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An Analytic-Synthetic Distinction of Judgments and the Credibility of Its Criteria and Usage

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The aim of this paper is to investigate the justification of the analytic-synthetic distinction of judgments in modern philosophy. The main argument of the paper is that the credibility of the criteria of the distinction is problematic and, therefore, the ground of the distinction is not solid enough to be used safely for other purposes. Hence, the validity of the arguments based on the distinction is highly questionable.

Key words: Analytic, synthetic, Kant, judgments, modern philosophy, metaphysics.

Although some traces of the analytic-synthetic distinction of judgments may be found in philosophies that date before Kant, it is Kant who is considered to be one of the most leading proponents of this distinction. Therefore, we will begin our study with him, and focus on his works, later moving on to examine newer developments in this matter. Let us examine how Kant considers the distinction between the analytic and the synthetic.

Kant's philosophical endeavor appears to be a chain that consists of states of affairs that rest on one another. From my point of view, his famous attack on traditional metaphysics rests on his epistemology, while his epistemology rests on his distinction of judgments as analytic and synthetic. Thus, in the final analysis, the analytic-synthetic distinction functions as the ultimate ground that provides fundamental support for the entire edifice of his philosophy. This situation raises some questions with regard to this ground. First of all, is Kant's analytic-synthetic distinction justifiable? In other words, is this distinction made on the basis of legitimate or acceptable ground? If so, what is this ground? Secondly, is this ground strong or firm enough to carry the weight loaded onto it? If it is not, i.e., if the distinction breaks down, then there are some serious implications. For instance, it is possible that the entire building which has been erected on this foundation suddenly

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collapses. Therefore, the distinction being well-established is crucial for both the philosophy of Kant and that of subsequent thinkers. In this paper, I will examine the foundation of this distinction and the credibility of its criteria. The reason lying behind this distinction, the nature of the distinction, its foundation and the credibility of its criteria are the issues that will be mainly examined and discussed here.

Let us begin by analyzing the question of which answer constitutes Kant's main task in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: How are a priori synthetic judgments possible? The term 'a priori synthetic judgments' here indicates that Kant believes that there are some judgments which are 'not a priori' and that there are some which are 'not synthetic'. That is to say, the term that is in question presupposes both a priori-a posteriori and analytic-synthetic distinctions of judgments. But, before examining the analytic-synthetic distinction itself, it would be useful to investigate why Kant needs to make such a distinction.

There is no doubt that certain modes of knowledge disturb Kant because, according to him, they "are outside the field of all possible experience and have the appearance of extending the scope of our judgments beyond all limits of experience."[1] Moreover, this task is to be fulfilled "by means of concepts to which no corresponding object can ever be given in experience."[2] The science that leads Kant to make these statements of frustration and by which a so-called crime is committed, is described as dogmatic metaphysics on the following page of *Critique*.

On the other hand, most of the principles and concepts of mathematical knowledge –in particular the fundamental principles, which are reliable and trustworthy according to Kant - are not given by experience. However, there must be a difference between these two modes of knowledge. Kant's belief in the existence of this difference can be understood from the following statements: "For one part of this knowledge, the mathematical, has long had an established reliability, and thus gives rise to a favorable presumption as regards the other part, which may yet be of quite a different nature."[3] Here, the context indicates that the mode of knowledge Kant is talking about as "the other part" is the knowledge we can call 'dogmatic' or 'traditional' metaphysics. So, what is the so-called difference in question?

1 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by N.K. Smith (New York: St. Martins, 1965), p. B6; from now on this work will be referred to as "Critique", and the letters "A" and "B" will be used respectively to indicate the first and second editions.
2 Kant, *Critique*, p. B6.
3 Kant, *Critique*, p. B8.

According to Kant, first we have two kinds of knowledge, a priori and a posteriori. It is evident that metaphysical knowledge is far above experience and therefore, it cannot be a posteriori knowledge. As for mathematical knowledge, it also cannot be a posteriori, at least in its origin, because it has the property of being universal – in the strict sense of the term - and necessary.[4] Thus, both of these modes of knowledge must be a priori modes of knowledge. Accordingly, the difference between them cannot stem from the fact that one is a priori and the other is a posteriori. But what can this difference be or, more properly speaking, from which property of these types of knowledge can this difference emanate? Now, as knowing is, in some sense, judging and as the structure of all forms of genuinely objective knowledge is constituted by judgments, i.e., judgments are its fundamental units, Kant examines the structure of our judgments. This examination of judgments leads him to make the analytic-synthetic distinction. Now let us take a look at how this process occurs.

A judgment consists of two parts that are related to one another. These parts or elements can be related to one another only in three ways, as follows: In the first way, the second part of the judgment, i.e., the predicate, is contained in the first part, i.e., in the subject; that is, the (semantic) extension of the subject involves the predicate. In the second way, both parts have an equal (semantic) extention, i.e., here there is either an identity or equality between the (semantic) extension of the subject and the predicate. In the third and final relationship, the (semantic) extension of the predicate is neither contained in nor equal to that of the subject; rather, it is outside the limits of the extension of the subject, although there is a connection or a relationship between them and the judgment is constituted to express this relation. For Kant the important point is that the first and the second approaches may be considered and classified under the same category because they perform the same function in our knowledge; that is, both of the first two ways are explicative, not ampliative. In other words, the predicate does not add anything new to the concept of the subject, but only explains it in both of these ways, whereas the third way differs from them. In the third way, the predicate adds something to the concept of the subject which was not found in it, i.e., in some sense, it makes a (semantic) extension of the subject. Therefore, in some respects, this third way is ampliative of our knowledge. Thus, our knowledge consists of two kinds of judgments: explicative and ampliative.

