



New Essays on the A Priori

Paul Boghossian and Christopher Peacocke

Print publication date: 2000

Print ISBN-13: 9780199241279

Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: November 2003

DOI: 10.1093/0199241279.001.0001

Rationalism, Empiricism, and the A Priori

Quassim Cassam (Contributor Webpage)

DOI:10.1093/0199241279.003.0003

Abstract and Keywords

Quassim Cassam investigates the relation between a priori truths on the one hand and rationalist and empiricist positions on the other. He argues that we obtain a clearer understanding of the distinction between rationalism and empiricism as well as a more refined conception of a priori truths if we do not regard the question of whether there exist such truths as the dividing line, but rather concentrate on the different explanations with those respective positions for the existence of such truths.

Keywords: a priori truths, Quassim Cassam, empiricism, explanation, rationalism

I

How is the distinction between 'rationalist' and 'empiricist' theories of a priori knowledge to be understood? Those who organize their accounts of a priori knowledge around this distinction are not committed to regarding it as sharp or straightforward, but it is nevertheless widely assumed that there are distinctive core elements or principles by reference to which most theories of a priori knowledge can usefully be classified either as 'rationalist' or as 'empiricist'. Is this assumption correct? If so, what are the core elements of each doctrine?

In answering the second of these questions, it would be inappropriate to ignore historical considerations. For example, one should be extremely reluctant to accept any answer to it which results in the classification of Leibniz as an 'empiricist' or A. J. Ayer as a 'rationalist'. Equally, the fact that someone such as Ayer is deemed to be a paradigm empiricist should not be taken to imply that every element of his position is a core element of empiricism about the a priori.

The key is to be able to distinguish, among the principles held by some paradigmatic historical figure, between those without which he would fail to qualify as, say, an ‘empiricist’, and those which are peculiar to his particular brand of empiricism. There is, no doubt, some element of arbitrariness in this distinction, just because the boundaries of concepts such as those of ‘empiricism’ and ‘rationalism’ are neither precise nor uncontroversial. To concede this much is, however, not to concede that no distinction can be drawn between the fundamental tenets of these doctrines and the idiosyncratic commitments of a particular philosopher.

As it turns out, these fundamental tenets are surprisingly hard to identify. There is no shortage of principles by reference to which theories of a priori knowledge have traditionally been classified as either ‘rationalist’ or ‘empiricist’, but a good many of these principles are obscure and ambiguous. Some of them appear to have been held both by paradigm rationalists and paradigm empiricists, and it remains to be seen whether it is possible to account for this by referring to the idiosyncracies of particular historical figures or to differences in interpretation. In other (**p.44**) cases, the problem is that the intelligibility of allegedly core principles is open to question. Quine's conclusion is, in effect, that ‘rationalism’ and ‘empiricism’ are ‘pseudo-doctrines’ between which ‘there is no real difference’ (Quine 1976: 113).¹ I agree with Quine, at least to the extent that some of the most popular and influential accounts of the dispute between these doctrines are, in my view, untenable. However, instead of rejecting the traditional classification outright, I will conclude by proposing my own alternative account of what is at issue between ‘rationalism’ and ‘empiricism’.

II

According to the standard account, one area of disagreement between rationalism and empiricism concerns the source of a priori knowledge. Suppose that a proposition p is said to be known a priori as long as p is true and one's justification or warrant for believing it is independent of experience. Rationalism is then said to be committed to the principle that the source of some or all of our a priori knowledge is what is variously described as ‘rational intuition’, ‘clear and distinct perception’, or ‘rational insight’. For one's knowledge of p to count as a priori, one's justification for believing this proposition must be a priori, and the rationalist claims that rational intuition or one of its variants is the source of one's a priori justification.² In contrast, the empiricist is characterized as rejecting this account on the grounds that it requires us to posit a mysterious faculty of intuition which cannot be properly explained.³ For some empiricists, the moral of this ‘argument from queerness’⁴ against the notion of rational intuition is that the very (**p.45**) idea of a priori knowledge is problematic. For others, it is that while it might be appropriate to describe some of our knowledge as ‘a priori’ the possibility of such knowledge can and should be

accounted for without appealing to occult faculties of the kind which the rationalist invokes.

A second point at issue between rationalism and empiricism is said to concern the scope of a priori knowledge. This is the area of disagreement which Ayer emphasizes in his classic discussion of these matters in *Language, Truth and Logic*. According to Ayer, rationalism is the view that ‘there are some truths about the world which we can know independently of experience’ (1946: 98). In contrast, empiricism is committed to the principle that ‘there can be no a priori knowledge of reality’ (1946: 115). On one reading, to say that there can be no a priori knowledge of ‘reality’ would be to say that there can be no a priori knowledge. This is not the version of empiricism which Ayer himself favours. His version of empiricism allows that a priori knowledge of some necessary truths is possible, but denies that the truths in question are ‘about the world’. His way of making this point is to restrict a priori knowledge to analytic propositions, defined as ones which are true solely in virtue of the meaning of their constituent symbols, and to argue that analytic truths are ‘entirely devoid of factual content’ (Ayer 1946: 105).

Here, then, are two fundamental issues over which there are apparently straightforward disagreements between ‘rationalism’ and ‘empiricism’. To summarize, the standard account maintains that to be a ‘rationalist’ one must believe that:

- (R1) Rational intuition is the source of some or all of our a priori knowledge

and

- (R2) A priori knowledge of reality is possible.

To count as an ‘empiricist’, one must believe that:

- (E1) Rational intuition is the source of none of our a priori knowledge⁵

and

- (E2) A priori knowledge of reality is not possible.

Given this account of what is supposed to be at issue between rationalism and empiricism about the a priori, the next questions which need to be addressed are these: (**p.46**)

- (Q1) how is the notion of ‘rational intuition’ to be understood?
- (Q2) what would it be for a piece of a priori knowledge to count as a priori knowledge of ‘reality’?

A popular answer to (Q1) is that rational intuition is what Laurence BonJour calls ‘intuitive insight into necessity’ (1998: 18). To say that rational intuition is the source of my a priori knowledge of some proposition is therefore to say that

'when I carefully and reflectively consider the proposition (. . .) in question, I am able to see or grasp or apprehend that the proposition is *necessary*' (ibid. 106). With regard to (Q2), Ayer's discussion suggests that a priori knowledge of reality would have to be a priori knowledge of the truth of propositions which are 'about the world' (Ayer 1946: 98). I take it that for a proposition to be 'about the world', its truth must, as Quine puts it, 'hinge on reality' (1970: 10); it must be true by virtue of 'traits of reality' (Quine 1976: 113). It remains to be seen what all this talk of 'reality' amounts to, and also how the phrase 'true by virtue of' is to be understood.

