TWO DOGMATISTS

by

Charles R. Pigden

University of Otago

Grice and Strawson's 'In Defense of a Dogma is admired even by revisionist Quineans such as Putnam (1962) who should know better. The analytic/synthetic distinction they defend is distinct from that which Putnam successfully rehabilitates. Theirs is the post-positivist distinction bounding a grossly enlarged analytic. It is not, as they claim, the sanctified product of a long philosophic tradition, but the cast-off of a defunct philosophy - logical positivism. The fact that the distinction can be communally drawn does not show that it is based on a real difference. Subcategories that can be grouped together by enumeration will do the trick. Quine's polemical tactic (against which Grice and Strawson protest) of questioning the intelligibility of the distinction is indeed objectionable, but his argument can be revived once it is realized that 'analytic' *et al.* are theoretic terms, and there is no extant theory to make sense of them. Grice and Strawson's paradigm of logical impossibility is, in fact, possible. Their attempt to define synonymy in Quinean terms is a failure, nor can they retain analyticity along with the Quinean thesis of universal revisability. The dogma, in short, is indefensible.

I. Introduction

'Two Dogmas',[1] Quine's great attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction, caused quite a stir when it first came out, and provoked a spate of replies. One of the few to have stood the test of time is H. P. Grice and P. F. Strawson's (1958) 'In Defense of a Dogma' (henceforward DD). It is much anthologized, praised by Quinean revisionists such as Hilary Putnam (1962) (1975, p. 34) and appealed to by the likes of R. M. Hare, whose systems might not survive the demise of a sharp distinction (1981, p. 81). If the analytic/synthetic dogma is still a going concern, that is largely due to Grice and Strawson's defence.

What are its merits? According to Putnam (1975, pp. 34-35), GS (as Grice and Strawson will henceforth be known) offer theoretical *reasons* for supposing that the distinction marks a real difference (which is, after all, the point at issue). They don't just beat their breasts and declaim that the difference is real and they feel it in their bones - no, they argue (1) that there must be a difference for philosophers to succeed in making the communal distinction (DD, pp. 42-43).

In fact, GS do more than this. They go on (2) to criticize Quine's central argument that

the notion analytic cannot be clearly defined, since it forms part of a closed circle of concepts, all of which stand in equal need of clarification. Even if this is true, it does not constitute a decisive argument either against the category or the distinction marking if off. The (unspecified) standards of intelligibility to which Quine appeals are set far too high. Whatever they are, it is clear that too many words would fail to meet them (DD, pp. 147-9). (3) GS make a rather unfortunate attempt to break into the circle with a concrete example of a logical impossibility - unfortunate, because, as I shall argue, it is precisely the kind of analyticity ('it is analytic that not . . .') that experience might persuade us to discard. (Their idea seems to be that a stream of such examples, together, perhaps, with the appropriate contrasts, would yield a sort of inductive definition. DD, pp. 150-1). Finally, they turn to the last and best third of Quine's paper, where he links the analytic/synthetic distinction with empiricist reductionism (the second of the two dogmas). Because our statements face the bar of experience 'not individually, but only as a corporate body' (1961, p. 41), Quine argues that no single statement can be assigned its peculiar verification conditions. Hence synonymy (analyticity and all the rest) cannot be defined in terms of co-verifiability. And since it is *optional* which statements we revise in the face of 'recalcitrant' experience, analyticity cannot be defined as absolute unrevisability. At best, there is a continuum between those statements we would revise at the drop of an experience, and those we would give up only if things got really weird. GS suggest (4) that synonymy *can* be defined despite the lack of determinate verification conditions. Two statements are synonymous if, *on certain assumptions*, experiences which would confirm or disconfirm one, would confirm or disconfirm the other to the same degree (DD, p. 156). And (5) the category 'analytic' can be retained though no propositions are absolutely unrevisable, so long as a distinction is preserved between those statements that are dropped through mere falsity and those which are abandoned because the concepts involved are changed or given up (DD, p. 157).

This paper is an attack on the defence. But it should not therefore be construed as a defence of the attack. I *do* think there is an analytic/synthetic distinction - or at least that such a distinction can be drawn. But the category of the analytic is small - much smaller than is commonly supposed. It is scarcely worth a philosopher's serious attention. Putnam (1962), (1975), the arch-revisionist of Quineanism, got it more or less right. He defines a narrow and uninteresting realm of analytic truths consisting of

synonymies and their consequences. This is *not* (Putnam himself to the contrary) the bloated empire of the analytic defended by GS. So before turning to the analytic imperialism of GS, I shall outline Putnam's severely reduced realm and explain why the boundaries had to be pushed back.

The result is that the category of the synthetic - usually defined as the non-analytic - will tend to break up. For being non-analytic becomes a trait too common to confer philosophic distinction. The items that would be included in the enlarged synthetic are too disparate for the grouping to be of interest. Moreover, in so far as 'synthetic' *did* have any connotation over and above 'non-analytic', it tended to exclude such propositions as the truths of logic and mathematics, now in the non-analytic basket. So either the term will be dropped, or it will be supplied with a new connotation, which determines a smaller and more cohesive class. Logic, mathematics, and much else will be left in no-man's land. It transpires that if Putnam is right about the analytic, GSs' first argument is not as good as Putnam himself supposes. And unfortunately for them, he is.

II. The Truth about Analyticity

Putnam defines analytic truths thus:

Analytic truths are (or are like) statements which fulfill (or nearly fulfill) the following criteria, or are consequences thereof:

(i) The statement has the form 'Something (someone) is an A if and only if it (he, she) is a B' where 'A' is a single word.

(ii) The statement holds without exception, and provides us with a criterion for something's being the sort of thing to which the term 'A' applies.

(iii) The criterion is the only one that is accepted and employed in connection with the term.

(iv) The term is not a law-cluster term.