4 Kant argues the reason why mathematics cannot derive strict universality and necessity from experience in the following manner: First, "experience teaches us that a thing is so and so, but not that it must necessarily be so or that it can not be otherwise"; secondly, "it never confers on its judgments true or strict, but only assumed and comparative universality, through induction". Kant, *Critique*, p. A1/B3.

Kant calls the judgments in the first category "analytic" and those in the second "synthetic". The first is labeled as "analytic" simply because the predicate here is derived from a *mere analysis* of the concept that already exists and which is used as the subject, while the second kind is "synthetic" merely because this kind of judgment is constructed *by way of synthesizing* two separate and different concepts. In other words, in order to gain an analytic judgment we only need an analysis of the subject concept; however, this is not enough in order to pass a synthetic judgment. In order to do that, we need a new concept that is different from those contained in the subject concept and which needs to be synthesized with the subject concept.[5]

Now, according to Kant, this is where both the difference between the knowledge of mathematics and theoretical physics and the knowledge of traditional metaphysics appears. The difference is this: Although the judgments of both kinds of knowledge are a priori, only the judgments of the first kind are synthetic in the sense that they consist of both concepts and intuition. That is why the so-called knowledge of traditional metaphysics adds nothing to our knowledge and, indeed, it is not knowledge at all in the strict/genuine sense of the term. As in traditional metaphysics concepts are not synthesized with intuition that arise from experience, it can easily be said that they are empty, and that the so-called propositions of traditional metaphysics may, at best, be nothing more than analytic judgments – of course, if they even this. This is what lies behind Kant's attack on traditional metaphysics.

However, a serious problem arises here: How can we determine whether a judgment is analytic or synthetic, and what is the criterion for this distinction? More specifically, what properties are to help us recognize the synthetic judgments, which are, according to Kant, the fundamental units of our true and valid knowledge?

Although Kant gives a criterion with regard to the a priori-a posteriori distinction, it seems that he does not suggest a clear-cut criterion, indeed not even a satisfactory one, for distinguishing *synthetic judgments* from *analytic judgments* –in fact not even providing a criterion with regard, at least, to philosophical judgments. But his definitions of analytic and synthetic judgments and the explanations he gives about them provide some clues about the candidates of criteria. Let us turn to these expositions and try to derive the possible answers that Kant may have given to the above questions.

5 Kant, *Critique*, p. B10-11; see also *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, ed. by L.W. Beck, Indianapolis 1950, p. 14; (hereafter, this work of Kant's will be referred to as "Prolegomena".

Having in mind affirmative categorical judgments, Kant makes the following definitions about analytic and synthetic judgments:

> Either the predicate B belongs to the subject A, as something which is (covertly) contained in this concept A; or B lies outside the concept A, although it does indeed stand in connection with it. In the one case I entitle the judgment analytic, in the other synthetic.[6]

After providing these definitions Kant gives the judgment "All bodies are extended" as an example of an analytic judgment, and "All bodies are heavy" as that of a synthetic judgment. When he indicates the difference between the two examples, he declares that we do not need to go beyond the concept "body" in order to find the predicate "extended" or the concept of being extended in the first judgment; whereas the predicate "heavy" or the notion of heaviness is something entirely different from anything thought/contained in the concept of "body" and cannot be derived from a mere analysis of it as it is outside the semantic field/intension of this concept in the second judgment.[7]

Now, it is important that both the definitions given and the explanations presented above presuppose a full and complete knowledge of the subject of the judgments. That is to say, in order to determine whether a judgment is analythic or synthetic, one must have a complete knowledge of the entire intension/semantic extension of the subject. Let us take the concept "body" in the examples. Here we need to know where the limits of the intension of this concept terminate in order to decide whether 'heaviness' is contained in it or not. Only after a complete survey of the whole semantic field of the concept of "body" can we know which concepts are included and which are excluded; but this necessitates a determination of the borders/limits of the field in question. Furthermore, if the distinction claims to be an objectively valid distinction, this determination of the content of the subject should not change according to one person or another's knowledge. Thus, the boundaries of the semantic territory of the subject must also be objectively drawn. But here another question comes to mind: Why is such a determination necessary? Strictly speaking, why do we have to fully determine the content of the concept that is the subject in a judgment? Where does this necessity stem from? First, we will discuss a possible answer to this question and then we will continue to examine Kant's suggestion as to how this determination can be made.

6 Kant, *Critique*, p. B10.
7 Kant, *Critique*, p. B11.

It seems that the necessity for such a determination has to do with Kant's definition of the judgment in question. More specifically, it presumably stems from his definition of synthetic judgments, as this definition is dependent on the subject of the judgment, and therefore, in some sense, on the definition of analytic judgments. That is, as we saw earlier, if we demonstrate Kant's definition of analytic judgments as "X", then his definition of synthetic judgments is "non-X". Let me use Kant's own symbols, i.e., 'A' as the subject of a judgment and 'B' as the predicate, and explain what I mean here. Now, in order to form an analytic judgment, we need only an equivalent or a subordinate member of the concept 'A'. To put it in another way, in order to perform the task at hand, we need to think about the intension of the concept 'A' and be conscious of either its equivalent or one of the constituents of its intension. Let us say this member is 'A**1**' and show other members of the content of 'A' as the set (A**2**, A**3**, A**4**, ... A**n**). But, in the case of forming a synthetic judgment, to know A**1** or A**2** or any other member of the set is not enough; we must exhaust the entire intension of 'A' and go beyond it, including the whole set of its subordinate members to find a 'B'. So, here it is necessary to know the entire content of the intension of 'A', including all subordinate members of it from A**1** to A**n**, without leaving anything outside, in order to be sure that the predicate that is used is not a part of the intension in any way, but a new, different concept, i.e., not an insider, but an outsider, namely, 'B'. Otherwise, it is always possible that the judgment we form, thinking that it is synthetic, is indeed an analytic judgment; however, we would be unaware of this and never know, in the strict sense of the term, what the true nature of the judgment that we have formed is.

