Denying a Dualism:

Goodman's Repudiation of the Analytic/Synthetic Distinction

Catherine Z. Elgin

The analytic synthetic/distinction forms the backbone of much modern Western philosophy. It underwrites a conception of the relation of representations to reality which affords an understanding of cognition. Its repudiation thus requires a fundamental reconception and perhaps a radical revision of philosophy. Many philosophers believe that the repudiation of the analytic/synthetic distinction and kindred dualisms constitutes a major loss, possibly even an irrecoverable loss, for philosophy. Nelson Goodman thinks otherwise. He believes that it liberates philosophy from unwarranted restrictions, creating opportunities for the development of powerful new approaches to and reconceptions of seemingly intractable problems. In this article I want to sketch some of the consequences of Goodman's reconception. My focus is not on Goodman's reasons for denying the dualism, but on some of the ways its absence affects his position. I do not contend that the Goodman obsessed over the issue. I have no reason to think that the repudiation of the distinction was a central factor in his intellectual life. But by considering the function that the analytic/synthetic distinction has performed in traditional philosophy, and appreciating what is lost and gained in repudiating it, we gain insight into Goodman's contributions. I begin then by reviewing the distinction and the conception of philosophy it supports.

The analytic/synthetic distinction is a distinction between truths that depend entirely on meaning and truths that depend on both meaning and fact. In the early modern period, it was cast as a distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact. More recently, it has been characterized as a distinction between types of sentences or propositions. In contemporary terms, analytic sentences are (supposed to be) sentences whose truth values derive from their meanings alone. In this article I focus on the contemporary formulation of the matter. If an identity statement is analytic, the terms bracketing the 'is'

are synonymous. Sometimes, the analytic realm is subdivided into syntactic and semantic neighborhoods. Logical truths, being syntactic, get one sort of treatment. Non-logical truths, depending on synonymy or conceptual entailments, get another. This is unnecessary and potentially misleading. Logical truths are truths whose truth values depend entirely on the meanings of their logical particles. All other terms in such sentences are truth functionally inert. So if the distinction is tenable, truth values of all analytic sentences depend entirely on meaning; truth values of synthetic sentences depend on both their meanings and the facts.

Put this way, the distinction seems innocuous. What else could a sentence's truth value depend on except its meaning and the facts? But the analytic/synthetic distinction does more than acknowledge a dual dependence. It construes sentences as susceptible to a type of factor analysis. If the distinction is viable, it should be possible to factor out the separate contributions of meaning and fact to the truth value of any synthetic sentence, and to show by factor analysis that only meanings are involved in the truth value of any analytic one. Analysis is supposed to reveal exactly what meanings and facts bear on the truth value of any sentence. Analysis thereby shows evidence to be selectively relevant. Although investigation is required to find out whether the relevant facts obtain, it is determinate a priori what facts are at issue. A nice division of labor results. Philosophy is responsible for conceptual analysis, which reveals the commitments of a sentence or proposition. Empirical science is responsible for discovering whether the relevant facts obtain.

As standardly put, the distinction focuses on the status of individual sentences. But to appreciate the importance of the distinction requires adopting a more comprehensive stance. The distinction defines a framework that determines the conceptual and factual commitments of every sentence in the language. Perhaps the three central ideas supporting the framework are meaning, evidence, and analysis. In his repudiation of the distinction, Goodman challenges each of them.

An adequate account of meaning should (a) afford criteria for permissible paraphrase, and (b) explain how meaning constrains correct use. The conception embedded in the analytic/synthetic distinction may seem to do both. In extensional contexts, coextensive terms are intersubstitutable *salva*

veritate. If all that matters is the referent, then any term for that referent is as good as any other. In intensional contexts, a more restrictive criterion is wanted. Since terms with the same meaning are intersubstitutable in pretty much any context, synonymy is held to be the criterion for acceptable paraphrase in most intensional contexts. The 'pretty much' caveat is needed to bracket propositional attitude ascriptions where synonyms are not freely intersubstitutable. Even if 'doctor' and 'physician' are synonyms, it is wrong to substitute 'physician' for 'doctor' in a statement of Fred's beliefs about his medical care if he does not think that they are synonymous. In general, though, the meaning of a term is supposed to constrain its use by supplying criteria for its correct application. If the term is vague, the meaning precisely delimits the penumbra of vagueness. On this account, analysis reveals what paraphrases are permissible, and what conditions on application obtain. A critical challenge for accounts that repudiate the analytic/synthetic distinction and the conception of meaning that figures in it is whether or to what extent they can satisfy these expectations.

