

Indeterminacy, A Priority, and Analyticity in the Quinean Critique

Gurpreet Rattan

Abstract: Significant issues remain for understanding and evaluating the Quinean critique of the analytic/synthetic distinction. These issues are highlighted in a puzzling mismatch between the common philosophical attitude toward the critique and its broader intellectual legacy. A discussion of this mismatch sets the larger context for criticism of a recent tradition of interpretation of the critique. I argue that this tradition confuses the roles and relative importance of indeterminacy, a priority, and analyticity in the Quinean critique.

1.

Quine's critique of the analytic/synthetic distinction (henceforth, *the a/s distinction*) in 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' has been the focus of careful interpretation and scrutiny for more than fifty years now. Such a massive response can be bewildering, but the deluge of work has served to clarify the relatively obscure arguments of Quine's paper. Two strategies of critique can be discerned in broad outline in Quine's paper. The first criticizes the 'dogma' of the a/s distinction on the grounds that no non-circular analysis can be given of *analytic*. The second challenges logical empiricist conceptions of meaning, knowledge, and their interrelations, offering an alternative conception that is supposed to be empiricist but 'without the dogmas'. Although the first strategy is both deserving of critical attention and has from the very beginning received it (Grice and Strawson 1956), unravelling the dense network of notions, connections, and tensions involved in the second strategy, and in particular in Quine's radicalization of the empiricist perspective, promises deeper understanding. This promise has already been realized to some degree. But, as I shall try to show, fundamental questions of understanding and evaluation remain for this second strategy and its consequences—for what I will call the *Quinean critique*.

In thinking through the Quinean critique, there is of course a rich intellectual history to explore. There is also an influential legacy to trace, not only in core philosophical areas like the philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and epistemology, but more broadly in the philosophy of science, through to the birth of the sociology of knowledge, and ultimately, to the rise of the deeply sceptical outlook of postmodernism. But a puzzling mismatch between the *common philosophical attitude* toward the Quinean critique, on one hand, and its *broader*

intellectual legacy, on the other, raises questions. What is puzzling is how the common philosophical attitude and the broader intellectual legacy agree about the success of the Quinean critique, yet radically disagree about what directly follows from that success for the nature of meaning and knowledge.¹ The issues look very different from the two points of view.

From the point of view of the broader intellectual legacy, the Quinean critique grounds and propels a deep scepticism about the reality of meaning and the possibility of knowledge. Although there are many strands—and many conflicting strands—in Quine's writing on these issues, a fundamental and stable aspect of his view is his deep scepticism about the reality of meaning. At least in this matter, Quine seems to be on the side of the broader intellectual legacy. Moreover, Quine's (1969a) epistemological work notwithstanding, this kind of scepticism about the reality of meaning seems gravely to jeopardize the possibility of knowledge; for there would seem to be nothing to *the content* of such knowledge.² If the success of the Quinean critique does lead to a deep scepticism about the reality of meaning and the possibility of knowledge, then accepting it without accepting its sceptical consequences is bound to look like a failure of nerve on the part of the common philosophical attitude: an inability to follow the Quinean critique to its logical terminus.

But things can be viewed from the other direction as well. From the point of view of the common philosophical attitude, the Quinean critique is successful; but a deep scepticism about the reality of meaning and possibility of knowledge does not follow from it. Indeed, it is very hard to see how one can coherently be deeply sceptical about the reality of meaning.³ The Quinean critique does not eliminate meaning and knowledge, but rather tells us something important and innovative about them, something hitherto neglected. From this direction, the broader intellectual legacy looks like the result of a sloppy and overzealous mishandling of the delicate semantic and epistemic issues that Quine raises.

Does the Quinean critique entail a deep scepticism about the reality of meaning and the possibility of knowledge? I will argue that the broader intellectual legacy, and not the common philosophical attitude, better understands the critical focus of the Quinean critique. But understanding is one thing, evaluation another. The critical focus of the Quinean critique *is* a deep scepticism about the reality of meaning and the possibility of knowledge, and this makes accepting the critique more demanding and costly than is usually thought. But once we become clear on what the critical focus of the Quinean critique really is, we are in a better position to see what kind of innovation in our conception of, especially, meaning, the Quinean critique really engenders. Overall, I want to argue that the challenge posed by the Quinean critique is more trenchant than is commonly recognized, and that responding to it in a way that does justice to its insights requires straying further from some stock commitments about the nature of concepts and meanings and the epistemology of understanding than is commonly appreciated.

I have been talking about large-scale intellectual trends in philosophy and beyond. The immediately following sections (2–7) take up things at a much more specific and analytical level. The analytical nature of the argument to follow also

contrasts with a more strictly scholarly approach that tries to determine what the best interpretation of Quine is (hence the *Quinean* critique, and not *Quine's* critique). Instead, the focus of the immediately following sections is to try to stamp a clear, relatively novel, and theoretically fruitful structure on the Quinean critique. The concluding section (8) returns to the large-scale intellectual trends, and sketches briefly and in outline some lessons for the nature and epistemology of understanding.

2.

In 'Analyticity Reconsidered' (1996) and 'Analyticity' (1997),⁴ Paul Boghossian presents a novel and nuanced understanding of the Quinean critique together with a thought-provoking evaluation of the resulting prospects for analyticity and meaning. I begin my discussion with a critical consideration of some of Boghossian's helpful distinctions and argumentation. Although I will discuss and challenge some of Boghossian's ideas in detail, my purpose in discussing them here is to facilitate a better handle on how the Quinean critique is to be understood, and to make some initial headway on our main question, viz., that of whether the Quinean critique entails a deep scepticism about the reality of meaning and the possibility of knowledge. Boghossian's ideas provide some solid initial grip.

The larger philosophical aim of Boghossian's paper is to clear the ground for an account of meaning that can function in an explanation of the a priori, and in particular, of basic logical knowledge. According to this *analytic explanation of the a priori*, the a priori character of basic logical knowledge is to be explained in terms of a thinker's grasp of concepts or meanings. To this end, Boghossian attempts to save *some* idea of analyticity and meaning from the Quinean critique. Boghossian's strategy is to grant the Quinean critique an important but confined insight: that a certain conception of analyticity, what Boghossian calls *metaphysical analyticity*, is bankrupt. This important insight is confined because it cannot be part of or extended to another idea of analyticity, *epistemic analyticity*, without invoking a questionable thesis that many, including many who accept the Quinean critique, reject. This leaves epistemic analyticity intact for service in the epistemology of basic logical knowledge. Let me elaborate, beginning with the questionable thesis.

The questionable thesis that must be invoked in trying to extend the Quinean critique to epistemic analyticity is Quine's *indeterminacy thesis*, espoused and defended in Chapter Two of *Word and Object* (Quine 1960). Boghossian cites William Lycan (1991) and Jerry Fodor and Ernie Lepore (1992) as representative examples of philosophers who accept the Quinean critique, but reject indeterminacy. These philosophers embrace the critique of the a/s distinction, but they reject the Quinean conclusions about indeterminacy and what they see as the attendant *non-factualism* about meaning, the view that there are no facts about what expressions mean, and indeed no concepts or meanings *to* mean. These

philosophers do not deny the reality of meaning, but hold instead, in Boghossian's words, 'whatever precisely the correct construal of meaning . . . Quine has shown that it will not sustain a distinction between the analytic and the synthetic' (Boghossian 1996/7: 360/331).

