

## A CRITICAL EXPOSITION OF QUINE'S ARGUMENTS<sup>1</sup> ON THE ANALYTIC-SYNTHETIC DISTINCTION

### Abstract

*Arguments in support of the analytic-synthetic distinction from Rudolf Carnap and other proponents came under attack by Quine's (1961) Two Dogmas of Empiricism. He identifies two statements which are referred to as analytic. (1) "All unmarried males are unmarried" and (2) "All bachelors are unmarried males". The first statement is admitted to be a logically true statement because it is true in all its reinterpretations of 'males' and 'married'. This means that given the rules of language as they apply to 'being a male' and 'being married', whichever way the first statement is interpreted, it will remain true. But, Quine questions how the second statement, "All bachelors are unmarried males", is accepted to be logically equivalent to the statement, "All unmarried persons are unmarried", and therefore is analytic. Quine questioned this linguistic usage under some themes and concluded that none of these themes could sufficiently justify the presupposed analytic-synthetic distinction. This paper tries to put Quine's arguments in proper perspective for clearer understanding in order to assess the potency of the arguments of his critics.*

*Key words: Logical Impossibility, Interchangeability, Synonymy, Semantic Rule, Salva Veritate, Verification, Reductionism.*

### Introduction

The debate over the analytic-synthetic distinction has taken a different turn from the traditional discourse to the contemporary debates. The contemporary debates started with Rudolf Carnap's theory on the analytic-synthetic distinction. Carnap put the issue of the analytic-synthetic distinction into proper and clearer perspective. This was an improvement on the works of Hume, Kant, and Leibniz on the same issue. David Hume made a distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact; Leibniz made the distinction between the truths of reason and the truths of fact; Kant made the distinction between *a priori* truths and empirical truths. For a proposition to be *a priori*, Kant (1963, 44-45), identified two criteria viz; Necessity, and strict universality. For empirical proposition, the criteria are relative universality, and contingency. Carnap built on the foundation laid by these precursors.

Rudolf Carnap (1947, 25), employs, for example, the concepts *intension* and *extension*. The intension of a statement deals with its logical equivalent properties, while its extension deals with its equivalent class. For instance, "The property *human* is L-equivalent, i.e., logically equivalent, to the property *rational animal*" while "The property *human* is class-equivalent to the property *featherless biped*" (Carnap 1947, 25).

'Human' and 'rational animal' are L equivalent if the answer given to the question, 'what does it mean?' asked of 'Human' is the answer given to the same question asked of 'Rational Animal'. But 'Human' and 'featherless biped' would be equivalent if they have the same referents. Then, two statements can be generated from the description above. (1) "All human are rational animal". (2) "All human are biped". Carnap means that the first statement above is analytic while the second is synthetic. An analytic sentence can then be understood as that whose truth value is determined by the semantic rules of language, meaning, and usage of words. The truth value of a synthetic statement is determined by the information from experience. This fairly represents the distinction marked by Carnap between analytic and synthetic sentences. Given this, it may be appropriate to say that all logical and

mathematical propositions are analytic, because their truth values depend on the semantical rules.

Quine (1961) challenges Carnap's and modern empiricists' claim on the analytic-synthetic distinction and reductionism. He refers to these as the dogmas of modern empiricism. Quine systematically argues to show that the grounds upon which the arguments to support them are built are insufficient.<sup>3</sup> He then declares that the analytic-synthetic distinction is not justified. To make this position, Quine identifies two statements which are referred to as analytic. (1) "All unmarried males are unmarried" and (2) "All bachelors are unmarried males". The first statement is admitted to be a logically true statement because it is true in all its reinterpretations of 'males' and 'married'. This means that given the rules of language as they apply to 'being a male' and 'being married', whichever way the statement "All unmarried persons are married" is interpreted, it will remain true. Hence, it is accepted as analytic. But, Quine questions how the statement, "All bachelors are unmarried males", is accepted to be logically equivalent to the statement, "All unmarried persons are unmarried", and therefore is analytic. The linguistic usage allows 'bachelor' and 'unmarried male' to have the same meaning. This means that 'bachelor' can be used to replace 'unmarried male' without changing the meaning of the sentence where they function. The main preoccupation of the paper is to do a critical exposition of Quine's arguments against the analytic-synthetic distinction as contained in 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism'.