Rather than focusing on sameness of meaning, Goodman's approach is to ask what accounts for differences in meaning. Terms whose extensions diverge obviously differ in meaning. No one is remotely inclined to think that 'truck' means the same thing as 'encyclopedia'. But many pairs of coextensive terms are held to differ in meaning. 'Unicorn' and 'centaur' differ in meaning even though they have the same (null) extension. Standard explanations appeal to something more fine-grained than extension, such as a difference in connotation or sense. Let us characterize all such differences as differences in content. Goodman rejects such explanations, for he considers the criteria of identity for senses, connotations, and the like obscure. But we need not share his scruples to see the force of his challenge. For the question could be recast as asking what it is to differ in content? What does a difference in content amount to?

Instead of introducing something more fine-grained than extensional equivalence, Goodman appeals to multiple extensions. He thereby homes in on the contexts in which the differences in meanings matter. He notes that terms occur not only in isolation, but also as parts of compounds. 'Mother of a doctor', 'elbow of a doctor', 'doctor's assistant' and so on, are compound terms containing the term

'doctor'. He suggests that the meaning of a term depends not only on what the term alone refers to (its primary extension), but also on what the compounds containing it refer to (its secondary extensions). So the meaning of the word 'doctor' depends not only on the denotation of 'doctor' but also on the denotations of compounds such as 'mother of a doctor', 'doctor's assistant' and so on. According to Goodman, two terms are synonymous just in case they are coextensive and all pairs of parallel compounds are coextensive, where parallel compounds are compound terms obtained by appending exactly the same words to each of the two terms. If, for example., 'doctor' and 'physician' are synonyms, then 'doctor' and 'physician' are coextensive and all parallel compounds of 'doctor' and 'physician' are coextensive.[1]

Agreement in many secondary extensions follows automatically from agreement in primary extension. If all and only doctors are physicians, then all and only mothers of doctors are mothers of physicians. Hence 'mother of a doctor' and 'mother of a physician' are coextensive. Likewise for 'elbow of' or 'assistant of'. If we restrict our attention to cases like these, appeal to secondary extensions avails us nothing. But some compounds behave differently. Even if all and only creatures with hearts are creatures with kidneys and all and only mothers of creatures with hearts are mothers of creatures with kidneys, it is not the case that all and only creature-with-a-heart-descriptions are creature-with-kidneys-descriptions, or that all and only creature-with-a-heart-pictures are creature-with-kidneys-pictures. (The hyphens are introduced to indicate that the compounds function as singular terms.) Because the parallel compounds 'creature-with-a-heart-description' and 'creature-with-kidneys-description' differ in extension, Goodman maintains, 'creature with a heart' and 'creature with kidneys' differ in meaning. Similarly, the coextensive terms 'unicorn' and 'centaur' differ in meaning because 'unicorn-description' and 'centaur-description' differ in extension.

Goodman's criterion may seem too demanding. We might be inclined to think that 'doctor' and 'physician' are synonymous. But 'doctor that is not a physician' is a doctor-description and not a physician-description. 'Doctor' and 'physician' thus have at least one pair of non-coextensive parallel compounds. Granted, if 'doctor' and 'physician' are coextensive, then nothing is denoted by the

description 'doctor that is not a physician'. But that is irrelevant. Nothing is denoted by the term 'unicorn' either. Still, 'unicorn' is a perfectly respectable term. The issue is not whether 'doctor that is not a physician' describes any doctor, but whether 'doctor-description' describes 'doctor that is not a physician'. The answer is surely yes. It describes a sort of doctor not to be found on the rolls of the AMA. If the outcome of this discussion were only the surprising discovery that 'doctor' and 'physician' are not synonyms, it might be tolerable. The problem is that we can always generate a difference in meaning using the 'p that is not a q' schema. Goodman's criterion yields the result that no terms are synonyms. And if no terms are synonyms, no sentences are analytic.