Let us turn again to the question of how the determination in question is/can be made. Kant does not suggest a direct solution to this question. But a clue which may be considered to be a suggestion of criterion for this determination is Kant's notion of "definition". As he explains in the chapter entitled "Discipline of Pure Reason", the difference between philosophical knowledge and mathematical knowledge is the "definition", as follows: "To define, as the word itself indicates, really only means to present the complete, original concept of a thing within the limits of its concept."[8] Now, if to define is to present a complete concept of a thing, we can say that we can make the determination in question simply by giving a definition of the concept (that is to be) used as subject in a judgment. In other words, the definition of a concept functions as the determinant factor for the limits of the intension of that concept. But this does not solve the problem; for if we understand the definition in this way, then the problem

8 Kant, *Critique*, p. B755.

becomes the question of how such a definition like this is/would be possible, i.e., the question of how we are to make the definition. For, first of all, we define things while we remain within the limits of our knowledge of them; therefore, our definitions have, not an objective, but a subjective characteristic. Secondly, since we define things as far as we know them, our definitions will be restricted to our (personal) knowledge and will be far removed from presenting *complete concepts* of things. Thirdly, new and advanced investigations make changes in our knowledge of things, even in the knowledge of the same thing, by attaching some new properties and removing some old ones. Hence, the limits of definitions may change from time to time, and therefore ready-made definitions cannot maintain their completeness all the time, even if they have been accepted as complete ones at a certain time.

Kant, probably being aware of these difficulties, states (the fact) that empirical concepts are outside this definition standard. What we call the definitions of empirical concepts, according to Kant, are nothing else than expositions. In his own words: "An empirical concept cannot be defined, but only made explicit. For ... we find in it only a few characteristics of a certain species of sensible object ... (and) new observations remove some properties and add others; thus, the limits of the concept are never assured."[9]

On the other hand, Kant also excludes concepts that are given a priori from his standard. According to him, we cannot define concepts like substance, cause, equity and etc. either. Kant explains the reason behind this undefinability as follows: "For I can never be certain that the clear representation of a given concept ... has been completely effected, unless I know that it is adequate to its object. ... the concept of it may, as given, include many obscure representations which we overlook in our analysis."[10] As for the question 'why do we use the so-called definitions, i.e., expositions, if they are not real definitions?' his answer has a pragmatic character: "We make use of certain characteristics only as long as they are adequte for the purpose of making distinctions."[11]

Now, if neither the definitions of empirical concepts nor those of concepts that are given a priori are possible, what concepts can we define? Let us take the answer from Kant: "Since, then, neither empirical concepts nor concepts given a priori allow of definition, the only remaining kind of concepts, upon which this mental operation (i.e., definition) can be tried, are *arbitrarily in-*

9 Kant, *Critique*, p. B755-756.
10 Kant, *Critique*, p. B756.
11 Kant, *Critique*, p. B756.

vented concepts."[12] Since these concepts are not given to us but *deliberately made* or *constructed* by us, we can always know their limits and contents and therefore define them. Moreover, since there is no content or correspondent for these concepts before they have been made, they are not derived from anything else, but rather invented. The term "original" in Kant's definition expresses this aspect. Indeed, what Kant calls "a priori determinants of their objects"[13] are just these concepts. Seeing that the only concepts allowing for definitions are "those which contain an arbitrary synthesis that admits of a priori construction,"[14] the only science that uses this kind of concepts is mathematics. For only there objects are given through a definition. This means that the definition criterion for the analytic-synthetic distinction may be valid only for mathematical judgments. But the discussion with regard to Kant's notion of definition does not stop here.

Although Kant explicitly denies the definability of 'given concepts' and accepts the deliberately constructed concepts as the only definable concepts, as we can see above, an important Kant scholar, L.W. Beck, seems to claim the contrary and talks about what he calls 'analytic definition' in his article entitled, "Kant's Theory of Definition". According to Beck, "a definition is analytic if it is of a 'given concept'; it is synthetic if of a concept that is made or synthesized by the definition itself."[15] As far as we can understand from Kant's statement above, what Beck calls 'analytic definitions' are indeed the same as that which Kant refers to as 'expositions'; these are not definitions in the Kantian sense of the term. On the other hand, what Beck calls a 'synthetic definition' is, according to Kant, a 'definition' in the proper sense. Furthermore, interestingly enough, although Beck speaks of two kinds of analytic definitions –analytic nominal and analytic real, he confesses that analytic real definitions "fail to meet the formal requirements of definition with respect either to completeness or precision"[16]; whereas this failure is valid for Beck's analytic definitions altogether because they are of 'given concepts'. Beck seems to think that what he calls 'analytic nominal definitions' meet the formal requirements of definition, but he gives no information about these definitions. It may indeed be said, that Beck's assertion of 'analytic definition' is incompatible with Kant's understanding of definition in the statements that were quoted earlier.