One way of undermining the standard account of the dispute between 'rationalism' and 'empiricism' would be to show that 'empiricism' is not committed (E1) and is therefore not committed to denying (R1). Another possibility would be to show that 'empiricism' is not committed to (E2) and is therefore not committed to disputing (R2). These are not the only possibilities, but they are the ones which I will focus on to begin with. Clearly, anyone who tries to argue that (R1) and (R2) are compatible with 'empiricism' needs to explain how a position which accepts these theses can still count as 'empiricist'. On one view, the only basis for the continued use of such labels is tradition, and if it is the case that (R1) and (R2) are compatible with what would generally be regarded as prominent examples of 'empiricism', then this only goes to show that Quine's scepticism about the traditional classification is entirely justified. For those who do not share Quine's scepticism, the lesson would have to be that there are other ways of drawing the distinction between rationalism and empiricism, or that what really counts in the present context is not one's acceptance or rejection of (R1) and (R2), but rather one's interpretation of these theses or one's specific grounds for accepting or rejecting them. The suggestion, in other words, is that the agreement over (R1) and (R2) may turn out to be comparatively superficial.

How might an empiricist be brought to accept (R1), and hence to abandon (E1), given the argument from queerness? If the very idea of 'rational intuition' is dismissed as queer or occult, how can one possibly agree that rational intuition is the source of any of our a priori knowledge? Perhaps the best way of talking an empiricist out of his opposition to (R1) would be to persuade him that an appeal to rational intuition is required to account for our a priori knowledge of analytic truths.⁶ An argument along these lines would not cut much ice with someone who (**p.47**) is sceptical about analytic-synthetic distinction, but it ought to carry considerable weight with those empiricists who take it for granted that there is such a distinction and that a priori knowledge of analytic truths is possible. If, as many empiricists concede, we have a priori knowledge of some analytic truths, and if rational intuition is a necessary condition of such knowledge, then the idea of rational intuition should not be dismissed as queer.

This attempt to demystify the concept of rational intuition is a ‘transcendental’ argument in something like Kant’s sense.⁷ It attempts to legitimate a concept which empiricists have called into question by showing that an appeal to this concept is required to explain how a cognitive achievement which many empiricists regard as actual—a priori knowledge of analytic truths—is possible. I will refer to this transcendental argument for (R1) as the *argument for rational intuition* (ARI).

As with other transcendental arguments, there are basically two ways of attempting to undermine ARI. The first would be to deny that the cognitive achievement from which it sets out is actual. It would need to be claimed, in other words, that we do not have a priori knowledge of analytic truths, or what I will refer to from now on as analytic a priori knowledge. I will not pursue this option here. The second option would be to show that what ARI identifies as a necessary condition of the cognitive achievement from which it sets out is not in fact necessary, and that this achievement can be counted for in other ways. What this amounts to is the proposal that rational intuition is not a necessary condition of the possibility of analytic a priori knowledge. Critics of ARI who endorse this proposal are under an obligation to provide an alternative explanation of how a priori knowledge of analytic propositions is possible, one which does not appeal to ‘rational intuition’. The range of genuine alternatives will, in turn, depend on one’s answer to (Q1). Intuitively, the broader one’s conception of rational intuition, the harder it will be to explain analytic a priori knowledge without appealing to the possibility of ‘rational intuition’.

With regard to (R2), one way of defending this thesis would be to argue that (i) a priori knowledge of some synthetic truths is possible, and that (ii) synthetic truths are ‘about the world’. The problem with this argument is that there are no uncontroversial examples of synthetic truths which can be known a priori, and that the rejection of the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge is arguably a fundamental tenet of ‘empiricism’. In general, those who regard themselves as empiricists have responded to examples of supposedly synthetic a priori judgements either by denying that they are synthetic or by denying that they are a **(p.48)** priori. While rationalist critics of (E2) have not always found these responses persuasive, the fact that there are so many different ways of understanding the analytic–synthetic distinction has meant that the debate over the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge has more or less ground to a halt.⁸

A more promising argument for (R2), one which stands a better chance of persuading an empiricist to give up (E2), is this: (i)* analytic a priori knowledge is possible; (ii)* analytic truths are ‘about the world’; therefore, (R2) a priori knowledge of reality is possible. From an empiricist perspective, a major attraction of this argument is that it does not require one to accept that synthetic a priori knowledge is possible. If empiricists can be brought to accept that even judgements which are straightforwardly and unquestionably analytic

by their lights are not devoid of factual content, then they should no longer be committed to (E2) and opposed to (R2). I will call it, this argument for (R2), the *argument for factual content* (AFC).

III

To begin with ARI, what is the case for saying that rational intuition is a necessary condition of analytic a priori knowledge? According to one version of ARI, the case is this: for one's knowledge of a proposition to be a priori, one's justification for believing it must be a priori. Suppose, next, that an analytic truth is, as Ayer maintains, one which is necessarily true purely in virtue of its meaning. This suggests that one's justification for believing an analytic truth will be a priori or independent of experience as long as one understands the proposition in question, and sees or recognizes, in virtue of one's grasp of its meaning, that the proposition is necessarily true. In the words of Crispin Wright:

The real motivation for thinking of necessity as truth in virtue of meaning derives from the fact that, in simple cases at least, we want to describe ourselves as reflecting on the content of a sentence and *thereby* coming to see that it cannot but be true. In such cases, necessity is recognized by *the light of understanding*. (1980: 353–4)

How does this show that *rational intuition* is a necessary condition of analytic a priori knowledge? It shows this because, according to ARI, seeing 'by the light of understanding' that a proposition is necessary is exactly the same thing as rationally intuiting its necessity. Where the present version of ARI speaks of 'seeing' that certain propositions are necessarily true, rationalists speak of an 'intuitive' or 'rational' insight into the necessity of propositions which one has carefully and reflectively considered, but these ways of putting things appear to be equivalent. The rationalist overtones of Wright's formulation are, after all, unmistakable. So (**p.49**) if 'seeing' by 'the light of understanding' that analytic truths are necessarily true is a necessary condition of a priori knowledge of such truths, then it follows that rational intuition is a necessary condition of analytic a priori knowledge.

