

The Objectivity of Analyticity: Quine's Two Dogmas Argument Revisited

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Abstract: From a classical view, analyticity entails objectivity, as opposed to syntheticity. With "Two Dogmas" and other essays, the traditional analytical aprioricity is dead, various attempts for seeking recourse to conventions also reveal to be insufficient to account for the leak from subjective experiences about the external world and objective knowledge reserved in a law-governed sphere. Although Quine cast doubt on a traditional analytic-synthetic distinction and a priori truth obtained by virtue of meaning and disapproved of Carnap's logical empiricism, i.e., logical truth in the sense of conventions that defined by linguistic structure, it is clear that he has never refused the possibility of seeking a common picture of our external world, a kind of objectivity neither based on a transcendental Kantian approach of a priori intuition, nor the one that relies on a logical framework and certain structural properties that are isomorphic between private experiences. Quine opposed these views mainly by providing a holistic approach which states that confirmation is holistic where indeterminacy sets the accountability of every single given expression. However, this claim eventually resuscitates the question of the relation between objectivity and the questioned analyticity, i.e. truth by virtue of meaning. This essay argues that in fact, a new kind of objectivity has emerged with the Quinean approach, namely the analytical objectivity.

Keywords: analyticity, objectivity, Quine, holistic view

1. Introduction

The famous "gavagi" example was given by Quine to raise the problem of the indeterminacy of translation. If someone say "gavagai," the word is uttered as saying a rabbit. Accordingly, some linguists may argue that the linguistic system that contains the word has to decide whether that utterance of a native speaker means "rabbit," "undetached rabbit parts," or "rabbit stages". The only "sense-data" he had that was used to determine the translation was the specific context in which this word is produced by local people. Quine concludes that the "referent is impenetrable", in the sense that there is no empirical data that would allow one to decide between different possible translations of a statement in an indigenous language. The crucial consideration behind this argument was, as Quine stated, that "a statement about the world does not always or usually have a separable fund of empirical consequences that it can call its own". A word, once its truth-valued is fixed, can have a potentially infinite number of possibilities for potential references.

What follows from this is an objection to classical ontology. If a word cannot be made meaningful unless being relative to some background language in a coordinate system, it will make no sense to

talk about the ontological identity of an object on its own. There are simply too many ways to map a word to its reference in the world. The objects that only preserve values that satisfy the statements in which the variables of quantification appear. Being is to be the value of a variable. As Quine claimed: "Thus ontology can be multiplied relative, multiply meaningless apart".

Though ontological relativity means that there are various possible theories and models of the world expressed by our knowledge, and there is no logically necessary ground for how these different theories and models and the world they express are, it is nevertheless a trivial fact that in daily conversation A and B are referring to the very same rabbit and we speak about the same scientific theory of quantum mechanics. Thus it seems that there must be some possibilities to maintain certain objectivity as a common picture that all parties can refer to. Even though a hallucination of knowing the objectives themselves is rejected and any ontological question loses its sense, the correspondence between relevant words and a particular range of perception that has overlap among a group of people is preserved. When we utter some words, we do make a justified assertion about objects or events in the world. Thus, the possibility of seeking objective truth arises from this correspondence. This is also in line with Quine's position of rejecting conventionalism in favor of naturalism or physicalism.

2. A Holistic View

Quine has never abandoned the thesis that there is no break between ordinary language and scientific theories or common sense and science, where observational statements are similarly the starting point and the touchstone of verification. It should be noted that observational sentences according to Quine are not entirely subjective. First, they have conditioned responses to concurrent stimuli produced by the external world. They are "the protocol sentences most closely linked causally to neural intake: most closely linked not in respect of the subject matter, but physically, physiologically, neurally" [1]. Secondly, they are intersubjective, as they "must command agreement of all competent witnesses." This follows that observational sentences are viable means for founding natural knowledge. Quine maintained that there is a preestablished harmony of innate cognitive structures guaranteed by natural selection, which makes communication possible by favoring a "perceptual similarity standard" and allows scientific concepts to preserve a "degree of objective validity" [2,3].

While Carnap sought to ground objective knowledge of the external world that starts from an autopsychological basis by extrapolating certain logical structures from subjective experiences, Quine criticized him for failing to take the foundations of science as its own and suggested a naturalized epistemology that "concerned with the foundations of science" [3]. And Quine also criticized Carnap's rational reconstruction approach which promotes certain a priori "structural proprieties" of science. Instead, "science itself tells". Quine wanted to show the process of how scientific claims are confirmed, e.d. how objective knowledge is actually acquired from perceptual and cognitive experiences within a frame of naturalized epistemology, but not only stipulating that there is a logical possibility of objective knowledge.

