of Moore in White's book *G. E. Moore: A Critical Exposition* (Hartford, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. 8. (Originally published, Oxford, 1958.)

[63]See the following: Casimir Lewy, 1976, Ch. 1 (Lewy also claims this form of argument is used by Martha Kneale and Strawson (ibid., p. 8); G. E. Moore, 1977, p. 159; Alonzo Church, 1950, p. 98 (Church attributes this form of argument to a review by C. H. Langford in the *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, 2, No. 1 (June, 1937), 53; however, there is no review by Langford on this page in the cited volume, and I have not been able to find the correct reference.).

[64]W. V. O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), see Chapter 2.

Chapter 4

In defending an empiricist thesis in the previous chapters I make several claims which would appear to commit me to certain 'philosophical' views and to a certain view of necessity. The first claim, that philosophical positions must be presented in words, needs no support and cannot sensibly be denied. Trivially, we must be able to make sense of those words which encapsulate those positions. Another more controversial claim is that we cannot experience instances of necessary truth--or at least instances of logical principles. I have also said that logical principles can plausibly be characterized as rules, and as such are neither true nor 'known' (see above pp. 25-34). In this chapter I will relate these latter remarks to an account of necessity.

To begin with, I wish to consider a number of sentences (or quasi-sentences like (5)) which are (or have been) reputed to express a 'necessary truth.' I would not wish to claim that the following sentences are homogeneous, let alone homologous, however, in the literature some people[1] have said that sentences like (1) - (6) are variously related to the notion of necessary truth:

1. All unmarried men are not married.
2. All bachelors are unmarried men.
3. Nothing is both red and green all over.
4. All words must be used univocally.
5. 7 + 5 = 12.
6. Water boils at 100°C.

Each of the sentences on this list might seem importantly distinct from every other. Sentence (1) is what Quine would call a "logical truth" (in our use "express a logical truth") because its 'truth' can be determined solely by giving the requisite interpretation to constants, variables, and so on. The 'truth' expressed by the second sentence seemingly relies on a notion of synonymy, that between "bachelor" and "unmarried man." It might be argued that our assent to the promulgation of the third sentence depends (essentially) upon how we use the words "red" and "green." The 'truth' of what is expressed by the fourth sentence might depend upon, or exhibit, a general pragmatics for the employ of any word (or symbol). Our assent to the promulgation of the fifth sentence relies on some 'interpretation' of "7," "+," "5," "=," "12." Finally, the sentence "Water boils at 100°C" depends maximally on our convention for the use of "water" and "boils," taking it that "100°C" is maximally unequivocal. Refinements in our notion of water may lead us to reject any putative sample of 'water' as not being water if it does not boil at 100°C.

Given such a diverse list we might anticipate different answers to similar questions about the 'necessity' of each item. Specifically, we might expect that I would have different reasons for coming to classify what is expressed by each of these sentences as "necessary truths." What is common to what is expressed by each of the sentences cited on the list is that we cannot effectively describe an experimental procedure which would justify the promulgation of their denials. How could we describe a procedure which would confirm that an unmarried man was married, or that water does not boil at 100°C (at sea level and so forth), or that words may be used equivocally? Any attempt to specify a systematic procedure for using words equivocally (for the purpose of communication) is self-stultifying. By dissenting to what is promulgated by any of these examples one must be using one or more of the expressions equivocally, or be unfamiliar with the expressions. For example, given the proper acquisition of expressions like "bachelor" and "unmarried man," one cannot assent to the promulgation of "Jones is a bachelor" and yet dissent to the promulgation of "Jones is an unmarried man." There are no relevant criterial differences between a man who is a bachelor and a man who is unmarried for the purpose of affixing the labels "bachelor" and "unmarried man." Therefore, there can be no differences which would allow one properly to acquire the labels

"bachelor" and "unmarried man" and yet be able to segregate bachelors and unmarried men. The criteria for affixing the label "bachelor" are the same as those for affixing the label "unmarried man"--this purely as a function of our (contingent) acquisition of these expressions.

In much the same way, we might say the acquisition of colour words is such that it would be self-stultifying to announce "This is both red and green" while pointing to some minimally sensible spot. The criteria which, when present, sustain the propriety of affixing the label "red," and the criteria which justify the propriety of affixing the label "green," are discrete and exclusive. Hence, if something can properly be called "red," then it cannot properly be called "green." When the criteria for affixing the label "red" are present, then the criteria for affixing the label "green" are not; the criteria for affixing the label "red" are criteria for not affixing the label "green."