There are at least two things which those who are sceptical about the notion of rational intuition can say in response to this argument. They can object that (a) 'seeing by the light of understanding' that an analytic proposition is necessarily true is not a necessary condition of a priori knowledge of that proposition, or that (b) 'seeing by the light of understanding' that a proposition is necessarily true is not the same thing as rationally intuiting its necessity. Consider, in the light of these options, the following passage from Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*:

The contention . . . which we reject is that the propositions of logic and mathematics have the same status as empirical hypotheses; that their validity is determined in the same way. We maintain that they are independent of experience in the sense that they do not owe their validity to empirical verification. We may come to discover them through an

inductive process; but once we have apprehended them we see that they are necessarily true, that they hold good for every conceivable position.
(1946: 100)

This passage suggests that (a) could not have been Ayer's response to ARI. He explicitly refers to our ability to 'see' that logical and mathematical propositions are necessarily true, and this insight into their necessity is clearly supposed to be the result of one's understanding of these propositions. In both of these respects, Ayer's approach is strikingly similar to some rationalist approaches to the a priori. The same paradoxical conclusion is suggested by Christopher Peacocke's recent characterization of rationalism in the context of an account of what it is to possess a concept. Peacocke describes his own view as having 'the distinctive flavour of a classical rationalist position' (1998: 78) on the grounds that it endorses six principles which were held by 'that paradigm rationalist Leibniz'. The principles are that (1) the evidentialness of particular axioms is grounded in the understanding of the terms they contain, (2) finding an axiom evident, when this is properly grounded in the understanding, is a way of coming to know the Thought expressed by the axiom, (3) logical axioms can be known a priori, (4) logical axioms are necessary, (5) reflection is needed to discover the axioms of logic, and (6) there is an important distinction to be drawn between clear ideas and distinct ideas. Yet, with the possible exception of (6), there seems no reason why these principles could not also be accepted by that paradigm empiricist Ayer. Where Peacocke's rationalist speaks of finding a logical axiom 'evident', Ayer speaks of 'seeing' that logical truths are necessarily true. For Ayer, as for the rationalist, this 'seeing' is, in Peacocke's terminology, 'understanding-based' and a source of knowledge. In addition, logical axioms are both necessary and knowable a priori. As for (5), Ayer's emphasis on 'the power of logic and mathematics to surprise us' (1946: 114) implies that we may need to reflect in order to discover them. Are we therefore to fly in the face of tradition and conclude that Ayer's view also has the flavour of a classical rationalist position?

(p.50) This paradoxical conclusion would only follow if what Ayer describes as 'seeing' that a proposition is necessarily true is the same thing as 'rationally intuiting' its necessity.⁹ This is what (b) disputes. Before examining the case for (b), it would be worth pointing out that even if Ayer's approach turns out to be 'entirely' indiscernible from that of the rationalist' (BonJour 1998: 39),¹⁰ it is a further question whether this vindicates the Quinean view that there is no real difference between 'empiricism' and 'rationalism'. I said that one should be very reluctant to accept any account of the distinction between these doctrines which has Ayer coming out as some kind of rationalist, but I added that it is also necessary to distinguish between the idiosyncratic commitments of a particular philosopher and the fundamental tenets of 'rationalism' or 'empiricism'. Ayer's talk of 'seeing' that analytic propositions are necessarily true certainly commits him to what might be called an 'intuitionist' conception of our a priori knowledge of such propositions, and this is the basis of the charge that his view

has at least the flavour of a classical rationalist position.¹¹ But quite apart from the question of whether Ayer's intuitionism is the same as the intuitionism of those who endorse (R1), it is also possible that his intuitionism is an idiosyncratic feature of his brand of empiricism rather than a crucial element of 'empiricism' as such, or even a crucial element of his own approach to the a priori. To the extent that 'empiricism' in the strict sense is opposed to intuitionism, it is not entirely discernible from 'rationalism', and the moral is that (a) *should* have been Ayer's response to ARI, whether or not it would have been his response.

I will come back to this suggestion below. First, I need to complete my discussion of (b). If there is a distinction between the sense in which empiricists such as Ayer think that 'seeing' that a proposition is necessarily true is required for a priori knowledge of that proposition and the sense in which rationalists think that intuitions of necessity are necessary for a priori knowledge, then there (**p.51**) is no need to conclude that empiricism as such and intuitionism are incompatible. A familiar argument for (b) is that the intuitions of necessity which are referred to by Ayer and Wright are *linguistic*, whereas what the rationalist calls 'intuitions of reason' are not on the same level as 'merely linguistic intuitions' (Ayers 1991: i, 293).¹² So when empiricists say that the ability is 'see' that analytic propositions are necessarily true is a necessary condition of analytic a priori knowledge, they are *not* saying, in effect, that rational intuition is a necessary condition of analytic a prior knowledge. Far from committing him to (R1), or to giving up (E1), Ayer's 'linguistic' intuitionism can be seen as a threat to ARI and as leaving the argument from queerness intact. It is a threat to ARI because, assuming that (b) is correct, its explanation of how analytic a priori knowledge is possible is an alternative to the explanation offered by the rationalist's transcendental argument. And it is compatible with the argument from queerness because, given (b), it does not follow from the fact that the notion of 'rational intuition' is unacceptably mysterious that the notion of a merely linguistic intuition is unacceptably mysterious.

All of this assumes that the notion of a merely linguistic intuition is coherent in its own right, and that there is a genuine distinction between merely linguistic intuitions of necessity and so-called 'intuitions of reason'. Are these assumptions defensible? To begin with the notion of a linguistic intuition, this can be understood in either a narrow or a broad sense. Linguistic intuitions in the narrow sense are syntactic intuitions. To borrow an example from Chomsky, a sentence such as 'sincerity frighten may the boy' is a 'violation of purely syntactic rules' (Chomsky 1965: 76), and our recognition of its deviance might, in virtue of this fact, be described as involving the exercise of 'linguistic intuition' in the narrow sense. In contrast, the deviance of 'oculists are generally better trained than eye doctors' is semantic rather than syntactic. Intuitions of semantic deviance might be described as 'linguistic' in the broad sense.¹³

As I have already pointed out, Ayer characterizes an analytic proposition as one which is true solely in virtue of the meaning of its constituent symbols. His view is that 'seeing' that an analytic proposition is necessarily true is an immediate, non-derivative product of a proper grasp of its meaning. To say this is, in effect, to say that our intuitions of necessity are 'understanding-based', since understanding a proposition and grasping its meaning come to the same thing. An understanding-based intuition cannot, however, be characterized as purely syntactic. Rather, to the extent that 'seeing', in the empiricist's sense, that an analytic proposition is necessary is the product of one's grasp of its meaning, one would have to regard this 'seeing' as involving the exercise of semantic rather than merely syntactic intuition. This means that for (b) to be defensible, it would (**p.52**) have to be the case that so-called 'intuitions of reason' are *not* semantic, or, at any rate, not merely semantic.