### **Synonymy: Definition, Explication and Notation**

Now, according to Quine (1961), for the statement; "All bachelors are unmarried males" to be turned to 'All unmarried men are unmarried', 'bachelor' will be substituted for 'unmarried male', and the statement becomes; *All unmarried males are unmarried males*. For 'bachelor' to be substituted for 'unmarried male' and make "All bachelors are unmarried males" analytic statement, it implies that 'bachelor' and 'unmarried male' have the same meaning, i.e., they are synonymous. Thus, an adequate understanding of synonymy should give us an adequate explanation of analyticity. But Quine argues that synonymy is not sufficient to account for analyticity.

To account for synonymy of terms, the first ground Quine identifies is definition. This means that two concepts having an equivalent definition are synonymous. Under definition, Quine considers three arguments. But the three arguments conclude that definition is deficient as an account of synonymy and therefore of analyticity. The first one is the argument that synonymy through definition could be found in the work of the lexicographers, which is the dictionary. Definitions of terms and concepts are found to be equivalent in the dictionary. Quine's argument is that, dictionary definitions would not explain synonymy satisfactorily. This is because lexicographers also rely on the existing synonymy as used in the society before they compile their definitions. For instance, in the context of human beings, 'infant' and 'young', have equivalent definition. However, this definition may be in terms of age, brain capacity or in terms of experience. Given these conditions, 'infant' or 'young' signify persons that are not adult or that are not yet grown up or are not mature. The conclusion is that definition that relies on the preexisting sense of synonymy can not be taken to give us an adequate explanation of synonymy.

The second argument under definition is associated with *explication* of the term. Explication is an attempt to get a better or clearer use of a certain word, in order to improve

the existing use of the word. For instance, 'unmarried lady' might be used to explicate the word 'spinster'. But, explication will make synonymy contextual, because some words will be synonymous in some contexts and not in others. For instance, in the context of business and industry, 'infant' is synonymous with 'young' but not with 'kid'. But, in the context of human beings, 'kid' and 'infant' are synonymous with 'young' and with 'kid'. Again, in the context of meat, 'raw' is more synonymous with 'uncooked' than 'crude'. But, in the context of 'gold', 'crude' is synonymous with 'raw' than 'uncooked'. In this sense it becomes clear that synonymy is contextual. But, the kind of synonymy that Quine is looking for must explain synonymy across contexts. Besides, this kind of synonymy also relies on the preexisting synonymy as it is used in ordinary language.

The third argument is that an attempt can be made to create a certain word to be a synonym to another even though this special synonymy was not so previously used or accepted in language. Again, this synonymy is not backed up by the linguistic or semantic rule. This is what Quine referred to as the idea of *novel notation*. For instance, in English language, 'cook' might be picked as the new synonym for the word 'book'. It then means that a new synonym has been created for 'book' which is now 'cook'. According to Quine, though this does not depend on preexisting synonymy, it might bring confusion into language. If any word can be picked as the synonym of any word at any moment, confusion would set into such a language. The foundation of language in such a case would not be secure.<sup>2</sup>

Grice and Strawson (1972, 73-88) objected to these arguments by arguing that the analytic-synthetic distinction has enjoyed pre-established acceptance and usage. Lexicographers only build on this pre-established acceptance and usage to compile their work. Philosophers, linguists, psychologists, and other speakers of the language, have all been using and accepting the distinction in their discourses respectively, without any misunderstanding. Other distinctions are also so marked in the language and they did not raise any critical dust. According to Grice and Strawson, rejecting the analytic-synthetic distinction and arguing that there is no difference at all marked by these expressions amounts to an extreme thesis. This is because of its consequences. This challenge on the adequacy of the analytic-synthetic distinction in the language 'has the consequence of challenging the acceptability of the entire language. But, this kind of challenge may be seen as self stultifying. It follows that as it is self stultifying to challenge the foundation of the entire language, by deduction, it is also self stultifying to question the justification of the analytic-synthetic distinction.