12 Kant, *Critique*, p. B757.
13 Kant, *Critique*, p. B124.
14 Kant, *Critique*, p. B757-758.
15 Beck, L.W., "Kant's Theory of Definition", in *Kant: Disputed Questions*, M.S. Gram, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967, p. 217.
16 Beck, "Kant's Theory of Definition", p. 221.

Moreover, Beck does not accept that the definition is a criterion for the analytic-synthetic distinction. According to him, a decision on whether a judgment is analytic cannot be based on the definition of the subject concept. His reason for this rejection is as follows: "Now if the decision on analyticity of a specific judgment could be based on a definition of the subject, it would be easy enough to determine whether the judgment is analytic. But Kant rejects this procedure, because he holds that 'definability' is a stricter condition than 'analyzability', and that we can therefore make analytic judgments with concepts we cannot define."[17] To support this assertion, Beck states that Kant is insistent about the methodological difference between mathematics and philosophy. For the mathematician begins with definitions and proceeds towards conclusions, whereas the philosopher begins with given unclear concepts and reaches definitions at the end of his enquiry.[18] Beck continues his argument by saying "analytic judgments are made by the 'analysis of concepts', which need not first be established by definition. Definition is a late stage in the progress of knowledge, being preceded by the analysis of given concepts."[19] I will deal with Beck's claim about whether definitions can be a criterion later; but I can say here that it is hard to understand why it would be easy to determine the analytic nature if a definition is taken as the criterion. If Kant's definition of (analytic and) synthetic judgments is taken as the criterion, this would then require us to make an analysis of the subject that goes beyond its limits in order to ensure that the predicate is not a member of the intension of the subject. But this is not an easy task; quite the contrary, it is extremely arduous. Indeed, such an analyzability is no different from definability in the Kantian sense, i.e., in the sense that "to define is to present the complete concept of a thing within the limits of its concept."[20]

An alternative criterion suggested by Kant for the analytic-synthetic distinction appears to be the principle of contradiction. When discussing the negative and positive employment of this principle under the title of 'The Highest Principle of All Analytic Judgments' in the *Critique*, he says "if the judgment is analytic, whether negative or affirmative, its truth can always be adequately known in accordance with the principle of contradiction. ... The principle of contradiction must therefore be recognized as being the universal and completely sufficient principle of all analytic knowledge."[21] At the beginning of the *Prolegomena*

17 Beck, "Can Kant's Synthetic Judgments Be Made Analytic?", in *Kant: Disputed Questions*, p. 231.
18 Beck, "Kant's Theory of Definition", p. 223.
19 Beck, "Kant's Theory of Definition", p. 227.
20 See footnote 8 above.
21 Kant, *Critique*, p. B190-191.

while Kant talks about general characteristics of so-called metaphysical knowledge, he gives similar but more explicit knowledge about the function of the principle in this distinction. This function is explained under the subtitle, "The Common Principle of All Analytical Judgments is the Law of Contradiction", as follows:

> All analytical judgments depend wholly on the law of contradiction, and are in their nature a priori cognitions, whether the concepts that supply them with matter be empirical or not. For the predicate of an affirmative analytical judgment is already contained in the concept of the subject of which it cannot be denied without contradiction. In the same way, its opposite is necessarily denied of the subject in an analytical, but negative, judgment, by the same law of contradiction.[22]

Interestingly enough, in the following paragraph Kant includes even judgments that consist of empirical concepts in the category of analytic judgments on the basis of this principle and gives an interesting example: "For this reason, all analytical judgments are a priori, even when the concepts are empirical, as, for example, 'gold is a yellow metal'; for to know this I require no experience beyond my concept of gold as a yellow metal."[23] It can be understood from these statements, as aptly remarked by W.T. Jones, that the principle of contradiction is thought to be what warrants the entire class of analytic judgments.[24] We will see whether this is so or not below.

So far we have examined Kant's analytic-synthetic distinction of judgments, the reason lying behind this distinction and its criteria. In the second part of the article, the satisfactorines of these criteria and those of the new proposals in modern philosophy will be discussed, along with some implications.

First of all, let us take Kant's examples and examine them more closely. According to him, the judgment 'all bodies are extended' is an analytic, while the judgment 'all bodies are heavy' is a synthetic judgment. The concept 'body' is the subject in both judgments. Now, it is a mystery how Kant determines the limits of the intension of this concept to arrive at the conclusion that the term 'heavy' is outside it. For, since the concept 'body' is an empirical one, it cannot be defined and the limits of its intension cannot be determined according to Kant's first criterion, namely, his understanding of what a definition is. In other words, how can he be sure that 'heaviness' is outside the *empirical*

22 Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 14.
23 Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 14.
24 Jones, W.T., *History of Western Philosophy: Kant to Wittgenstein and Sartre*, New York 1952, p. 23.

concept 'body'? For it is obvious that the intension of empirical concepts may be extended (or narrowed) by new investigations. For instance, with regard to Kant's example of 'gold', today we are well aware of the empirical fact that gold may exist, indeed does exist, in different color(s) than yellow, for example, green; therefore, the judgment 'gold is a yellow metal' cannot be considered to be an analytic judgment, although during the lifetime of Kant it was. On the other hand, how can Kant know that he is not synthesizing but analyzing as he forms the judgment 'all bodies are extended'; that is, how does he know (or can be sure) that the concept 'extension' is contained in (or identical with) the concept 'body' if the empirical concept of 'body' is undefinable?