Similar sorts of things can be said for the other examples. For instance, one criterion for a substance's being pure water might be that it boils at 100°C. It would, therefore, be self-stultifying to attempt to describe, or produce, a sample of 'water' which boils (under specified conditions) at some other temperature. Plainly it would not be water; it would not deserve the label "water" however we had initially mastered or acquired a use for the term "water."

The fourth example might appear to be out of place in this respect, but it can be brought in line by following the amendment--"as a matter of policy, all words must be used univocally for the purpose of effective communication" (or minimally a method for resolving equivocation, that is, systematic equivocation). This is a specification of a necessary condition for effective communication, viz., the minimizing of equivocation. There is tacit agreement among language users that the words they use are used consistently (used repeatedly in the same ways) and conform to ordinary usage. I have already pointed out that this policy is a necessary condition for communication, and that a systematic policy incompatible with this one cannot even be specified.

In the case of the fifth example, one cannot dissent to the propriety of the formula "7 + 5 = 12." That it is a proper arithmetical formula is governed by the rules for the addition of natural numbers. Once again, it would be pointless to attempt to prove that the addition of "5" to "7" does not yield "12" while maintaining the ordinary procedures for the addition of natural numbers. There could be no rivalling formulation because any putative rivalling 'formulation' is not really a formulation--there is no such thing as a rivalling formulation. That "7 + 5 = 12" is a 'proper' formula is guaranteed by the rules governing addition. By "proper" I mean that "7 + 5 = 12" conforms with the syntactical rules governing arithmetical

expressions, which in the case of arithmetical formulas yields truth on interpretation.

It would seem that the propriety of promulgating any of these sorts of sentences (including (5) as a quasi-sentence) is justified by lexical fiat. The words, expressions, or symbols are so used (and therefore acquired in such a way) that any 'rivalling' description cannot be stated without breaking a rule governing the use of the expressions in question. The rule is implicit in our acquisition of the words or expressions. To use the words properly is to conform to the rules which apply to those expressions. For these examples, the history of our acquisition of the terms in question simply does not allow for the possibility of expressing relative denial. Here, the counter factual nearly collapses into the counter legal.

One might object that none of these sentence samples are imperatival. My response is that they can be made to take the form of rules, and more specifically, eventually the form of linguistic rules. I hope I have already answered the rejoinder that a sentence containing a mentioned expression is necessarily unlike any which does not contain such expressions.

Perhaps another objection is that the idea of a lexical fiat does not capture the notion of 'necessity.' An object's incapability of being more than one colour all over its surface at one time might not seem to be a matter

of convention. My response is two-fold. First, to repeat the lesson of Chapter 3, we cannot divorce an object's incapability as distinct from our incapability of describing it. In the second place, the adoption of a linguistic rule may itself be justifiable. I have implied by acknowledging that there may be different reasons for conferring the status of "necessity" upon the items on the list, that there may be reasons for adopting one lexical policy over another. Now the question is, why do we maintain the rules we actually do? The answer to this will depend on the instance. For example, there may be no alternative to maintaining a policy of ultimate non-equivocation, given our desire for effective communication and non-jocular, non-punning communication;[2] whereas the defacto synonymy of "bachelor" and "unmarried man" seems trivial and easily sacrificed. Or consider the sixth example: all water boils at 100°C. To insist of fluids, which do not boil at 100°C (at sea level and so forth), that they are not to be treated as pure water samples, seems to indicate confidence in a scientific theory, and thereby a system of semantic classification. Perhaps the reliability of 'heat-of-vaporization tests' for the individuation of liquids can be called in question (along with many other presumptions) in which case we might no longer promulgate "All water boils at 100°C" as a sample of the requisite sort. My aim in calling attention to these differences is to show that

there may be various reasons for the privileged status of the items on the list. That is, we can supply reasons, historically and heuristically, for adopting linguistic conventions. I am therefore not committed to claiming that any convention would do equally well. I can account for our reluctance to renounce things like the 'Law of Identity' (viz., whatever is, is). On my account this 'law' is a disguised form of the 'principle' of non-equivocation: we so use words that we cannot implicitly endorse the propriety of affixing a description and at the same time endorse the impropriety of affixing that same description. We cannot dispense with this convention without suspending communication--even our basis of communication. The point is that the reasons for maintaining a rule depend upon the kind of rule that it is. 'Necessity' is not conferred by cheerful agreement, but rather because the verbal behaviour (of which the rule is a codification) is *necessary* (that is, requisite) *for* a given purpose.

This summarizes the kind of view I had in mind while defending an empiricist thesis in the previous chapters. Quine has claimed, in various articles,[3] that this kind of view is nonsensical. I shall therefore consider some of his arguments to determine whether my account is susceptible to this charge.