However, in examining the causal relationship between the external world and the sensory evidence, between a physicalistic language and an individual language formed by privatized data-sense, Quine needed not to ignore a fact. While observation statements are said "holophrastic" (assuming no a priori knowledge and is theory-free) and direct reflections of our sensory experiences, cannot avoid being subjectively founded, at least partially, the scientific theories are expected to be naturalized, expressed in logico-mathematical terms, and are sufficiently objective, or at least, intersubjectively, to capture the standard picture of the world. Although Quine explicitly opposed the idea that there is a dichotomy between objectivity and experiences and a need to bridge this gap via "a fancifully fanciless medium of unvarnished... sense-datum" language, he could not avoid the incompatibility between the physicalistic nature of neural intake and the subjective nature of one's perceptual Surely, by adopting a holistic view, Quine's solution was that the naturalized epistemology

is initially in a psychological setting, in an attempt to avoid undesirable isolation of the parts of the whole picture. In my view, although he might be able to shorten the distance to objectivity, his holistic approach did not obtain an overreaching success in bringing our knowledge and objectivity from the starting point. In my view, the observational sentences proposed by Quine stand more or less in the middle ground between subjectivity and objectivity, composed of a mixture of neural intake and cognitive discourse but cannot be attributed as wholly objective. By replacing experiences in a more scientific form such as "stimulation" or "the triggering of sensory receptors", he did not render them more scientific or objective. It still has the underpinning of ideas, impressions, or sense-data brought by Lock, Hume, and Berkeley. Even though we agree that science can be not deduced from experiences anymore, we still need to answer the question of how can natural science eventually accommodate empirical psychology as part of its "component book", as the two cannot be totally homogeneous [3].

Therefore, expected objectivity is now perhaps not associated with deduction anymore, but with accommodating. Precisely, the questions still left for Quine are to show how the gap between "stimulus meaning" (a meaning that only makes sense by meaning something for somebody) and the meaning that means something by carrying out its meaning can be bridged, and how the expected "objective validity" can arise from and eventually transcend the inevitability subjective belief and sensory evidence and can be expressed objectively via language, without rewinding to an approach that is relegated to a purely psychological study(not a naturalized one) [4].

3. Beyond Conventionalism

In *The Logical Structure of the World* of 1928, Carnap seeks to construct a system that establishes the central thesis of logical empiricism: the system of knowledge is composed of two elements: conventions as logical relations and empirical contents of experiences that are immediately given. Further, In *The Logical Syntax of Language*, Carnap adopted the idea that The logical truths of a language system LS are all and only those sentences of LS that are true-in-LS solely in virtue of the linguistic conventions for LS. In an attempt to eliminate all a priori synthetic, he identified the analyticity with the conventions. The whole of our knowledge is thus reduced to only two types of components: logical conventional and empirical contents. All logical truths express linguistic conventions and are truths by virtue of the linguistic conventions in which they are expressed.

However, In the Truth truth Convention, Quine raised doubt about this logical conventionalism. The main thesis is that in this sense logical truths are analytically true by convention or definition. They cannot be so by being stipulated. Because if they are consequences of stipulations which are general conventions about this truth, a logical inference is still needed and it cannot be explained by stipulation and so forth. So here we encounter the paradox: stipulations require other stipulations to be interpreted. We are then confronted with an infinite regress, i.e. any logical primitive is at least composed of two parts, and a certain meaning must be attributed to at least one of them for the stipulation itself to be interpreted.

A good example given by Quine is the "if idiom"(if-then). "If --then" is taken as a primitive logical expression. Let us consider the stipulation that is supposed to state the condition that implicitly defines the "if-then": x, y, and z being statements, if x and z are true and if z is written "if x, then y", then y is true. Now two conditions are expressed in "if-idiom" intervene, and it is necessary to understand the first one, to understand the condition of the second "if-idiom". This condition defines determine the meaning of the logical primitive "if-then". Therefore, we would need another stipulation to be able to interpret the first "if-then". We cannot escape from this regression to infinity, unless if we accept that a certain meaning is attributed to logical expressions independently of postulates. As Quine concluded: "In a word, the difficulty is that if logic is to proceed mediately from conventions, logic is needed for inferring logic from the conventions " [5].

Putting Quine's arguments in the general picture of his holism and naturalized epistemology. I think that he did not solely criticize the conventionalism adopted by Carnap, but his stance goes beyond conventionalism. If Carnap aimed to reduce abstract concepts to a certain logical structure with immediate empirical contents by means of a linguistic framework system, this conventionalism ultimately rests on the distinction between analytical statements and synthetic statements expressing the content of the empirical world. Quine rejected this distinction and shifted the whole focus from the very beginning. He explicated claimed in two dogmas: "total science is like a field of force whose boundary conditions are experienced. A conflict with experience at the periphery occasions readjustments in the interior of the field." The system of knowledge statements is not taken in isolation but is characterized by dynamic and constant interaction and adjustments. His criticism against conventionalism does not lie within the frame of conventionalism, but he went beyond it by accommodating this into a broader picture. Conventions are now attachments of knowledge of science, but not what is used for scientific inquiries.