Secondly, Kant's understanding of definition restricts definability only to mathematical concepts. This means that the analytic-synthetic distinction can be applied only to mathematical judgments. In other kind of judgments – for instance, in philosophical judgments - we cannot be sure that we are not forming an analytic but a synthetic judgment. For, we cannot be sure of the content of the subject in these judgments as we have not constructed the subject concept. From this we can infer that we can obtain certain and genuine ampliative knowledge only in mathematics. But, as such an assertion would eliminate Kant's transcendental philosophy it is not possible for him to admit it.

Thirdly, is it possible to make an objectively valid philosophical definition, as both Kant and Beck claim, even if we accept the condition that philosophical definitions ought to come at the end rather than at the beginning of enquiries?[25] If "philosophical definitions are never more than expositions of given concepts,"[26] would a definition in the Kantian sense then be possible in any philosophy? Is not the expression 'philosophical definition' as the exposition of a given concept, as defined by Kant himself, incompatible with Kant's understanding of definition and of undefinability of given concepts? If a definition in philosophy is not possible, how do we distinguish synthetic judgments from analytics in Kant's transcendental philosophy? Furthermore, if what are called 'definitions' in philosophy are not real definitions but only 'expositions', one then can never determine the content of the subject in a philosophical judgment. In that case, definition can never be a criterion for the analytic-synthetic distinction, as correctly pointed out by Professor Beck. But the problem for both Kant and Beck arises from their understanding that analytic judgments are made or can be obtained by a mere analysis of the concepts we already have; namely, by the

25 For the condition mentioned, see Kant, *Critique*, p. B759.
26 Kant, *Critique*, p. B758.

analysis of the subject.[27] The problem here is how am I to know that I have not gone beyond the limits of the intension of the subject and that I am still analyzing the subject, not synthesizing?

In short, with regard to the first candidate of criterion for the analytic-synthetic distinction it can be said that definition may be a criterion in mathematical judgments, but not in philosophical ones, because a definition in the sense Kant understands is, although possible for mathematical ones, impossible for philosophical concepts.

As for the second candidate for a criterion for the distinction, namely, the principle of contradiction, as suggested by Kant, this is not sufficient for an apodictically certain distinction either. The application of this principle to judgments can provide knowledge of whether the judgment at hand contains a self-contradiction, but it cannot provide knowledge of the entire content of the subject. However, this knowledge is necessary in order to make the distinction in question between the judgments concerning the subject. It can even be said that the application of this principle presupposes the knowledge of the content of the subject, or at least the knowledge of what this concept means. In fact, what we learn by means of the application of this principle, as Kant himself indicates, is whether an anlytic judgment is true or false rather than whether it is analytic or not;[28] but it is obvious that this presupposes the determination of the analyticity of the judgment. This means that using the principle of contradiction in order to make the distinction simply begs the question.

Beck's interpretation of the principle of contradiction as 'the logical criterion of analyticity' is not satisfactory either. Let us try to prove our claim by examining Beck's own statements. After he maintains that the principle is 'a necessary and sufficient condition for an analytic judgment' he proposes an application test in the following manner: "Substitute in a judgment synonyms for synonyms, or an anlysis or definition of the subject concept for the subject itself. Then the contradictory of this judgment will infringe the law of contradiction if the original judgment is analytic."[29] In these statements the suggested three substitutions for the subject are its synonym, an analysis and a definition. Let us examine each case separately. In the first case, substitution of a synonym for the subject is demanded. But here we are in no better a situation than the earlier one. For here too we lack any criterion for synonymy. How do I know that the concept I want to substitute for the subject is its synonym? W.V. Quine describes

27 Kant, *Critique*, p. B11; Beck, "Kant's Theory of Definition", p. 227
28 Kant, *Critique*, p. B190-191.
29 Beck, "Can Kant's Synthetic Judgments Be Made Analytic?", p. 233.

this situation as a circular procedure. For the notion of 'synonymy' is "no less in need of clarification than analyticity itself."[30] In other words, "to say that 'bachelor' and 'unmarried man' are cognitively synonymous is to say no more nor less than that the statement 'all and only bachelors are unmarried man' is analytic."[31] Thus, the substitution of a synonym is either an attempt to explain what is not known by some other unknown or simply begs the question. But neither is a reasonable solution.

As for the second case suggested by Beck, since 'to substitute an analysis' for the subject means 'to be able to form an analytic judgment,' here again we do not have any criterion for such a procedure and therefore are in no better a situation than the original one. Indeed, since the problem here is no different from the original one, this case cannot avoid the same weaknesses; the same problem occurs as that which is put forward for the first suggestion, namely, lacking a criterion or being a circular procedure, and therefore begging the question.

Finally, in the third case, the suggestion is 'to substitute the definition of the subject concept for the subject itself.' Here, first we need to ask the question: 'what kind of definition is the definition that is to be substituted? It cannot be a definition in the sense that Kant understands, because such a definition can occur only in mathematical judgments, and philosophical concepts cannot be defined, since they are not constructed but given concepts, as we have seen. If this is not a definition –in the strict sense of the term - but rather an exposition of the subject, then once again there is an ambiguity, obscurity and lack of criterion here. How can I be certain that I am not going beyond the limits of the intension of the subject concept while I am exposing it?

Thus, from all these considerations we can understand that the principle of contradiction is not sufficient to make the distinction in question.

As neither Kant's first or second candidate can provide legitimacy for his distinction, what is to be done? Is it possible to merely discard the distinction in question? Or should we /can we say that there is no such distinction? It seems that such an attitude would be an oversimplification and an unfair consideration of the issue. For nobody can overlook the remarkable difference between the judgment 'oculists are eye doctors' and the judgment 'oculists are prosperous'. In the case of the first judgment we know that the judgment is true as soon as we understand the words, whereas, contrary to the first situation, we need

30 W. V. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", in *From A Logical Point of View*, Cambridge: Mass, 1953, p. 23.
31 Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", pp. 28-29.

empirical evidence in the case of the second judgment.[32] So, there should be some way to solve this problem.