Lycan and Fodor and Lepore express what I am calling the common philosophical attitude—an acceptance of the Quinean critique together with a rejection of any deep scepticism about the reality of meaning and the possibility of knowledge. What Lycan and Fodor and Lepore add to the common philosophical attitude is a focus on a particular way that one might be led to a deep scepticism about the reality of meaning and possibility of knowledge—through indeterminacy considerations. But what is the relation between the indeterminacy considerations and the original Quinean critique of the a/s distinction? This question will figure importantly below (section 3).

Our main question is how the Quinean critique is to be understood, and in particular whether it entails a deep scepticism about the reality of meaning and the possibility of knowledge. Boghossian's distinction between metaphysical and epistemic analyticity provides some initial grip. Suppose that the Quinean critique is directed against metaphysical analyticity, against, in a slogan, *truth in virtue of meaning*. Metaphysical analyticity casts meanings in a truth-making role. According to the view, some claims, the analytic ones, are made true not by what they are about (bachelors, being or not being adult, male and married) but by a realm of meanings or concepts (the concepts *bachelor*, *male*, *adult*, and *married*). That metaphysical analyticity is bankrupt is the important insight that Boghossian ascribes to the Quinean critique. But it is straightforward to see that one can deny that there are any metaphysically analytic claims without also denying that there are meanings. To deny that there are any metaphysically analytic claims is to deny that meanings are to be cast as truth-makers for claims that are not about meaning; but this does not force one to deny the existence of meanings or concepts. To hold that metaphysical analyticity is bankrupt is to deny meaning and concepts a certain theoretical role, not to deny them *any* role. More specifically, according to Boghossian, the important insight about the bankruptcy of metaphysical analyticity cannot be extended to the distinct target of epistemic analyticity—of, in another slogan, *knowledge in virtue of grasp of meaning*—without invoking indeterminacy and engendering non-factualism.

Fodor and Lepore's view is again illustrative. They understand the rejection of the a/s distinction as the claim that there is no *principled* distinction between inferences that are meaning-constitutive and those that are not (Fodor and Lepore 1992: 24–25). To deny that there is any such principled distinction is to deny, for example, that there is a principled distinction, with respect to their meaning-constituting character, between the inference from *x*'s being a bachelor to *x*'s being unmarried, on one hand, and the inference from *x*'s being a bachelor to *x*'s being likely not to have a minivan, on the other. One consequence of the absence of a principled distinction between inferences that are meaning-constitutive and those that are not is that there will be no inferences (or object-linguistic expressions of inferential connections) that can be known in virtue of grasp of meaning.

This is because grasp of meaning is grasp of something that is not connected in a principled way to some inferences and not others. No principled distinction marks off the inferences that are supposed to be epistemically accessible through grasp of meaning. If we think of meaning-constitution by inferential role as representative of the account of concepts and their grasp that an account of epistemic analyticity will need to make use of, then this view entails that there are no epistemically analytic claims.⁵ But, Boghossian presses, Fodor and Lepore's idea that there is no *principled* distinction in inferences amounts to an indeterminacy thesis wherever it is plausible that meaning is constituted by inferential role. So even if Fodor and Lepore's account does put epistemic analyticity into jeopardy, it does so only by invoking a kind of indeterminacy argument. But Fodor and Lepore reject indeterminacy. So, Boghossian concludes, they should reject the Quinean critique understood as directed against epistemic analyticity. Although this is just one example, it is supposed to be illustrative, and it is supposed to tell us that any attempt to go beyond the important but confined insight against metaphysical analyticity to a critique of epistemic analyticity will invoke indeterminacy (cf. Boghossian 1996/7: 383–384/355–356).

So Boghossian's argument attempts, *modulo* the important but confined insight, to demonstrate instability in the position of those who accept the Quinean critique but reject indeterminacy and non-factualism. For Boghossian, the only reading of the critique of *epistemic* analyticity is one that invokes indeterminacy, and is thus non-factualist. As a result, those who reject indeterminacy and non-factualism had best restrict their understanding of the Quinean critique to metaphysical analyticity. This leaves epistemic analyticity intact for service in the epistemology of basic logical knowledge.

3.

Now, Boghossian is not as clear as he might be on how the instability point is to be understood. Early in the paper, Boghossian says that he is 'only concerned to show that a scepticism about epistemic analyticity cannot stop short of the indeterminacy thesis' (Boghossian 1996/7: 362–363/333). However, later in the paper, Boghossian puts his point differently, saying that there is no argument against epistemic analyticity that falls short of an 'outright rejection of meaning itself' (Boghossian 1997: 342; cf. Boghossian 1996: 370).⁶ These two formulations would be formulations of the same point, we can allow, if (a) indeterminacy implied the 'outright rejection of meaning'; and if (b) the 'outright rejection of meaning' inevitably had to invoke considerations of indeterminacy. But both of these claims can be questioned. Boghossian himself questions the first (Boghossian 1996/7: 362/333). But the more important question for the cogency of Boghossian's argument, is the second: whether there is an understanding of the Quinean critique that does not invoke indeterminacy considerations, but that nevertheless forms the basis for an 'outright rejection of meaning'. Here we return to the question, suggested by a consideration of Lycan and Fodor and

Lepore, about how indeterminacy considerations are to be located with respect to the original Quinean critique.

Boghossian's argument involves these four steps:

1. an argument, with Fodor and Lepore as a representative example, that a critique of epistemic analyticity necessarily invokes indeterminacy and engenders non-factualism about meaning;
2. the observation that most philosophers, including many who accept the Quinean critique, reject indeterminacy and non-factualism about meaning;
3. the preliminary conclusion that philosophers who accept the Quinean critique but reject indeterminacy and non-factualism should reject the critique of epistemic analyticity; and
4. the final conclusion that, for many, epistemic analyticity remains intact and able to function in the project of explaining basic logical knowledge.

But by switching back and forth between indeterminacy and non-factualism, Boghossian comes to his conclusion too hastily. I want to spend a moment explaining this idea, and why it is so fundamental in evaluating Boghossian's argument.