Although I do not countenance Quine's[4] use of expressions like "true sentence," "true principle," "true

statement," "true analytic statement," "true synthetic statement," "necessary sentence," "contingent sentence," "analytic truths," "synthetic truths," et al., I have, of necessity in reporting his position for the purpose of debate, had to adopt his use of these contentious expressions. However, the reader should note the consequences of the stance I outlined in Chapter 3--that quantification over propositions or statements may be highly illicit, and that sentences cannot, without lengthy apologia, be described as *true*. In conformity with my convention, I have used withdrawal (or sneer) quotes to indicate my unwillingness to endorse that use of the quoted expression.

Quine's arguments against conventionalism can be construed as supporting the general thesis that there can be no procedure for making a clear distinction between 'analytic and synthetic statements.' Obviously, the onus is on the conventionalist to show how 'truth' has been attributed conventionally. Without a procedure for making a distinction between 'analytic truths' (which are true by convention) and 'synthetic truths' (which are simply true), it is not clear what the conventionalist is claiming by explaining. For example, what is the value of explaining the conventionality of the truths of mathematics, and not those of (say) sociology, if there is no prior agreement that the former are 'necessary' and the latter 'contingent.' It is part of the conventionalist's task to show how we can

arrive at the two classes--one conventionally, the other not. Quine has tried to show, in different ways, that the conventionalist's task is futile. It may turn out that Quine has misconceived the onus laid upon the conventionalist. Does the conventionalist, qua philosopher, have to account for the genesis of the predicates "necessary" and "contingent"? Is his task not rather to produce an account of what we have glossed as "necessary" or "contingent"?

In "Truth by Convention"[5] and "Carnap and Logical Truth"[6] Quine argues that there is no meaningful sense in which we can conventionally attribute truth to all and only the truths of logic and mathematics. We cannot postulate, legislate, nor define in any way that would circumscribe only the alleged analytic truths. In "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"[7] he gives an explanation for the conventionalists' failure--there is only a difference of degree between 'analytic' and 'synthetic statements.' 'Statements' do not contain, in varying proportions, an empirical element and a linguistic element. Any statement, says Quine, can be held to be true come what may. Conversely, no statement is immune from revision.[8] It is for this reason that the empiricist's task is misguided. There can be no procedure for recognizing only 'analytic (or synthetic) truths' because such a procedure presupposes that there is some essential difference between 'analytic and synthetic statements.'

It is important to note that Quine is not claiming, in any of these articles, that there are no differences to be drawn between the 'truths of logic' and the truths of (e.g.) history:

> Still, there is the apparent contrast between logico-mathematical truths and others that the former are a priori, the latter a posteriori; the former have "the character of an inward necessity," in Kant's phrase, the latter do not. Viewed behavioristically and without reference to a metaphysical system, this contrast retains reality as a contrast between more and less firmly accepted statements; and it obtains antecedentally to any *post facto* [sic] fashioning of conventions. There are statements which we choose to surrender last, if at all, in the course of revamping our sciences in the face of new discoveries; and among these there are some which we will not surrender at all, so basic are they to our whole conceptual scheme.[9]

> Those [statements] of the first class, which may be called *logically true*, are typified by:
>
> 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', 'an', 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.[10]

> Logical truth . . . is, we saw, well enough definable (relatively to a fixed logical notation) . . . . Once given the logical vocabulary, we have a means of clearly marking off the species logical truth within the genus truth.[11]

What Quine is claiming in these articles is that the difference of surrender is not accounted for by conventionalism. Conventionalism is founded on the dogma that 'logical truths' are irrefutable because of the 'meanings' of the words expressing that truth. This dogma, in Quine's

view, is closely associated with the dogma that logical truths are not about experience and, therefore, cannot be refuted by experience. Once it is realized that this picture of the analytic/synthetic dichotomy is ill-conceived it is easy to see why a linguistic doctrine has, and must, fail to account for the apparent contrast between 'truths' of logic (and mathematics) and 'truths' of other disciplines.

> We may wonder what one adds to the bare statement that the truths of logic and mathematics are a priori, or to the still barer behavoristic statement that they are firmly accepted, when he characterizes them as true by convention in such a sense.[12]

> But I hope we are now impressed with how stubbornly the distinction between analytic and synthetic has resisted any straightforward drawing.[13]

> Furthermore, 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 . . . . no statement is immune to [sic] revision.[14]

> I do not suggest that the linguistic doctrine is false and some doctrine of ultimate and inexplicable insight into the obvious traits of reality is true, but only that there is no real difference between these two pseudo-doctrines.[15]

The question is, whether or not the account I have sketched suffers from the same sort of flaws. To answer this question requires looking more closely at the various arguments.