(Putnam [1975], p. 65)

This is not the place to rehearse all Putnam's arguments and elucidations. But the class he is trying to capture consists of such inanities as 'Bachelors are unmarried men' - boring lexicographic synonymies and their consequences; statements which 'cut no philosophic ice' (1975, p. 36). He wants to isolate these because they are the only propositions which satisfy the *ideology* of analyticity; the purported accounts of what (bloated) analyticity is. They are (a) true in virtue of (something like) linguistic stipulation; and (b) unrevisable given the language - i.e. a change in assigned truth-value betokens a *mere* or *trivial* meaning change (that is *all* that has happened). Putnam accepts Quine's argument in 'Truth by Convention' that 'the radical thesis that logic is true by language alone quickly becomes the harmless truism that "logical truth is true by virtue of language plus logic"' (Putnam [1962] [1979, p. 188], Quine [1936] [1976]). And if logic is not true by convention, neither is mathematics.

It is not just that logical truth transcends convention - its change transcends convention too. Logic (at least some of it) is revisable. Indeed, Putnam wants to revise it. But 'to assimilate the change from one system of logic to another to the change that would be made if we were to use the noise "bachelor" to stand for "unmarried woman" instead of "unmarried man" is assimilating a mountain to a molehill' (1975,p. 51). For instance (Putnam thinks), we should shift to a quantum logic rather than accept a physically weird or weirdly anti-realist physics. The shift allows us to reject these weirdnesses as untrue and compels us (in the small) to restrict our inferences. It is not as if we are reading '&' for 'v' and vice versa! (1979, pp. 189-92). Finally, Putnam looks askance at a good many 'analyticities' going the rounds. Many are not even true, let alone true in virtue of lexicographic conventions or synonymies.[2, 3]

In fact, Putnam's definition exceeds his brief. Besides its intended victims, it entraps the truths of logic (and much of mathematics as well). Since they (or at least some of them) are necessarily true (true under any appropriate interpretations), then they are true

under interpretations which verify 'All bachelors are unwed' (etc.). Hence they are included among its consequences. The analytic has reconquered logic! But Putnam need not despair since the reconquest is very shaky. For one thing, it may be a matter of dual sovereignty. Any attempt to define the *synthetic* as the inclusive consequences of consistent subsets of a base class of selected statements, will likewise rule in logic. Moreover, the analytic can be thrown back by fiat. We simply restrict the analytic to those consequences of (i)-(iv) statements that are not logically (arithmetically, mathematically) true. More interestingly, we could restrict the consequence relation to something of less than classical strength. Putnam should sympathize with this. He is not only a revisionist logician, but specifies that the 'if and only if' of (i) (together with any 'ors' that may be involved) are not the truth-functional creations of classical logic. Presumably they would determine a weaker consequence relation; perhaps one that would exclude the truths of logic and mathematics.[4]

I come now to my first polemical point. If Putnam is right about the boundaries of the properly analytic, then he is wrong to commend GS. His point is that the only ideologically sound analyticities are the trivial ones he delineates. These fit the analytic bill: others do not. There is a distinction between true analyticities and others but it does not lie where it is usually left. The *valid* distinction is distinct from the one that is commonly drawn. GSs' point is that since philosophers *in fact* agree on the current distinction, there *must be* (pending stupendously good counterarguments) a real difference there - that is, there must be two distinct categories each bound together by some significant and remarkable feature. We cannot distinguish the (current) analytic from the synthetic simply on the basis of enumeration. (The classes are infinite or indefinitely large.) Thus the current categories must be *genuine*, possessed of a *rationale*, if there is to be a consensus in sorting.

For Putnam (though he does not clearly realize this) the practice to which GS appeal is *superstitious*. What philosophers *do* (in terms of drawing distinctions) is inconsistent with the stories they tell about it (e. g. everything on the larger analytic side is 'true by linguistic convention' or something similar). What philosophers call the 'analytic' is not distinguished by any philosophically interesting property (unless being *called* 'analytic' by 'fifties philosophers counts as interesting). Rather, there is a bundle of disparate

subcategories, plus or minus various odds and ends, held together by a myth. Much the same must be said of the synthetic. It should fall apart. For (except for hard-line empiricists) what *unified* this class was *the lack of* this mythical analyticity - in itself supposedly a significant feature. All that remains now is a class some of whose members are marked by greater responsiveness to experience, a more clear-cut concern with 'matters of fact and existence'. Thus the philosophic practice is based on an illusion. T here is no single significant something about the 'fifties analytic which distinguishes it from the synthetic (and vice versa).

But according to GS this is precisely what cannot be, given the philosophical consensus. So, if GSs' argument is correct, Putnam is in trouble. He cannot commend their argument and ignore its conclusion - that there is an analytic/synthetic distinction *other than the one drawn by him*. The loyal Putnamite must therefore improve upon the Master by showing how this other distinction can be drawn in the absence of a real difference. How did philosophers (at least philosophers of the 'fifties) do the trick? Whence this consensus on two unreal categories?

The answer lies shrouded in the mists of time, in a past that by 1958 was already forgotten.

III. History of a Distinction

GS open up their argument (1) with a whopping historical falsehood. The distinction expressed by analytic/synthetic was what, in earlier times, philosophers 'have supposed themselves to be expressing' by such pairs as 'necessary' and 'contingent', 'a priori' and 'a posteriori', 'truth of reason' and 'truth of fact'. The distinction is not just a fad of GS & Co., but is grounded in a long and 'not wholly disreputable' tradition (DD, p. 142). This is sheer nonsense. The necessary/contingent distinction goes back to Aristotle at least, but only coincides with the analytic/synthetic in the writings of empiricists and their followers. The analytic and the synthetic were unknown to the scholastics, but if we try, anachronistically, to impose these notions on their work, we can see that the necessary and the analytic do not come to the same thing. God's existence was their paradigm of necessity, but according to Aquinas it was (for us)

