



Question about difference between analytic statement and empirical statement

by Jeff - Wednesday, 25 July 2012, 1:21 PM

Analytic statement is statement can be determine false or ture by understand the meaning alone.

My question is the "meaning" of concepts vary from cultures (subcultures) and individual understanding. In this sense, all analytic statement is depending on external knowledge to understand concepts and verify if it is ture or false (just like the "god is all-knowing" example, I can argure triangle can by different definition, can mean a movie named "triangle", then it will become a emprical statement)

Anyone have a simillar confusion here?

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Re: Question about difference between analytic statement and empirical statement

by Jeff - Wednesday, 25 July 2012, 1:34 PM

Sorry I realize I might didn't put the question clear enough, my argument is all analytical statement is a form of empirical statement, but the difference is analytical statements have internal cerntainty on its meaning and they can be verified by these meanings.

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Re: Question about difference between analytic statement and empirical statement

by [Norva Lo](#) - Wednesday, 25 July 2012, 11:42 PM

Good comments!

Some philosophers (e.g., W. V. Quine - to be studied in 3rd year philosophy core subject) have argued against the analytic/empirical distinction in a similar line.

However, once **after** people in a conversation have **mutually agreed how the terms in a statement are defined** (i.e., after the meaning of the statement is fixed and agreed by all parties in the conversation), **if** the statement's truth/falsity can be **determined solely by its (settled) meaning**, then it is **analytic**. But if even after people having an agreement on its meaning, its truth/falsity still have to determined by empirical obervation, then it is an empirical statement.

The issue here can be a more fundamental one: can people in a conversation with each other ever agree on the meaning of a term? the analytic/empirical distinction does not need to assume that people can. It is a distinction to be employed only after people in a conversation have settled on the matter about definitions.

In the case where different people mean different things by the same sentence, we can argue that they are simply employing **different statements**, and so when one says it is true and another one says it is false, they are not disagreeing - because they are talking about different things! And such a dispute is not a real one, and they will be better off if they realise that they are actually talking about different things and so the appearance of disagreement will disappear.

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Re: Question about difference between analytic statement and empirical statement

by [Ashleigh](#) - Friday, 27 July 2012, 6:44 PM

This explanation helped alot although I'm still a little confused. To clarify... 'A triangle has 3 sides' is analytical because everyone has mutually agreed that triangles have 3 sides. But what if there is a person who does not know what a triangle is? Would this then become an empirical statement?

Another example is 'The UK had a larger population than Italy in the 1970's'. I have no idea about the population of anywhere in the 1970's so this statement to me is empirical. But there could be someone who knows exactly how many people lived in both Italy and the UK in the 1970's. Would this then become analytical because no further research is required for this person?

Does deciding whether a statement is analytical or emperical change from person to person?

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Re: Question about difference between analytic statement and empirical statement

by [Norva Lo](#) - Friday, 27 July 2012, 7:37 PM

If there is no indication or qualification alongside a given statement or in the context where it is given, then we should assume the ordinary meanings for the terms used in the statement (e.g., the meanings given in everyday use dictionaries).

In the case of "a triangle has three sides", the crucial terms are "triangle", "three", and "sides". So, if someone (e.g., a person whose native language is not English) does not know the meanings for these terms, then they should look up the ordinary definitions for these terms to work out the meaning of the whole statement first. And then after they have settled on the matter on definition and meaning, they should proceed to analyse the meaning of the statement and see if the statement is true simply by the relations among the meanings of the terms used in it. In the current case, "triangle" is defined (e.g., by the Oxford Dictionaries Online) as "a plane figure with three straight sides and three angles". So, the statement " a triangle has three sides" means "a plane figure with three straight sides and three angles has three sides", which is true simply by virtue of its meaning (or the relations among the meanings of the terms used in it). So, it is an analytic statement.

If a person does not know the meaning of the terms, then the person is not in an informed position to work out whether the statement is analytic or not. But that does not mean the statement is not analytic. It is like that I might not know whether 2 plus 3 is five - but that does not mean 2 plus 3 is not 5. The fact that a person does not know the answer to a question does not imply that there is no correct answer to the question or that the answer changes from person to person.

The same point applies to empirical statements - the fact that a person might not know whether an empirical statement (e.g., the UK population statement) is true or false does not mean whether the statement is true or false depends on the person's knowledge (or the lack of knowledge) of it.

Another example: It is empirically true that the Earth is not flat - even though some people might not know that, and even if no one on Earth knows that. In the past, people did not know that indeed and some people in the past believed that the Earth was flat. But that does not mean that the Earth was flat. That the earth is not flat is an empirical fact, which can be discovered by people. But this empirical fact being an empirical fact itself does not depend on its being discovered by people. There are a lot of facts/truths out there that are not yet discovered

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Lecture 1 - Slide 4

by [Ashleigh](#) - Friday, 27 July 2012, 6:52 PM

Not so much an error. Just wondering why example 12 is in another language? It makes it hard to know whether it is a statement or not.