4. Towards an Analytic Objectivity

With "Two Dogmas" and other essays, the traditional analytical aprioricity is challenged severely, various attempts for seeking recourse to conventions also reveal to be insufficient to account for the leak from subjective experiences about the external world and objective knowledge reserved in a law-governed sphere. Although Quine cast doubt on a traditional analytic-synthetic distinction and a priori truth obtained by virtue of meaning and disapproved of Carnap's logical empiricism, i.e., logical truth by virtue of linguistic conventions, it is clear that he has never refused the possibility of seeking a common picture of our external world --- a kind of objectivity neither based on a transcendental Kantian approach of a priori intuition, nor the one that relies on a logical framework and certain structural properties that are isomorphic between private experiences [6,7].

In "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", Quine famously objected to the analytic-synthetic distinction. He divided analytic statements into two classes. Either it expresses a logical truth, such as the statement "No unmarried man is married" and the like; or it is a statement of Frege-analyticity, which can be turned into a logical truth by synonyms substituting, for instance, "No bachelor is married". He claimed that the major problem lies in the second class and analyticity in virtue of meaning is not justified, for there are two reasons: 1). Definitions and explications either rely on preexisting synonyms or other preexisting synonyms. 2). Interchangeability without the truth-value changing could be due to chance by not meaning. He further advanced empiricism without the dogmas. If every sentence is a part that cannot be isolated from the whole system, a verification theory of meaning is then made implicit: the occurrence of sensory events can add or distract the likelihood of a statement, which can only be done within the whole system.

But what is this kind of objectivity in the context of the dissolution of analytic-synthetic distinction? Gary Kemp has argued that Quine's "objectivity is without object" because it has already been made clear that the objects, in theory, have no meaning beyond how that theory is reinterpreted by another theory [8]. Again, the problem of objectivity is no more about being able to know a transcendental object such as Kantian "Ding-an-Sich", nor is it about grounding the truth of the external world starting from immediate experiences as suggested by old empiricists, but it is objectivity raised from a whole sphere or system in which we observe things, learn the language, collect information and response to stimulation.

Now we get to a crucial point where such kind of objectivity is reminiscent of the very concept of analyticity, which has been put into question from the beginning. Analyticity is a certain a priori truth in virtue of meaning, and meaning can only be confirmed within a holistic picture, i.e., by considering as an integral part of the network and its references being always relative to other background words, in the same way, the objective validity of science is also acquired by being positioned in the whole

system, accommodating empirical experiences and applying a naturalized epistemic worldview. Briefly, a meaning-holism has its equivalence to the integrity of observational sentences.

Boghossian gave two notions of analyticity, one is metaphysical and the other epistemic, rejected the first one but maintained the second one is needed for the theory of a priori knowledge independently of empirical investigation. I agree with him insofar that a metaphysical concept of analyticity is in contrast with Quinean's position, characterized by an attempt to naturalize epistemology, i.e., respond to scientific questions within science itself, and to square philosophical notions with our current way of understanding the natural world by rescuing them from "abyss of the transcendental" [9,10]. Furthermore, I think that his second concept of analyticity paves a way to answer the question of how this objectivity is analytic, although it is debatable whether the knowledge of those meaning facts is prior. I would argue that they are more or less like a posterior necessity proposed by Kripke [11]. But this is not the main focus of this essay.

Boghossian defined that A is epistemically analytic for T to say that T's knowledge of A's meaning alone suffices for T's justification for A so that empirical support is not required [12]. If someone knows the relevant facts about their meaning, then that person will be in a position to form a justified belief about their truth. I would argue that this is a water-down version of the Quinean holistic view: instead of requiring the whole system of knowledge or sense as confirmation background information, this epistemic notion of analyticity takes certain common sense out of its totality that is sufficient to justify the meaning. If T is sufficient to account for A, then the total background theory needed for A is entailed by T, then T could be considered as a whole system against which A is confirmed. For instance, when I say that this is a cat, surely I do not need to include the theory of quantum mechanics as part of the holistic system for falsification or confirmation, but only certain data about the weight, fur, shape, and a common response to that particular stimulus. If this epistemic notion of analyticity is saved, then objectivity concerning the whole sphere of knowledge is indeed analytic.

5. Conclusion

This article argues that Quine criticized analytic-synthetic distinction and went beyond the conventionalism adopted by Carnap mainly by providing a holistic approach. This holism states that confirmation is holistic in that the warrant for any given sentence depends on the warrant for every other sentence. From a classical view, analyticity entails objectivity, and Carnap's logical empiricism also preserves a relativized a priori by showing that logical truth can be analytically true by linguistic conventions. Given the condition that Quine's objection to both the classical view and logical empiricism, might lead to the crisis that Quine's theory also supposes a rejection of all a priori or analytic knowledge. In the view of this article, the objective base of analytic knowledge is resurrected, for that Quine's holism presupposes analytic objectivity. In dissolving the distinction between synthetic and analytic statements, Quine wanted to retrieve the analyticity with a holistic view where the naturalized epistemology is still supposed to produce.

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