Similar distinctions can be observed in mathematical language. Take for instance, the even and odd number distinction. By mathematical definition, an even number is any number that is divisible by two. An odd number is any number that is not divisible by two. These definitions are acceptable and used without question even outside mathematics or science. 4 and 5 are different simply because 4 is an even number while 5 is an odd number. Now, if it is argued that 4 may become an odd number while 5 may become an even number, given some changes in experience of numbers, then this is raising a big issue with the entire fabric of mathematical language and not only with the use of '4' and '5'. It would not make sense for anybody to call the entire mathematical language to question; this will bring disruption. But supposing that the entire language is declared faulty, the consequence is that we have to abandon the faulty language and begin to formulate another language. But the question is

this: what language are we going to use to formulate a new language where the possibility of 5 becoming an even number will be accommodated? Certainly, it can no more be with the language we have already abandoned.<sup>3</sup>

Grice and Strawson (1972) attempted to construct a non-extreme argument for Quine. The thesis is that the distinction is misunderstood by those who use it:

“the nature of, and reason for, the difference or differences are totally misunderstood by those who use the expressions, that the stories they tell themselves about the difference are full of illusion.” (Grice and Strawson 1972, 75)

The argument may be structured as follows:

- (1) Any distinction which is based on a mistaken theory of language will be a pseudo distinction, which in the real sense does not exist.
- (2) The analytic-synthetic distinction is based on a mistaken theory of language. Therefore,
- (3) the analytic-synthetic distinction, in the real sense, does not exist.

But, Grice and Strawson argue that suppose that our theory of language is a mistaken one, it has to be shown with a different argument. That means that the argument: ‘(1) all the grounds used to support the analytic-synthetic distinction are insufficient to justify it; therefore, (2) the analytic-synthetic distinction is not justified’, cannot at the same time be used to argue that our theory of language is a mistaken theory. And, suppose that our theory of language were mistaken, we would need an entirely new theory of language to show that the present theory of language is a mistaken one. Just because we can not use a mistaken theory to show that it is mistaken, the whole exercise would be a mistake. If we must do this, then it becomes a problem, unless we formulate an entirely new theory of language. How that is possible is beyond the scope of this research work.

It might be argued that *ab initio* Quine did not hold the extreme thesis ascribed to him. He said that he did not call for a complete rejection of our language. His point is that we have to ensure that we stay afloat while we continue to repair our boat. (Quine 1960, 3) This means that we can continue to accept and use our language while we attempt to amend the faulty parts. This might be accepted as a simple or mitigated thesis. This simple thesis notwithstanding, Quine's argument is still not free of problems. This is because Quine argued that statements of belief in the structure are interconnected. But, whenever the linguistic structure conflicts with experience, all the statements of belief in the structure are affected since all the statements in the structure are interconnected. Then, any amendment will definitely affect all the statements either directly or indirectly, again since all the statements in the system are interconnected. Now that the entire structure will be affected, it may not be possible to stay afloat on the boat while we continue to repair it. This means that the position that “we can stay afloat in the boat while we continue to repair it”, and the position that “all the statements in the structure are interconnected” are mutually exclusive and therefore cannot be held true together. When one is true the other must be false. This is against Quine's argument which attempts to hold the two positions true together.<sup>4</sup>

Now, Quine is left with two mutually exclusive options. He has to give up one of the two mutually exclusive statements. But whichever one he gives up, he faces a problem. If he gives up the position that “we can stay afloat in the boat and still continue to repair it”, then it

implies that he would be holding the statement "All the statements in the structure are interconnected" true. But the problem with this is that if we are prepared to give up any part of the linguistic structure, then, in principle, we should also be ready to give up the entire linguistic structure. But, Quine is not prepared to accept this. This will undermine his entire theory. However, if he gives up the statement "All the statements in the structure are interconnected", this means that statements of belief in the structure are independent of one another. But with this, he would be contradicting himself. He would be affirming the statement he has already rejected. The argument is claiming that Quine's challenge of the analytic-synthetic distinction will make him challenge the entire linguistic structure. Again, that if he chooses to give up the position that statements in the structure are interconnected then he would be contradicting himself.

### Argument from Interchangeability – Synonymy as Interchangeability

Quine also considered interchangeability as a possible satisfactory explanation of synonymy of terms. The aim is to discover whether interchangeability of words can yield synonymy without altering the truth value of the statement. Two concepts are interchangeable *salva veritate*, when one concept can be substituted for the other in the same statement without altering the truth value of the statement where those concepts feature. To show that it is not true that *bachelor* and *unmarried man* can be interchanged *salva veritate*, Quine gave some counter-examples in which the truth value of two sentences could not be preserved when the two expressions are interchanged. For instance, we have "bachelor" as "unmarried male", but there is also Bachelor of Arts, which is a degree in a university. The issue is that when a true statement says 'All bachelors are unmarried males', by substitution, it becomes "All bachelors of Arts are unmarried males". And by this test, 'bachelor' is not a synonym for 'unmarried male'. 'Bachelor' and 'unmarried male' are not interchangeable *salva veritate*.