Thanks :)

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Re: Lecture 1 - Slide 4

by [Norva Lo](#) - Friday, 27 July 2012, 7:15 PM

It is to show that a sentence in any language can be a statement - so long as it is capable of being true or false.

Also, note that if two sentences in different languages have the same meaning, then they express the same statement. So the identity of a statement is not determined by the language in which it is expressed - but by its meaning.

(Since this question is more a discussion question - I have moved it and my response to it to the discussion forum "Week 1 (Statements)".)

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Re: Lecture 1 - Slide 4

by [Jeff](#) - Friday, 27 July 2012, 11:44 PM

It is a interesting topic about same content in different language states same thing. What about same content in same language, ~~are~~ [do] "mike is taller than tom" and "tom is shorter than mike" [express] the same statement?

(Edited by [Norva Lo](#) - original submission Friday, 27 July 2012, 07:50 PM)

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Re: Lecture 1 - Slide 4

by [Norva Lo](#) - Friday, 27 July 2012, 11:49 PM

I think so.

Another example: "I am next to you", "you are next to me", "I and you are next to each other" are all equivalent in meaning and so they all express the same statement (or the same *proposition* - a term philosophers use to refer to what is expressed by a sentence capable of being true or false).

(PS: If you are interested in this topic, you will probably enjoy doing Philosophy of Language, where questions like the above ones get to be analysed and debated in more depth. And you will see other perspectives on the matter. The one presented in PHI1CRT is a pretty standard one in the field.)

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Subject: The current Pope is female

Topic: Lecture 1

Author: Benjamin [REDACTED]

Date: 29 July 2010 9:05 AM

In the lecture, the statement "The current Pope (head of Catholic Church) is female" is described as not analytic. Given that by definition no member of the Catholic Church clergy can be a woman, I would argue that this is a false analytic statement. There is enough information in the statement itself to determine its validity.

Anyone care to comment?

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Subject: Re:The current Pope is female

Topic: Lecture 1

Author: Matthew [REDACTED]

Date: 29 July 2010 11:07 AM

The statement itself doesn't tell you the Pope cannot be female (you have to find that out yourself) so it must be empirical.

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Subject: Re:The current Pope is female

Topic: Lecture 1

Author: Colin [REDACTED]

Date: 29 July 2010 1:19 PM

That would depend on each individual as some people may already have the required knowledge so they would not need to find it out. While others may not know the workings of the church so they would need to research it to find out.

I think in the reading that an example was the statement that "A bachelor is an unmarried man". If you are a competent english speaker you know that a bachelor is an unmarried man it is an empty statement, but if you are only just learning english then it has useful information.

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Subject: Re:The current Pope is female

Topic: Lecture 1

Author: Benjamin [REDACTED]

Date: 29 July 2010 10:24 PM

I think a better comparison from the lecture is with the statement 'God is all knowing'. If you were learning English you would probably not know who the Pope is. But a proper definition of 'Pope' would be that he is the leader of the Catholic Church which only permits males to the clergy. Therefore a full definition would provide sufficient meaning within the statement itself.

But this is of course one of those arguments for which there is no correct answer...

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Subject: Re:The current Pope is female

Author: Colin [REDACTED]

I wouldn't have thought that the Pope was only known to people who speak English.

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Subject: Re:The current Pope is female

Author: Benjamin [REDACTED]

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 31 July 2010 10:32 AM

True. What I guess I meant was that someone unfamiliar with the word Pope or who didn't know who he was

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Subject: Re:The current Pope is female

Author: Aleisha [REDACTED]

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 7 August 2010 2:47 AM

In reply to Benjamin. Im sure there are plenty of non-english speaking people who are catholics so they would obviously know that the pope is the head of the catholic church and it is not permitted to have a woman in that role. And haha at Colin :P

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Subject: Re:The current Pope is female

Author: Ross Brady

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 9 August 2010 10:10 AM

Students,
I find myself agreeing with this, on account of the fact that the Catholic Church may in the future allow priests and subsequently Popes to be female. The word 'Pope' would still represent the head of the church.
Ross.

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Subject: Re:The current Pope is female

Author: Benjamin [REDACTED]

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 9 August 2010 6:56 PM

Hi Ross,

They may, but I think you're going to be waiting a long time. At least a few hundred years. At present the Pope can only be male so I still think my suggestion that this is a false analytic statement bears consideration.