synthetic.[5] (The five ways all work from synthetic premises.)[6] The basic principles of morality (natural law, etc.) are necessary, grounded in God's immutable will, but hardly analytic. Indeed, necessary but non-analytic moral truths persist through Price, Reid, and Kant right up to Ross in 1939![7] Necessities abound in Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, but it would be a bold scholar who maintained that, if properly analyzed, they would all wind up analytic. And *no one* would say that that is how Descartes saw them! Quine is notoriously opposed to both the necessary and the analytic, but being opposed by Quine does not convert them into the same thing. Kant, of course, *invented* the analytic and the synthetic, as well as the a priori and the a posteriori in their modern meanings. But again, the distinctions are conceptually and extensionally distinct. The synthetic a priori is a capacious realm, including morality, arithmetic, and geometry. (Its truths are necessary too.) Schopenhauer[8] and even Frege[9] were Kantians in this, though Schopenhauer had his doubts about morality,[10] and Frege tried to expand the analytic to include arithmetic. Even so, geometry remained. Russell retained the synthetic a priori right up until 1912 (after *Principia Mathematica*) and the old-style intuitionists *never* gave it up.[11] Even empiricists, anxious to do away with such concepts as the synthetic a priori, have not all resorted to the analytic. Mill notoriously converted the truths of arithmetic and (some) axioms of geometry into high-level empirical generalizations.[12] In short, the only traditional figure to 'express' GSs' distinction clearly is Hume with his (contingent) 'matters of fact or experience' and his (necessary) 'relations of ideas' (covering arithmetic and geometry).[13] Locke perhaps prefigures him. He has an almost Putnamite category of 'trifling propositions', plus the set of intuitive truths and their (demonstrative) consequences. (This contains arithmetic among other things.) But since he does not assimilate the one to the other, he lacks the modern concept of analyticity.[14] Leibniz sometimes seems to be running a GS-type line, with his (necessary) truths of reason and (contingent) truths of fact (though his cognitive account of morals complicates matters). But the weirdness of his metaphysics led him astray. In the end there are no contingent truths.[15]

The Vienna Circle revived the philosophy of Hume, and with it his distinction. *Qua* positivists (descendants of Comte) they were concerned to show that everything worth knowing, all truths about the *world*, could be known by the scientist. The synthetic a

priori was denied, and morality dismissed as non-cognitive, since if there were truths of either kind they could presumably be known by non-scientific means. This would open the way for the free-wheeling metaphysics they so detested.[16] Thus the synthetic and the empirical were identified. Mathematics was a problem, but logicism allowed them to shunt it into the analytic. And by marking out the analytic as *the philosopher's* stamping ground, they resolved a conflict within the positivist soul. The logical positivists possessed a strong streak of self-abnegation, even self-immolation. Since the scientist could know everything worth knowing, they were inclined (as mere philosophers) to consign themselves to the flames as containing nothing but sophistry and illusion. But few can write off their own life-work as worthless, and still fewer comfortably write themselves out of a job. Thus the positivists devised a field of inquiry where the results, though incomparably less significant than those of science, were yet not devoid of interest or utility. Analytic truths were (or were reducible to) synonymies or truths of logic, and were hence (in an extended sense) tautologies. They said nothing about the world; thus the philosopher (whose stock-in-trade they were) was not fit to fasten the shoestrings of the scientific Messiah. But in the explication of concepts the positivist found a function, especially since what constituted the verification conditions of a proposition was an analytic question and hence the philosopher's preserve.[17] Unworthy as he was, the philosopher could prepare the way for the scientific Lord and make his paths straight. With the proud humility of Lockean underlabourers, they set to work. The results are too well known. Their greatest achievement was the education of their philosophical executioners.

Philosophers of the post-war world retained the distinction but dropped the theory. *Explicit* verificationism went out of vogue (though throughout the 'fifties verificationist arguments abound).[18] Thus there was no longer any reason to identify the synthetic and the empirical. But people did not stop. With the abandonment of verificationism, a large class of analyticities were eliminated - those pairing theoretical statements with their verification conditions. Nobody noticed. The original reasons for consigning arithmetic to the analytic no longer held. Godel had shown that no set of axioms could deliver all the truths of arithmetic. Logicism had required just this.[19] Besides, there were rival *ontological* bases for arithmetic, *alternative* set theories positing the existence

of different entities. On Kantian criteria, this would tend to make arithmetic synthetic and not analytic after all. Only Quine seems to have realized this[20] - which perhaps explains his zeal to abolish both categories.

But the official boundaries of the analytic did not shrink. On the contrary, there was a certain amount of analytic creep. A. J. Ayer, finding himself intellectually unfitted to explicate the concepts of science (the task he had set philosophers in *Language, Truth and Logic*), was lucky: 'It began to seem to me that there were still problems in the theory of knowledge that needed further attention: and so I pursued this easier course' (1977, p. 164). Most philosophers lack Ayer's charming insouciance. They need an elaborate ideology to justify their academic existence. Hence the boom in 'conceptual investigations' conceived as an inquiry into the larger analytic. The category had to be expanded to assure philosophers of an interesting supply of problems - and to validate their solutions. The later Wittgenstein was a malign influence here. The general trend of his later philosophy is to blur the analytic/synthetic distinction. For example (PI, I.242), 'If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but (queer as this may sound) in judgements'. Understanding the world and understanding language cannot be torn apart. A sufficiently radical change in world-view would betoken a change in our linguistic capacities - and vice versa (see Pl, II.xil). But his conception of philosophy as sharply distinct from science and operating at a different level, as concerned with 'grammar' and 'what is possible *before* all new discoveries and inventions' (Pl, I.126) - all *this* required a sharp analytic/synthetic split; and an enlarged analytic to accommodate the expanded range of questions considered. The self-refuting thesis that we do not (cannot? should not?) advance *theses* in philosophy (Pl, I. 128) probably blinded him to the nature of the epistemic backing needed for the theses he advanced. Unfortunately his followers preferred illusion to insight. By the time of DD the most amazing claims get labeled 'analytic'. Malcolm, for example, thinks it conceptually impossible (i.e. analytically impossible) that the world could have come into existence five minutes ago complete with memory traces, remains, etc. (1963, pp. 187-202). He is honest enough to admit that his analyticities are not analytic in the old positivist sense. The five-minute world is not a 'self-contradictory' hypothesis. But 'there is not just *one* brand of logical impossibility' (1963,

p. 201).