Let us consider Quine's argument on cognitive synonymy to show whether it can provide satisfactory explanation for analyticity.

- (1) "Bachelor" and "unmarried male" are cognitively synonymous if and only if "All and only bachelors are unmarried males" is analytic.

Suppose we try to understand (1) through 'necessity': then it becomes

- (2) "Necessarily, all and only bachelors are bachelors", this is obviously an analytic statement.

We may simply go back and replace *synonym* for *synonym*; e. g,

- (3) "Necessarily, all and only bachelors are unmarried males", (i.e., replace in (2), 'bachelor' by 'unmarried male')

But then, (3), which is used to make sense of (2) (the necessity statement) is equivalent to (1). So, necessity already presupposes analyticity and cognitive synonymy presupposes analyticity.

The argument which Quine brings out of this is the following;

- (1) We want to use cognitive synonymy to explain analyticity.
- (2) But, cognitive synonymy presupposes necessity as the conclusion of the previous argument shows.

- (3) Necessity presupposes analyticity,

Therefore,

(4) Cognitive synonymy presupposes analyticity and we should not use cognitive synonymy to explain analyticity.

This kind of argument is what Quine (1961, 30) says "has the form, figuratively speaking, of a closed curved in space".

Another problem which he identifies with interchangeability is this. Suppose that we relativise interchangeability *salva veritate* to a particular language. This language contains logical and linguistic properties. The language contains: predicate letters such as "Fx", "F(xy)", "Gy", etc. Suppose further the language also contains atomic sentences: 'Fx', and complex sentences such as ' $\sim$ Fx', (Fx  $\wedge$  Gy), (Fx  $\rightarrow$  Gy), (Fx  $\leftrightarrow$  Gy), (Fx  $\vee$  Gy), etc. Suppose the language also contains a description such as; 'The king of x': ' $\exists xFx$ '. This kind of language is used to name classes, classes of classes, such as mathematical class {1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc}. For Quine, this kind of language may "be adequate to classical mathematics and indeed to scientific discourse generally". (Quine 1961, 30)

However, this kind of language, for Quine, is an extensional language. For 'Fx' and 'Gx' agree extensionally if and only if 'Fx' and 'Gx' are true of the same object. Can extensional language preserve cognitive synonymy? Suppose there is a world of many individual bachelors and unmarried males. Suppose further that 'bachelor' and 'unmarried men' are extensionally synonymous, then  $\Lambda x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$  will not preserve cognitive synonymy. This is because, the sentence 'x is a bachelor' will be true of a person (bachelor) and the sentence 'x is an unmarried man' will be true of another person (an unmarried male) in that world. Then, it follows that  $\Lambda x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$  is false because 'x is a bachelor', and 'x is an unmarried male' will sometimes pick different persons. But this is not the sense in which we speak of cognitive synonymy.

Two expressions are cognitively synonymous just in case they agree intensionally. " $\Lambda x (Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ "<sup>5</sup>, where 'Fx' is 'x is a bachelor' and 'Gx' is 'x is a married male' will be cognitively synonymous if and only if 'Fx' can be substituted for 'Gx' in any sentence without changing the truth value of the sentence. That implies that 'All Fx are Gx' must be true by virtue of meaning. Consider 'x is a creature with a heart' and 'x is a creature with a kidney'. Then the statement 'All and only *creatures with a hearts* are *creatures with kidneys*', will be true. They are extensionally equivalent but not by virtue of meaning. They are accident of matters of fact. So, extensional equivalence is not a safe ground for synonymy.

### Semantical Rule

A similar close curve argument is contained in Quine's problem with semantical rules. Quine examines whether analyticity can be understood through semantical rules. But, for Quine, this argument itself is fraught with a lot of problems. In the first instance, if it succeeds at all, it will only relativise analyticity to a certain language, since the explanation of analyticity will depend on the semantic rules of that language alone. Besides, when a rule says; 'S is analytic for L' or "A statement is analytic for language L° if and only if ...", it becomes clear that this rule is only conferring analyticity on some statements but it has not really explained the concept analyticity. But, before analyticity is conferred in any language, analyticity has to be first of all satisfactorily explained. This is Quine's issue.