Regards
Ben

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Subject: Re:The current Pope is female

Author: Lorna-Ann [REDACTED]

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 13 August 2010 1:24 PM

Another example of inequality, discrimination and male dominance against women cheers
Lorna

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Subject: Re: The current Pope is female

Author: Norva Y.S. Lo

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 5 December 2010 3:08 PM

Whether the statement ("The current head of Catholic Church is female") is analytic or not all depends on whether "being female" is part of the meaning of "head of Catholic Church". If so, then the statement is analytic, and in this case, analytically false. However, if "head of Catholic Church" simply means "whoever occupies the top position in the Catholic Church" where "being female" is not part of its meaning, then the statement is not analytic, but empirical.

Is "being female" part of the meaning of "head of Catholic Church"? We can argue about it by providing good reasons to persuade people with a different view.

Here are two possible ways to argue that "being female" is not part of the meaning of "head of Catholic Church". (1) Suppose "being female" is really part of the meaning of "head of Catholic Church", then it follows that statements such as "it is possible for a woman to become the head of Catholic Church" will be self-contradictory (as self-contradictory as saying, e.g., that a triangle may not have three angles), and it will follow that people who campaign for the Church to change its restriction on women in this regard will be in effect asking for the logically impossible. But what the campaigners are asking for is not logically or even physically impossible. Organisations can and do change their internal policies from time to time, and the Catholic Church is also an organisation made up by human beings. Since statements like "it is possible for a woman to become the head of Catholic Church" is (arguably) not self-contradictory, it follows that "being female" is (arguably) not part of the meaning of "head of Catholic Church". (2) "Being female" is more of a contingent selection criteria that the Church has imposed on the choice of their top leader. It is rather like the term "Australian voter". By law, only people 18 or above can vote in an Australia government election. But that does not mean that the term "Australian voter" itself includes the meaning of "being 18 or above". Voting regulation can and do change from time to time, but the meaning of the term "Australian voter" remains the same: whoever has a right to vote in an Australian government election". Likewise, restricting women from occupying the top position in the Catholic Church is a policy. That policy may change one day, and whether it changes or not, the meaning of the term "head of Catholic Church" remains the same: whoever occupies the top position of the Catholic Church, where "being female" is not part of its meaning.

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Subject: Overlapping statements

Author: MATTHEW

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 28 July 2009 9:33 AM

Looks like I'm kicking the discussion off... I'm just after some other thoughts on this: can a statement be more than one of the three kinds that are mentioned under point 2 of slide 2 - analytic, empirical, or evaluative? In other words can an evaluative statement also be either analytic or empirical, or is it treated as categorically separate? It would seem that an analytic statement can't possible be empirical, and vice versa, but what about evaluative statements? I'm having trouble figuring out how an evaluative judgement could be soundly treated as either analytic or empirical, but I thought I would throw the question out there before I commit myself, just in case I'm missing something. After all, if the truth or falsehood of an evaluative judgement can be determined, as mentioned in the slides, then surely it could also be either of the other two kinds of statements... right? Or does the unavoidably subjective nature of an evaluation rule it entirely separate? Any ideas are welcome.

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Subject: Re:Overlapping statements

Author: BLAINE

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 28 July 2009 10:31 AM

I was also looking for clarification about this question. For instance would the sentence, 'Still worse, many people are violent,' be considered both an empirical and an evaluative statement since it contains a empirically quantifiable proposition but also a judgment on the 'goodness' of this supposed fact?

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Subject: Re:Overlapping statements

Author: DANIEL

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 28 July 2009 2:17 PM

I would say yes - though the sentence would probably be interpreted as more an evaluative than empirical statement as it suggests a context of evaluative judgement.

I think this is the purpose of the weeks discussion, to explore the ways in which a sentence can fall under different categories given context.

That's what I got out of it, anyway.

[Reply](#)

Subject: Re:Overlapping statements

Author: Norva Y.S. Lo

Yes, analytic statements and empirical statements are mutually exclusive categories. Well observed!

Very good question too: Are evaluative statements analytic or empirical? Philosophers are still arguing about that.

Some philosophers argue that evaluative statements are analytic statements. This means that in

order to determine whether an evaluative statement (e.g., "Lying is morally wrong") is true or false, all one has to do is to reflect on and understand all the concepts involved in the statement (e.g., the concepts "lying" and "morally wrong"), and then one can in principle logically work out the answer, in the same way that one can logically work out whether a square has exactly four sides. The idea here is that by logical reasoning and analyzing concepts alone, one can work out whether somethings is morally right or wrong, good or bad. A school of moral rationalists think exactly that. They think that arm chair reasoning on its own, unaided by empirical observations, can lead us to truths about morality.

But a lot of philosophers argue for the other view. They think that evaluative statements are empirical statements instead. These philosophers are reductionist. They usually argue for adopting some definitions of moral terms, which define moral concepts in empirical terms. For example, some might argue that the term "morally wrong" simply means "disapproved of by every human being". Now, if we accept this definition of "morally wrong" then whether an action (call it X) is morally wrong is in effect an empirical matter, namely, whether, as a matter of empirical fact, every human being in the world disapproves of X. We will need to go out to the world and investigate human attitudes and behaviours in order to determine if it is empirically the case that every human being disapproves of X. If so, then, given the reductive definition of "morally wrong", X is morally wrong. If not all human beings disapprove of X, then X is not morally wrong. This is only an example of how one can argue that evaluative statement is an empirical statement. There are many competing accounts of moral concepts that try to reduce moral concepts to concepts about objects and events in empirical world.

If you are interested in the nature of moral concepts, you should consider doing the 2nd/3rd year unit in Philosophy, called "ETHCIS". You may also get more ideas by reading the article "Moral Naturalism" in the Stanford Encyclopedia at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/naturalism-moral/>

Best,
Norva (unit co-ordinator)

Reply

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Subject: Re:Overlapping statements

Author: MATTHEW

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 28 July 2009 5:26 PM

Ah, so evaluative statements are not separate from analytic or empirical statements? They are either one or the other, depending on one's position?

Thanks Norva!

Reply

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Subject: Re:Overlapping statements

Author: Norva Y.S. Lo

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 28 July 2009 7:08 PM

Ah, Ah, I did not say that.

It is possible to argue that evaluative statements are of a third kind - a mysterious kind - neither analytic nor empirical - because moral concepts refer to some mysterious properties, properties other than physical ones. But so far not very much that is convincing has been said about this third option in my opinion. To get more idea on this third option, read "Moral Non-Naturalism" in the Stanford Encyclopedia.

In this week's lecture, our task is to put statements into three categories, and leave open the question whether the third category is or is not a subset of the first or the second.

Subject: Plastic Surgery Is Unnatural - your thoughts

Author: KIMBERLEY

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 29 July 2009 7:38 PM

I had similar thoughts about the empirical/evaluative argument that Matthew has raised, especially in relation to the unanswered statement in Slide 11, "Plastic surgery is unnatural". I wanted to know what everyone thought about this statement and if anyone has answered it, and how they reached that conclusion.

I am still thinking about it, and here are some of my thoughts:

Firstly, what does this statement actually mean, that the act of surgery is unnatural, or that the result of plastic surgery is unnatural? I think this statement may need to be defined further. If I need more clarification on this statement, as I can't understand the meaning of the statement alone, then it is not an Analytic statement.

Or, what is the definition of unnatural: the act of surgery itself, or the fact that this type of surgery alters what is natural ie the human body?

For arguments' sake, if the answer is that "Unnatural" refers to the result of the surgery (ie altering the natural state of the body), then is it stating a fact, by way of of the bodily sense of sight, therefore making the statement an Empirical statement?

I hope this makes sense, I've never used these philosophical terms before, and I hope I have understood them correctly.

Your thoughts?

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Subject: Re:Plastic Surgery Is Unnatural - your thoughts

Author: ADAM

Topic: Lecture 1

Date: 30 July 2009 12:55 AM

well i looked at this too and used the dictionary terms as a placement for unnatural. (like they did with the god one)

Unnatural =df not natural, not normal

"Plastic surgery is not natural/not normal"

so therefore I would say as both are saying negative things and are not analytical i would say it is empirical cause it is not true unless we ask everyone's thoughts (like the example of checking the worlds tables for 3 sides)

hope this makes sense and hope I am on the right track

[Reply](#)

Subject: Re:Plastic Surgery Is Unnatural - your thoughts

Good thought.

It all depends on what "unnatural" means.

We should consider all the plausible interpretations before we can answer whether the statement is analytic, empirical, or evaluative, and we need to do that before we can decide whether the statement is true or false.

For example, suppose "unnatural" means "not normal"

Then the statement means "plastic surgery is not normal". But what does "normal" mean?

Suppose it means "the way most things of the kind is". Then the the statement can be interpreted as meaning "plastic surgery is something that most people have not had or will not have". Under this interpretation of "natural", the statement is empirical. Whether it is the case that most people have not had plastic surgery is an empirical matter, the verification of which requires investigation into people's medical history.

But suppose "natural" means "without technological intervention" like the "natural" in "natural child birth", then the statement means "plastic surgery is not done without technological intervention". Now, this is an analytic statement. For by definition, "survey" is a procedure that involves the use of medical instruments and technologies.

The point of the exercise is not that there is one best interpretation of the statement. Rather, the point is that one and the same sentence can be legitimately interpreted in different ways to mean different things. SO, before we enter into argument with each other about whether the sentence is true or whether it is analytic, empirical or evaluative, we first of all need to distinguish the different plausible interpretations. Only after that should we proceed to determine what kind of statement it is, and whether the statement is true, under each interpretation. The purpose of asking students to put statements into different categories is partly to encourage them to CLARIFY and explicitly interpret the meanings of the terms involved as the FIRST STEP of any inquiry.

Norva

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