On one reading, to say that intuitions of reason are not semantic would be to say that language-mastery is not a necessary condition of the ability to recognize the necessity of analytic propositions.¹⁴ This claim is extremely implausible. In order to recognize the necessity of a proposition such as 'all bachelors are unmarried', one must be able to understand it, and it is difficult to see how this would be possible without mastery of a language. Perhaps, then, the point of (b) is that language-mastery is a sufficient condition for seeing by 'the light of understanding' that analytic propositions are necessarily true, but not sufficient for the rational intuition of necessity. This claim is, on the face of it, also implausible. Once it is granted that analytically necessary propositions are necessarily true purely in virtue of meaning, how can it be supposed that grasp of their necessity in either sense requires anything more than the 'ability to know what we mean by the expressions which we use, and to discern the implications of meaning them in such-and-such ways' (Wright 1980: 343)? Possession of these abilities is, however, just what 'reflective language-mastery' (*ibid.*) consists in, so it seems that reflective language-mastery is, as the linguistic intuitionist claims, not just necessary but also sufficient for one's intuitive insight into the necessity of analytic propositions. It is not as if 'reason' is not involved in one's mastery of a language, or that it can be sharply distinguished from what the linguistic intuitionist calls 'understanding', so the attempt to distinguish sharply between 'intuitions of reason' and 'linguistic intuitions' is bound to be problematic.¹⁵

An objection to this line of argument is that it accepts the assumption that those propositions whose necessity we can intuit are necessarily true purely in virtue of meaning. To accept that analytic propositions are true purely by virtue of meaning is, in Paul Boghossian's terminology, to endorse a 'metaphysical' conception of analyticity.¹⁶ *Once granted* that an analytic proposition is true solely in virtue of the meaning of its constituent symbols, the proposal that intuitive insight into its necessity requires anything other than the exercise of semantic intuition may seem mysterious, but perhaps the rationalist's point is to

deny that ‘intuitions of reason’ pertain to propositions which are metaphysically analytic. An alternative proposal would be that ‘the world’ is responsible for the truth of propositions whose necessity we can rationally intuit, and that rational intuition is therefore to be regarded as ‘intuitive insight into the nature of reality’ (BonJour 1998: 18). As long as one is willing to admit that analytic propositions are ‘about the world’, this proposal is (**p.53**) compatible with the thesis that the propositions whose necessity we can intuit are analytically necessary. To say that analytic propositions are ‘about the world’ is, however, to deny that they are ‘metaphysically’ analytic. A different conception of analyticity is required, one which does not imply that analytic propositions are true purely by virtue of meaning.¹⁷

In contrast, linguistic intuitionists think that our intuitions of necessity are merely linguistic because they think that necessity itself is merely linguistic. Our intuitions of necessity are therefore linguistic both in origin and in scope. They originate exclusively in a general capacity of reflective language-mastery, and only ‘enlighten us by illustrating the way in which we use certain symbols’ (Ayer 1946: 106). Since, by Ayer’s lights, the ‘world’ is not responsible for the necessary truth of analytic propositions, seeing by the light of understanding that an analytic proposition is necessarily true does not amount to intuitive insight into necessary properties of reality. In this crucial aspect, his intuitionism is, as (b) claims, fundamentally different from the rationalist’s intuitionism. This means that, as anticipated above, the fact that an empiricist is a *linguistic* intuitionist does not commit him to (R1), or to abandoning (E1).

This defence of (b) provides ‘empiricism’ in Ayer’s sense with the resources to challenge the conclusion of ARI, but only at a price. For it now appears that for empiricists who are also intuitionists to be in a position to resist the charge that their position is indistinguishable from rationalism, they must insist that necessary truths are metaphysically analytic and devoid of factual content. These are not claims with which all those who regard themselves as ‘empiricists’ would wish to be saddled.¹⁸ If the notion of metaphysically analyticity is incoherent, or if analytic propositions are ‘about the world’, this would strengthen the case for (a), for the view that ‘empiricism’ should have nothing to do with intuitionism in any form. Since demonstrating that analytic propositions have factual content is the business of the argument for factual content (AFC), it is now time to examine this argument.

IV

For a proposition to be ‘about the world’ is for it to be true by virtue of ‘traits of reality’. Suppose that analytic propositions are true by virtue of traits of reality and therefore, as (ii)* claims, ‘about the world’. According to AFC, this would (**p.54**) mean that analytic a priori knowledge is a priori knowledge of ‘reality’. This is the basis of AFC’s defence of (R2). The conclusion which ARI draws from the supposition that analytic propositions have factual content is that intuitive

insight into their necessity is intuitive insight into necessary traits of reality. This is the basis of ARI's defence of (R1).

This account of the use which rationalists can try to make of (ii)* raises the following questions:

(Q3) what does 'reality' mean in the claim that analytic propositions are 'true by virtue of reality'?

(Q4) what is the case for saying that analytic propositions are true by virtue of traits of reality?

With regard to the first of these questions, 'naturalism' is the view that 'reality' is identical with nature, with what exists in space or time. Platonism is the view that 'reality' includes universals or abstract objects, which do not exist in nature. A naturalistic argument for the thesis that analytic propositions are devoid of factual content would therefore be that 'every truth must be a truth about the natural world' (Strawson 1997: 62) and that analytic propositions are not about the natural world. Because analytic propositions are not true by virtue of traits of nature, they 'say nothing' (Ayer 1946: 106). By the same token, a Platonist argument for the view that analytic propositions are not devoid of factual content would be to allow that there are truths which are about the world without being about the natural world, and to insist that 'we speak of the non-natural relations that hold between universals, or abstract entities, themselves. . . whenever we speak of conceptual (or logical or analytic or semantic) necessities' (Strawson 1997: 61). From a Platonist perspective, Ayer's assertion that analytic propositions say nothing is based on an answer to (Q3) which is far too restrictive.

Is a commitment to Platonism the only possible basis for a defence of (ii)*? While many rationalists are Platonists, (ii)* has also been endorsed by writers on a priori knowledge who would not describe themselves as Platonists. The question which this raises is whether it is possible to argue for (ii)* without committing oneself to Platonism. One such argument, which is broadly Quinean in inspiration, is this: (A) 'no sentence is true but reality makes it so' (Quine 1970: 10); (B) analytic propositions or sentences are true; therefore (C) analytic truths are true by virtue of reality.

Both 'empiricists' in Ayer's sense, and rationalists accept (B). Ayer maintains that analytic propositions 'can be true and useful and surprising' (1946: 97), but he does not take this to be equivalent to the assertion that they have factual content.¹⁹ The sense in which they are true and useful is that they illustrate the (**p.55**) way in which we use certain symbols. They lack factual content because they are true purely by virtue of meaning rather than by virtue of traits of reality. It is this thesis which is at odds with (A). The point of (A) is, firstly, that (Ai) there is no such thing as a true statement which does not owe its truth to the 'world' or to the 'facts', and, secondly, that (Aii) there are therefore no true propositions which are true purely by virtue of meaning. In other words, there are no metaphysically analytic statements or propositions.²⁰ It follows from this that analytic propositions cannot both be true and lack factual content. If they

are literally ‘true’, it is the world which makes them so, and this means that they have factual content.