Those who accept the Quinean critique of the a/s distinction cannot reject indeterminacy *because* it leads to non-factualism about meaning. This is because the Quinean critique may do so as well, and by hypothesis, the Quinean critique is accepted. Indeed, it must be epistemically possible that the Quinean critique compromises epistemic analyticity independently of invoking indeterminacy considerations, for unless that were epistemically possible, Boghossian's argument for (1) above would beg the question. So those who accept the Quinean critique must reject indeterminacy for other reasons. One reason might be that the indeterminacy considerations of *Word and Object* are foreign to the critique of the a/s distinction in 'Two Dogmas'. A more substantial reason might be that the indeterminacy considerations constitute a *bad argument* for non-factualism about meaning and concepts, so that to be saddled with indeterminacy is to be saddled with a commitment not only to a difficult conclusion—non-factualism about meaning and concepts—but also to a bad argument for that conclusion. If that is right, and the critique of epistemic analyticity necessarily invokes indeterminacy considerations, then those who accept the Quinean critique should side with Boghossian, and rest content with an interpretation of the Quinean critique that sees only metaphysical analyticity, and not epistemic analyticity, as its critical focus. But if implicit in the Quinean critique of the a/s distinction are grounds other than indeterminacy that entail 'the outright rejection of meaning', and if these grounds are both wrapped up with the criticism of the a/s distinction in 'Two Dogmas' and are stronger than the indeterminacy grounds, then, although the Quinean critique may entail the 'outright rejection of meaning', the instability Boghossian is arguing for will not resolve Boghossian's way.

Here is why. If the Quinean critique itself entails non-factualism, those who accept the Quinean critique will be forced to accept non-factualism and 'the outright rejection of meaning'. They cannot reject the critique of epistemic analyticity because (by Boghossian's hypothesis) they accept the Quinean critique, and although they reject indeterminacy, the considerations that are involved are (by my hypothesis) wrapped up in the critique of the a/s distinction, and both independent of and stronger than indeterminacy grounds. What these considerations suggest is that Boghossian's instability should resolve against him and epistemic analyticity if certain conditions are met:

Instability Resolves Against Boghossian and Epistemic Analyticity If

If there is an understanding of the Quinean critique that (1) is intimately bound up with the critique of the a/s distinction in 'Two Dogmas'; and (2) does not invoke indeterminacy issues, but nevertheless entails the 'outright rejection of meaning'; and (3) involves considerations stronger than the indeterminacy considerations; then Boghossian's instability should resolve against him and epistemic analyticity.

The question now is: is there such an understanding of the Quinean critique?

4.

There is something to be learned about the mismatch (section 1) between the common philosophical attitude and the broader intellectual legacy, from Boghossian's distinctions and from his argument (section 2) for the instability of accepting the Quinean critique against epistemic analyticity while rejecting indeterminacy and non-factualism. Boghossian's analysis explains how the common philosophical attitude can accept the Quinean critique without embracing indeterminacy and non-factualism—viz., by construing the Quinean critique to be directed against metaphysical analyticity. Further, the broader intellectual legacy can extract a deep scepticism about the reality of meaning and the possibility of knowledge from the Quinean critique—viz., by construing it to be directed against epistemic analyticity and to invoke indeterminacy considerations. But there are reasons for thinking that Boghossian's analysis does not get to the ultimate source of the mismatch. Indeed thinking through the issues a little bit exposes what seems to be a serious philosophical omission in Boghossian's paper.

One source of lingering doubt is the suggestion that according to the common philosophical attitude, the ambition of the Quinean critique is restricted to making metaphysical analyticity untenable. This view does not unravel the dense network of notions, connections, and tensions that Quine's radicalization of the empiricist perspective involves. Paraphrasing Donald Davidson from another,

not unrelated, context (Davidson 1973: 183), this view of the Quinean critique clarifies the critique, but not while retaining the excitement. More problematic is the suggestion that the broader intellectual legacy understands the Quinean critique to be invoking indeterminacy considerations. Although the broader intellectual legacy culminates in the rise of postmodernism, a more immediate intellectual impact of the Quinean critique was in the philosophy of science, especially on the then soon-to-follow concern with the nature and importance of scientific revolutions (with the *locus classicus* being, of course, Kuhn 1962). This concern with the nature and importance of scientific revolutions is not driven by a concern with the rather more philosophically rarefied considerations of indeterminacy.⁷

But there is no mystery here, for the appreciation of the importance of scientific revolutions for the a/s distinction is already present in Quine's 'Two Dogmas'. I explain with some explicit reference to Quine's text.

Having been unable to provide a non-circular analysis of *analytic* in the first four sections of his paper, in §5 Quine culls from the verification theory of meaning and its reductionism (the second dogma of empiricism) an account of the meaning of a sentence as the method of empirically confirming or infirming it. An analytic statement is then construed as the limiting case of being confirmed come what may—of being *rationaly unrevisable*. In §6, Quine elaborates his holistic view of confirmation, introduced at the end of §5, and argues that being confirmed come what may or being rationally unrevisable is neither a sufficient nor necessary condition for being analytic.

Being confirmed what may or being rationally unrevisable is not a sufficient condition for being analytic because, Quine says,

[a]ny statement can be held true come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system. Even a statement very close to the periphery can be held true in the face of recalcitrant experience by pleading hallucination or by amending certain statements of the kind called logical laws. (Quine 1951: 44)

But, Quine's thought runs, we do not want the result that every statement is a possible candidate for being analytic. However, Quine's point here relies on a very unconstrained holism about confirmation, in the sense that the revisions or adjustments Quine envisions do not conform to our 'natural tendency to disturb the total system as little as possible' (Quine 1951: 44). We can hold any claim come what may as long as we make *drastic enough* adjustments elsewhere. To count these drastic adjustments as rationally permissible is to operate with a very permissive account of confirmation. Insofar as such a permissive account of confirmation is implausible, so is the objection to sufficiency.

But things are different in the argument against necessity. Here Quine invokes the episodes from the history of science, and writes,

[c]onversely . . . no statement is immune to revision. Revision even of the logical law of the excluded middle has been proposed as a means of simplifying quantum mechanics; and what difference is there in

principle between such a shift and the shift whereby Kepler superseded Ptolemy, or Einstein Newton, or Darwin Aristotle? (Quine 1951: 43)

What the episodes from the history of science show is that *even* those statements that are the best candidates for being analytic, those most central to the web of belief, are not immune to revision. But it is a little noticed fact that these claims are supposed to be rationally revisable *despite* the holism about confirmation; or to put it another way, they are rationally revisable even on a highly constrained account of confirmation. For whereas the revisions envisioned to inure, say, some observational statement—a statement ‘very close to the periphery’—from revision are both fanciful and against our ‘natural tendency’ in revision, the revisions carried out in scientific revolutions are actual, and made with all the constraints on rational revision as that is undertaken in scientific practice. These no doubt include, but presumably are not limited to and are far richer in content than, a constraint of minimal disturbance to the total system.⁸

The upshot is that if the conception of analyticity proposed in §5 of ‘Two Dogmas’ is, as Quine thinks, the best that can be done for analyticity, and if I am right about the difference in the quality of the arguments against the sufficiency and necessity of confirmation come what may or rational unrevisability as a conception of analyticity, then it looks like the episodes from the history of science provide Quine’s most powerful challenge in ‘Two Dogmas’ against analyticity.

Looking back from the broader perspective of the intellectual legacy of the Quinean critique, this passage stands out in its prescience.⁹ I’ll be elaborating the connection between scientific revolutions and the a/s distinction below (section 6). But my point for now is just that Boghossian’s paper has little discussion of the crucial passage, and none of its central point, which quite explicitly deploys the episodes from the history of science against the a/s distinction.¹⁰ Indeed, these considerations look like a substantial clue in our quest to find an alternative understanding of the Quinean critique, one that is not foreign to ‘Two Dogmas’, that invokes considerations both distinct from and stronger than indeterminacy considerations, and that still entails the ‘outright rejection of meaning’.