Does this result discredit synonymy or Goodman's criterion? Defenders of synonymy would conclude that it tells against the criterion. To make good their defense, they need to explain what is wrong with the criterion. It won't do simply to point out that it always works, and has an unwelcome consequence. It seems obvious that we do construct compound terms and that the extensions of those compounds have something to do with the meanings of the components. So it seems prima facie reasonable to expect that the divergences in parallel compound terms should show divergences in the meanings of the components. Nor has Goodman introduced an excessively fine-grained measure of meaning. His criterion appeals only to extensions, which if anything are normally deemed too coarse-grained to do the job. It is hard to see why looking at more rather than fewer extensions should be illegitimate. Simply balking at the criterion does not seem reasonable.

One might then object, not to the general strategy of considering secondary extensions, but to the deployment of 'p that is not a q' in particular. The schema functions as a universal solvent, dissolving even the tightest synonymy bonds. But even if we reject its deliverances, pictures, descriptions, and the like that belong to the secondary extension of one but not both of a pair of coextensive terms are ubiquitous. Whether it will turn out that there are no synonyms is not clear. But it will surely turn out that there are not many. A few sentences may turn out to be analytic, but language as a whole does not have the rigid structure that the analytic/synthetic distinction is taken to support.

If defenders of synonymy are required to say what is wrong with the criterion, adherents of

Goodman's position should be expected to say what is right about it. Although Goodman offers little in support of it, the justification is easy to discern. Synonymous terms should be intersubstitutable in fiction as well as in fact. Nothing should count as a description (or picture) of the ostensible referent of the one that is not a description (or picture) of the ostensible referent of the other. Even though all and only unicorns are centaurs, it is not the case that all unicorn-descriptions are centaur-descriptions. Divergence in the extensions of 'unicorn-description' and 'centaur-description' marks a difference in the meanings of 'unicorn' and 'centaur'. Likewise, if one can make up a story about a doctor who is not a physician, this shows that 'doctor' and 'physician' are conceptually divergent. The only synonyms that survive then will be ones that cannot be separated in even the most outre of fictions. Perhaps there are some, but there will not be many.

Still, it would be harder to devise a story of a doctor who is not a physician than it is to devise a story of a unicorn who is not a centaur, or a creature with a heart who is not a creature with kidneys. This suggests that 'doctor' and 'physician' are more alike in meaning than the members of the other two pairs. Although Goodman's criterion yields the result that few, if any, terms are exactly synonymous, it affords a basis for recognizing degrees and kinds of likeness of meaning.[2] To do so, we adjust our focus. At least two sorts of adjustments are available. Parallel compounds are obtained by appending exactly the same sequence of words to each of several terms. If, within a restricted range, all parallel compounds of a pair of coextensive terms are themselves coextensive, the meanings of the original terms agree within that range. The terms may then be sufficiently similar in meaning within that range to be intersubstitutable within that range, even if they diverge elsewhere. If all and only spines are backbones, and within medical discourse all and only spine-representations are backbone-representations, the terms 'spine' and 'backbone' may be similar enough in meaning to be intersubstitutable in purely medical contexts. The fact that a work of science fiction characterizes a space alien's spine as a fibrous web that envelops its body makes no difference. This spine-description that is not a backbone-description is irrelevant in medical contexts.

Sometimes, parallel compounds that diverge do not diverge much. In such cases, the terms are

6

similar, but not identical in meaning. To the extent, for example, that wizard-descriptions are sorcerer-descriptions and vice versa, 'wizard' and 'sorcerer' are alike in meaning. They may be close enough in meaning to be intersubstitutable in a given context. We can delimit the domain of interest and adjust the standards to suit our purposes. We can declare that we are only interested in representations within a given range, and decide how much agreement in secondary extensions is required for intersubstitutability. Goodman's criterion thus replaces a rigid context-neutral criterion of synonymy with a flexible, context-sensitive measure of likeness of meaning. It enables us to make systematic sense of the shifting, but non-arbitrary criteria of intersubstitutability that characterize actual language use. It also enables us to accommodate rather than bracket propositional attitude contexts. If Fred does not believe that all doctors are physicians, then in characterizing his beliefs about medical care, we delimit the parameters so that not all doctor-descriptions are physician-descriptions. Such flexibility and context-sensitivity are more reflective of actual language use than the forced choice between synonymy and coextensiveness is. In paraphrasing, we normally opt for an intermediate position, where the range of permissible paraphrases is determined by the context, the audience and the point of paraphrasing.[3]