It is not just extravagances such as this, but precisely *this* extravagance (among others) that Putnam's restricted analytic is designed to curb. (See Putnam [1975, p. 37], where the unnamed philosopher is either Malcolm or someone very like him). Putnam's explicit attack on Malcolm (1962) (1975, p. 306) censures his reliance on 'the idea of a depth grammar which provides a "fact/convention" dichotomy on a level inaccessible to ordinary lexicographic investigations'. Quine, too, is no friend to an expanded analytic.

Marx maintained that the evils and abuses of capitalism could only be remedied by its abolition, while Bernstein proposed that it be controlled, confined, and refined by socialist politicians. Quine maintains that the evils and abuses of the analytic/synthetic distinction can only be remedied by its abolition, while Putnam proposes that the analytic be controlled, confined, and refined by realist philosophers. But whether revolution or reform is the right option, there was (in the 'fifties and early 'sixties) a crying need for one or the other. Philosophy was dominated by a dark distinction with nothing more by way of backing than the ghost of a dead theory. In the shadow of this specter philosophical superstitions flourished. The distinction was not the sanctified product of a reputable tradition, but the decayed cast-off of a defunct philosophy. The established *use* to which GS appeal is a 'fifties *artifact* - and a rather shoddy one at that.

IV. Distinctions Without a Difference: How to Make Them

But an artefact, however shoddy, is still real. So the question remains: How did philosophers draw the distinction without a difference? If there is no significant characteristic common to the members of at least one category, how can we have agreed in consigning propositions to one category or the other?

GSs' argument runs as follows:
If a finite collection is divided into two classes, the distinction need not mark a real difference. Being an A rather than a B need amount to nothing more than being *a*, *b*, or *c* as opposed to *d*, *e*, or *f*. Some A's might resemble some B's more than they resemble

their classmates. You could still tell A's from B's simply by knowing all the members of both groups. The situation is different when the classes are *open*. If speakers can agree, more or less, in distinguishing A's from B's when both have a potentially infinite membership, there must be something about A's and B's which enables them to do so. Both the categories and the distinction must have a *rationale*. The members of at least one class must share some (more or less) discernible characteristic. It does not even matter if there is a disputed area, so long as there is general agreement on which cases are doubtful. Philosophers agree in distinguishing the analytic from the synthetic. Therefore there must be something about the items distinguished that makes this possible. The classes reflect genuine categories and the distinction a real difference.

This argument is inconclusive. The categories and the distinction might lack a rationale even though we can agree on sorting. Maybe the two classes are themselves composed of open subclasses which *do* have a rationale. These must be finite in number and it must be easy to tell whether something is a member. Then, because we can determine the membership of the subclasses, and because the community has been taught by enumeration which are included in A and which in B, we can agree on which items are members of A and which of B, even though there is nothing non-arbitrary connecting the subclasses which comprise them. Being an A rather than a B, is to be a member of a, b, or g, all of which are included in A, rather than a member of d, e, or z, all of which are included in B. And to be a member of a, b, or g, is to possess one of the *properties*, a', b', or g'. But for all that, members of a, might resemble members of d, e, or z, more closely than they do the rest of the A's.

Such was the legacy of positivism in the 'fifties and early 'sixties. Mathematical propositions, truths of logic, synonymies and their consequences are all classes whose membership can be agreed on - especially if no one *looks* for borderline cases. Commonsense observations ('It is raining'), scientific statements ('This is molybdenum') are likewise easily recognized. Propositions that cannot be fitted into these classes can be swept under the carpet. Many will be regarded with suspicion anyway, as metaphysics has not yet recovered from the blows dealt by verificationism (which is still treated with respect). Philosophers have been taught to include the first group of proposition-classes in the analytic and the second in the synthetic. But we have no

proof that there is anything non-arbitrary binding the two groups together, especially as we have a historical explanation - the prevalence of positivism - of how the groupings originally arose. A diet of bad examples ('This is molybdenum' rather than 'E = mc2' or 'All reptiles are cold-blooded') has obscured the fact that some easily identifiable scientific propositions do not fit the (rather vague and confused) synthetic bill. (For example, they are not in any *straightforward* way refutable by experience, or do not deal with the properties of existent things.) Sheer ignorance has concealed the fact that logicism has failed (or is at least in difficulties) and thus that the original reason for classing mathematics as analytic no longer holds.

The consensus on which GS rely is, I suggest, much exaggerated. But in so far as it *did* exist, it was a hang-over from a series of false beliefs. The existence of open subclasses with discernible rationales allowed it to persist. But the sorting practice was devoid of philosophic justification. Once the beliefs which bound the subclasses together have been abandoned, the categories - and the practice - should be dropped or reassessed.

V. Unintelligibility and Orwellian Philosophies

Argument (2) is a better bet. GS are right to query Quine's standards of intelligibility. *In effect*, Quine demands that a concept X only be accounted intelligible (i.e. allowed to *make sense*) if an explanation can be provided which meets the following criteria: (1) It provides necessary and sufficient conditions for something's being X (it is an 'if and only if' definition); and (2) the concepts in the explanandum do not themselves involve X (i.e. X would not occur in *their* explananda). GS suggest that a good many indispensable concepts would fail this test. And at present no explanations which meet the criteria are forthcoming for the concepts 'morally wrong', 'blameworthy', 'false', 'fact', 'denial', and 'assertion' (DD, pp. 147-8). Quine's demands are tendentiously excessive.