Kant leaves the problem here, but many outstanding scholars in modern philosophy have tried to find a solution. A once famous attempt has been suggested by what is known as verificationism. The verification theory, which is presented by the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle, invokes radical reductionism in order to make the distinction possible. The reduction in question is stated as follows: "... every word of the language is reduced to other words and finally to the words which occur in the so-called 'observation sentences' or 'protocol sentences'. It is through this reduction that the word acquires its meaning."[33] According to this theory, a judgment is analytic if it is true or false solely by virtue of its form. Tautologies and contradictions form this kind of judgments. The formulae of logic and mathematics are also of this kind. Here we do not need any reduction process for the protocol sentences in order to verify these judgments; we can tell whether they are true or false just by looking at their form.[34] In other words, "an analytic statement is that limiting case which is confirmed no matter what";[35] that is, it is "alike in point of the method of empirical confirmation or infirmation."[36] On the other hand, a judgment is synthetic if the decision about its truth or falsehood lies in the protocol sentences.[37] Here, the truth or falsehood of the judgment is tested on the basis of its verifiability by the reduction process and ultimately by the method of empirical verification.

Now, let us see whether this is a viable proposal for finding a solution. It seems that the original problem with the Kantian proposals continues here as well. For it seems, according to the new proposal, that whether a judgment is analytic or synthetic may be decided on the method of its verifiability, i.e., whether it is verified/falsified by virtue of its form or by the empirical method of verification. But how can I decide whether I should use the first or the second way of testing the judgment, for instance, 'all bachelors are unmarried men'. In order to decide on this I should know, at least, the intension of the subject concept. But that is exactly the original problem that needs to be solved. There are judgments for which the new proposal may work; these are by form tautologies

32 A. J. Ayer, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, London: Unwin, 1984, p. 247.
33 R. Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language", in *Logical Positivism* (ed. by A.J. Ayer), New York: Free Press, 1959, p. 63.
34 Ayer, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, p. 76.
35 Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", p. 37
36 Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", p. 37.
37 Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language", p. 76. For more information about the protocol sentences and their function in the theory of verification, see Otto Neurath, "Protocol Sentences", in *Logical Positivism*, pp. 199-208.

and contradictions, i.e., statements like 'bachelors are bachelors' and 'bachelors are not bachelors'. But even here, the form of the judgment is no guarantee for determining its type. For the term 'bachelor' may be used in different senses in the subject and the predicate here. Moreover, we rarely use this kind of analytic judgments, i.e., analytic by form, in our language; mostly we use the other kind of so-called analytic judgments, i.e., analytic by virtue of intension, judgments like 'bachelors are unmarried men', for instance. Therefore, the new proposal does not, at least for the most part, solve our problem.

As for the synthetic aspect of the proposal, reductionism claims that the meaningfulness of a statement requires that the statement is translatable term by term into a statement, be it true or false, about an immediate experience, i.e., into a protocol sentence. But, as Quine rightly points out, a distinction between individual statements is impossible. Although the claim that the truth of statements, in general, depends on both language and 'extralinguistic' facts is acceptable, "to speak of a linguistic component and a factual component in the truth of any individual statement is nonsense, even the root of much nonsense."[38] In other words, it may be said that scientific statements – or synthetic judgments in the Kantian sense - are doubly dependent upon language and experience, but this duality is not applicable to these statements if they are taken one by one.[39] One can go a step further and maintain, as Quine does, that "it becomes folly to seek a boundary between synthetic statements, which hold contingently on experience, and analytic statements, which hold come what may."[40] Quine radicalizes his severe criticism even more and ends up with an explicit rejection of the distinction itself as follows: "Carnap has recognized that he is able to preserve a double standard for ontological questions and scientific hypotheses only by assuming an absolute distinction between the analytic and the synthetic; and I need not say again that *this a distinction which I reject*."[41] Indeed, Quine does not only reject the existence of the distinction in question, but also says that "that there is such a distinction to be drawn at all is an unempirical dogma of empiricists, a metaphysical article of faith."[42]

This extraordinarily radical attitude on the part of Quine against the distinction in his "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" has provoked some studies on the

38 Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", p. 42.
39 Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", p. 42. Putnam is of the same opinon on this issue; see H. Putnam, "The Analytic and the Synthetic", in his *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers, Volume 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 40.
40 Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", p. 43.
41 Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", pp. 45-46.
42 Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", p. 37.

issue on both sides, i.e., both the pros and the cons. One of them is to be found in the article entitled "In Defense of a Dogma" by P. Grice & P.F. Strawson. The argument of this paper consists mainly of two parts: negative and positive. The negative part of the argument, which constitutes most of the paper, is devoted to prove that Quine does not present a satisfactory argument for his radical attitude against the distinction in question.[43] In the positive part of the argument, the authors appeal to the existence of the long philosophical tradition and the present practice as being sufficient ground for the distinction.[44] They explain what they mean by this appeal as follows:

> In short, "analytic" and "synthetic" have a more or less established philosophical *use*; and this seems to suggest that it is absurd, even senseless, to say that there is no such distinction. For, in general, if a pair of contrasting expressions are habitually and generally used in application to the same cases, *where these cases do not form a closed list*, this is a sufficent condition for saying that there are *kinds* of cases to which the expressions apply; and nothing more is needed for them to mark a distinction.[45]