Goodman's criterion effects a shift in the direction of dependence. Rather than the meaning of x constraining the extensions of x and x-representation, the meaning of x derives from the extensions of x and x-representation. Whether meaning depends on primary extension or primary extension depends on meaning may make little difference. The meaning of 'cat' and the extension of 'cat' are in any case intimately conjoined. But if the extension of 'cat-representation' figures in the meaning of 'cat', then the meaning of the term is a function of the descriptions we contrive. Since these include fictional as well as factual representations, the ways cats are portrayed in fiction affect the meaning of the term 'cat'. This may seem surprising, and perhaps alarming. But it is not clearly wrong. Many stereotypes are grounded in fiction, not in fact. And these stereotypes may be quite central to the meanings we attach to the terms. The meaning of the word 'cowboy', for example, seems heavily influenced by the fictional portrayals in Western movies and TV shows, probably far more than it is by factual characterizations of actual herders of cows.

Nor is it only fictional descriptions that shape the meanings of our terms. Factual descriptions do so as well. There are a vast number of epistemically accessible truths about cats. Relatively few of them get recorded in cat-descriptions. If the meaning of 'cat' derives in some measure from our cat-descriptions, and these are generated on the basis of what we consider worth saying about cats, then the meaning of the term is shaped by the interest we take in its referent. Semantics turns out to be deeply infused with pragmatics. Had we told different stories or highlighted different features in our descriptions, a term's meaning would have been different. As we tell different stories, the meaning of the term evolves.

A familiar objection is this: since 'unicorn' is a component of 'unicorn-description' we cannot recognize a unicorn-description unless we already have the concept of a unicorn. The meaning of the term, it is said, is antecedent to and constrains anything being recognized as a genuine unicorn-description. This is simply false. If we consider how we acquire terms for fictional entities, we see why. Prior to Tolkien, I suppose, the word 'hobbit' had no meaning. It acquired its meaning through the hobbit-descriptions Tolkien provides. He offers nothing like a definition or conceptual analysis of the term. He provides a thick, purportedly factual, description that is enriched as the stories progress. He begins,

> What is a hobbit? I suppose hobbits need some description nowadays, since they have become rare and shy of Big People, as they call us. They are (or were) a little people, about half our height, and smaller than the bearded Dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along . . . They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; they dress in bright colours (chiefly green and yellow); wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on their heads (which is curly); have long clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day when they can get it).[4]

We attached no meaning to the word 'hobbit' before first reading the description. But we read the description and began to understand what the word 'hobbit' means. That meaning is extended and

deepened as the story progresses. It is then through an understanding of hobbit-descriptions that we come to understand the word 'hobbit'.

Nor does this happen only in fiction. Scientific investigation often introduces a concept of an unknown entity by presenting a description that entity should satisfy. Before identifying the AIDS virus, scientists generated a description of the entity they were looking for. It was the x such that x underlies a given cluster of signs and symptoms. This AIDS-description presupposes that the constellation of signs and symptoms have a common cause, and characterizes the sought after pathogen in terms of what are taken to be its effects. There was a priori no guarantee that the presupposition was correct. It could have turned out that multiple pathogens give rise to the same cluster of symptoms, or that some of the symptoms have one cause and others another. So whether the description they worked with had a unique referent was not assured at the outset. But because they understood the description, and understood what it committed them to, they were in a position to recognize the entity that satisfied it. The point is this: we can come to understand the term 'hobbit' by understanding hobbit-descriptions, and to understand the term 'AIDS' by understanding AIDS-descriptions. The conviction that we must understand the component words in order to understand the compounds it figures in is not borne out either by our understanding of fiction or our understanding of concepts at the cutting edge of science.