To begin with, it will be helpful to notice what

Quine is looking for in a conventionalist account of necessary truth (or in Quine's idiom "statement analyticity"). Perhaps his clearest statement of what he expects such an account to look like occurs in his discussion of set theory:

> In set theory we discourse about certain immaterial entities, real or erroneously alleged, viz., sets, or classes. And it is in the effort to make up our minds about genuine truth and falsity of sentences about these objects that we find ourselves engaged in something very like convention in an ordinary non-metaphorical sense of the word. We find ourselves making deliberate choices and setting them forth unaccompanied by any attempt at justification other than in terms of elegance and convenience.[16]

This seems to be one of Quine's guiding assumptions, viz., that a conventionalist account must show us how we make deliberate and unjustified choices about the truth or falsity of a 'statement.'

Given this assumption, Quine explores definition, postulation, and legislation[17] (these being the sorts of activities that conform with his expectations). My method of assessing his objections to conventionalism will consist of relating his arguments under each of these three headings to the account which I have sketched. I shall begin with legislation.

Can truth be legislated? In "Truth by Convention," Quine attempts to construct an artificial language in which the same 'statements' which are true (or false) in our language are true or false for it:

> . . . the alternative is open to us, on introducing a new word, of determining its meaning *absolutely* to whatever extent we like by specifying contexts which are to be true and contexts which are to be false . . . . Since all contexts of our new word are meaningless to begin with . . . we are free to run through the list of such contexts and pick out as true such ones as we like; those selected become true by fiat, by linguistic convention. . . . Such contexts as we render true are true by convention.[18]

This attempt fails because there is an infinite number of 'truths' to be specified. In an attempt to escape this objection, Quine avails himself of "conditions finite in length which determine infinite classes of expressions."[19] The problem with this latter attempt is that in the adoption of these general conditions it is necessary to infer or derive the 'specific statements.' However, such an inference cannot be accomplished conventionally without specifying further conditions. Hence, the conventionalist is involved in an infinite regress. Quine thinks there is an escape from this regress, but it requires depriving conventionalism of any explanatory force:

> It may still be held that [our conditions] are observed from the start, and that logic and mathematics thereby become conventional. It may be held that we can adopt conventions through behavior, without first announcing them in words; and that we can return and formulate our conventions verbally afterward, if we choose, when a full language is at our disposal . . . . So conceived, the conventions no longer involve us in a vicious regress. Inference from general conventions is no longer demanded initially, but remains to the subsequent sophisticated stage where we frame general statements of the conventions and show how various specific conventional truths used all along, fit into the general conventions as thus formulated.[20]

Quine goes on to say that this kind of account accords well with what we actually do--we formulate conventions to fit our behaviour. (I might add, that this also accords well with the account I have sketched.) However, there is a further argument which makes Quine doubtful of the explanatory value of a conventionalist account. He says "it is not clear wherein an adoption of the conventions, antecedently to their formulation, consists; such behavior is difficult to distinguish from that in which conventions are disregarded."[21] It is not clear to me why this should bother Quine. Of course it should be difficult to distinguish between behaviour governed by conventions which have been specifically formulated and behaviour governed by conventions prior to any explicit formulation of those same conventions. If we could distinguish between behaviour dictated by a putative specified convention, and behaviour not so dictated, we would conclude that the putative convention was not a codification of our actual practices. It seems to me that Quine is begging the question by assuming that behaviour prior to the explicit formulation of conventions is non-conventional. On my account, the deliberateness or explicitness of adopting conventions is irrelevant. What needs explaining is why some statements are 'firmly accepted' and why others are not. This can be explained (in certain cases) by the acquisition of language. I cannot see that it

makes any difference whether the rules governing the use of the expressions are implicit throughout the acquisition or are explicitly and deliberately formulated after the acquisition of those expressions. Obviously, it requires language to specify the rule, both because the rule must be specified in words and because there would be no convention or rule to specify if there were no language. In other words, the rule-as-specified is logically posterior to the acquisition of language (the question whether the specified rule is acquired along with the mastery of a term, or subsequently, is immaterial); but there can be no language without conventions or rules governing these expressions. Still, it is not clear to me why this should impugn either the claim that we have conventions, or the claim that an accounting of our conventions can explain 'necessary truth.'