In fact we can go further. Quine's argument here represents Orwellian philosophy at its worst. The anonymous tyrants of 1984 sought to enforce a 'canonical language', Newspeak, in which subversive thoughts could not be expressed. Empirical and analytic philosophers since Hobbes have sought to eliminate philosophical opposition

wholesale by enforcing a canonical language (usually a restricted version of English) in which subversive thoughts (scholastic, rationalistic, or metaphysical thoughts) cannot be expressed. Without state-power this looks like a pathetic fantasy, but in fact it has been a remarkable success, usually because Orwellian philosophers have marched in time with the progressive ideologies of the age. The original empiricists (Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume) grounded language in a psychology of *ideas* conceived as copies of sensa. Any word to which no such idea corresponded was meaningless. Thus Hume, for example, disposes of necessary causal connections. The weakness of this explicit approach is that the Orwellian theory is exposed to criticism. Indeed, the concepts it is designed to dispose of can be revived as counterexamples. Price (1758) (1974, p. 25), points out that we *do* have the notion of a necessary connection, and that the psycho-linguistic theory which rules this out is therefore false. The Orwellian program of the Vienna Circle suffered much the same fate. The linguistic theory was explicit, and as such subject to a damning critique. Post-war Orwellians are wiser. The theory of meaning, and the language or languages licensed, are insinuated, not stated. Orwellians nowadays profess 'not to understand' their opponents and question their 'intelligibility'.[21] Victims struggle vainly to express themselves in terms the Orwellian will accept (indeed, some Orwellians can envisage no other kind of reply).[22] This is intellectually objectionable, since despite frequent a-theoretic pretensions, the Orwellian relies on some covert *theory of meaning*; a theory, moreover, which probably is *false*. For the very existence of an opposition to be dealt with indicates that the theory cannot accommodate the linguistic data. Occasionally the tactic can lead to absurdities, when Orwellian philosophers are torn between their polemical need not to understand their opponent and their heartfelt conviction that they understand him all too well. Witness the blurb on Baker and Hacker's (1984) dig at Frege: 'By clarifying the mathematical foundations of Frege's logic, the authors render intelligible Frege's thinking what he did. But by critical analysis they reveal much of what he thought to be unintelligible.' Only in an Orwellian culture could such patent doublethink escape ridicule.[23]

And, of course, to any libertarian the tactic is *morally* objectionable, particularly in its sneaky post-war variant. Why should we put up with these linguistic tyrants? GS suggest the right response: What are the meaning-rules to which we must conform?

What is this impoverished but ideologically pure language we must henceforward speak? *And how are they both to be justified*? This puts the onus back where it belongs - on the aspiring linguistic legislator.[24]

'But surely some philosophers *do* talk nonsense, or fail to display that clarity which is the good faith of a philosopher. How, then, are they to be dealt with if we are not allowed to not understand them? Can't they be brought to book?' Yes - but our methods must be piecemeal, not the wholesale slaughter dealt out by a partisan semantics. (For too many philosophers, Orwellian incomprehension is their only tool.) Piecemeal polemics are more effective anyway, since they convince others besides our semantic partisans. *Ad hominems*, *mockery*, *reductio ad absurdum* – a whole battery of non-Orwellian techniques remain available. Where a thesis is vague or figurative *we* try to make it clear and assess the truth of its clarified variants. If, after a sincere effort, we find all the plausible interpretations false, then, and only then, are we entitled to say with Quine that 'as to the thesis [in question] only further clarification can assure us that this asserts anything at all' (1976, p. 106).[25] For philosophic libertarians there is no short way with bad philosophy.

Perhaps Quine's arguments can be revised so as to meet these constraints? The closed circle of unintelligibility could be construed as an *ad hominem*. Philosophers tend to expand the analytic by chalking up new 'conceptual truths'. These are often established through the 'unintelligibility' of their opposites. If the complex of ideas on which such arguments depend is, by similar standards, 'unintelligible', this should be an embarrassment. But this argument is too sketchy to embarrass anyone. And though it may be what Quine *should* have argued, it is a long way from what he actually said.

A more promising line is suggested by GS themselves. We might be harder on these expressions (i.e. the supposedly unclear members of the analytic circuit) if they were either technical terms or ordinary terms used in an extended sense (DD, p. 149). This is not because of any vulgar Wittgensteinian aversion to technical terms in philosophy, but because the theory in which they are embedded is a failure. The idea behind analytic truths is that they are true by something like fiat or linguistic convention. And

Quine has shown in 'Truth by Convention' that this analysis fails even for those paradigm analyticities, the truths of logic and arithmetic. It is rather as if chemists, post-Lavoisier, continued to use 'phlogiston' and a circle of interdefinable terms without giving any account of how they intend to deal with Lavoisier's results. We are thus entitled to wonder whether what their philosophic counterparts say makes sense and even to demand a little extra clarity.

The absence of an articulated and unrefuted theory of analyticity spells trouble for the other members of the circuit. 'Synonymy' and 'synonymous' are everyday words and, at the level of lexicography, are clear enough. No doubt 'bachelor' and 'unwed man' mean much the same. But if analyticities can be reduced to logic via the substitution of synonyms, there must be more to synonymy than this - at least if 'analytic' is to retain its 'fifties range. To accept this account of analyticity, but stick with everyday synonymy, would leave us with a very restricted analytic - roughly, the Putnam-class plus logic. And this would undermine the GS-argument from consensus. So synonymy is used in an extended, theoretic sense. But no *theory* of extended or philosophic synonymy exists (once verification has been given up), and we have no pre-theoretic intuitions to go on. (Such intuitions as we have are the products of departed theories.) In *these* circumstances we may feel that synonymy 'stands in need of clarification'.

What about necessity, another member of the circuit (synonymy is defined as substitutivity *salva necessitate*)? I don't think it can reasonably be claimed (at any rate not *nowadays*) that the notion of necessity is unclear. Rather there are rival notions of necessity (codified by different logics) and rival accounts of these (a multiplicity of pure and depraved semantics). It is not intelligibility that is the problem, but a plethora of interpretations. Nevertheless, there *is* a problem about whether necessity can elucidate synonymy. First because it is not clear that *philosophic* synonyms of the kind required *can* be switched within the scope of a necessity operator without change of truth-value. (The lack of a theory of philosophic synonymy means we have no guarantee of this.) Second, expressions can be switched *salva necessitate* and *not* be (ordinarily) synonymous. Within some complete formulation of the propositional calculus, *being a theorem* (derivable from the axioms) and *being a tautology* (defined in terms of truth-tables) are necessarily coextensive. Yet the one is a proof-theoretic and the other a

semantic notion. They are not synonymous. This is clear from intentional contexts. Despite his understanding of both words, Greg may know that A is a tautology but not that it is a theorem. (He is not aware of the completeness proof or is simply a duffer at logic.) Nor can we define synonymy via substitutivity in intentional contexts. Human inconsistency precludes such a project. At all events, necessity, though clear enough in itself (or perhaps itselves) is no good for our present purposes.