A worry remains. At least one important function of meaning is to constrain use. If 'doctor' means 'physician', then it is inappropriate to use the term 'doctor' in contexts where it would be wrong to use the term 'physician'. But as Goodman characterizes it, a term's meaning depends on the way it is used. Rather than constraining use, meaning is determined by it. This suggests that even if Goodman's criterion is a criterion for something, it is not a criterion either for what we ordinarily mean by 'meaning' or for suitable successor concept. A term's primary extension consists of all things past, present, and future, to which it applies. Each of its secondary extensions consists of all things past present and future to which a given compound applies. If its meaning is determined by its primary and secondary extensions, its meaning seems incapable of constraining its use, since its meaning is not fully determined until it no longer has a use. Manifestly, if the constraint must be take the form of a rule specifying

necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of a term, Goodman's criterion fails badly.   But the paucity of necessary and sufficient conditions for the proper uses of terms indicates that such a general requirement is unsatisfiable in any case. If meaning constrains use, it must do so largely without benefit of rigid rules.

Instead we rely on precedents. To decide whether the term 'cat' applies to a newly encountered creature, we consider whether the creature is relevantly like the things we already consider cats (the precedent class) and relevantly different from superficially similar things we exclude from the class of cats (the foil class). If so, we call it a cat. This is standard operating procedure no matter where we stand on the analytic/synthetic distinction. The problem we face in deciding to apply a term to a newly encountered object is a problem of projection. Evidently it is not meaning per se that constrains use, but meaning insofar as we know it. That the extension of 'cat' is only incompletely known is true, but unproblematic. However limited our sample, we project at least in part on the basis of the cats we've previously recognized as such. But the precedent class consisting of previously recognized cats does not by itself afford an adequate basis for projection. The class of things we already deem cats is a subclass of infinitely many classes. The creature in question is bound to belong to some of them. What constrains permissible projections from the precedent class? On the Goodmanian account, secondary extensions play a role. In deciding whether to call the creature a cat, we consider not only its similarities to things we already consider cats, but also its instantiation of the things we already consider cat-representations. The various descriptions we give of cats fix what we deem to be central features of the creatures, hence what features any newly encountered instances of the term should display. If we are loath to include 'catlike robots controlled by Martians'[5] in the extension of 'cat-representation', this manifests a commitment to restricting the application to the term to animals. Which extension turns out to be the extension of 'cat' is hostage to the cat-representations we create and endorse. This is less troubling than it seems. For the cat- representations we create and endorse include and are dominated by those that figure in our developing theory of cats. And our developing theory of cats affords our best current understanding of what in the world our cat-talk is talking about.

Relying on such a precedent class may be problematic for a different reason. Not all past uses of the term have been correct. Even if we could remember every previous instance in which we have called a creature a cat, surely some of them have been mistaken. Whether the creature we now confront is properly called a cat is a different question from whether it belongs to a conservative extension of the class of things we previously called cats. If we insist on abject fidelity to all past uses of the term, we get the wrong result. The solution is this: the precedent class on which we base our projection consists not of every past application of the term or even of every past application we remember, but only of those in which we have sufficient confidence. The creature need not be relevantly similar to all the things we have already characterized as cats; it must be relevantly similar to the things we confidently characterize as cats. And if a smoother, more uniform, or more useful classification would result from excluding some of the cases we previously had confidence in, our confidence in the problematic cases may reasonably wane. Then we appeal to a different precedent class to settle the issue.[6]

The members of any class bear some resemblance to one another. So long as we evade the paradoxes, regardless of which entities we admit or exclude, the result will be an extension whose members have something in common that they do not share with non-members. But most extensions are a matter of indifference. In devising a system of classification, we mark out likenesses that matter. We decide whether to classify the creature as a cat, not on the basis of whether it has something in common with antecedently recognized cats or even whether it has a lot in common with them (which it surely does), but whether it has important features in common with them. Our decisions as to how to extrapolate to an appropriate extension evolve with the growth of understanding of a domain and our purposes in classifying. If we adjust the precedent class in the interests of systematicity or tractability, we effectively choose an extension that better suits our purposes. This involves no falsification, since all the candidate extensions exist. Our choice amounts to a decision as to which extension deserves to be the extension of 'cat'. That decision is, and should be, guided by an understanding of what we want the term or concept for.