Another variant of semantical rule is what Quine calls the 'rule of truth'. This also not only falls victim of relativising analyticity to a certain language but also generates another problem

of question begging. When a rule says, "A statement is analytic if it is (not only true but) true according to the semantical rule", (Quine 1961, 34). Quine argues that the notion of a 'semantical rule' also stands to be given a sufficient explanation just as analyticity. To understand analyticity through the 'rule of truth' and 'semantic rule', we need to, first of all understand what 'rule of truth' and 'semantic rule' mean. Without having a clear understanding of the notions of 'rule of truth' and 'semantical rule', using them to justify analyticity will also form a close curve. Quine argues that there is no way that these notions can be explained without involving other members of the analyticity group. Besides, an attempt to compare a semantical rule to a postulate may not yield analyticity. This is because semantical rules can become as numerous as there are contexts. None of these semantical rules would have peculiar preference over others. But, definitely, this could not be the sense in which we construe semantical rule. And this could not be used to explain analyticity.

Let us consider Quine's sense of a satisfactory explanation in form of an argument. This is the argument:

- (1) Any satisfactory explanation of any member of the analyticity group should not include any concept belonging to the family-circle, i.e., 'necessity', 'cognitive synonymy', 'semantical rule', etc.
- (2) Such an explanation must provide a general character and explanation which will be formally true of all other members of the family circle.
- (3) No such explanation satisfying (1) and (2) above has been presented for any of the members of the group separately.

Therefore, (4) analyticity has not been satisfactorily explained because conditions (1) to (3) have not been met.

I do not consider Quine's argument to be sufficient. The fact that conditions (1) to (3) have not been met is not enough to argue that analyticity cannot be satisfactorily explained.

Analyticity is used and accepted in natural language. The fact that it is used and accepted in natural language is enough an explanation for analyticity. If any satisfactory explanation is needed, then natural language should be studied and even questioned for allowing analyticity to be used.

### **Grice and Strawson on Quine's argument**

Grice and Strawson approach Quine's argument from two angles. Their first argument is to draw some consequences against Quine's purported extreme thesis. The extreme thesis attributed to Quine is that he rejected the analytic-synthetic distinction and argued that there is no difference at all marked by these expressions. But, the non-extreme thesis is that the distinction is misunderstood by those who use it.

Here is the non-extreme argument structured for Quine;

- (1) Any radical theory about distinctions, to be consistent, must reject all the actual and possible distinctions in language and knowledge.
  - (2) Quine's theory does not reject all the forms of distinctions in language and knowledge.
- Therefore, (3) Quine's theory is not a radical theory.

With this argument, Grice and Strawson made a case for some other types of distinctions, apart from the analytic-synthetic, which are made in language and knowledge, but which no theory has attempted to reject. For instance, there are some other expressions in language such as 'mean the same as' and 'does not mean the same as', which are used to make some distinctions both intensionally, and extensionally and doing so does not appear absurd. For example, "bachelor" means the same as "unmarried male", but "creature with kidneys" does not mean the same as "creature with a heart" (Grice and Strawson 1972, 77). This means that a distinction is marked between 'means the same as' and 'does not mean the same as'.

Therefore, if there are some non-absurd distinctions that are made in language, such as above, then "*mean the same as*" and "*does not mean the same as*" are meaningful. This means that sentences in which they occur can be meaningful. We can derive a definition of sentence synonymy from these clauses. For instance,

"Two sentences are synonymous if and only if any true answer to the question 'what does it mean?', asked of one of them, is a true answer to the same question, asked of the other." (1972, 78)

Grice and Strawson thought that Quine's rejection of sentence synonymy causes more harm than he anticipated. This is because sentence synonymy affects sentence significance and the rejection of one necessarily affects the other.

For instance, if 'means the same thing', and 'does not mean the same thing', do not make sense, the consequence is that Quine's arguments do not mean anything as well and therefore do not make sense. Again, it implies that Carnap's arguments to which Quine reacted do not mean anything either. This is because an argument must mean something in order that it can be understood. Then, what is all Quine's belabouring about if this is true? It also follows that Quine's arguments also cannot be understood because they do not mean anything. This is because for us to understand them, we must know what they mean; that is, they must mean something. The conclusion is that if synonymy does not make sense, Quine's arguments also do not make sense either. In this case, Quine is left with two options; either to agree that his arguments do not mean anything or that synonymy means something and that it is entrenched in our linguistic structure. Quine would not choose the first option, I assume. He would not agree that his arguments do not make sense. Accepting the second option will then admit synonymy. This means that sentence synonymy and therefore analyticity are entrenched in both philosophical and ordinary linguistic usage. Rejecting this on the basis of unsatisfactory explanation, as Quine does, would also not make good sense.