Now, let us examine how far this argument can survive to under close scrutiny. The aim of the negative part of the argument is to show that Quine's severe criticisms do not justify his rejection of the distinction. Although it is dubious whether this is the case, for the sake of argument let us accept that this is so; is the problem then solved? I do not think so. For what this part of the argument proves, at best, is that Quine is not right in his radical rejection of the existence of the distinction or that the distinction in question exists. But that is not the real issue. The real issue here is not whether Quine is right or wrong in his rejection, nor whether the distinction exists or not. The real issue is the nature and justification of the distinction in question; this is the main target of Quine's severe criticisms. In other words, what Quine indicates is not that the existence of the distinction should be proved – for almost every student of philosophy knows that there is such a distinction in modern philosophy tradition, but that the nature of the distinction needs to be clarified and that the distinction should be justified if it is to be used for some purposes. Hence, Grice and Strawson mistook the aim of Quine's arguments. As for the positive part of their argument, it invokes the existence of long philosophical tradition as well as current practice about the distinction. First, this is nothing else than an appeal to the authority

43 For a clear statement of this side of their argument, see P. Grice & P.F. Strawson, "In Defense of a Dogma", in *Studies in the Way of Words*, Cambridge: Mass, 1995, (fourth edition), p. 212, also p. 206.
44 P. Grice & P.F. Strawson, "In Defense of a Dogma", pp. 197-198.
45 P. Grice & P.F. Strawson, "In Defense of a Dogma", p. 198.

of the established tradition and the current convention. I do not need to say anything about the weight of this appeal. Secondly, this appeal can prove, at best, only that such a distinction has existed and is still present; but it cannot prove that it is justified. There have been and still are many practices in various traditions which are not justified. To put this in another way, as we know from ethical analogue, the mere existence of a practice in use cannot guarantee its justification. Therefore, we can conclude that Grice and Strawson's argument does not present a satisfactory exposition with regard to the nature of the distinction, nor does it suggest a justification for the use of the distinction in question. Indeed, it can be understood from the following statements that they seem to be aware of this: "... our purpose has been wholly negative. We have aimed to show merely that Quine's case against the existence of the analytic-synthetic distinction is not made out. ...This is not to deny that many of the points raised are of the first importance in connection with the problem of giving a satisfactory general account of analyticity and related concepts."[46]

Another important attempt in this matter comes from Hilary Putnam. After he concedes that Quine's important challenges have not received the response they deserve and that the problem of clarifying the distinction and of giving a rationale for it still is without a solution, Putnam proposes a solution that consists of two parts. The first part aims to solve the justification problem by presenting a rationale for the distinction. The second part proposes presenting clarification with regard to the nature of analytic statements. Now, let us have a close look at this argument.

In the first part of the argument Putnam presents a practical/pragmatic rationale for the distinction in question. He expresses it as follows:

> The reply that I have to offer to the question of the rationale of the analytic-synthetic distinction, and of strict synonymy within a language, is this: first of all, the answer to the question 'why should we have analytic statements (or strict synonymies) in our language?' is, in essence, 'why not?' or more precisely, 'it can not hurt'. And, second, the answer to the derivative question 'how do you know it can not hurt?' is that I use what I know.[47]

As he explains in his answer, Putman talks about two (among many) of the most important advantages of having synonyms in a language: *brevity* and *intelligibility*.[48] According to him, having synonyms provides us with the advantage of brevity. But that is not altogether true. For, although it is dubious

46 P. Grice & P.F. Strawson, "In Defense of a Dogma", p. 212.
47 Putnam, "The Analytic and the Synthetic", p. 56.
48 Putnam, "The Analytic and the Synthetic", p. 56.

whether there really is an exact synonymy,[49] strict synonymy sometimes brings not brevity, but redundancy. For instance, it is said that there are over a hundred words for camel in Arabic; we do not need all of them if they are strict synonyms; indeed, most of them are redundant and therefore not practical/useful for an Arabic speaker, because learning them is an arduous task and indeed not necessary. On the other hand, the existence of analytic statements in a language means that some of the statements or rules of that language are immune to revision. Since this means freezing some parts of the language to a certain extent, this brings the advantage that speakers of that language will be able to predict some usages of the language and thus understand each other better. This is the advantage of intelligibility, according to Putnam.[50] But this is not altogether true, either. For the synonymy here is either a strict or a loose one. If it is a strict one, then, as we said earlier, it is redundant; but if it is a loose synonymy, then it does not always lead to a better understanding, but often to a bad understanding, or even a misunderstanding, because connotations of such synonyms are different to one another. So, it is not certain that analyticity provides us with the advantages mentioned.

On the other hand, for the sake of argument let us say that a distinction brings us the advantages mentioned, i.e., it has the practical/pragmatic character that is in question; does this justify it? I think not. For being justified cannot be reduced to being useful or practical. That is to say, doing/having something because it is *just* to do/have it is different from doing/having it because it is *useful* or because it provides this or that advantage. We understand this difference better when we consider the justification of an ethical act. Indeed, what distinguishes Kantian ethics from utilitarian/pragmatic ethics is the difference between the concepts of justification that are suggested by those ethics.