In rejecting Quine's argument I am not thereby endorsing some view of 'legislative conventionalism.' It became apparent by considering Quine's argument against legislating 'truth' that there was an objection to the sort of account I presented. Since this objection can be dismissed I will proceed to consider 'truth by definition.'

Quine's remarks on definition are largely directed at those who say "such and such is true by definition." Very little, according to Quine, is true by definition. The only instance in which definition contributes to the

truth of a 'sentence' is the case in which a notation previously unused (or used in a novel way) is introduced (or disambiguated) by legislative fiat.[22] Even this kind of definition is not true by convention in the sense that it is a transcription of a prior logical truth (viz., "X = X").[23] Other sorts of definition, such as notational abbreviations, or what Quine calls "discursive definitions," make no contribution to truth at all.[24] A notational abbreviation is 'true' because of a pre-existing synonymy between the unabbreviated terms.[25] Similarly, the lexicographer who defines "brother" as "male sibling" is also relying on a presupposed notion of synonymy.

So far, these complaints have little bearing on my view of necessity, since I do not appeal to a notion of definitional equivalence. However, I do say that we would not justify dissenting from the promulgation of (2) (All bachelors are unmarried) because of the synonymy of "bachelor" and "unmarried man," and it might therefore be thought that I am exploiting some notion of definition after all. My response is, that I do not explicate synonymy by appeal to definition, but rather by the notion of a rule implicit in the acquisition of "bachelor" and "unmarried man." The 'proper' acquisition, that is, actual, de facto historic acquisition, of these expressions disallows for there being a criterial difference which would enable a speaker to individuate bachelors and

unmarried men. Perhaps one would still object that I am relying on an unexplicated notion of synonymy--is it not true that "bachelor" and "unmarried man" are acquired in such a way because they are synonymous? The answer is "no." The expression "bachelor" and "unmarried man" are synonymous (or would it not be better on my account to say "synonyms") because we so use the words the way we do (and not the other way around). To deny this is to be committed to some 'realistic' notion of synonymy. It would seem that I am able to escape Quine's objections to 'truth by definition' if I can explicate synonymy in terms of linguistic acquisition and rules. That is, my account of necessity is not tantamount to saying "such and such is true by definition" if I can produce a satisfactory account of synonymy. I shall now consider Quine's remarks on truth by postulation.

As in the case of definition, Quine is reluctant to admit that recourse to postulation can advance the solution.[26] Postulates are merely 'statements' annexed for the purpose of reaching other 'statements.' The postulates we choose will depend on the purpose we have in mind. "Any finite (or effectively specifiable infinite) selection of statements (preferably true ones, perhaps) is as much a set of postulates as any other."[27]

This procedure of circumscribing some set of interpreted statements is what Quine calls "discursive

postulation."[28] It is clear that the process of discursive postulation is not a process of attributing or conferring truth since the postulates are (for Quine) already true or false. However, there is also another kind of postulating which Quine calls "legislative postulation." "Legislative postulation finally, affords truth by convention unalloyed."[29] This kind of postulation can be found in contemporary set theory; it is the adopting of postulates and their logical consequences without any justification other than convenience or elegance. However, even legislative postulation does not render conventionalism satisfactory to Quine since legislative truth is a passing trait.[30]

Once again, I think it is clear that Quine's remarks on postulation do not threaten the account I have suggested. So far, the account I have given is neutral toward any account of postulation, Quinean or otherwise. It is therefore fair to conclude that none of the reasons so far given are sufficient for dismissing what I have proposed. This brings us back to a consideration of the reasons for Quine's rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction. It seems to me that Quine summarizes his misgivings over such a distinction in the following passage:

> In any event, we at present lack any tenable general suggestion, either rough and practical or remotely theoretical, as to what it is to be an analytic

> sentence. All we have are purported illustrations, and claims that the truths of elementary logic, with or without the rest of mathematics, should be counted in. Wherever there has been a semblance of a general criterion, to my knowledge, there has been either some drastic failure such as tended to admit all or no sentences as analytic, or there has been a circularity . . . or there has been a dependence on terms like 'meaning', 'possible', 'conceivable', and the like . . . .[31]

No doubt 'the like' includes "synonymy," "rules," "criteria," "communication," and "proper acquisition;"[32] in which case the question is, whether these expressions really are as mysterious as "analytic" and "necessary." I do not propose to consider all, or even most, of these expressions. Since Quine complains about "synonymy" and "rules" (actually "semantical rules"), it will be convenient to focus on these.

Incidentally, I should point out that my account does not suffer from the other complaint noted by Quine, viz., tending to admit all or no 'sentences' as 'analytic.' I do admit, however, that I cannot specify a recursive procedure for identifying all, and only 'analytic truths.' The identification of 'necessities' is a piecemeal affair guided by our variously structured identifications of verbal behaviours.