What is the argument for (Ai)? Quine's argument is that when the truth predicate is attached to a sentence, it always ‘serves, as it were, to point through the sentence to reality’ (1970: 11). Just as ‘the sentence “Snow is white” is true, as Tarski has taught us, if and only if real snow is really white’ (1970: 10), so the sentence ‘All bachelors are unmarried’ is true if and only if all bachelors are unmarried. In both cases, sentences are mentioned but ‘reality is still the whole point’ (1970:11). It makes no difference that the second sentence would be classified by most rationalists and empiricists as ‘analytic’, though Quine himself is sceptical about the notion of analyticity. Crucially, there is apparently no suggestion in any of this that the reality which is responsible for the truth of ‘All bachelors are unmarried’ is abstract. Quine is no Platonist. So here is an argument for (Ai) which does not presuppose the truth of Platonism. On the assumption that the notions ‘true by virtue of traits of reality’ and ‘true purely by virtue of meaning’ are mutually exclusive, it is also an argument for (Aii), for the claim that there are no metaphysically analytic propositions.²¹

These arguments undoubtedly pose a serious threat to Ayer's version of empiricism, but is there any reason why ‘empiricism’ as such should want to resist them? If not, then this would strengthen the case for regarding Ayer's empiricism as idiosyncratic. It would also add weight to the suggestion that the standard account of the dispute between ‘rationalism’ and ‘empiricism’ is inadequate. If empiricism as such can agree that analytic truths are true by virtue of traits of reality, then it can also agree that analytic a priori knowledge is a priori knowledge of reality, and that intuitive insight into the necessary truth of analytic propositions is intuitive insight into necessary traits of reality. In that case, (R1) and (R2) fail to distinguish between empiricism and rationalism. For there to be a genuine difference between these two doctrines, rationalism would need to insist on the possibility of a priori knowledge of synthetic truths, or empiricism would need to reject *all* forms of intuitionism. Once empiricists go along with the idea that intuitive insight into necessity is the source of a priori justification, the Quinean argument for (ii)* (**p.56**) makes it extremely difficult to hold the line between empiricism and rationalism by distinguishing between different forms of intuitionism. Perhaps the lesson is, as (a) implies, that the difference between rationalism and empiricism is simply the difference between a conception of a priori justification which is intuitionist and one which is not. Alternatively, it may be the thesis that so-called ‘necessary truths’ are literally true which empiricism needs to dispute.

Before endorsing either of these alternatives, however, it would be worth asking whether the Quinean case for (ii)* is really all that compelling or one which even non-idiosyncratic empiricists can or should accept. The first point to note is that Quine himself puts forward an argument which apparently undermines the

notion that analytic truths are true by virtue of traits of reality. The argument is this:

How, given certain circumstances and a certain true sentence, might we hope to show that the sentence was true by virtue of those circumstances? If we could show that the sentence was logically implied by sentences describing those circumstances, could more be asked? But any sentence logically implies the logical truths. Trivially, then, the logical truths are true by virtue of any circumstances you care to name—language, the world, anything (1970: 96).

This argument trades on the paradox of strict implication, the paradox that a necessary proposition is strictly implied by any proposition. Since analytic truths are necessary, this means they too are strictly implied by any proposition. In that case, they are also true by virtue of any circumstances you care to name. They are true by virtue of traits of reality only in the trivial sense that they are ‘true by virtue of anything and everything’ (1970: 97). To ask whether analytic truths are true by virtue of linguistic meaning or by virtue of the way the world is is therefore to ask an empty question.

This argument suggests that the case for saying that a necessary truth is made true by reality is different from the case for saying that a contingent truth is made true by reality, since a contingent truth is not made true by any circumstances one cares to name. Instead of saying that the difference between necessary and contingent truths is the difference between propositions which are, and those which are not devoid of factual content, Ayer's empiricist can now say that it is the difference between propositions which are factual only in the sense that they are true by virtue of anything and everything and propositions which are factual in a less vacuous sense. While it would still be inappropriate and misleading to describe analytically necessary truths as true purely by virtue of meaning, Quine's reading of the phrase ‘true by virtue of’ suggests that it would be equally inappropriate and misleading to describe such truths as true by virtue of reality.

Supporters of (ii)* are unlikely to be impressed by this argument. They will object that the most that it shows is that Quine's position is not wholly consistent, and that the fact that a necessary proposition is strictly implied by any proposition shows that the phrase ‘true by virtue of’ should not be read in the way that Quine reads it. On a different reading, the point of the claim that there is no such (**p.57**) thing as a true statement which does not owe its truth to the ‘world’ or to the ‘facts’ is simply that ‘any true sentence is true in virtue of the holding of its disquotational truth condition’ (Peacocke 1993: 187), and this is all that is required to sustain the thesis that analytically necessary propositions are factual.²² As for whether there are any true propositions which are true purely by virtue of meaning, the problem is not just that a sentence which is true in virtue of the holding of its disquotational truth condition cannot be said to be true purely in virtue of its meaning. The problem is that it is

incoherent to suppose that linguistic meaning can, by itself, generate truth or that there is ‘a better answer to the question: What is responsible for generating the truth of a given class of statements? than something bland like “the world” or “the facts”’ (Boghossian 1997: 336).

These considerations reopen the question of whether the world which is responsible for generating the truth of necessary truths can be the natural world. The Platonist’s question is whether it would be coherent to regard conceptual truths as true by virtue of anything other non-natural relations between universals or abstract objects, and the fact that Quine is no Platonist does not settle this question. I will not have anything more to say about this issue here since most empiricists are not Platonists.

From an empiricist perspective, the important contrast is not that between propositions which are true by virtue of natural reality and those which are true by virtue of abstract reality. It is, rather, the contrast between what is true by virtue of natural reality and what is true by virtue of what might be called ‘social or conventional reality’ (Tully 1980: 13). While many empiricists share Quine’s scepticism about Platonism, one does not have to be a Platonist to take the view that an undifferentiated notion of ‘reality’ cannot account for the fundamental difference between the sense in which ‘reality’ is responsible for the truth of, say, ‘January has thirty-one days’²³ or ‘All bachelors are unmarried’, and the sense in which it is responsible for the truth of propositions which owe their validity to empirical verification. Thus, instead of continuing to insist that analytic propositions are devoid of factual content, perhaps empiricists should maintain that the ‘reality’ to which many such propositions pertain is conventional, and that this is the ‘reality’ into which ‘intuitive insight’ is possible for us. ‘Rationalism’ can then be distinguished from empiricism on the basis that it does not accept this restriction on the scope of our a priori knowledge. So the next question which needs to be considered, with a view to determining the accuracy and significance of the principle that no sentence is true but reality makes it so, is the question of whether the distinction between ‘natural’ and ‘conventional’ reality is coherent.

