Analytic Universalism*

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Very rough first draft, comments very welcome.

1 The View

Consider the view according to which the statement

SUM Whenever there are two things, there is something which is a sum of them.

has the same relevant "form" as, and shares the relevant "logico-semantic" status with, other mereological statements, such as

PROPER PART Whenever something is a proper part of another, there is something that is part of the latter but not of the former.

or

OVERLAP Whenever there are two things that overlap, there is something which is a part of them.

Following another dimension of the analogy, mentioned by (Chalmers, 2007, this conference), with functionalism in the philosophy of mind, I propose to label this view ***analytic universalism***.[1]

The aim of this note is very modest: not to argue *in favor* of analytic universalism, but just *against* some ways of dismissing it, submitted in the recent literature. This polemical purpose allows me to restate the characteristic contention of analytic universalism *via* the claim that SUM—as well as (most will agree) PROPER PART and OVERLAP—is "analytic,' without the need to offer an illuminating explication of that notion.

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[1]Lewis might have been one such, and it is a view for which I myself have sympathies.

2 The Form of the Statement

Theodore Sider says that

> it is very difficult to see how the sentence 'If some objects are in conditions C, then there exists something that is composed of those objects' could be analytic, for it conditionally asserts the existence of a thing, and how could such a statement be analytic? (Sider, 2003, 203)

After quoting this, Ross Cameron adds:

> Indeed. The sentence in question conditionally asserts the existence of some thing on some conditions that do not mention the existence of that thing, and it does not seem that such a sentence could be analytic. Existence claims are, seemingly, never analytic; so it seems that a conditional whose consequent was an existence claim could be analytic only if the antecedent asserted the existence of the thing in question. But if the sentence 'If some objects are in conditions C, then there exists something that is composed of those objects' is informative then the antecedent does not assert the existence of the thing in question (namely, the sum of the objects in conditions C). (Cameron, 2007, §2)

And Karen Bennett contends that what she calls 'linking principles,' of which, I take it, Sum would be a case, cannot be analytic, given that this would amount

> to saying that we can define things into existence. But surely an analytic claim cannot be existence entailing in this way; surely the existence of a new object cannot follow by meaning alone. Who knew ontological arguments were so easy? (Bennett, 2007, §5.2)

On the face of it, it seems that they hold that there is something in the "form" of conditionals with existential consequents such as Sum which prevents them from being "analytic,"in the appropriate relevant sense. As the cases of Proper Part and Overlap witness, however, this kind of consideration by itself carries no conviction.

3 The Status of the Statement

David Chalmers says:

> The absolute quantifier expresses a primitive concept, if it expresses any concept at all. Because of this, it is extremely implausible that ampliative conditionals involving the absolute quantifier, such as 'If x and y exist, the sum of x and y exists,' or 'If there are particles arranged heapwise, there is a heap' could be analytic. It is unlikely that they are true in virtue of the concept of absolute quantification, because that concept is primitive and unanalyzable. It is unlikely that they are true in virtue of the concepts 'heap' and 'sum' alone, in part because they have logical consequences that do not involve these expressions. And it is unlikely that they are true in virtue of the concepts of

> absolute quantification and those expressed by 'heat' or 'sum' together: this combination might at best yield nonampliative analytic conditionals, such as 'If there is an object made of particles arranged heapwise, it is a heap,' but not ampliative analytic conditionals. (Chalmers, 2007, §7, this conference)

For him, the conditionals are *ampliative*

> roughly in that the consequent makes an existential claim that is not built into the antecedent. (That is, the consequent is not a logical consequent of the antecedent, where we take an expansive view of logical consequence such that for example, 'If x is a father, there exists someone who is an offspring of x is a logical truth.)" (Chalmers, 2007, §6, this conference)

With this understanding of 'ampliative' it is indeed plausible that ampliative conditionals are not "analytic," for being "analytic" would make them logical truths, in the relevant sense, and thus nonampliative.

The problem with this understanding of 'ampliative' is, of course, that it secures the tension between being ampliative and being analytic, but at the cost of making the notion unsuitable to express any objection to analytic universalism. For the contention that Sum *is* ampliative turns out to be, on the present understanding, just what the opponent is characteristically denying.

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