Lecture Twelve: *Verificationism and the Two Dogmas*

*Philosophy 360*
*March 24, 2015*

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I. **Administrative**

A. Readings and writings for the coming weeks

B. Reading Essay #2 – will be returned this evening

C. *Remember the writing assignment due tonight:* a 250-word abstract + an outline

D. Two general thoughts about papers

E. Mid-term Course Evaluations – review

F. General Questions?

II. **Finish Grice Lecture**

III. **Verificationism**

A. **Opening move:** write one question about verificationism that you would like to see discussed.

B. **Another proposal:** take the meaning of a sentence to be its *verification condition*, or “the set of possible experiences on someone’s part that would tend to show that the sentence was true” (Lycan, 98).

1. This is an *epistemic* theory of meaning, and one that definitely downplays the mystery

2. Whose experiences? What are the limits here?

3. Think about what this set might include for a sentence like, “This is a pen”. But what about “Proper names do not refer by way of definite descriptions”? Or “Scarlatti’s sonatas are sublime”?

C. This was developed as a part of logical positivism, and is related closely to perspectives on science and metaphysics
This is dependent on the empiricist notion of reductionism, i.e., the idea that meaningful sentences should have their meaning be reducible to possible experiences we might have that confirm or disconfirm them

1. It is related to the Humean distinction between matters of fact and relations of ideas

2. The idea, as Quine elegantly crafts it, involves the observation that a true sentence is made true in part by the language and by the world – a linguistic component and a factual component (M&S, 465)
   a. It will not be the case that the language’s contribution is null, but in some cases it could be that the world’s contribution is
   b. In those cases, we would have an analytic truth

3. Why do we need analytic truths?
   a. In part this is descriptive – these are the null case
   b. In part this is normative – these are the connective tissue that will enable us to put the rest together; e.g., truths of logic

III. Quine’s Two Dogmas

A. These are:
   1. There is a “fundamental cleavage” between truths of meaning (the analytic) and truths of fact (the synthetic)
   2. “... each meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct upon terms which refer to immediate experience” (M&S, 455)

B. Against Analyticity
   1. An analytic truth is one that cannot be false because it is true on the basis of the meanings of the words alone. E.g., “Bachelors are unmarried”, and “Four-sided, equiangular figures have four sides”
   2. He considers the following possible routes to an analysis
a. Meaning (M&S, 455-6)
b. Definition (M&S, 457)
c. Interchangeability and cognitive synonymy (M&S, 459-60)
d. Semantical rules (M&S, 4612)

3. **Upshots**
   
a. No analytic/synthetic distinction
b. No *meanings*
c. Radical holism about meaningful discourse
d. Pragmatism