William P Alston (1986, 49-68), draws a similar point out of Quine's arguments. He understands Quine's arguments to imply that sentences, spoken by a speaker, will not have meaning. Synonymy is defined as 'having the same meaning' or 'meaning the same as'. If synonymy is not justified, according to Quine, then meaning also cannot be justified. But Alston's argument is that when a speaker utters a sentence in his language, the speaker is clear of the meaning of the sentences uttered. That is why the speaker corrects the listener whenever there is a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of his utterances.

For instance, when a speaker of the English language utters 'rabbit' in the language, he understands that he means a whole rabbit and not a rabbit part or rabbit stages, irrespective of how anybody might translate or interpret it. To Alston, knowing this is part of what it means



to have or use language "as a vehicle of thought and means of communication".(1986, 60) Given this, what a certain sentence means cannot depend solely on observation of behaviour and the circumstances of behaviour as Quine would wish to argue. This argument is used to attack Quine on synonymy and therefore meaning, although it has its foot in the *indeterminacy thesis*.

Grice and Strawson take care of Quine's argument on the satisfactory explanation of the analyticity concepts. Their argument could be structured in this format. (1) For any member of the analyticity group to make sense, it does not require Quine's kind of strict explanation. (2) Analyticity concepts can be explained in a comprehensible way, such that they will make sense to users. Therefore, (3) the fact that a strict explanation (Quine's type) cannot be given to those expressions does not imply that they do not make sense. This is the point also made by Arnold Kaufman (1953), that the difficulty in giving the type of explanation which Quine demands is not enough to justify our abandonment of the analytic-synthetic distinction.

Grice and Strawson then attempt to give an explanation of one of the members of the group that does not beg the question. This is to show that contrary to Quine, it is possible to explain analyticity. They believe that an explanation will be satisfactory if it is able to make the use of the terms clear to the users of the language. Once this kind of explanation is found, Quine's strict explanation becomes unnecessary. This is partly because such a strict explanation may not serve any significant purpose in the use and acceptance of those terms and, again, because it is doubtful that such an explanation may be found. And declaring synonymy unjustified based on this is like trying to declare the use of 'Pegasus' unjustified simply because the referent of the term has not been presented for sense perception.

### **Logical Impossibility, a Non Question Begging Explanation**

To provide an explanation that does not beg the question as to some of the members of analyticity family of concepts, an attempt was made by Grice and Strawson to explain 'logical impossibility' and 'natural impossibility'. This is done by making clear what each of the terms means. Some things are naturally possible but not logically possible. Although uncommon, it is still naturally possible that a child proves Russell's theory of types. Again, for instance, I will regard such a child as strange who is able to tell me the history of my generation to the fourth generation. However, if the history is true, I will agree but with utter amazement. But, at least it is possible for me to agree. But, consider the statement; "A four year old child is a grand parent of his father".

What is this sentence saying? It is saying that the child is an adult. But logically it is saying that a child is not a child. It is impossible that this is true no matter what. This is because it involves a logical contradiction. That a child can explain my generation to me, might be accepted as possible even though difficult. But, the statement 'A four year old child is a grand father of his father' is a logical contradiction. However, it can be said that the second sentence 'The child is a grand parent of his father', may make an ordinary sense, since we can understand what the statement says, but technically, it does not make a logical sense because it is a logical contradiction. This is true by the virtue of linguistic understanding of concepts and the rules of language. And, it will be concluded that the speaker does not know the meaning of the terms involved in the statement.

A child can never *be* an adult according to the conceptual meaning and understanding of the terms as used in the language. With this simple analysis, 'natural impossibility' makes a different sense from 'logical impossibility'. What Grice and Strawson did here is to show that 'logical impossibility' can be explained in contrast with 'natural impossibility' in a way that makes sense to an audience. Therefore, it is false that concepts in the analyticity group cannot be explained in a satisfactory way that it will make sense to the listener. The implication of this is that analyticity can be explained in a way that makes sense.