With what right does Boghossian ignore the considerations that spring from the episodes in the history of science? I address this question in the next two sections, where I will also elaborate on the idea that these considerations do in fact form the basis for the ‘outright rejection of meaning’.

5.

I want to delve a little deeper into how the Quinean critique has been understood, and in particular, how it has been understood by those who have recognized the importance of the considerations from the episodes in the history of science. Hilary Putnam (1976, 1978) and Philip Kitcher (1983) have provided some of the most powerful and influential interpretations of the philosophical

consequences of these considerations. However, despite the fact that the considerations from the episodes in the history of science are fundamental for both Putnam and Kitcher, I think that their interpretations can be used to defend Boghossian's right to ignore those very considerations.

The Quinean critique, as well as the logical empiricist position that it attacks, have both *analyticity* and *a priority* in their purview. Putnam's and Kitcher's most significant interpretive move for understanding the Quinean critique is to shift the primary focus of the arguments from the issue of analyticity and meaning to the issue of the *a priori*. Putnam writes:

Some of Quine's arguments were directed against one notion of analyticity, some against another. Moreover, Quine's arguments were of unequal merit. One of the several notions of analyticity that Quine attacked was . . . a sentence is analytic if it can be obtained from a truth of logic by putting synonyms for synonyms . . . Against this notion, Quine's argument is little more than that Quine cannot think how to define synonymy. But Quine also considers a very different notion: the notion of an analytic truth as one that is confirmed no matter what. I shall contend that this is the traditional notion of a priority, or rather *one* of the traditional notions of a priority. (Putnam 1976: 87)

Here Putnam moves beyond questions about circularity in the analysis of *analytic*, discussed in the first four sections of 'Two Dogmas', and on to consideration of analyticity as confirmation come what may. Putnam takes the Quinean critique of analyticity understood in this way to be a critique of a traditional notion of a priority.

Kitcher echoes and amplifies on these thoughts when he writes:

Quine connects analyticity to apriority via the notion of unrevisability. If we can know a priori that *p*, then no experience could deprive us of our warrant to believe that *p*. Hence statements that express items of a priori knowledge are unrevisable . . . But 'no statement is immune from revision'. It follows that analytic statements cannot be a priori; or if analyticity is thought to entail apriority, there are no analytic statements. (Kitcher 1983: 80)

Kitcher is also concerned with the account of analyticity as confirmation come what may. He allows that the Quinean critique has a bearing on analyticity and meaning, but only derivatively. Kitcher does not draw any conclusion about the non-factuality of meaning, neither when he concludes that analytic statements cannot be a priori, nor when he concludes, on the assumption that analyticity entails a priority, that there are no analytic statements. The primary assault on a priority involves some secondary, but feebler, assault on analyticity and meaning, one that has no consequence for the factuality of meaning.

The key idea for both Putnam and Kitcher is that the notion of being confirmed come what may is primarily a notion of a priority and not of analyticity

and meaning. Putnam goes on to say 'Quine's attack on [a priority] is correct. And Quine's argument against this notion was not at all concerned with circularity of definitions' (Putnam 1976: 87). In a later section, Putnam tells us that Quine is concerned with the bearing of the episodes in the history of science for the a priori and Putnam explains why he thinks 'Quine's very sketchy "historical" argument against the existence of a priori (unrevisable) statements is correct' (Putnam 1976: 92).

Roughly, the reasoning of that argument goes like this. According to Putnam and Kitcher, the episodes in the history of science show that propositions that were thought to be known a priori (if anything was) came to be rationally revised *in the light of experience*. But the a priori is supposed to be a realm of knowledge independent of experience. Putnam and Kitcher conclude that, although there may be a very restricted class of a priori knowable propositions, at least for a very large class of propositions, including mathematical and logical ones, their claim to be a priori is to be rejected.¹¹

If this were a correct reading of the Quinean critique, I think that it would support Boghossian in largely disregarding the considerations from the episodes in the history of science.¹² For, on this reading, those considerations are really not directed at the factuality of meaning at all. Were the Quinean critique directed at the factuality of meaning, that would immediately put the idea of knowledge as a whole into jeopardy, for as I said earlier, it would open up the difficult question of what the content of knowledge could be. But Putnam and Kitcher are concerned to show only that a priori knowledge, and not knowledge as a whole, is compromised.¹³ The views are meant to advance empiricism, not non-factualism about meaning and nihilism about knowledge as a whole.

I had suggested that the considerations from the episodes in the history of science might be a clue to finding an argument in 'Two Dogmas' that does not invoke indeterminacy considerations and that is directed at the 'outright rejection of meaning'. If this argument could be shown to be stronger than an argument grounded in indeterminacy, this would make Boghossian's instability resolve against him and epistemic analyticity. But if Putnam and Kitcher are right, the considerations from the episodes in the history of science do not support the 'outright rejection of meaning'. And if that is right, things are back to where Boghossian leaves them: for all we have seen, there seems to be no argument against epistemic analyticity that does not invoke indeterminacy considerations, but indeterminacy is something Boghossian's opponents are loath to accept. This leaves epistemic analyticity intact.

6.

In this section, I want to argue that it is a mistake to construe the Quinean critique as being directed exclusively, or even primarily, at the a priori. Building on the discussion of section 4, I want to sketch an alternative reading of the Quinean critique, one that reinstates a focus on analyticity and meaning.¹⁴

Like Putnam's and Kitcher's reading, the alternative reading begins with a consideration of the episodes from the history of science. But whereas on Putnam's and Kitcher's reading, the episodes from the history of science are meant to draw our attention to the *experiential revisability* of claims that were thought to be a priori, on the alternative reading, a consideration of the episodes from the history of science is meant to direct our attention not to *experiential* revisability, or even really to *revisability*, but more simply, to the possibilities and potential *depths* of *rational challenge*. The focus on rational challenge alone, and not experiential revisability, allows a redirection of the issues towards the *intelligibility* rather than the *decisive epistemic quality* of certain kinds of challenges.

According to this alternative reading, the first step in the argument derives from the lesson that Quine draws from the episodes in the history of science. That lesson, in Quine's words, is that 'no statement is immune from revision'. Since it is obvious that many, or even most, statements are susceptible to revision, it must be that, with the episodes from the history of science, Quine is intending to draw our attention to a special class of statements. We will explore the special character of these statements in a moment, but for now it is clear that they include the most basic principles of empirical theories, including (what are traditionally regarded as) the a priori claims of logic and mathematics. Since, on my construal, 'revision' does not illuminate but rather distracts from the real issue, I'll rewrite Quine's thought as the *No Immunity Thesis*:

No Immunity Thesis

(Even) the most basic principles of theories are not immune from rational challenge.

Reflection on rational practice as it is exhibited in certain episodes in the history of science gives us the *No Immunity Thesis*.