It should be clear that the notions of synonymy and linguistic rules are closely related on my account. In fact, I have said that synonymy is to be accounted for in terms of linguistic rules. Since Quine's complaint is

that "rules" and "synonymy" are both obscure, it follows that if I cannot defend the notion of a rule then I cannot, in Quine's eyes, render the notion of synonymy intelligible. What are Quine's complaints about rules?

The only sense Quine[33] seems to give to the notion of a rule is that of a statement appearing on a page under the heading "semantical rule," or, that of a multitude of 'true statements' of a language which can be used to generate other 'truths.' Of course, neither of these is the sense in which I am using "rule"; nor is there any ordinary sense of "rule" which corresponds to Quine's sense of the word. To begin with we would not ordinarily say that rules are 'true statements.' On the contrary, we would say rules are not true and not even derivatively true by being true of them that they are listed in the rule book. Furthermore, it is not clear why Quine would think any 'true statement' is as much a rule as any other:

> Now the notion of a semantical rule is as sensible and meaningful as that of a postulate, if conceived in similarly relative spirit--relative, this time, to one or another particular enterprise of schooling unconversant persons in sufficient conditions for truth of statements of some natural or artificial language L. But from this point of view no one signalization of a subclass of the truths of L is intrinsically more a semantical rule than another; and if 'analytic' means 'true by semantical rules', no one truth of L is analytic to the exclusion of another.[34]

What Quine seems to be saying is that we can annex any finite set of 'statements' from some language and possibly use 'them' to teach some unconversant persons the

sufficient conditions which would render these 'statements' 'true.' For this purpose any set of 'statements' is as good as any other because there will be sets of sufficient conditions for the truth of each 'one.' In other words, no matter what 'statements' are chosen we can school unconversant persons on the subject of sufficient conditions for 'truth.' Although Quine does not say so, I think part, if not most of the task, requires that the 'truth conditions' for 'truth functional connectives' occurring in each 'statement' (for example, "and," "or," "if," "then," "not," "all," "every," "some,") be specified. In this case, there may here be two levels of rules being discussed, viz., the rules as 'statements' arbitrarily annexed, and the rules as 'statements' of the sufficient conditions for the 'truth' of the arbitrarily annexed statements. From my point of view it really makes no difference whether Quine's account is more complex than it appears, because the two levels of rules (if there are two levels) should be of the same sort. Therefore, if I am wrong in thinking that there might be two levels of rules, it will not affect my present purpose, which is to show that the sort of rule Quine is thinking of can be contrasted with another sort of rule. I do not mean to imply that there are only two sorts of rules, or even that there are types of rules, I wish only to argue that there are important differences between the sorts of rules Quine seems to be considering and the sorts of rules

which are implicit in the acquisition of language.

When Quine arbitrarily annexes a set of 'statements' and proceeds to treat 'them' as rules for a semantic system, he is using the 'truth conditions' of those 'statements' as a guide or reference for classifying other 'statements' in the language. How the classification will go depends upon the particular set of 'statements' annexed at the outset. In this way, I think it is accurate to compare rules with postulates. From the outset, Quine has explicitly formulated procedures according to which he can 'arrive at' and classify other statements. The point to be noticed is that these rules are like postulation not because of the arbitrariness involved in annexing the initial 'statements,' but rather because the rules are acknowledged from the outset and are going to be used (referred to, employed, invoked) to determine (in this case) which 'statements' can be 'reached' and which are 'true' or 'false.' Once having extracted a rule it will guide future behaviour.

In contrast to 'extracted' rules, there seems to be another sort which one 'extrapolates out of.' In this case the rule is not a guide in the same way. For example, one might acquire the word "water" in such a way that the criteria for something's being called "water" are left inarticulated. This need not be any obstacle to that person's being able to identify what is called "water" in

ordinary cases. In fact this person need not have a very sophisticated notion of what water is, that is, what the ramifications of using the term "water" are, to be able to decide in different circumstances what does nor does not count as water, that is, what deserves the label "water." In being able to say what does or does not deserve the title "water," this person is extrapolating out of the rule which could be seen as implicit in the acquisition of the word "water." We might expect that as our testing becomes more refined, the rules implicitly governing the uses of "water" will become less implicit. Now suppose this person is confronted with two putative samples of water only one of which is entitled to the label "boils at 100°C at sea level etc." The question is whether or not the boiling point of water has been regarded as rule-derived. As of yet, there is clearly no postulational rule to be invoked. An answer either way will legislate for what can properly be called "water." In other words, once legislated the rule is no longer implicit--if the sample does not boil at 100°C then it does not deserve the label "water." Here we have legislation for the use of the word "water" explicitly formulated. That there are reasons for ruling one way or another according to any test is immaterial. What is important is that the decision is based on the extrapolation of the implicit rules governing the use of the expressions, and that a distinction