Nevertheless, in one respect, Goodman's criterion is unduly limited. It defines synonymy and

11

likeness of meaning only intralinguistically. However alike in meaning 'cat' and 'gato' may seem, the combinations that result in replacing 'cat' with 'gato' in phrases like 'cat fur', 'cat food' and 'cat-description' belong to no language, hence have no denotation. Goodman's criterion provides no basis for assessing translations. But drawing on a device introduced by Israel Scheffler, Wolfgang Heydrich remedies this shortcoming.[7] We saw that many parallel compounds are innocuous. Scheffler devises a way to characterize the role of those that are not. He notes that denoting terms do not always function denotively. In a museum, pictures have captions like 'Hunters in the Snow' or 'Potato Eaters'. The caption 'Hunters in the Snow' does not, of course, refer to hunters in the snow. It refers to a hunters-in-the-snow-picture. When we use the phrase 'Hunters in the Snow' to refer to that picture, Scheffler says, we use the phrase mention-selectively. Mention-selection is a mode of reference by which a term refers not to its denotation, but to mentions thereof. A term mention-selects the members of the secondary extension obtained by appending '-representation' to the term. Instead of relying on parallel compounds to settle questions of likeness of meaning, Heydrich recommends that we appeal to mention-selection. Then coextensive terms p and q are alike in meaning to the extent that they agree in mention-selection. In that case, coextensive terms p and q are alike in meaning to the extent that p-representations (that is, p-pictures, p-descriptions and the like) are q-representations and vice versa. Since these representations may belong to any language or symbol system, Heydrich's revision of Goodman's original criterion thus supplies an interlinguistic criterion of likeness of meaning.

Goodman's account of meaning is more sensitive and flexible than the one supplied by the analytic/synthetic distinction. It has capacity to accommodate the context sensitivity of our standards of paraphrase, and the role that precedent plays in our use of terms. But it does not yield anything like the structure that the analytic/synthetic distinction provides. There is no hope of factoring our representations into factual and conceptual components.   Does there remain a role for analysis to play?

Analysis, as standardly construed, is a process of decomposing a complex term or concept into its basic constituents. The result is supposed to be a logical combination of basic elements which is synonymous with the original and makes manifest exactly what the original is committed to. According to

G. E. Moore,

> If you are to 'give an analysis' of a given *concept* which is the *analysandum*, you must mention,
> as your *analysans*, a *concept* such that (a) nobody can know that the *analysandum* applies to an
> object without knowing that the *analysans* applies to it, (b) nobody can verify that the
> *analysandum* applies without verifying that the *analysans* applies, (c) any expression which
> expresses the *analysandum* must be synonymous with any expression which expresses the
> *analysans*.[8]

This conception of analysis presupposes that (a) there is a distinction between the conceptual
commitments, which must be reflected in the analysans, and factual commitments are, for the purposes of
analysis, irrelevant; (b) a context-neutral distinction between basic and complex items; (c) a unique,
context-independent decomposition; and (d) a relation of synonymy which undergirds competence with
the concepts involved. Goodman clearly rejects these presuppositions. It might seem that in repudiating
the analytic/synthetic distinction, he is forced to deny that anything like analysis is possible. Instead, he
revises the concept of analysis, preserving what he takes to be its strengths. Because the result is a mode
of analysis similar to Carnapian explication, I shall use the term 'explication' for the mode of analysis
Goodman advocates.

Since Goodman recognizes no distinction between conceptual and factual commitments, he
simply requires that an explication of a term respect important commitments – that is, the commitments
that on reflection we most strongly endorse.[9] What is important is of course relative to a cognitive
context, so instead of an all-purpose analysis of 'cat', for example, any explication of 'cat' is keyed to
and, if adequate, suitable for particular purposes. Even in a given context, there need be no unique
constellation of important commitments. So an explication is likely to involve a choice, a decision about
which commitments are important enough to warrant inclusion. Different, equally reasonable choices
underwrite different explications of the same term. Moreover, importance is plainly interest-relative.
What is important given one set of interests may be unimportant given another.