At this point Putnam's and Kitcher's reading goes in the following direction. According to it, the notion of being confirmed come what may is a notion of a priority and not a notion of analyticity. And the idea behind this, more generally, is that the notion of being confirmed come what may is an epistemological notion, and not a semantic one. I think that these ideas are confused, for at least two reasons.

First, Putnam and Kitcher seem to be working with an antiquated notion of the a priori. Putnam, I quoted earlier, calls rational unrevisability a 'traditional notion of the a priori'. That might be so, but that of course does not make it the *right* notion of the a priori. In particular, the standard to which Putnam and Kitcher seem to hold a priori warrant is incredibly high, with a priori warrant being both indefeasible and infallible.¹⁵ This is not the standard to which we hold a posteriori justification, and it would seem to require special argument to hold onto the asymmetry in standards. More generally, perhaps there is a good argument for thinking that the a priori is indefeasible and infallible; but perhaps there is

not, and a priori justification is defeasible and fallible like a posteriori justification.¹⁶ So, although it is possible to think of the notion of being confirmed come what may as a notion of a priority, one should suspect whether doing so directs the Quinean critique against a straw man (cf. also note 11).

Second, and more importantly, even if the notion of being confirmed come what may is a notion in epistemology, this does not prevent the notion from *functioning in a fundamentally semantic role*. Being confirmed come what may is, very intuitively, a property of certain kinds of claims, namely of claims that specify the conditions of application of one their constituents; it is a property of *definitions*, or if these are always meta-linguistic in character, of *definitional claims*, or *meaning-constitutive* claims, or in the lingo of this paper, of *analyticities*. The special status of the definitional or the analytic is intuitive, but it is also backed by theoretical considerations. In particular, if a certain claim is analytic, then it looks like accepting it is a condition on meaning something by the concept or word for which the claim is analytic. Many have thought it plausible that who denies or even doubts an analytic claim *ipso facto* shows herself to be *incompetent* with the relevant word or concept.¹⁷

On this view, the notion of being confirmed come what may is functioning in a fundamentally semantic role. The analytic is confirmed come what may not because evidence cannot tell against it, or even because necessarily, evidence cannot tell against it, but because the analytic set the limits of intelligibility. Putative challenges to the analytic are not *intelligible* as challenges. Paraphrasing Quine from a closely related context (but one in which he takes a position in significant tension with the position in 'Two Dogmas'), when it comes to the analytic, to deny the doctrine is to change the subject (Quine 1970: 80–81). The absence (or even necessary absence) of evidence against the analytic is itself to be explained by the role of the analytic in setting the limits of intelligibility. Evidence cannot tell against the analytic because such evidence would transgress the limits of intelligibility.

My point is certainly not to endorse these claims, but to highlight the theoretical sense in which the notion of being confirmed come what may or of being rationally unrevisable can be thought to function fundamentally as a semantic notion. But it is also worth noting that the fundamentally semantic functioning of the notion of being confirmed come what may figures in key logical empiricist doctrines in a way that the indefeasibility and infallibility of the a priori does not. Surely it was at best a derivative concern of logical empiricism to argue that the a priori should not be defeasible experientially; the real concern was to argue that there really is no substantial a priori (the exemplary intellectual achievements of logic and mathematics notwithstanding), not even a putative a priori to reduce to an ultimate a posteriori ground (as in Quine). Their approach to the a priori is eliminative, deflationary: the a priori it is not reduced to the a posteriori, but is deflated into the merely formal and conventional.¹⁸ To construe logical empiricism as fundamentally concerned with the indefeasibility and infallibility of the a priori is again to fall into the mistake of thinking that the analytic cannot be challenged because no evidence can tell against it. But this is not the most basic

explanatory connection. The analytic cannot be challenged because challenging the analytic transgresses the limits of cognitive intelligibility.¹⁹

But if this is right, there is an immediate conflict with the *No Immunity Thesis*. For the framework claims—the claims both deepest in the web of the theory and such as to set the limits of intelligibility—cannot themselves be challenged. This is the connection to the revolutions in science. In a scientific revolution, the most basic claims of a science, including those comprising its logical and mathematical commitments, are put under rational challenge. These claims, on the empiricist perspective, provide the ‘framework’ (Carnap 1950) from which the meanings of the theoretical, logical and mathematical terms derive. The very structure of such an account of concepts or meanings generates the *Immunity Thesis*:

Immunity Thesis

The most basic principles of a theory are immune from rational challenge.

The most basic principles of a theory cannot be rationally challenged because these principles set the limits of intelligibility; they define certain fundamental concepts or meanings. Putative challenges transgress the limits of intelligibility. The *Immunity Thesis* is, thus, in direct conflict with the *No Immunity Thesis*.

So here, in sketch, is the alternative reading of the Quinean critique that I am recommending. After having failed in his attempts to analyze *analytic* in a non-circular way in §§1–4, in §5 Quine asks, ‘But what of the verification theory of meaning?’ The verification theory of meaning, together with the dogma of reductionism, suggest that an analytic statement or claim is one that is confirmed come what may or that is rationally unrevisable. Although the notions of confirmation come what may and of rational unrevisability are epistemological notions, they are functioning in a fundamentally semantic role, in that the confirmed come what may or rationally unrevisable character of the analytic is explained by the fact that the analytic is meaning-constitutive, setting the limits of intelligibility. The analytic cannot be rationally challenged because it sets the limits of intelligibility. This conception of analyticity and meaning is the best that Quine thinks can be done for analyticity in the theory of meaning; but the subsequent arguments are intended to show that best is not good enough. When one tries to theorize the fundamental theoretical notions of *concept* and *meaning* that figure in theorizing the propositional attitudes and significant utterances that make up rational discourse, one is pushed to a view in which some claims cannot be challenged because their acceptance sets the limits of intelligibility of the discourse. But reflection on the episodes in the history of science suggests that everything can be rationally and intelligibly challenged. The upshot is that the introduction of concepts and meanings into our conceptual and ontological commitments brings with it paradox: they are such as to support both an

immunity thesis for certain claims, and a no-immunity thesis for all claims. That is the Quinean critique of analyticity and meaning.

7.

Let's recap. Our overall concern is with questions of understanding and evaluation of the Quinean critique (section 1). Boghossian's distinctions and argumentation provide some initial grip. Boghossian wishes to secure a notion of analyticity from the clutches of the Quinean critique by showing that there is no criticism of epistemic analyticity that does not invoke indeterminacy considerations, and thus that those who accept the Quinean critique but reject indeterminacy should confine their critical focus to metaphysical analyticity and leave epistemic analyticity intact (section 2). But it is one thing to say that the Quinean critique invokes indeterminacy, and another to say that it engenders non-factualism. One may reject indeterminacy not because of the non-factualist conclusion it may engender, but because it is foreign to the considerations of 'Two Dogmas' or, better, because it is a bad argument for the non-factualist conclusion. But if grounds for non-factualism can be found that are wrapped up with the critique of the a/s distinction in 'Two Dogmas', that do not invoke indeterminacy considerations, and that are stronger than the indeterminacy considerations, then given that Boghossian's opponents accept the Quinean critique, the instability that Boghossian argues for will resolve itself against epistemic analyticity (section 3). Boghossian largely neglects the important considerations from the episodes in the history of science (section 4), and in doing so he is justified by an influential tradition of interpreting the Quinean critique deriving from Putnam and Kitcher, for whom the considerations from the episodes in the history of science suggest that a priority, rather than analyticity or meaning, is defective (section 5). I have tried to argue that there are considerations, internal to the Quinean critique in 'Two Dogmas', that do not invoke indeterminacy considerations, and that point to non-factualism about meaning (section 6). If it can be shown that these considerations are stronger than indeterminacy considerations, then any instability between the Quinean critique and non-factualism will resolve itself against Boghossian. That is what I want to show in this section (section 7). I conclude in the next section with a brief consideration of the question of evaluation (section 8).