can therefore be drawn between 'extracted' and 'extrapolated' rules. It is the latter sort of rule which is relevant to the account of 'necessity' I have sketched. Since Quine has not, as far as I know, criticized this other sort of rule, I think it fair to conclude that he has not succeeded in showing the conventionalist thesis is unintelligible.

Earlier I suggested that Quine might have misconceived the onus placed on conventionalism. This suggestion seems to have been substantiated by the foregoing discussion--Quine's arguments have little bearing on an account which is not concerned with attributing or postulating 'necessary truth,' but with explaining our use of "necessary truth." The burden of my contention is that the notion of "necessary truth," as exhibited by discussion of "necessary truth," can be rendered asceptic by viewing the sentence which expresses that 'truth' as being used in such a way that no counter-instance or counter-example can be specified without contravening the use-rules for the expressions in that sentence.

Further to my previous remarks about Quine's view of the 'analytic/synthetic' distinction, I would like to discuss his uncritical use of "statement" and his willingness to quantify indiscriminately over a class of 'truths,' 'true statements,' 'true sentences,' 'analytic truths,' and so on.

If we confine ourselves to talking about sentences, and the occasions on which those sentences can be used to express something which is true, then Quine's problem about analyticity and synonymy seems somewhat unreal and difficult consistently to state. Recall that for Quine, an analytic statement can be turned into a logical truth only if we have some criterion for replacing synonyms (i.e., terms/words) for synonyms (i.e., terms/words). Therefore, for Quine, insofar as we have no adequate criteria for explaining synonymity (i.e., our handling of words) we cannot account for analyticity (i.e., of statements). What is paradoxical about Quine's problem is that he can rest happy with the notion of 'logical truth' and yet effectively deny that there could be a satisfactory account of synonymity. Consider once again, his account of 'logical truth':

> 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.[35]

How can we assign truth to a statement by supplying an interpretation for logical particles? Notice that logical particles are words and that a statement's components are logical particles and non-logical words. "Statement," for Quine, must obviously mean "sentence." Quine is saying that a logical truth is a sentence which is true and

remains true under all reinterpretations of its non-logical words. In giving this much of an account of logical truth, Quine is committed to true sentences, and interpretations of logical and non-logical expressions. In other words, Quine has the theoretic framework to identify 'true sentences' by means of the concatenations of the logical particles, and yet allegedly has no framework from which to answer questions about non-logical words. It would seem that Quine is disregarding the route by which he was able to extract the 'logically true' sentence skeletons.

On my account this 'problem' cannot even be stated. Truth is not a predicate to be ascribed to formulas, sentences, or logical schema *in vacuuo*. The ascription of the pseudo-predicate "is true" is a resultant function of the endorsement of the propriety of promulgating a sentence. Hence, truth is tied down to an occasion of a sentence use. This is obscured on Quine's account by the use of "statement," since it ambiguously betokens the what which is expressed by a sentence and the sentence itself. In some cases Quine may be ascribing "is true" to the occasion of sentence production, but clearly he is predicating truth of sentences in the above quotation. Quine begins with the notion that sentences are true, hence, his problem is misconceived from the beginning. The question of how these sentences are to be classified is begged by assuming from the outset that they are true, and not the sentence-

derivatives (that is, statements) which are properly labelled "true."

Footnotes to Chapter 4

[1]In this connection see: Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought* (Vols. I and II), (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1939); A. C. Ewing, "The Linguistic Theory of *A Priori* Propositions," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 40 (1946); W. Kneale, "Are Necessary Truths True by Convention?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplement*, 21 (1940); Arthur Pap, *Semantics and Necessary Truth* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1958); et al.

[2]Obviously, the possibility of a pun is parasitic upon our being able to maintain a policy of non-equivocation.

[3]The articles I am referring to are: W. V. O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," in *From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 20-46; W. V. O. Quine, "Truth by Convention," in *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, Rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 77-107; and W. V. O. Quine, "Carnap and Logical Truth," ibid., pp. 107-133.

[4]These expressions can be found throughout articles cited in note 3 above.

[5]Quine, "Truth by Convention," 1976.

[6]Quine, "Carnap and Logical Truth," 1976.