It might seem that the dependence on variable assessments of importance and the availability of

equally acceptable alternatives undermines the value of Goodmanian explication. If its goal were to uncover the unique constellation of underlying commitments, this would be so. But it aims to do no such thing. Explication can be informative and useful because it reveals relations among commitments, displaying an underlying structure they possess, and thereby puts us in a position to assess their adequacy. A positive assessment does not demonstrate that, even in a limited context, 'cat' is synonymous with the explicans. It shows that for current purposes, no more than appears in the explicans need be assumed. The recognition that a body of commitments exhibits a variety of mutually irreducible structural relations should occasion neither surprise nor distress.

By denying that explicandum and explicans must be synonymous, Goodman evades the paradox of analysis, and shows how explication, as he construes it, can contribute to rather than merely recapitulating understanding. Demanding either synonymy or coextensiveness is ill advised if our goal is the advancement of understanding. If a term is vague, any synonym is equally vague. If a sentence is confused, so are its analytic equivalents. Analyses that preserve synonymy relations or extensional equivalences then entrench inadequacies. They may show that a concept is muddled, but they have no way to alleviate the muddle. Goodmanian explication is a vehicle for advancing understanding because it incorporates resources for revising and rejecting untoward commitments. Since an explication need respect only important commitments, it can reject relatively unimportant ones that give rise to difficulties. Since respecting a commitment does not require replicating it, an explication can refine and adjust the commitments it preserves. This does not mean that an explication can cavalierly jettison irksome commitments. The commitments we began with constitute our connection to our subject matter. So one standard of adequacy of a good explication is that for any relatively important commitment it revises or rejects, the explication make plain why that commitment seemed as reasonable as it previously did. Another is that the explication that results from the rejection be at least as good as any available alternative. Plainly Goodmanian explication is not the same process as analysis as standardly conceived. Nor does it deliver the result that standard analysis promises. But it does disclose connections among commitments, show underlying structure, display relations of dependence and independence, and lay out

alternatives, and thereby enable consider whether the commitments are warranted.

An analysis is complete when all complex terms have been replaced by basic ones. The issue thus arises: what makes a term basic? Here too, Goodman's view diverges from tradition. Goodman denies that any term or concept is intrinsically basic. Anything can be basic, he maintains, if we treat it as such[10]. To treat something as basic is to explicate other words or concepts in terms of it, but to refuse to subject it to explication. A term's status as basic then depends entirely on its role in explication. The very same term can be basic in one explication and non-basic in another.

Although in principle any term can be basic, some are better suited to the role than others. A good basis consists of elements that are sufficiently clear and unproblematic that they need no further analysis, sufficiently economical that they underwrite an integrated theory, and sufficiently useful that the theory yields the sorts of insights we seek. Whether a given term is a good basic term then is not determined in isolation, but depends on whether it is a component of a good basis. We can compare bases for simplicity and scope, and compare the systems they give rise to for utility, tractability, fecundity and so forth. The test of a good basis is not its correspondence to the fundamental structure of reality, but its utility in fostering understanding of a domain. There is no assumption that any basis is uniquely best.

Goodman construes basicness pragmatically. A term is basic if it functions in an explication as an unexplicatable explicator. Traditional accounts, however, take basicness to be an intrinsic feature of some terms, but not of others. Whether an analysis is complete then depends on whether the terms appearing in it are really basic terms. It needs an account of what qualifies a term as really basic.

Although the analytic/synthetic distinction currently functions as a semantic device, it was originally formulated and long used for epistemological purposes. It was introduced to explain how our representations (mental or linguistic) afford epistemic access to their objects. The picture it encapsulates is this: representations are compounds of convention and content. The conventions are metaphysically arbitrary constructs, designed to impose order on content. Content is non-arbitrary, being supplied by the world. Proportions vary. Some representations depend more heavily on convention; others, more heavily on content. Analytic representations constitute a limiting case, where the world's contribution goes to

zero. The truth value an analytic sentence depends entirely on linguistic convention. At the other limit,

lies pure content -- the way the world presents itself to us, prior to and independent of conceptualization.

The representations at this level have been variously characterized as simple ideas of sensation, sense

data, *elementarerlebnisse*, and so forth. However they are characterized, they are held to reflect the given

element in experience, to express what we simply take in.