Quine's original onslaught on 'analytic' and related words was a paradigm of Orwellian rhetoric. He demanded, in effect, that they be translated into a partisan Newspeak, based on absurdly strict semantic standards. Whether GS themselves employ Orwellian tactics (and few philosophers in our time are entirely guiltless), they are right to denounce them in others. However, Quine's criticisms can be revived without resort to an Orwellian theory of meaning. The words in question are *theoretic*; terms of the philosophic art. They are therefore to be understood through the theories in which they are embedded. These are non-existent. Clarification (in the form of a decent theory) is still required.

VI. Breaking into the Circle

GS also try to counter Quine's argument by breaking into the circle. They show how they might introduce someone to the notion of logical impossibility by a sort of inductive definition (a sequence of examples).

They could then move on to define its interdefinable *relata*. It is clearly conceptual impossibilities, rather than bare and boring logical contradictions, that interest GS. Their example of a logical impossibility is this: 'My neighbour's three-year-old child is an adult' (DD, p. 150). There is, GS suggest, nothing coherent this could mean. They bolster their case by excluding an obvious interpretation - that the child is a freak of nature who has developed at enormous speed. (This is a rather cheap method of manufacturing conceptual impossibilities. You deny that a certain description can be coherently met and, when someone comes up with a plausible case, declare *'That* is not what I meant!'. In effect, GS tacitly switch to another proposition which they likewise assume to be impossible: 'My neighbor's three-year-old child, who is not a rapidly

maturing freak of nature, is an adult.') But there are other coherent interpretations of the original statement besides this. The child could have been magically transformed into an adult by a passing sorcerer. (Maybe there's nothing 'freakish' about this. The sorcerer does it on such a grand scale that his victims [?] are granted adult rights on a routine basis.) Or maybe the child is a legal adult since he understands Russell's Theory of Types (unlikely, but logically possible, according to GS) and everyone who performs this feat acquires adult status. Perhaps the child was born on Ganymede and is three *Jovian* years old. Or my neighbor is a bug-eyed monster (or 'bemmy' for short) whose children mature in three years in the natural course of events (non-freakishly, that is). Maybe the child is a time-traveler who has grown up during his journeyings but was born just three years ago. GS, it seems, confound inconceivability with their own inability to conceive.

GS might reply that some of the counterexamples to their alleged logical impossibility are themselves impossible. Their surface plausibility masks a deep incoherence. Maybe, but this is no help to GS. For their aim was to elucidate 'logical' impossibility by displaying a paradigm case. If the paradigm seems to be possible after all - at least on some interpretations - we cannot *assume* the concept is in order and use it to discredit the counterexamples. Perhaps there *are* clear-cut cases of a conceptual impossibility on which an inductive definition could be based. But GS's example isn't one of them.

It is obvious that, for all their a-theoretic pretensions, GS remain reliant on a ghostly theory. They nowhere dispute Quine's analysis of analyticity. Something is analytic or conceptually true if it can be reduced to a truth of logic through the substitution of synonyms. Thus something is logically impossible (it is analytic that not . . .) if it can be reduced to a logical contradiction through the substitution of synonyms. Do GS really think that this can be done with 'My neighbour's three-year-old child is an adult'? Presumably being more than three (earth?) years old is *part of the meaning* of 'adult'. But, as the above examples show, this is not a matter of uncontentious linguistic fact, a piece of lexicographic trivia. The synonymy to which GS covertly appeal is thus synonymy in the extended theoretic sense. Again we have a theoretic term without a stated theory. In its absence, it is not clear that they have marked out a cohesive class of impossibilities at all.

VII. Synonymy within the Bounds of Quineanism Alone

GS show some sympathy for the latter part of Quine's paper. They are, perhaps, prepared to give up reductionist empiricism, the second of the two dogmas. But synonymy can be saved from the wreck. It can be defined in terms of Quine's undogmatic empiricism. Two statements are synonymous 'if and only if any experiences which, on certain assumptions about the truth-values of other statements, confirm or disconfirm one of the pair, also, on the same assumptions, confirm or disconfirm the other to the same degree' (DD, p. 156). But almost any pair of formally consistent statements can be converted into synonyms by this criterion. Take 'x is cordate' and 'x is renate' (to trot out Quine's two old warhorses). If we assume that all cordates are renates (and especially if we assume that this has maximum certainty), anything which confirms 'x is cordate' likewise confirms 'x is renate', and to the same degree. But the co-extensiveness (even the necessary co-extensiveness) of the two predicates does not convert the statements into synonyms, whatever GS may say. Perhaps their definition can be amended: 'Two statements are synonymous if on *any* assumptions etc., experiences which would confirm or disconfirm the one, confirm or disconfirm the other, and to the same degree.' On the first definition, synonyms were embarrassingly abundant; on the second, they may be abolished altogether. Consider 'x is a creature with a heart' and 'x is cordate'. We can imagine the category *cordate* acquiring a special status in biology, becoming the name of a natural order. And we can imagine cardiac surgery and prosthesis advancing to such a degree that a diseased heart may be removed or replaced, not with a transplant or mechanical heart, but with several little pumps operating in different parts of the body. Mr X may be a true-born cordate, springing from hearty stock but, in his own person, entirely heartless. Evidence that he is a cordate (genetic evidence for instance) will not confirm to the same degree that he is a creature with a heart. Or consider 'x is a bachelor' and 'x is an unmarried man'. We get in touch with bug-eyed monsters from the planet Skyro and discover that, apart from their anatomical oddities, they are much like ourselves; male and female, and given to legalized pair-bonding. Bachelor bemmies are surely possible; unmarried, male, but not men. Evidence could confirm X's bachelorhood without confirming his unmarried hominity. A still more bizarre situation might allow unmarried men (at least

unmarried as men) who yet were not bachelors. Suppose that science establishes that bemmies from Skyro are regularly reincarnated as human beings. The soul's path can be traced in every case and memories of our earlier lives restored. Legal obligations contracted as a bemmy might carry over into the new human life. Men, though unmarried, no longer count as bachelors if they married as bemmies (obligations to bemmy wives remain). Under these circumstances, confirming that X is an unmarried man would not confirm to the same degree that X is a bachelor.