There are two ways in which the argument that I have provided against the factuality of meaning is stronger than those that spring from indeterminacy considerations. The first is that it connects more directly with the non-factualist conclusion than do indeterminacy considerations. Suppose for concreteness that meaning is understood as consisting in something like method of verification or inferential role (call this *role* for short), but where role leaves meaning indeterminate in the sense that facts about role do not determine unique specifications of meaning-facts: where there are any correct specifications of meaning-facts, there will be many, and incompatible, specifications of meaning-facts.²⁰ It is not clear

how radical a conclusion this kind of indeterminacy generates for meaning.²¹ Depending upon exactly why it is that no unique specification of meaning-facts is determined, indeterminacy may counsel a view of meaning where the idiolect and not the sociolect is primary (so as to avoid discrepancies in role across speakers as a source of indeterminacy), or a view of meaning specifications where pure disquotational specifications of meaning take precedence over extended or quasi-disquotational specifications (Field 2001) (we avoid indeterminacy by 'acquiescing in our mother tongue and taking its words at face value', as Quine (1969b: 49) put it in a closely related context). These are significant conclusions about language and semantic concepts, but they do not seem to speak to the issue of the factuality or not of meaning. When indeterminacy does engage the issue of factuality, it seems at best to entail only that some specifications of meaning-facts may not be *determinately* true or false, perhaps in something like the way that it may not be determinately true or false that a man is bald. Again this is a significant conclusion, but seems not to be the claim that there are no meaning facts.

By contrast, the argument that I have offered produces a non-factualism about meaning. The problem occurs at the level of the introduction of theoretical notions, of *concepts* and *meanings*. Concepts and meanings are the fundamental theoretical entities involved in theorizing the rational interactions within, between, and amongst, minds. The problem is that when the full scope of rational interaction is made clear—including scientific revolutions—we see that nothing is immune from revision; but when we try to introduce the fundamental theoretical entities—meanings—we understand them in ways that set up certain claims, those whose acceptance sets the conditions of intelligibility, as immune to revision. On this view, the notions of concept and meaning are not well defined and do not pick out any entity.

Even if it were the case that indeterminacy considerations could yield non-factualism about meaning, there is a second, and further way in which the argument given here is stronger than that provided by indeterminacy considerations: it is immune to a common and trenchant objection to indeterminacy arguments. It is often objected that Quine's arguments for indeterminacy presuppose a behaviourist understanding of meaning, and that indeterminacy can be reduced or altogether removed if one conceives of the metaphysical basis of meaning in a less austere, perhaps more normative, way. The objection highlights the idea that indeterminacy arguments are sensitive to how the constitutive basis of meaning is envisaged. But the argument that is given here does not presuppose behaviourism, and allows that the constitutive basis of meaning can be behavioural dispositions, but that it can also be something considerably more normatively infused, like commitments to certain cognitive and inferential practices. Suppose that it is a condition on grasping a concept that one be cognitively committed to certain inferences, and not merely that as a matter of behavioural reflex one is disposed to those inferences. Assuming that a challenge to the validity of a certain inference is at the same time a disavowal of commitment, then one will be able to grasp the relevant concept (and thus be able to challenge

the particular inference) while failing to be cognitively committed in the way that grasp demands. As long as these commitments are meaning-constituting, the problem remains. The overall conclusion is that whereas the rejection of behaviourism or of austere conceptions of the constitutive basis of meaning may destroy the argument deriving from indeterminacy considerations, it leaves untouched the argument that I have supplied on behalf of the Quinean critique.

At the end of section 3 we had established the following conditional:

Instability Resolves Against Boghossian and Epistemic Analyticity If

If there is an understanding of the Quinean critique that (1) is intimately bound up with the critique of the a/s distinction in 'Two Dogmas'; and (2) does not invoke indeterminacy issues, but nevertheless entails the 'outright rejection of meaning'; and (3) involves considerations stronger than the indeterminacy considerations; then Boghossian's instability should resolve against him and epistemic analyticity.

I have now completed the argument for the claim that Boghossian's instability should resolve against him and epistemic analyticity. section 6 tried to show that there is such an alternative understanding of the Quinean critique, one that is bound up with the considerations in 'Two Dogmas' and that does not employ indeterminacy considerations. In this section I have tried to show that this argument is stronger, in more than one sense, than the argument from indeterminacy. I conclude that the instability of the common philosophical attitude should resolve itself against Boghossian, and against epistemic analyticity.

8.

I would like to bring the paper to a close by returning to the larger-scale questions of the opening section. Our overall concern has been with questions of understanding and evaluating the Quinean critique that are precipitated from a consideration of the mismatch between the common philosophical attitude towards and the broader intellectual legacy of the Quinean critique. Both views accept the Quinean critique, but they are diametrically opposed in what they take to be its consequences. I promised to defend the idea that the broader intellectual legacy has more properly conceived the focus of the Quinean critique. That has been done. The focus of the Quinean critique is analyticity and meaning, and not indeterminacy or a priority, and its aim is to eliminate meaning. The common philosophical attitude, as well as an influential tradition of interpreting the Quinean critique that can be thought to stand behind it, mistakes the focus of the Quinean critique because it confuses the roles and relative importance of indeterminacy, a priority, and analyticity in the Quinean critique.

What remains now is the issue of evaluation. To focus the discussion somewhat, but still too slightly, I will assume that the non-factualist conclusion is unacceptable and that it is to be resisted. I will also assume that the non-factualist conclusion is *not* to be resisted by deflecting the key idea in the argument, viz., the *No Immunity Thesis*. Defending the *No Immunity Thesis* properly is difficult and I do not undertake it here. My aim is rather to discern what the Quinean critique has to tell us about concepts, meaning, and knowledge when its key idea is embraced. I want very briefly to develop two interrelated points about the nature of concepts and meanings and about the epistemology of understanding.