[7]Quine, "Two Dogmas," 1961.

[8]The reader might be interested to note Quine's semi-barbarism "immune to revision."

[9]Quine, "Truth by Convention," 1976, p. 102.

[10]Quine, "Two Dogmas," 1961, p. 22.

[11]Quine, "Carnap and Logical Truth," 1976, p. 130.

[12]Quine, "Truth by Convention," 1976, p. 102.

[13]Quine, "Two Dogmas," 1961, p. 41.

[14]Ibid., p. 43.

[15]Quine, "Carnap and Logical Truth," 1976, p. 113.

[16]Ibid., p. 117. I find it interesting that Quine thinks he has found a non-metaphorical sense of "convention" in this context. The word "convention" comes from the Latin word *conventio* which means "an assembly, an agreement, a compact."

[17]I do not mean to imply that Quine has divided his task into these three categories; rather, it is a convenient way of classifying his arguments.

[18]Quine, "Truth by Convention," 1976, p. 89.

[19]Ibid., p. 92.

[20]Ibid., p. 105.

[21]Ibid. It is worth noticing that Quine does not adopt the passive voice in this passage; that is, rather than saying "wherein we have adopted" he says "wherein an adoption." It seems clear that the conventions could be there without acknowledging them.

[22]Quine, "Carnap and Logical Truth," 1976, p. 119.

[23]Ibid., p. 118. See also "Truth by Convention," 1976, pp. 78-79.

[24]Quine, "Carnap and Logical Truth," 1976, p. 119.

[25]Quine, "Two Dogmas," 1961, p. 24.

[26]See Quine's, "Carnap and Logical Truth," pp. 115-122; "Two Dogmas, p. 33; "Truth by Convention," pp. 82-105.

[27]Quine, "Two Dogmas," p. 35.

[28]Quine, "Carnap and Logical Truth," p. 119.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., pp. 129-130.

[32]I would like to emphasize that "proper" is being used in a non-normative sense. Proper acquisition is the actual (historical) acquisition of the expressions. There is no sense in asking with what justification we use the

words. Hence, the futility of asking the Sartrean question, "Is the planet we call "Uranus" really Uranus?"

[33]Quine, "Two Dogmas," p. 35.

[34]Ibid., p. 35.

[35]Ibid., p. 22.

SUMMARY

Some of the more renowned historic, as well as some of the most canvassed contemporary debates over necessary truth are, as I have tried to show, ill-conceived. In attempting to expose the ways in which a few of the more or less sophisticated objections to empiricism fail, my primary concern has been not to defend a 'philosophical' position, but rather to draw attention to critical aspects of our acquisition of terms and of the rules governing their use. In this context my account models Locke's approach as exemplifying the plain historical method. It is only, insofar as I take empiricism explicitly to acknowledge our indebtedness to the 'acquisition-story,' that I am defending some (minimal) form of empiricism. As I have pointed out, it is not clear what the denial of this kind of 'empiricism' would look like--obviously it cannot be stated in words. Once this is acknowledged, there is a basis for assessing the dispute. Our employment of high-level, abstract, and meta-theoretical expressions can only be sanctioned given a legitimate introduction to the use-rules governing such expressions. We cannot initially, uncritically endorse expressions like "classes of truths," "items of knowledge," "knowledge acquired *a priori*,"

"propositions," "necessary propositions," "analytic statements," et al. Of course the vicious metaphors, discussed extensively in Chapter 1, being the most blatant examples of expressions for which there is no legitimate introduction, also belong on the list. Along with such expressions, I have tried to show, specifically in Chapter 3, that high-level meta-theoretic programs, like that of translation, or the restrictions imposed by logicians' notions of use and mention (or Quine's program for reducing 'analytic truths' to 'logical truths'), must be consistent with, or bred out of a more fundamental concern with language acquisition.

Finally, I should point out some aspects of this thesis which I have left undeveloped and which I trust might well become the legitimate extension of my present research.

Although I have somewhat harshly commented upon Quine's critical employment of such expressions as "true sentence," "true statements," "analytic statements," "true postulates," "true rules," and so forth, still I do not think that we are fundamentally opposed. In ascepticizing our use of "necessary truth" I have appealed to the notion of the acquisition of words as being relatively unproblematic and central to any explication of modality. Quine also appeals to the notion of acquisition insofar as he employs the notions of stimulus-occasion, stimulus-response,

and stimulus synonymy as relative primitives for the derivation of analytic hypotheses. It would be my hope that stimulus-occasion/response/synonymy could be rendered in a way consistent with the main thrust of my thesis in Chapters 3 and 4.

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