(p.58) V

The distinction between natural and conventional reality is, as James Tully has pointed out, one which does important work in Locke’s theory of knowledge and ideas. According to Locke, as Tully reads him, general ideas of substances are ‘ectype’ ideas. They are called ‘ectypes’ (copies) because ‘they are intended to stand for an archetype existing independent of our knowledge *in rerum natura*’ (Tully 1980: 12). The conclusion which Locke draws from this is that our ideas of substances are ‘inadequate’. Adequate ideas are ones which perfectly represent their archetypes, but our ideas of substance do not and cannot ‘exactly, and fully, contain all that is to be found in their Archetypes’ (II. xxxi. 8).²⁴ The reason for this is that substances are natural rather than man-made,

and Locke assumes that our knowledge of what we do not make ourselves is bound to be limited and inadequate.

In contrast, general ideas of ‘modes’ and relations are ‘archetype’ ideas.²⁵ They comprise ideas of sorts of things which ‘are, in some sense, constructed by man as opposed to substances, which are constructed by nature’ (Tully 1980: 9).²⁶ Ideas of modes and relations cannot but be adequate because they are not copies, “or made after the Pattern of any real Existence”(II. xxxi. 14). They refer to social or conventional reality and define their objects. Whereas the adequacy of our knowledge of substances is judged by comparing the idea to its object, knowledge of social or conventional reality is just the opposite, since ‘conventional things are judged for their adequacy by comparing the “object” to its idea’ (Tully 1980: 12). Archetype ideas are, in this sense, ‘normative’, and our knowledge of conventional things is an example of what has sometimes been referred to as ‘maker’s knowledge’, the knowledge of what we ourselves have made or brought about.²⁷

Locke illustrates the normativeness of archetype ideas by means of the following example: Adam observes that Lamech is troubled, and assumes that the cause of his unhappiness is jealousy of his wife’s adultery. So Adam invents the Hebrew words *kinneah* (jealousy) and *niouph* (adultery) to enable him to discuss the matter with Eve. It subsequently transpires that Lamech was worrying about something else, but this does not undermine the ideas of *kinneah* and *niouph*, **(p.59)** which ‘remain archetypes of what jealousy and adultery are’ (Tully 1980: 13). Similarly, the necessity of necessary propositions such as ‘suicide is the taking of one’s life’ consists for Locke ‘not in the fact that they are derived from reality but, rather, that reality is judged in accordance with them. It is the conventionalist thesis that an archetype idea tells us what kind of object any non-natural thing is’ (Tully 1980: 14).

What is the significance of these considerations for the suggestion that there is no better answer to the question: What is responsible for generating the truth of a given class of statements? than something bland like ‘the world’ or ‘the facts’? What they suggest is that there is a better answer to this question. To be sure, a better answer would not be one which rejects the principle that no sentence is true but reality makes it so. Rather, a better answer would be one which, as anticipated above, does not operate with an undifferentiated notion of ‘reality’. Just as the sentence ‘Snow is white’ is true if and only if snow is white, so the sentence ‘Suicide is the taking of one’s life’ is true if and only if suicide is the taking of one’s life. Each of these sentences is true in virtue of the holding of its disquotational truth condition, but ‘Suicide is the taking of one’s life’ is normative or constitutive in a way that ‘Snow is white’ is not. The occurrence of suicides is, like the existence of bachelors, but unlike the existence of snow, a

social fact, and the world to which ‘Suicide is the taking of one's life’ is answerable is the social world.

Why does this distinction matter? It matters because ‘Suicide is the taking of one's life’ would widely be regarded as an analytically necessary proposition, and the Lockean account of its necessity brings out the limitations of (ii)*. On one view, the Quinean principle that no sentence is true but reality makes it so implies that ‘the notions “true purely by virtue of convention”, or “true purely in virtue of meaning” do not apply to any sentences or contents’ (Peacocke 1993: 187), but if it makes sense to speak of ‘conventional objects’ or ‘conventional reality’, then it is not clear that this implication holds. For sentences such as ‘Suicide is the taking of one's life’ or ‘January has thirty-one days’ can now be seen *both* as true by virtue of the (conventional) reality which they help to constitute *and* as ‘conventional in character’ (Dummett 1973: 621). Whether the sense in which such sentences are conventional in character implies that they are true purely in virtue of meaning is a further question, but the important point for present purposes is that there are at least some sentences whose necessity it would not be inappropriate to regard as broadly ‘conventional’, despite the fact that they are ‘about the world’.

This is not to say that the distinction between ‘natural’ and ‘conventional’ reality is entirely clear or clear-cut. In the case of the notorious ‘Nothing can be red and green all over at the same time’, there does not seem to be a straightforward answer to the question whether it is nature or convention to which it owes its necessary truth. As D. F. P. Pears remarks, ‘perhaps the emphasis on either side is a mistake; perhaps the culprit is neither convention alone nor nature alone’ (**p.60**) (1973: 113). Despite the existence of such cases, the fact remains that something like the distinction ‘natural’ and ‘conventional’ reality does appear to be along the right lines, and that the blank insistence that no sentence is true but reality makes it so fails to address any of the important metaphysical and epistemological questions which Locke's distinction brings into focus. I want to conclude by saying a little more about these questions, and developing the suggestion that Locke's approach enables one to see the dispute between ‘rationalist’ and ‘empiricist’ theories of a priori knowledge in an entirely new light.

VI

Let me summarize the position so far: I began by taking (R1) and (R2) to be the key theses of ‘rationalism’, and (E1) and (E2) to be the key theses of ‘empiricism’. On this reading, the argument for factual content results in an easy victory for rationalism. In order to undermine the claim that there can be no a priori knowledge of reality, it only needs to be pointed out that analytic a priori knowledge is possible, and that analytic propositions are ‘about the world’. The case for saying that they are about the world is that they are true, and that no sentence is true but reality makes it so. And once it is granted that analytic

propositions are factual, then it would surely be quite legitimate to regard what the empiricist himself characterizes as our ability to 'see' that analytic propositions are necessarily true as amounting to some form of intuitive insight into the reality to which these propositions pertain. This, in essence, is the argument for rational intuition.

I represented Ayer's empiricist as protesting that analytic propositions cannot be factual because they are true purely in virtue of meaning. The intuitions of necessity to which analytic propositions give rise are therefore merely semantic, and do not have any bearing on the structure of reality. On a Quinean view, however, even analytic sentences are true in virtue of the holding of their disquotational truth conditions, and it makes no sense to suppose that linguistic meaning alone can generate truth. This led to the suggestion that Ayer's version of 'empiricism' is idiosyncratic, and that the moral of Quine's argument is that empiricism should have nothing to do with intuitionism in any form. According to one version of this suggestion, an empiricist should say that a factual statement is analytic 'provided that grasp of its meaning along suffices for justified belief in its truth' (Boghossian 1997: 334). What the empiricist should refrain from saying is that analytic propositions are devoid of factual content and true purely in virtue of meaning. Since this account does not represent intuitive insight into the necessity of analytic propositions as the source of a priori justification, it does not face awkward questions about the relationship between this form of insight and what the rationalist calls 'rational intuition'.