The first point can be approached by drawing consequences from our narrowed focus. Since the Quinean critique as I have presented it takes the form of a contradiction between two principles, the *No Immunity Thesis* and the *Immunity Thesis*, either the non-factualist conclusion is to be accepted or at least one of the two principles is to be rejected. Since I am exploring what the Quinean critique has to tell us about the nature of concepts, meaning and knowledge when the *No Immunity Thesis* is accepted, the *Immunity Thesis*, and its background theory of meaning, are left as targets. So the idea is to explore how the Quinean critique is to be withstood by resisting the theory of concepts and meaning that Quine takes to be the best one can do on behalf of analyticity. This means that concepts and meaning are to be theorized in a way that is not based in the kind of empiricism Quine is reacting to, and that Quine does not oppose, but radicalizes. Carnapian frameworks are one form that empiricism can take; a more modern incarnation is the view of concept and meanings grounded in their *use* or *conceptual role*. Carnapian frameworks must be accepted in order to mean or think with a given concept; use or conceptual role theories require that certain patterns of use or role be instantiated in the individual, or even the community, to mean or think with a given concept. The *Immunity Thesis* manifests itself in these views in the idea that grasp of a concept is determined by acceptance of a framework, or instantiation in the individual or community of a particular use or conceptual role.

But the *No Immunity Thesis* makes problems for these kinds of views. It entails the possibility that one can grasp a concept even when one does not accept, and even challenges, the analyticity that governs that concept. If analyticity is to be made sense of along Carnapian framework lines, then one grasps even as one rejects the framework. If analyticity is to be made sense of along use or conceptual role lines, then one can grasp even where one's, or even one's community's, use and conceptual role do not conform to the use and conceptual role that are supposed to determine grasp.

But this makes a problem for analyticity only if concepts *are* in virtue of how they are *grasped*: in virtue of acceptance or instantiation of a certain use or role. This should be resisted. The first lesson that should be drawn from acceptance of the *No Immunity Thesis* thus concerns the objectivity of concepts and meanings: concepts and meanings should be considered to possess a measure of objectivity that renders them constitutively independent of thinkers' grasp. A claim can be analytic, and serve to fix the identity of a concept, even though it does not specify

what it is to grasp that concept. An account of concepts is not given by an account of what it is to grasp them.²²

This brings us to the second point, about the epistemology of understanding. If concepts are constitutively independent of their grasp, then grasp of a concept may be subject to possibilities of error and incompleteness that are characteristic of a kind of subjective take on an objective reality. This suggests that it can be a kind of rational achievement to come to grasp one's concepts better, for example by justifiably recognizing the truth of the analyticities that govern one's concepts.

But specifying exactly *what kind of* rational achievement this is very difficult—insurmountably difficult from the point of view of the broader intellectual legacy. For if we could explain the kind of rational achievement that is involved when one comes to recognize the truth of the analyticity for a concept that one already grasps, and thereby to have a better grasp of one's concept, one could begin to explain how a change from pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary scientific thinking could be a rational achievement. In that transition one comes to have a better understanding of one's concept, for one comes to correct one's thinking about claims that function to fix the identities of one's concepts. The move from paradigm to paradigm, instigated when the most basic, meaning-constitutive principles of a theory are put under challenge, isolates a locus for the improvement not only of knowledge of the subject matter (which follows as soon as metaphysical analyticity is rejected) but also of grasp or understanding.

What *is* the nature of this rational achievement? What is of paramount philosophical importance in scientific revolutions is the idea that, in the limit of the extent of the dispute, there is *no* common ground from which to bridge the gap between pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary thinking. This is not to say that there are *no grounds* at all in play. Both pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary have their reasons for thinking as they do, but these reasons are not common, and do not compel the other side. The role of common ground here is to supply premises that could serve as the basis for a deductive argument that could function to rationally compel one side to the other. And it is because that common ground is either missing or impoverished that these disputes are seen, in the broader intellectual legacy, as points of conceptual difference and rational incommensurability.²³

But once one understands that the relevant epistemic achievements are that of the correction of grasp or understanding, one can see that deductive arguments fall away as irrelevant. Analyticities make explicit one's understanding of a concept. Knowledge of the analyticity should require no more than understanding the concept. But a deductive argument gives support to its conclusion, roughly, by transmitting the justification for the premises to the conclusion. But then knowledge of the analyticity will be underpinned by a justification that goes beyond that which derives from understanding alone.²⁴ The upshot is that the justified recognition of the truth of an analyticity is not a matter of deductively inferential justification, but a matter of *non-inferential* justification.²⁵ The broader intellectual legacy is sceptical because it fails to understand the nature and application of non-inferential norms of justification to the rationality of scientific revolutions.

So my overall suggestion for understanding the nature of concepts and meaning and the epistemology of understanding in the face of the Quinean critique is this: that an account that emphasizes the objectivity of concepts and meaning and the non-inferential epistemology of improving understanding can plug the hole that became the meaning-less vacuum of rational incommensurability in the broader intellectual legacy of the Quinean critique.²⁶

Gurpreet Rattan
Department of Philosophy
University of Toronto
Canada
gurpreet.rattan@utoronto.ca

NOTES

¹ I will be using 'meaning' here in a broad sense, to stand for the contents of both language and mind, although I will sometimes use 'concept' or 'content' if the context makes it especially appropriate or makes the use of 'meaning' inappropriate.

² It might be objected that Quine could and would avail himself of a sententialist account of attitudes, in which attitudes are relations between thinkers and sentences. Such accounts are subject to myriad familiar problems, many centred on the need to appeal to meaning to make the accounts workable. More generally, this objection operates at a different, less fundamental, level than the discussion to follow.

³ For discussion, see Boghossian 1990 and Wright 2002.

⁴ The first paper is a shorter and slightly modified version of the second. Where I provide two sets of page references, they are to the first and second of these papers, respectively. I include page references both for completeness, and because, at least in one place, a modification is indicative of an awareness on Boghossian's part of something fishy in his argument. See note 6 below.

⁵ There is a lacuna in Boghossian's argument, for there is no direct path from a lack of principled distinction between semantically relevant and irrelevant inferences to non-factualism about meaning if meaning can be atomistic (see Fodor and Lepore 1992: 35 for relevant discussion). But even a very committed atomist like Fodor thinks that the most plausible account of the meanings of the logical constants is given by some inferential or conceptual role semantics. See Fodor 1987: 78; Fodor 1994: Chapter 3. To engage Boghossian's argument more fully, I'll proceed under the assumption that meaning is not atomistic.

⁶ I take it as evidence that Boghossian himself does not have a full grip on his ideas that this passage is altered between the 1996 and 1997 versions of the paper. The 1996 version speaks of indeterminacy, whereas the 1997 version, from which I have quoted, speaks not at all of indeterminacy, but only of non-factualism. As we shall see this back and forth is symptomatic of a larger problem in Boghossian's overall argument.

⁷ For present purposes I do not need to deny that one may be able to derive a kind of indeterminacy thesis from reflection on scientific revolutions (for example, see Field 1973). My point is that there is an argument, intimately bound up with the critique of the a/s distinction in 'Two Dogmas', that does not invoke indeterminacy considerations, and that entails non-factualism or the 'outright rejection of meaning'.

⁸ Quine notices that the kinds of revision by which an observational statement can be held immune to revision are out of accordance with the idea that revision is to be made (or that our 'natural tendency' is to revise) in a way that minimizes disturbance to the total system. But he does not notice that this renders the arguments against the sufficiency and against the necessity of rational unrevisability for analyticity very different—the former requires a very unconstrained account of confirmation, whereas the latter employs the presumably much stricter account of confirmation that scientists actually use. In Quine's presentation both arguments operate under the assumption of the unconstrained account of confirmation (Quine 1951: 43).

