

# Review of: "Why naturalists must give up deduction, or return to Hume"

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The paper argues for two things: (1) It is inconsistent to reject analyticity and a priority while also accepting logical consequence; and (2) naturalists fall into this inconsistency.

It is not clear what proportion of naturalists reject analyticity and a priority. The latest PhilPapers survey says: 35% of naturalists (and 18% of non-naturalists) reject analyticity; and 28% of naturalists (and 9% of non-naturalists) reject a priority. Moreover: 64% of naturalists (and 87% of non-naturalists) accept analyticity; and 59% of naturalists (and 75% of non-naturalists) accept a priority. If we can properly extrapolate from these survey results, then a very significant *majority* of naturalists accept both analyticity and a priority. Even allowing for the considerable uncertainty involved, it seems implausible to maintain that *rejection* of analyticity and a priority are 'typical' or standard for those who identify as naturalists.

Perhaps it is worth adding that there is a substantial literature in which naturalists defend what now seems to be the majority position. See, for example:

- Georges Rey (1998) 'A Naturalistic A Priori' *Philosophical Studies* 92: 25-43
- Louise Antony (2004) 'A Naturalistic Approach to the A Priori' *Philosophical Issues* 14: 1-17
- Lisa Warenski (2009) 'Naturalism, Fallibilism, and the A Priori' *Philosophical Studies* 142: 403-26

(There is much more that could be added to this list.)

Even if it is accepted that naturalists typically do *not* fall into the inconsistency identified in (1), that is hardly the end of the road for the project of the paper. After all, there is a significant minority of philosophers--predominantly naturalists--who do explicitly reject analyticity and a priority while also embracing logical consequence. Are they embroiled in inconsistency when they do this?

At p.3, the author claims that those who reject analyticity and a priority but who also accept logical consequence must suppose that logical consequence is ampliative. In order to assess this claim, we need accounts of (a) the a priori; (b) the analytic; and (c) logical consequence. (Perhaps we also need an account of (d) ampliativity. But, for now, let's just assume that we understand this well enough.) All of these are highly contested. Perhaps, again, it will be useful to note some of the relevant recent literature:

- Boghossian, P. and Peacocke, C. (eds.) (2000) *New Essays on the A Priori* Oxford: OUP

- Boghossian, P. and Williamson, T. (2020) *Debating The A Priori* Oxford: OUP
- Cappelen, H., Gendler, T. and Hawthorne, J. (eds.) (2017) *Handbook of Philosophical Methodology* Oxford: OUP
- Etchemendy, J. (1990) *The Concept of Logical Consequence* Cambridge Harvard U. P.

Despite what I have just said, there is something to be said for the view that we should understand logical consequence in terms that advert to the meanings of strictly logical terms. And, if that's right, then it seems plausible to think that we do need something like analyticity and a priority in order to have logical consequence. Consider the logical rule of conjunction elimination:  $A \& B \vdash A$ . It is plausible both that the truth of the rule is analytic (turning entirely on the meaning of '&') and a priori (there is no particular experience or particular kind of experience that we need in order to be convinced of the truth of the rule).

At p.5, the author says that they take the classic Humean view to be that [necessary] entailment runs from 'relations of ideas' (or analytic or conceptual truths) in the premises to 'relations of ideas' in the conclusion. According to the author, the only things that are properly called 'deductions' are [necessary] entailments from analytic or a priori truths. (See, e.g., p.10; but all of §2 is devoted to arguing for this claim.)

This part of the paper runs very much against the grain of orthodoxy in philosophical logic. In the statement of the logical rule of conjunction elimination (above), there is no limitation--beyond grammatical well-formedness--on the substitution instances for the rule. Let's consider an example. Suppose Phillip tells me that John and Mary were at a party. [Formally: John was at the party and Mary was at the party.] I accept Phillip's testimony, and so believe that John and Mary were at the party. When I see Roger, and he asks me if I know whether John was at the party, I immediately respond in the affirmative, relying--perhaps unconsciously--on the logical connection between the conjunctive claim and the conjunct. If we are happy to talk about making deductions, then, in this case, I've made a perfectly acceptable deduction. But, of course, my knowledge that John and Mary were at the party is not a priori, and nor is it based simply in my knowledge of the meanings of the words used to give typical expression to that claim.

There is a complicating factor for this part of the discussion. It has been controversial, at least since Harman's seminal discussion in *Change in View*, exactly how logic and inference are related. Many terms in this domain--e.g. 'deduction'--are polysemous: they can be used to refer to a relation between propositions and they can be used to refer to psychological acts or processes or the like. (This explains why I chose to talk about 'logical consequence' in the earlier part of this review.)

At p.13, the author suggests that we cannot have 'deductive entailments' between contingent premises. Again, this runs very much against the grain of orthodoxy in philosophical logic. Perhaps what is being missed is the distinction between (a) the status of the connection between premises and conclusion and (b) the status of the detached conclusion. There is a necessary connection between  $A \& B$  and  $A$ : it cannot be that  $A \& B$  is true if  $A$  is not true. (I ignore quibbles of the paraconsistentists who walk among us.) But if  $A$  is contingent, then  $A \& B$  is also contingent--and, in a case like that, taking  $A \& B$  as our premise, we get to a contingent conclusion from a contingent premise by way of a necessary connection.

Perhaps there is another elephant in the room. Much philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century was

concerned with getting clear about the distinctions between the analytic, the a priori, *and* the necessary. In addition to accounts of the analytic and the a priori, we also need an account of the necessary. (Here, the need is perhaps more pressing, because of the widespread tendency to think that there are different kinds of necessity: narrowly logical necessity, analytic necessity, broadly logical necessity, metaphysical necessity, physical necessity, and so on.) It is worth noting that there are very widespread appeals to 'brute contingency' in many subfields of philosophy.

At p.16, the author refers to the 'usual response' to Kripke's claim that the claim that Hesperus is Phosphorus is necessary a posteriori. However, it is very much a minority position to suppose that Kripke was wrong about this. Kripke's position relies on the claim that: necessarily, for any x, for any y (if  $x=y$ , then it is necessary that  $x=y$ ). In slogan form: identities are necessary. If we accept this, then in order to reject the claim that it is necessary that Hesperus is Phosphorus, we need to reject the claim that Hesperus is Phosphorus. But we know--at least according to the established philosophical myth--that the ancients unwittingly used the distinct terms 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' to refer to the planet Venus. That is: we know that Hesperus = Phosphorus. (And we do not know this a priori.) We may concede to the author that it is *conceivable* that Hesperus is not Phosphorus--but only so long as we are accepting that we can conceive impossibilities.

In part, this is a paper about Hume, and the interpretation of what he says about deduction. I do not know what informed historians of philosophy say about this. However, I do think it is worth noting that it is odd to suppose that *Hume's* views about deduction are authoritative. Moreover, it is worth adding that Hume is standardly regarded as an empiricist. Whether we should think of Hume himself as a naturalist is rather more controversial. Perhaps he is a wannabe naturalist. But he lacks some of the resources available to contemporary naturalists. (In particular, a reasonably well-developed account of the biological evolution of our cognitive capacities.) If you want to stick with the main line of argument, then it seems to me to be more plausible to be attacking empiricists than it is to be attacking naturalists. (For a trenchant defence of the claim that you should not conflate the two, see Antony (2004), cited above.) But not so many people *identify* as empiricists these days.