The attractions of this non-intuitionist approach to a priori justification are (**p. 61**) obvious, but it has now emerged it is not the only option for empiricism in the face of AFC and ARI. Another option would be for non-idiosyncratic empiricists to allow that a priori knowledge of 'reality' is possible but to insist that most, if not all, of our a priori knowledge is of aspects of reality which are conventional in character. By the same token, these are the aspects of reality into which it would be appropriate to describe ourselves as having some form of 'intuitive insight'. For example, we can know the truth of 'January has thirty-one days' a priori because the calendar is a human artefact. And we can know the truth of 'All bachelors are unmarried' a priori because the idea of a bachelor is not the idea of something which exists in nature, prior to our conceptualization. On this reading, a priori knowledge might be described as a form of self-knowledge, to the extent that it is knowledge of the content of our own archetype ideas. This is the sense in which our recognition of necessity is furnished by our ability to know what we mean by the expressions which we use, and in which our intuitions of necessity are 'semantic'. Accordingly, the real point of (E2) is only to deny that a priori knowledge of natural reality is possible for us. This form of knowledge is not possible for us because, to put it crudely, we are not responsible for the structure or order of nature.

Kant's idealist response to empiricism is to agree that 'we can know a priori of things only what we ourselves have put into them' (Bxviii),²⁸ but to argue that 'the understanding is itself the source of the laws of nature' (A127). Like Locke, Kant sees a priori knowledge as maker's knowledge, but he disagrees with Locke over the scope of a priori knowledge because he has a broader conception of what the human mind is responsible for. In effect, Kant applies Locke's conception of our knowledge of modes and relations to our knowledge of certain aspects of nature, namely, just those aspects which are made by the mind.

Like Kant, the rationalist wants to keep open the possibility of a priori knowledge of nature, but his underlying metaphysical outlook is very different. The rationalist does not think that a priori knowledge of nature is possible because he thinks that nature is a human artefact. He thinks that a priori knowledge of nature is possible because he does not think that our a priori knowledge is confined to human artefacts or to the products of our conceptualization. In defence of his position, he can point out that we have a priori knowledge of many propositions which cannot plausibly be viewed merely as descriptions of conventional or social reality. One example of such a proposition is 'Nothing can be red and green all over at the same time.' Other examples arguably include basic logical laws and the truths of mathematics. Indeed, in the case of mathematical propositions, rationalists are likely to want to maintain that the reality to which they pertain is neither conventional nor natural, but abstract. As Dummett remarks, while we might be prepared to treat 'January has thirty-one days' as 'the object of a conventional (**p.62**) stipulation' (1973: 621), the same cannot be said for 'many problematic propositions of the kind discussed by philosophers' (1973: 620). So if a priori knowledge of the truth of such propositions is possible at all, then it cannot be accounted for by the supposition that it is a priori knowledge of merely conventional or social reality.

The full force of this objection may be brought out by returning to Quine's discussion of the ground of logical truth. Quine rejects the idea that while 'Tom is mortal or Tom is not mortal' is about sentences, 'Tom is mortal' and 'Tom is Tom' are about Tom. In Quine's view, 'all three are about Tom' (1970: 11). It is scarcely intelligible, however, that the truth of 'Tom is Tom' is something for which 'we' are responsible. So if 'Tom is Tom' is knowable a priori, then this would be a clear-cut case of a piece of a priori knowledge which cannot plausibly be regarded as a form of maker's knowledge. The lesson is that Locke and Kant cannot easily account for our a priori knowledge of elementary logical truths in the way that Tully's Locke accounts for the fact that 'Suicide is the taking of one's life' is knowable a priori. Interestingly, Locke's own response to 'purely identical' propositions such as 'Obligation is obligation' is to describe them as 'trifling', and to insist that they fail to convey 'instructive *real Knowledge*' (IV. viii. 8).²⁹ Perhaps the suggestion here is that purely identical propositions are not, strictly speaking, objects of 'knowledge'. This would save Locke from having

to claim that we have a priori knowledge of such propositions, and hence that this knowledge is a priori knowledge of aspects of reality for which we are in some way responsible. On the other hand, the suggestion that purely identical propositions are not objects of knowledge is difficult to reconcile with the thesis that they have factual content.

It is no part of my present purpose to settle the dispute between rationalism, empiricism, and idealism. My aim is the more modest one of trying to understand what is at issue in this dispute. Although the questions raised by Locke's account of purely identical propositions are important in their own right, they do not affect the central point of the present discussion. The fact remains that although the principle that 'no sentence is true but reality makes it so' brings out the inadequacy of Ayer's account of the dispute between rationalism and empiricism as a dispute over the possibility of a priori knowledge of reality, it would be wrong to conclude that rationalism and empiricism are pseudo-doctrines between which there is no real difference. The right conclusion is that the differences between these doctrines are more subtle than Ayer's account suggests, and that Quine's principle is too blunt an instrument to constitute the basis of a good account of what rationalists and empiricists have been arguing about. The fundamental question is whether it is true, as Kant claims, that 'reason only has insight into that which it produces after a plan of its own' (Bxiii), and there is no way of answering (**p.63**) this question without distinguishing between those aspects of 'reality' for which reason is responsible and those aspects with respect to which our knowledge is not archetypal.

For it to be plausible that there is really no difference between rationalism and empiricism, it would have to be plausible that there is no difference between natural and conventional or social reality, and that Quine's principle says all there is to say about what is responsible for generating the truth of a given class of statements. In effect, I have explained the distinction between conventional and natural reality in terms of Locke's distinction between constituents of the 'world' which are 'concept-relative' (Ayers 1991: ii. 113) and those which are not, but, according to an extreme form of conceptualism, there is nothing in the 'world' which is not concept-relative.³⁰ If one were persuaded by this view, which is certainly Quinean in spirit, then it would indeed be mysterious how the differences between 'rationalism' and 'empiricism' could be anything other than notational. Extreme conceptualism is, however, even more incredible than the thesis that all that separates 'empiricism' about the a priori from 'rationalism' is a difference in notation.³¹ The terms in which Locke and Kant think about the problem of a priori knowledge are not unproblematic, but they remain indispensable for a proper understanding of the dispute between these doctrines.

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Notes:

(1) There is no explicit mention of ‘rationalism’ and ‘empiricism’ at this point in Quine’s discussion. The doctrines between which he claims there to be no real difference are the linguistic doctrine of elementary logical truth—the doctrine that such truths are true purely by virtue of language—and the doctrine of ‘ultimate and inexplicable insight into obvious traits of reality’ (1976: 113). The linguistic doctrine is a core element of ‘logical’ empiricism, and talk of insight into obvious traits of reality is characteristic of rationalist accounts of a priori knowledge. This is the basis of my suggestion that Quine’s discussion has a direct bearing on the dispute between ‘rationalism’ and ‘empiricism’.