⁹ This is not to say that Quine was the first to consider the importance of these episodes. Of course logical empiricism was keen to press the problems Einstein's science posed for Kant's synthetic a priori (see, for example Reichenbach 1965).

¹⁰ Boghossian is concerned with the holism expressed in these passages, and whether holism amounts to a good ground for eliminating meaning. That is not the direction of argument that I will suggest. Moreover, as I suggested, Quine's use of the episodes from the history of science does not require Quine's unconstrained holism about confirmation, and indeed may require a stricter account of confirmation.

¹¹ There are of course responses, on behalf of the a priori, that can and have been made to this argument. One response is to distinguish between justification and defeaters, and to argue that the primary commitment of the a priori is to justification independent of experience, and not indefeasibility in the light of experience. This opens up the prospects for the experientially defeasible a priori (see for example Burge 1993: 461; Casullo 2003: §5.2). Another line of response is to deny that the kinds of revisions that are highlighted in the episodes from the history of science are *epistemically* grounded in experience, and that instead, experience is playing some lesser, non-epistemic role in revisions that are, from an epistemic view, wholly a priori (Field 1998: 13–16; 2006: §4). These responses do not challenge Putnam's and Kitcher's reading of the Quinean critique even if they do try to deflect some putative consequences of that reading.

¹² This is not to say that Putnam's and Kitcher's readings of the Quinean critique pose no problems for Boghossian's project. The project is to explain basic logical knowledge, and basic logical knowledge is construed as being a priori. But if there is no a priori, there is no such explanandum. But the following position can get most of what Boghossian is after: our grasp of concepts explains our basic logical knowledge—here we have an analytic explanation of our knowledge—but that explanation is an explanation of knowledge that does not have the full status of a priority because the a priori is indefeasible, while our justification for our basic logical knowledge may be defeasible. Perhaps this is enough to capture the substance of Boghossian's position.

¹³ Of course this same point could be made about Quine's ambition to have empiricism 'without the dogmas'. But it is not at all clear whether Quine retains any room for knowledge on the view in 'Two Dogmas'. Quine's claims about how the 'myths' of the gods of Homer *and* of physical objects 'enter our conception only as cultural posits' (Quine 1951: 44) waters down any grand claims on behalf of our 'so-called knowledge or beliefs' (Quine: 1951: 42), as does Quine's qualified agreement with Carnap that ontological questions are 'not of matters of fact but of choosing a convenient language form, a convenient conceptual scheme or framework for science . . . but only on the proviso that the same be conceded regarding scientific hypotheses generally' (Quine 1951: 45).

¹⁴ Despite my misgivings about Putnam's reading of the Quinean critique in Putnam 1976, 1978, my own proposal is strongly influenced by Putnam 1965. In a less direct way, Burge 1986 also influences my reading.

¹⁵ As Kitcher 2000 notes, it is a common objection to his account of a priori knowledge that it sets the standard for having it incredibly high.

¹⁶ For a nuanced discussion of whether infallibilism about a priori justification depends on an asymmetry of standards thesis, see Jeshion 2000. She argues that it does not, and offers an alternative defence based in the idea that putative fallible a priori justifications involve unclear and conceptually confused cognitive states (Jeshion 2000: §1). She argues against infallibilism using a (representative) example in which unclear and confused cognitive states are rationally identified and corrected with the service of these very same unclear and confused cognitive states. I critically discuss Jeshion's argument in Rattan (manuscript: §5).

¹⁷ For recent critical discussion see Williamson 2007: Chapter 4. I critically discuss Williamson in Rattan (manuscript: §7).

¹⁸ Quine's position is more *expansionist* in attempting to subsume the a priori into the empiricist perspective.

¹⁹ For example, Carnap's framework claims are *cognitively indubitable* (Carnap's rough equivalent for confirmation come what may or rational unrevisability) not *because* there could not be any evidence against them but because to doubt a framework claim is to put oneself in violation of the limits of intelligibility (Carnap 1950: 207; 209). For Carnap, a challenge to a framework claim is either trivially false (when the challenge is intended as an *internal* rather than *external* challenge), or it is, with respect to the issue of truth or falsity, unintelligible (when the challenge is intended as an external, and not internal challenge). Carnap's diagnosis of the situation is that to ask the question, for example, whether there really are numbers, in the philosophical, external sense, is to ask a question that can have only a *practical*, and not a factual or cognitive answer. To deny the doctrine is to change the subject from that of, say, numbers, to that of how we ought, in a practical sense, to speak. These rough historical considerations suggest that the idea of confirmation come what may must be of fundamentally semantic and not epistemic import if the Quinean critique is to go to the heart of logical empiricist doctrine.

²⁰ Cf. Quine's understanding of indeterminacy of translation in *Word and Object* where, roughly, the behavioural facts in which meaning consists do not determine a uniquely correct translation manual.

²¹ Boghossian suggests that indeterminacy considerations may not give a reason to eliminate meaning, but instead 'a reason to base the theory of meaning on the notion of likeness of meaning rather than that of sameness of meaning' (1996/7: 362/333). I suggest two further possible consequences of indeterminacy short of elimination.

²² Many have read a definite commitment to the idea in Christopher Peacocke's work (1992: 5). I think that Peacocke comes close to endorsing this kind of view, but the formulation there is tempered by reference to one who has 'mastered the concept'. Some of Peacocke's own misgivings about his *Study of Concepts* view can be found in Peacocke 1998; see especially §4.

²³ In the background here is the idea that Boghossian elsewhere (2000: 253) calls the 'principle of the universal accessibility of reasons'. The idea is that genuine reasons can be appreciated as such by any rational inquirer. Deep disputes in the history of science form the basis, for the broader intellectual legacy, for a Modus Tollens inference to the conclusion that there are no genuine reasons applicable in deep disputes, and thus that these disputes are beyond the scope of rational adjudication. But that is to operate with an impoverished conception of the relevant reasons.

²⁴ The best way to see this is to think about the role of definitions in the kinds of fully explicit or gapless proofs Frege was after. If definitions ever occur essentially in fully explicit or gapless proofs, a definition cannot be justified in a way that other claims in a

proof can be justified without reneging on the idea that the definition is contributing to a fully explicit or gapless proof. But this means that no deductive justification *can* intrude to justify the recognition of the truth of the definition or analyticity, for then it would no longer be able to play its role in justification.

²⁵ Kuhn said that what was required is a 'conversion experience' (Kuhn 1962: 150). Kuhn gets right the idea that what is required is something non-deductive, something immediate. But Kuhn's choice of words puts a sceptical spin on the idea, one that is characteristic of the sceptical perspective of the broader intellectual legacy more generally.

²⁶ Thanks to Joshua Schechter for extensive and astute written comments, and to David Boutillier, Martin Hahn, Jennifer Nagel, Chris Pincock, and Jonathan Weisberg for illuminating discussion. Thanks as well to audiences at meetings of the Canadian Society for Epistemology, the Canadian Philosophical Association, and the Society for Exact Philosophy.

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