

## Announcements and Such

- Two Songs — First One By Request
  - *Elliott Smith*: “In the Lost and Found” and “Somebody that I used to Know” from *Figure 8*
- Paper topics for first essay have been posted
  - Essays are due in 2 weeks (2/20)
- Some Suggestions on the Readings:
  - Lectures usually cover all important issues in Audi
  - So, reading time might be better spent on *articles*
  - *Except* when I don’t get to all (Memory, Consc., *etc*)
- Today: Reason (I of III)
  - Back to a less hectic pace for awhile...

## Self-Evident Truths of Reason I

- So far, we’ve been talking about beliefs that are grounded in *experiences* of various kinds: perception, memory, introspection.
- We also have beliefs that are *not* grounded in experience, but rather come from *reason*.
  - If John is taller than Jim, then Jim is shorter than John.
  - All vixens are female.
  - Either it’s raining or it’s not raining.
  - Nothing is both red all over and green all over simultaneously.
- Our beliefs in these sorts of propositions are the subject of the next three lectures.

## Self-Evident Truths of Reason II

- These sorts of propositions are often described as being *self-evident* — without need of supporting evidence of their truth
- We’ll use “*p* is a self-evident truth” as:
  1. If one adequately understands *p*, then — *by virtue of that understanding* — one is justified in believing that *p*.
  2. If one believes that *p* — *on the basis of adequately understanding p* — then one *thereby knows* that *p*.
- “Adequately” is rather strong here.
- The justification in (1) *may* be *defeasible*.
- Self-evident truths need *not* be *obvious*.

## Self-Evident Truths of Reason III

- We need not *form* beliefs regarding self-evident truths — even when we adequately understand them in accordance with (1).
- Understanding *propositions* requires understanding the *concepts* they involve:
  - *Understanding* a concept *C*
  - *Objectually believing C* to *apply* to *o*
  - *Propositionally believing that C* applies to *o*
- One need not consult one’s experience of *o* (or even ponder the proposition that *Co*) in order to understand a self-evident *p* (*Co*).
- Normally, when one comes to understand such a *p* (*Co*), one *believes and knows* it

## Self-Evident Truths of Reason IV

- The crucial thing about self-evident beliefs is that they are *epistemically immediate* — *not based on inference or further evidence*
- Traditionally, self-evident truths have been thought to have other important properties:
  - *truths of reason*: truths knowable by reason alone w/out sense experience
  - *necessary truths*: there are *no conceivable circumstances* in which they are false
- Note: If a proposition is neither necessarily true nor necessarily false, it is *contingent*.
- Next, we'll think more about *truths of reason* and *necessary truths generally*

## The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Analytic Truths I

- Consider the proposition  $p$  expressed by the English sentence “All vixens are female”.
- Presumably,  $p$  is a *self-evident truth*.
- Moreover, our knowledge of  $p$  doesn't depend on thinking about it *in English*.
- Classically (Kantian), it is said that  $p$  is an *analytic truth* — its truth is grounded in a *containment relation* among its concepts
  - The concept *vixenhood* contains the concept *female*. In other words, *being female* is *analyzable out of vixenhood*
- Other *analytic* claims: “all bachelors are unmarried”, “all sound arguments are valid”

## The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Analytic Truths II

- Analytic truths are *necessary* in a very strong sense — there is *no conceivable situation* in which they are false
  - Contrast with, *e.g.*, *physical* necessity
- Indeed, analytic truths are true *on pain of contradiction*. *E.g.*, the statement that there are non-female vixens is *contradictory*
- Analytic truths are known by understanding (salient) conceptual containment relations
- This understanding *need not* involve *inference* — it can be *immediate/intuitive*
- We *can* come to know analytic truths by inference or conceptual analysis (this happens in logic/math), but we need not

## The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Analytic, A Priori, and Synthetic I

- Some propositions seem to be truths of reason (and self-evident), but *not* analytic:
  - ( $p$ ) Nothing is (simultaneously) both red and green all over.
- There are two sorts of objections to  $p$  being self-evident and necessary, but *non-analytic*.
  - First, one might object that  $p$  is *contingent* (which explains *why* it's *non-analytic*).
  - Second, one might argue that  $p$  is analytic (which explains *why* it's a *truth of reason*).
- The contingency objector could try to argue that there is a *scientific* explanation of why nothing is red and green all over

### The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Analytic, A Priori, and Synthetic II

- It is difficult to see how such a scientific explanation could work. Classically, science tells us about *things*, not *concepts of things*
- It is (in some sense) essential to the *concept of a red thing* that it cannot also be green.
- It would be quite odd to set out to *discover scientifically* whether what is red all over is ever also green all over simultaneously
- This feels like setting out to discover scientifically whether there are male vixens.
- Such possibilities seem *ruled-out from the start* — *prior* to scientific investigation
- These claims do not seem to be *open* to scientific investigation in the first place.