(2) See BonJour (1998) for a defence of this claim.

(3) This is the basis of Paul Boghossian’s criticism of the view that the source of our a priori knowledge is ‘a special evidence-gathering faculty of *intuition*, distinct from the standard five senses, which allows us to arrive at justified beliefs about necessary properties of the world’ (1997: 334). His objection is that this special faculty ‘has never been described in satisfactory terms’ (1997: 334). In his discussion, A. J. Ayer claims that ‘the fundamental tenet of rationalism is that thought is an independent source of knowledge’ (1946: 98). He objects that rationalism requires us to ‘accept it as a mysterious inexplicable fact that thought has [the] power to reveal to us authoritatively the nature of objects which we have never observed’ (1946: 98).

(4) This is J. L. Mackie’s expression. He uses it to describe an argument against moral realism which is very similar to some empiricist arguments against the idea that ‘rational intuition’ could be a source of a priori knowledge. According to the epistemological component of Mackie’s argument, if we were aware of objective moral values, ‘it would have to be by some special faculty of moral perception or intuition, utterly different from our ordinary ways of knowing everything else’ (Mackie 1977: 38).

(5) This should not be read as committing empiricism to the view that a priori knowledge is possible for us. In BonJour's terminology, an empiricist who denies the existence of a priori knowledge is 'radical' rather than 'moderate'. In my discussion, however, I will focus on 'moderate' versions of 'empiricism', which accept that we have some a priori knowledge but deny that rational intuition is the source of our a priori knowledge. For more on the distinction between 'radical' and 'moderate' empiricism, see BonJour (1998: 18-19).

(6) This is BonJour's response to 'moderate' empiricism. He criticizes moderate empiricists for claiming that 'the a priori justification of analytic propositions (or 'statements') can be understood epistemologically in a way that does not require the sort of allegedly mysterious intuitive capacity advocated by rationalism' (1998: 29).

(7) In the words of Gary Hatfield, 'transcendental argument starts from some given body of knowledge, or some cognitive achievement, and asks how it is possible. If it can be shown that the cognitive achievement in question is possible in only one way, then, given that the achievement is actual, the only possible means for its possibility must be actual, too' (1990: 79).

(8) Cf. BonJour (1998: 30).

(9) BonJour takes it for granted that anyone who thinks that 'one who understands an a priori proposition can see or grasp that it is necessary' (1998: 40) is thereby committed to rationalism about the a priori. This is the basis of his charge that so-called 'moderate empiricists' such as C. I. Lewis are *de facto* rationalists when it comes to explaining our a priori knowledge of analytic truths. But this charge fails to take into account the possibility that, as (b) suggests, moderate empiricism and rationalism have very different conceptions of what is involved in seeing that a proposition is necessary. As BonJour himself acknowledges, the rationalist's 'intuitive insight' is supposed to be rational insight into 'the nature of reality' (1998: 18). For many moderate empiricists, intuitive insight 'extends only to propositions that reflect relations among our concepts or meanings or linguistic conventions, rather than to those that make claims about the character of the extra-conceptual world' (1998: 18). This distinction is hard to reconcile with the claim that Lewis's view is 'entirely indiscernible from that of the rationalist' (1998: 39).

(10) BonJour makes this comment about C. I. Lewis's version of moderate empiricism, but he would presumably want to say the same thing about Ayer's position.

(11) I take 'intuitionism' to be the view that our a priori knowledge of some proposition P rests upon our ability to 'see' that P is necessarily true. See Ayers (1991: i. 264-8) for a recent defence of 'a qualified form of intuitionism'. In

Ayers' version of intuitionism, a priori knowledge of P involves not just the knowledge *that* P is necessarily true, but also the ability to 'see' *why* it is true.

(12) See Ayers (1991: i. 289–300) for an interesting discussion of a version of this argument.

(13) This discussion should not be taken to imply that syntactic and semantic considerations can always be sharply distinguished. See Chomsky (1964: 75–9), and Ayers (1991: i, 289–300), for further discussion of this important qualification.

(14) BonJour claims that 'there are some a priori knowable propositions that do not depend on language at all' (1998: 57).

(15) As Michael Ayers remarks, it is a good idea when thinking about the relationship between reason and language, to 'reflect on the role of rationality, or, less portentously, of general intelligence in the acquisition and employment of language' (1991: i. 290).

(16) A statement is metaphysically analytic 'provided that, in some appropriate sense, it *owes its truth-value completely to its meaning*, and not at all to "the facts"' (Boghossian 1997: 334).

(17) Boghossian, who is no rationalist, also questions the coherence of the metaphysical concept of analyticity. The alternative is to think of analyticity as an 'overtly *epistemological* notion' (1997: 334). A statement is epistemologically analytic 'provided that grasp of its meaning alone suffices for justified belief in its truth' (1997: 334). The question raised by this proposal is whether it is possible to separate the metaphysical and epistemological notions in the way that Boghossian suggests. I have my doubts about this, but will not attempt to spell them out here.

(18) See Boghossian (1997) for a broadly 'empiricist' conception of a priori knowledge which repudiates both claims.

(19) In his discussion of 'logical Conventionalism', Boghossian identifies the view that the sentences of logic are factual with the view that 'they can express truths' (1997: 349). Ayer rejects this identification.

(20) See Boghossian (1997) for a defence of (Ai) and (Aii).

(21) It is not beyond dispute that these notions are mutually exclusive. See Ewing (1939–40; 231–2) for a contrary view.

(22) Peacocke adds that this view of truth 'does not preclude further substantive elaboration of the characteristics of the truth predicate in different areas of discourse' (1993: 187).

(23) This is Michael Dummett's example. See Dummett 1973: 601.

(24) All references in this form are to Locke 1975.

(25) Modes are defined by Locke as complex ideas which 'contain not in them the supposition of subsisting by themselves, but are considered as Dependences on, or Affections of Substances; such are the *Ideas* signified by the Words *Triangle, Gratitude, Murther*, etc.' (II. xii. 4).

(26) Archetype ideas include those of 'products, actions, institutions, practices, social relations, and so on' (Tully 1980: 22).

(27) As Tully points out, 'it is not the making or doing which gives a person special knowledge but, rather, knowing the archetype in accordance with which what is done is done' (1980: 23). For further discussion of the notion of maker's knowledge, see Craig (1987: 232–43), and Hintikka (1974).

(28) All references in this form are to Kant 1929. Hintikka (1974) rightly interprets such passages as placing Kant squarely within the 'maker's knowledge' tradition.

(29) Locke defines 'identical propositions' as ones 'wherein the same Term importing the same *Idea*, is affirmed of it self' (IV. viii. 3).

(30) See Ayers (1991: ii. 113) for an account of the distinction between 'conceptualism' and 'realism'.

(31) There is a powerful attack on extreme conceptualism in Ayers (1991: ii. 110–28).