### Verification and Reductionism

Quine also rejects verification and reductionism as a means of satisfactory explanation of cognitive synonymy and consequently, analyticity. Quine's understanding of verification is that the meaning of a certain statement is its method of confirming or disconfirming it. This means that a statement is meaningful if and only if it can be established to be either true or false through empirical procedures. A statement is verified when the meaning of that statement is determined by empirical evidence. For instance, the statement, "It is raining", is true if it is raining. But if it is not raining then the statement is false.

However, for the positivists, the false statement is equally meaningful. The analytic perspective of verification is that is that a statement is *analytic* if it is confirmed, affirm or held true come what may. But for Quine, the idea of analyticity may not be clear unless we understand the idea of 'what may'. That is "This comes to naught unless we independently circumscribe the 'what may'" (Quine 1960, 66). The 'what' in 'what may', for Quine, is referring to stimulation. In other words, degree and mode of responding to stimulation solely becomes a determinant factor for a statement to be analytic or otherwise. This what Quine is saying in "One way is to take 'come what may' as 'come what stimulation may' and this gives virtually the definition of stimulus analyticity" (Quine 1960, 66) In *Word and Object* (1966), Quine may be read as upholding verification, the position he rejected in *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*. However, Kant (1963) would not agree with Quine's position, for Kant, our faculty also plays an essential role in the production of knowledge. That is why for Kant;

But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arise out of experience. For it may well be that even our empirical knowledge is made up of what we receive through impressions and of what our own faculty of knowledge (sensible impressions serving merely as the occasion) supplies from itself. (Kant 1963, 41)

This will mean that impressions from stimulation are just raw materials with which our faculty works to produce knowledge and not the sole determinant of what proposition is analytic or synthetic as Quine will argue.

Reduction takes place when a certain phenomenon is described or explained by reference to another phenomenon *without any remainder*. There are explanatory, ontological, eliminative, logical, and descriptive types of reduction. For instance, explanatory reduction consists in explaining a phenomenon A in terms of a phenomenon B without leaving anything about A unexplained. Ontological reduction occurs when a certain phenomenon A is observed to be nothing over and above phenomenon B. The type of reduction Quine subscribes to in *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* could be classified as explanatory. This is

because the explanation of the meaning of a statement is reduced to the explanation of its method of verification. This means that the explanation of meaning is nothing over and above the explanation of the method of verification of statements. The explanation of meaning is reduced to the stating of facts.

Now, to arrive at a synonymy, two statements must have the same method of empirical verification. But, Quine identifies some consequences of this principle. First, it presupposes that statements are meaningful individually, according to their relationship with empirical evidence. That is, the meaning of each statement can be determined by its empirical verification, independently of all other statements. This point is made in following ways: "The dogma of reductionism survives in the supposition that each statement, taken in isolation from its fellows, can admit of confirmation or infirmation at all".(Quine 1961, 41, Sleight 1972, 68)

Second, it also presupposes that for each statement, there is a certain portion of empirical fact or evidence that determines its meaning. This is what he regards as the other dogma of empiricism because it assumes that the meaning of individual statements can be established by supporting empirical evidence alone, *independently of other statements*. For Quine, knowledge is like a web where the meaning of an individual statement depends, to a large extent, on the truth function of the other statements in the whole system.(Quine 1961, 42-43) In this case, no statement faces experience *independently*.

Statements do not face experience individually but as a system. For the empiricists, the foundation upon which the possibility of synonymy of terms is situated is the assumption of the individuality of statements and the corresponding factual evidence. But Quine argued that knowledge is a web where statements do not face experience independently of others. Given that statements get their meaning and sense from experience, since experience changes, meanings will also change with experience. In this sense, it is not safe to talk about sentence synonymy. Synonymy is therefore threatened wherever in the system the change occurs.

However, Grice and Strawson identify a fallacy of false dilemma in Quine's argument. The fallacious reasoning is this: synonymy can only be explained through verification and radical reductionism or else it is not explained at all. And since Quine has argued that statements do not face experience individually as presupposed by verificationism and reductionism, the conclusion is that synonymy cannot be explained. Grice and Strawson (1972) attempted to present the definition of synonymy which accords with Quine's holistic system of language. For them:

"two statements are synonymous if and only if any experience which, on certain assumptions about the truth-values of other statements, confirms or disconfirms one of the pair, also, on the same assumptions, confirm or disconfirm the other to the same degree."(1972, 86)

A restating of Grice and Strawson's definition of synonymy will reveal the problem I identified with Quine's model in the last paragraph. The statement may now read; "Two (independent) statements are synonymous if and only if any experience which, on certain assumptions about the truth value of other statements (either interconnected or not) confirms or disconfirms one of the pair, also *on the same assumptions*,<sup>6</sup> confirms or disconfirms the

other to the same degree". This is the reading. But we can see that this does not fit into Quine's model. To fit into Quine's model, such a definition must start with something like this: "Two logically interconnected statements are synonymous..." or this: "Two non independent statements are synonymous...". We would then see that the sense of synonymy is already defeated with statements starting with these kinds of clauses. As I have argued, I think a close understanding of Quine's model threatens any talk of synonymy.

According to Quine, whenever there is any conflict with experience, statements of beliefs in the web are all subject to reevaluation. Quine believes that we do not have any power over experience. Then, whenever there is any conflict between experience and the web of belief, we can only adjust our statements in order to conform to experience. But, since statements in the web are of equal status, any of them can be reevaluated. Therefore, there is no statement that is immune from revision. Any statement can be reevaluated. But this is where Grice and Strawson came in to argue that Quine's holism can still accommodate the analytic-synthetic distinction. Their argument is that if any statement can be revised at any time to become either analytic or synthetic, then Quine's holism still gives room for the analytic-synthetic distinction.

The issue is that an analytic statement in Quine's holism can become synthetic whenever the adjustment in the web of belief warrants it: it is still necessary in the adjusted web of belief, yet it is revisable. The question at this point is this: can we still hold a statement as analytic if it is not necessary? In other words, is 'necessity' a necessary condition for analyticity? It must be noted that all analytic statements are necessary: either necessarily true or necessarily false. However, Grice and Strawson are able to reestablish the analytic-synthetic distinction in Quine's holism, but they raise a fundamental issue about the nature of analyticity. This is because an attempt to situate analyticity in Quine's holism has cost them one of the main features of analyticity, that is, 'necessity'. But, it may still be argued that Quine's model preserves necessity. "Necessity" is then relative to the available web of belief, i.e., instead of saying: "P is analytic" means "P is necessarily true or necessarily false", we should say "P is necessarily true or necessarily false within a given web of belief". Necessity is still preserved. However, the debate is open. What they have done is to meet Quine's objections against the analytic-synthetic distinction and to conclude that it is not the case that the analytic-synthetic distinction does not make sense in the philosophical and epistemological circle including Quine's holism.

### Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to present a brief debate of the contemporary debate on the analytic-synthetic distinction. I have done a critical exposition of Quine's main arguments in "*Two Dogmas of Empiricism*" and attempted to present the debate on each of the arguments. The debate includes how some other philosophers have explained and responded to some of Quine's arguments. Notable among the views considered against Quine's position are the views of Grice and Strawson and William P Alston. In the debate, attempts have been made to argue that Quine's arguments are not strong enough to render the analytic-synthetic distinction unjustified. Not only that, some other issues have been raised. For instance, there is the issue whether intentional meaning is completely independent of extensional meaning.

Another point is whether 'necessity' is a necessary condition for a sentence being analytic. I have identified this as an open question for further debates.

### Notes

1. The main focus of this paper on Quine's arguments on the analytic-synthetic distinction are those arguments contained in Quine W. V. O., "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", *From A Logical Point of View*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1961.
2. This is why Quine rejects the argument from new notation. Quine's argument is that the first two arguments rest on the preexisting synonymy and this makes them unacceptable. The consequence of the third argument is linguistic confusion. So, they all fail to account for synonymy.
3. It is not also clear with what linguistic scheme this could be approached. Are we going to have the previous linguistic scheme changed or develop a new language? We would not begin to change our previous scheme; it will still retain the trunk of the rejected linguistic scheme. We may want to develop a new language; but how do we proceed on this? These are problematic cases.
4. These two positions are contradictory and holding them true together may mean a lot negative on Quine's work. This is why I assumed that Quine might not want to hold the two positions true together.
5. The translation of the symbols is 'For all x, if x is a bachelor, then x is an unmarried male', where x is assumed to be a person.
6. This is the assumption that the two statements are independent and either other statements are interconnected or not.

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