Don't these stories involve a meaning-change? Perhaps - though I am not at all sure that the sense of 'bachelor' shifts when applied to a bachelor bemmy. But GSs' project was to define synonymy (and hence meaning) with concepts acceptable to Quine. They cannot, without circularity, import the notion of semantic change into Quine's meaning-theoretic vacuum. Neither their own definition, nor my amended version, will do.

VIII. Revisability and Analyticity

GSs' most startling claim (5) is that the analytic can be retained even if unrevisability is given up (DD, p. 157). It may well be that no statement is immune from revision in the face of experience. But the analytic and the synthetic can still be told apart, so long as we distinguish the kind of giving up that consists in (merely?) admitting falsity from changing or dropping concepts. Nobody will deny (or if they do, nobody else will believe it) that the same words can be taken in different senses. When an analytic- or, more properly *formerly* analytic - statement is dropped, then 'the form of words in question changes from expressing an analytic statement to expressing a synthetic statement' (DD, p. 157). It is the new synthetic variant that is discarded as false. There can be no change in the truth-value of our analyticity unless it ceases to be analytic - unless, that is, a meaning change transmutes it into a synthetic falsehood. The original concepts, which grounded the old analyticity, presumably remain available for use (though they will have to be clothed in different verbiage). That is, a new statement could be concocted with the same sense and the same truth-value as the old, but expressed in other words. Otherwise - if these concepts cannot be resurrected in the face of the facts - an analytic truth can be false or even nonsensical because the concepts involved cannot be fitted into the correct world-view. The dogma defended by GS

would then be very different from the one in common currency. To maintain the distinction in the face of universal revisability, it is necessary to maintain (a) that there is a difference between rejecting a proposition as false and dropping the concepts involved; (b) that whenever a supposed analyticity is rejected, this is because it has either metamorphosed into a synthetic falsehood or because we have ceased to use the concepts in question (it is not so much *false* as *unspoken*); and (c) that if the concepts are revived (perhaps embodied in different words), the statement (or its equivalent) would again be true. But this is to *deny* universal revisability in Quine's sense. True, on the (a) (b) (c) hypothesis there are no forms of words that cannot be dispensed with, and no statements that cannot be left unsaid. But there *are* propositions which, given their meanings, cannot but be true when stated, even though nobody ever states them. We are left with a banal and uncontroversial version of universal revisability. What Quine had in mind was rather more radical.

The argument can be expressed as a dilemma. Either GS insist on (a) and (b) above, but not (c), or they maintain (a), (b), *and* (c). If (a) and (b) are true but not (c), then an analytic statement (and not just a *sentence*) can turn out not to be true, and not to be true *on its original reading*. Its component concepts have no place in the new world-picture. Maybe the statement isn't strictly speaking *false*, but neither is it 'true in virtue of the meanings of words', nor unrevisable given those words (and that interpretation) - i.e. it is not analytic in the post-positivist sense. And this is to concede the case to moderate Quineans like Putnam. Suppose, on the other hand, that GS insist on (a), (b), *and* (c). Then the universal revisability they concede is quite innocuous, not at all the radical thesis espoused by Quine. But the burden of their argument was that analyticity can be defended in the face of *Quine's* subversive opinions.[26]

I can see two responses to this. The first is that it is not clear how Quine's universal revisability differs from the innocuous kind. He has abandoned the concepts (of synonymy, etc.) that would enable him to make the needed distinctions. I do not think this is correct (though it would visit Quine with a fitting *nemesis*). It seems obvious to me that there *is* a difference here, even though it is not obvious what that difference is.

A second, and more forceful, objection is that universal revisability in its strong form is false anyway. Putnam (1983, chs. 6-7) argues convincingly that there is *at least* one necessary and a priori truth, namely, that not every proposition is both true and false. (He calls this the minimal principle of non-contradiction.) Putnam seems to think that there is an unrevisable core of mathematical and logical propositions which cannot be rationally denied, and are thus far a priori. (What *makes* them true remains, however, a mystery.) But this is no help to GS. For a good many of the 'analyticities' *they* would defend remain revisable in Putnam's eyes. Indeed, we can rework the above dilemma using Putnam's limited revisability in place of Quine's universal variant. If GS insist on (a) and (b) alone, they grant Putnam everything he needs. If they hold out for (a), (b), *and* (c), then they are simply denying his limited revisability. Which means, in effect, that *their* analytic is incompatible with the cultural facts, and the History of Ideas.

IX. Conclusion

This essay, like that at which it is aimed, is mainly negative in purpose. GS defend a dogma - that there is an analytic/synthetic distinction, and (more importantly) that it lies, more or less, where the positivists left it. This dogma is false; the phantom survivor of a dead system, with a baleful influence on the present. The practices to which GS appeal are superstitious, and their arguments are defective. Though a valid distinction *can* be drawn at least between analytic statements and others - what falls on the analytic side is uninteresting. There is no realm of deep but empty truths that are the philosopher's special preserve. Like other scholars we are concerned with the world - though less directly than most.[27]