### The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Analytic, A Priori, and Synthetic III

- If *p* is not a “scientific” claim, one might suspect that it’s *really analytic* after all
- On the classical view of analyticity, this is wrong. After all, how would the analysis go?
  - An object *o* is *red* if and only if:
    - *o* is *colored*, and
    - *o* is *non-green*, and
    - *o* is *non-blue*, and ...
- An *analysis* of redness would have to give a *list (or conjunction) of contained concepts*
- And, if *p* is to come out *analytic*, then *non-green* needs to be *included* in this list

### The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Analytic, A Priori, and Synthetic IV

- On the classical view, an alleged analysis of a concept *C* will not be *bona fide* unless:
  - The analysis exhibits a suitable set of *sub-concepts/conjuncts (S)* that *constitute C*.
  - This must be done in such a way that one’s recognizing that the *S*’s constitute *C* can yield genuine *understanding of C*.
- The alleged analysis of redness (*R*) *fails both*.
  - There’s no way of filling-in the “...” to yield a *conjunction* that’s *equivalent to R*.
  - *Even if there is*, its conjuncts (colored, non-green, non-blue,...) won’t *constitute R*.
  - And, *understanding R isn’t achieved* either.

### The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Analytic, A Priori, and Synthetic V

- Although *p* is *not analytic* (in the classical sense), it is *knowable through conceptual understanding, without empirical evidence*
- Such propositions are called *a priori*
  - *Knowable simply through reason as directed toward them and their concepts*.
  - In this *strict* sense, *a priori* propositions are also plausibly considered *self-evident*
- While all *analytic* truths are *a priori*, the converse does not hold (as *p* shows)
- Statements like *p* are called *synthetic* (for us, this just means *non-analytic*) *a priori*
- We need to be more careful about “*a priori*”

### The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Three Types of A priori $p$ 's I

- The *strict* sense of *a priori* was given as:
  - *Knowable simply through reason as directed toward **them** and **their concepts**.*
- This (plausibly) implies being *self-evident*
- But, not all *a priori* propositions — *in the broad sense* — are self-evident
  - *Broad sense of a priori*: Self-evidently following from self-evident propositions
- Consider the following disjunction:
  - *Either nothing is red and green all over ( $p$ ) or there are 20 people in this room ( $q$ ).*
- The disjunction “ $p$  or  $q$ ” is *broadly a priori*

### The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Three Types of A priori $p$ 's II

- The disjunction “ $p$  or  $q$ ” *self-evidently follows from  $p$* , which is itself self-evident
- That is, we know the disjunction “ $p$  or  $q$ ” by *inferring* it — *in one self-evident step* — from its first disjunct, which is self-evident
- Some propositions are neither self-evident nor *a priori* in the *broad* sense, but still feel like they should be called “*a priori*”
- Some logical or mathematical theorems may require derivations involving *many* self-evident steps from self-evident claims
- Nonetheless, they can be *rigorously proved*, and so we’ll call them *ultimately a priori*
- These may depend on *memory and reason*.

### The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Three Types of A priori $p$ 's III

- This gives us *three kinds* of *a priori p*'s
  - *A priori* in the *narrow* sense: self-evident
  - *A priori* in the *broad* sense: self-evidently following from (“one step”) a self-evident
  - *A priori* in the *ultimate* sense: *rigorously provable* in finitely many self-evident steps from a self-evident proposition
- In this sense, the self-evident propositions form a *base* for all *a priori* knowledge.
- Knowledge of an *a priori p* does not depend on any *empirical* knowledge — they are “independent of experience” in this sense.
- They are also *necessary* (or so we’ll assume).

### The Classical View of Truths of Reason: Empirical/A Posteriori Claims

- There are a vast number of propositions that are *not a priori* (in any of our senses)
- These propositions are called *a posteriori* (or *empirical*) — they are only knowable on the basis of some sort of *experience*
- Specifically, they are knowable only on the basis of either perception or introspection (testimony and memory are *parasitic*)
- Moreover, empirical claims can be *false*.
- On the classical view, empirical and *a priori* propositions are both crucial to our lives
- Empirical science is primarily about the former, and logic and math the latter

## The Classical View of Truths of Reason:

### Analytic Truth, Concept Acquisition, and Necessity I

- Analytic and synthetic truths differ in the *ways* in which they can be known.
- *Analytic* truths are knowable by grasping a *containment* relation between concepts, but synthetic truths are not knowable this way
- Nonetheless, synthetic *a priori* truths are knowable by grasping *some kind* of relation.
- Presumably, *e.g.*, with nothing being red & green all over, we are able to grasp a *mutual exclusivity* relation between concepts
- The claim that something *is* red & green all over is *not* a *contradiction*, but it *is* *conceptually impossible*, which we can grok
- This is why *a priori*  $\Rightarrow$  *necessary* (classically)

## The Classical View of Truths of Reason:

### Analytic Truth, Concept Acquisition, and Necessity II

- Classicists also think *necessary*  $\Rightarrow$  *a priori*  
But, this presupposes an understanding of *necessity* that is inherently *conceptual*.
- Contemporary philosophers also speak of *physical* necessity (*e.g.*, implied by natural laws)
- But, presumably, we *wouldn't* want to say that laws of nature are knowable *a priori*
- Other challenges to the classical view will come from various forms of *empiricism*
- Note: classicists are *not* committed to the (*crazy*) view that the empirical is *irrelevant* here — we surely need it to *acquire concepts*
- It's about (some) *relations between concepts*