Underlying the analytic/synthetic distinction is a conception of cognition that represents the mind

as "wholly passive in the reception of . . . its simple ideas"[11] or sensory presentations. Cognition is

construed as information processing. We take in data perform and perform a host of complex cognitive

operations on it. But, aside from putting ourselves in a position to receive them, we have no influence on

the inputs. The world presents itself to us in experience, its qualitative content being determined by the

stimuli.

The commitment to sense data or the like involves the view that sensory inputs naturally cluster

into kinds. Standardly the criterion for membership in such a kind is perceptual indiscriminability. Then

two color presentations present the same sense content just in case they are visually indiscriminable.

Goodman rejects this position. It faces the problem of imperfect community.[12] *A* may be visually

indiscriminable from *B*, and *B* visually indiscriminable from *C,* while *A* is readily discriminable from *C.*

Sense presentations then do not fall naturally into discrete kinds. Even at the sensory level, when it

comes to assessments of identity and difference, we draw the lines.

Moreover, what we cannot discriminate today, we may be able to discriminate tomorrow.[13]

Enriched experiences, redirected attention, shifts in interest, sharpened focus, and altered background

assumptions can enable us to discriminate between things we previously could not. Wine tasting is just

one example of our capacity to refine our sensibilities, hence create a capacity experience features we

were previously insensible to. The mind, Goodman insists, is never wholly passive. It seeks, searches,

compares, contrasts, draws distinctions and blurs distinctions, chooses an orientation, a focus, a frame of

reference, and a grain. It assesses the inputs that result from such choices, and revises accordingly. Much

of this is automatic, being a result of learning, experience, and sophisticated, even if often unconscious,

attunement to our environment and our interests. But there is no innocent eye.[14] What we see, even what we can see, is influenced by what we have seen and learned. Our conceptual resources provide orientations, options, and saliences that affect perception. Even at the most fundamental level, perception involves overlooking. What we attend to, what we disregard, and what we are blind to are influenced by what we know and what we care about. Goodman's view is not that the world contributes nothing to our representations of it, but that what we experience of the world depends on what we bring to it. Rather than merely processing whatever inputs come our way, our minds exercise a measure of control over their inputs.

The repudiation of the analytic/synthetic distinction is often characterized as the denial of analyticity. This suggests that repudiators consider all sentences synthetic. We have seen that in Goodman's case, at least, this is not so.[15] Goodman's repudiation involves a fundamental reconception of meaning, analysis, experience and understanding. It replaces the rigid framework with flexible, context-sensitive, interest-relative tools, which are tested for their adequacy by the understanding of their objects that they yield.

[1] Nelson Goodman, 'On Likeness of Meaning,' *Problems and Projects*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1972, pp. 221-230.

[2] Nelson Goodman, 'On Some Differences About Meaning,' *Problems and Projects,* Indianapolis: Hackett, 1972, pp.231-238.

[3] See my 'Translucent Belief,' *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985), 74-91.

[4] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit,* NewYork: Ballentine Books, 1966, p. 16.

[5] The example is taken from Hilary Putnam, 'It Ain't Necessarily So,' *Mathematics, Matter and Method*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 237-249.

[6] Nelson Goodman, *The Structure of Appearance*, Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1966, pp. 3-33.

[7] Israel Scheffler, *Beyond the Letter*, London: Routledge, 1979, p. 35; Wolfgang Heydrich, 'A Reconception of Meaning', *Synthese* 95 (1993), 77-94.

[8] G.E. Moore, 'Reply to my Critics. ' In P. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of G. E. Moore*, Evanston, Illinois: Open Court 1942, p. 663.

[9] *Structure of Appearance,* pp. 13-29.

[10] *Structure of Appearance,,* pp. 64-66.

[11] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* volume 1, book 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894, p. 213.

[12] *Structure of Appearance,* pp. 162-168.

[13] Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976, pp. 103-112.

[14] *Languages of Art,* pp. 7-9.

[15] Nor, I would argue, is it so for Quine or White. See W.V. Quine, 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', *From a Logical Point of View,* New York: Harper, 1961, 20-46; Morton White, 'The Analytic/Synthetic: An Untenable Dualism,' In Sidney Hook, ed. *John Dewey: Philosopher of Science and Freedom*, New York: Dial, 1950, pp. 316-330.