In the second part of his argument Putnam tries to clarify the nature of analytic statements. He defines analytic statements as "statements which we all accept and for which we do not give reasons."[51] According to him, what makes these statements true is the 'implicit convention' we have about them. Nevertheless, we should distinguish them from unreasonably accepted statements. In order to do this, Putnam points out a distinguishing characteristic of analytic statements. The characteristic is this: the subject concept of these

49 For a good discussion on this issue, see F.R. Palmer, *Semantics: A New Outline*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 60-65.
50 Putnam, "The Analytic and the Synthetic", p 56.
51 Putnam, "The Analytic and the Synthetic", p. 69.

statements is not a *law-cluster* concept.[52] Thus, an analytic statement is a statement which is accepted by all without giving any reason on the basis of an implicit convention which makes it true and whose subject concept is not a law-cluster concept. Let us see whether this clarification solves the problem with regard to the nature of analytic statements. Now, the key point in this argument is that it presupposes that we are able to determine whether the subject concept is a law-cluster concept. For here Putnam introduces the substitution of 'a non-law-cluster concept' instead of the substitution of a synonym. But the issue is not so simple. For, first of all, being a non-law-cluster concept is no clearer than being analytic or a synonym; that is, if we cannot determine the intension of the subject concept and thus whether the predicate is a synonym of it, how can we determine whether the subject concept is a non-law-cluster concept? Secondly, even if we are able to make such a determination, that does not make it immune to revision; there is always the possibility that it turns out to be a law-cluster concept. Hence, it is always possible that after some revisions what we call 'analytic' becomes 'synthetic'. Therefore, it seems that Putnam's clarification is neither a guarantee nor solid ground for the distinction in question.

From all these considerations we can conclude that Putnam's attempt does not solve the problem with regard to the analytic-synthetic distinction.

In spite of his manifest rejection of the analytic-synthetic distinction in an earlier study, in a later study Quine relents and seems to allow a linguistic standard for the analyticity of judgments. According to this standard, a statement is analytic if every native speaker understands that the statement is true by learning its words.[53] But, first, this standard of Quine's has only an intra-linguistic character, not a logical one. That makes it valid only for the statement in the language in which it exists. For one cannot claim that an analytic statement in a language, according to this criterion, is/must be analytic in all languages. If it had a logical character, perhaps then it could have a universal validity for statements in all languages. But even then, the differences of development among languages –for instance, the difference between a primitive language and an advanced language - may prevent this universal

52 Putnam explains what he means by a law-cluster concept as follows: "Law-cluster concepts are constituted not by a bundle of properties as are the typical general names like 'man' and 'crow', but by a cluster of laws which, as it were, determine the identity of the concept. The concept 'energy' is an excellent example of a law-cluster concept. It enters into a great many laws. It plays a great many roles, and these laws and inference roles constitute its meaning collectively, not individually." Putnam, "The Analytic and the Synthetic", p. 52.

53 W. V. Quine, *The Roots of Reference*, LaSalle: Open Court Publishing, 1973, p. 79.

validity. Secondly, this attribution of analyticity may not be an absolute that is valid all the time, but only temporary, i.e., valid only for the time at which it is done. Our learning does not have absolute stability, but rather has a progressive character. Since it grows all the time, it is always possible that what we learn as 'analytic' yesterday becomes 'synthetic' tomorrow. In other words, our linguistic conventions – even the laws of logic - are not immune to revision.[54] Therefore, there is no warrant for an absolute distinction between analytic and synthetic statements.

In conclusion, modern philosophy – particularly the analytic tradition - is full of discussions concerning the analytic-synthetic distinction; this begins with Kant's critical philosophy. While Kant begs the question with regard to the existence of the distinction and devotes himself to proving the existence of 'a priori synthetic judgments' in the *Critique*, some of the discussions after him have an apologetic character, while others are severe criticisms. It is interesting that although the distinction is mostly accepted in modern philosophy, it seems that nobody has been able to suggest a sharp criterion which cuts of the arguments posed against it. Now, if it is to be accepted that such a distinction does not only exist, but is also indispensable as a classical distinction,[55] and that the judgments which provide objectively valid ampliative knowledge are only synthetic judgments, modern man must find a way of justifying this distinction and thus of being acquainted with these statements. To put it in another way, if modern philosophy does not want to waste valuable time in fruitless struggles providing no knowledge or nothing new with analytic judgments, it has to invent a definite criterion that distinguishes these judgments from synthetic ones. On the other hand, the question of the validity of the arguments based on this distinction in modern philosophy – for instance, the arguments used by Kant in his attack on traditional metaphysics in order to show its epistemological devaluation and the arguments used by the verificationism of the logical positivism in order to prove the meaninglessness of metaphysics - also requires that the existence of a real distinction should be proved and that a criterion must be found. Otherwise, these arguments will be grounded on an unjustified distinction. This means that one can easily overlook – even doubt - the existence of the distinction. Thus, all the arguments that are based on it become ungrounded, useless and insignificant.

54 H. Putnam, "'Two Dogmas' Revisited", in his *Realism and Reason: Philosophical Papers, Volume 3*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 96-97.

55 Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 19; see also Heinz Heimsoeth, *Immanuel Kant'ın Felsefesi*, (tr. by T. Mengüşoğlu), Istanbul 1986, p. 74.

Özet

Bu çalışmanın gayesi modern felsefede ele alınan hükümlerin analitik-sentetik ayrımının temellendirilmesini araştırmaktır. Bu çalışmanın temel iddiası bu ayrımı olumlayan kriterlerin geçerliliğinin problemli olduğunu ortaya koymak, ve bu sebeple ayrımın dayandığı temelin başka gayeler için kullanılabilecek kadar sağlam olmadığını göstermektir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma ayırımı esas alan argümanların geçerliliğinin tamamen sorgulanabilir mahiyette olduğu sonucuna ulaşmaktadır.