NOTES

1 All references to the reprint in Quine (1961).

2 Putnam has written extensively on these subjects since 1962 (see Putnam [1983, chs. 5, 6, 7 and 10]), but the changes he makes are not relevant to the present inquiry. In ch. 5 (pp. 196-7) he writes as if logic can be included in the analytic, but he seems to be trying it on for size, not going back on his earlier opinions ('Call these "analytic" if you like . . .'). He does recant his doctrine of (near) universal revisability in chs. 6-7, but this dogma does not directly concern us. Putnam *used* to think - and still does in ch. 5 - that besides verbal banalities there are no *absolutely* a priori

statements. There are *contextually* a priori statements, statements which ground the theory or theories we operate with, and which cannot be overthrown by observation alone. A *new* theory has to supersede the old one in which the earlier a priori 'truths' have no place. Of course, there may be some statements which retain an a priori status in any true or plausibly true theory. *As a matter of fact* these are never challenged. They are still *revisable* for all that. In chs. 6-7, Putnam changes his mind. There is at least one absolutely a priori truth; something it would *never* be rational to deny - the minimal principle of contradiction: not every statement is both true and false. And maybe there are others. But though the minimal principle is *true*, what *makes* it true remains a mystery. However, Putnam is still a friend to deviant logics. Just because *some* logical truths are absolutely a priori, this does not mean that all of them are.

Now the arguments of (1962) (at least as presented here) can withstand these shifts. Though there may be immutable truths of logic, large chunks of it can still be chopped or changed. It is still, in part, empirical, nor are the unrevisable bits true by *convention* (as the later Putnam is concerned to stress). This is all that is required for his arguments to follow through. However, Putnam's revision of Quine is now more radical. He *rejects* the universal revisability of non-verbal statements (whereas formerly he was prepared to play along). This later view seems to me correct. There *are* non-verbal statements we cannot sanely give up.

3 For false or foolish analyticities, see his defense of Time Travel (Putnam [1979, ch. 15]) and his famous attack on Malcolm in 'Dreaming and Depth Grammar' (1975, ch. 15).

4 Nowadays he might be even more friendly to this suggestion, since he has developed some sympathy for relevance logic. See Putnam (1983, p. 131).

5 Aquinas thought that if we understood God's nature we could see that he could not but exist. Unfortunately we don't have that kind of understanding. Anselm is wrong! (Of course, even if we *did have* such an understanding, it is not clear that the proof would be analytic in GSs' sense.) See *Summa Theologica* I. Q.2. a.l. (Aquinas [1945, pp. 20-23]).

6 E.g. that it is 'evident' to our senses that some things in the world are 'in motion' (*Summa Theologica* I. Q.2. a.3, Aquinas [1945, p. 25]).

7 See *Summa Theologica* I-II. Q.91, Aquinas (1945, pp. 616-27). Price's *Review* and Reid's *Essay on the Active Powers of Man* are excerpted in Raphael (ed.) (1969). Ross (1939) is by no means the last believer in necessary but non-analytic moral truths, but he is perhaps the last *mainstream* figure to embrace this opinion. McCloskey's (1969) is the work of a philosophical heretic, as is the Divine positivism of Geach (1969).

8 Schopenhauer (1966, 2, ch. IV).

9 Frege (1953, pp. 101-2).

10 See Schopenhauer (1965) where Kant's ethics is subjected to a savage critique.

11 See Russell (1912, ch. 8). He says explicitly that not all a priori knowledge is analytic but leaves it rather vague *how much* of it is synthetic. It is interesting to see how Platonistic he is even at this late date.

12 Mill (1911, bk. II, chs. 4 and 5).

13 See Hume (1975, I. iv. 1, p. 20). Actually Hume vacillates about Geometry. In the *Treatises* it does not reach the certainty of algebra and arithmetic. Hume (1978, I. iii. 1, pp. 71-72).

14 Locke (1959, bk. IV, chs. VIII and II).

15 See Russell (1937, p. v).

16 This is very clear in Ayer (1971, ch. IV).

17 In fact they overstepped the mark here. If 'explicating' verification-conditions were really the philosopher's special concern, no laboratory would be complete without one. Scientists would not be able to work out what verifying experiments to perform. The positivists were ambitious to be useful, but not as ambitious as this.

18 See Ayer's comments in his autobiography (1977, p. 156), where he more or less accuses his juniors of living off verificationism's immoral earnings.

19 To be fair, some philosophers were prepared to use Godel against logicism and expel arithmetic from the analytic. See Copi (1949).

20 In Quine (1948) the ontological commitments of logicist theories - though not their variety - are stressed (Quine [1961, p. 14]). But Quine was aware of this too. The ontological peculiarities of *Principia Mathematica* as distinct from class-based systems are discussed in Quine (1961, pp. 122-3), a paper of 1940s provenance.

21 Davidson's description of his bland cultural imperialism (his refusal to understand those who disagree with him) as '*charity*' is a brilliant Orwellian *coup*.

22 See Dummett (1978, pp. 362-3). Dummett's realist about the past is a patsy who accepts without demur Dummett's theory of meaning and tries to show that what he wants to say can be expressed in *Dummettese*- that conceptually impoverished fragment of English that could be taught in accordance with Dummett's ludicrously simple-minded theory of language-learning.

23 The blurb-writer may feel he has protected himself against this charge by distinguishing between the intelligibility of Frege's *thinking* and the unintelligibility of his *thought*; between the *activity* and the *product*. Thus it might be (*humanly*) understandable how someone came to be 'speaking in tongues' at a revivalist meeting although the babble is incoherent. But this will not wash in Frege's case. For the doing in question, Frege's *thinking*, consists in concocting propositions and connecting them with others. If the actual propositions are unintelligible so is the activity.

24 I should stress that I am not impugning the honor of individual practitioners of the Orwellian art. It is the tradition that is corrupt, not they. The God of the philosophers will forgive them for they know not what they do.

25 This is the concluding sentence of Quine (1936). Quine's efforts to elucidate the notion of conventional truth *were* sincere. It was a doctrine to which he was much attracted and had upheld just three months before. See Putnam (1983, p. 172).

26 The argument in the last few paragraphs owes something to Dummett's discussion of Putnam. Dummett (1978, p. 287).

27 I am indebted to Alan Musgrave for his comments on an earlier draft.

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Charles R. Pigden, Department of Philosophy, University of Otago, P.O. Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand.