
THE JOURNAL OF
PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

NO. 588

Understanding the Indeterminacy of Translation

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Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of translation has invited various disputes since its publication, and numerous papers have been written on it. However, it seems that, even now, in the world of philosophy, the common understanding has been established neither on argument for the thesis nor on the content of the thesis itself. Nonetheless, this situation is regrettable because this thesis of Quine's not only denies meanings specific to linguistic expressions but also implies extremely significant and bold theses, such as the impossibility of science on intentionality, and the disqualification of intentional language as language of science. (Hamano 1990, 383; translated from Japanese by the author of this paper)

Regrettably, it appears that the situation has not improved on the understanding of Quine's thesis of indeterminacy since Hamano has written the above passage. What does Quine mean by the indeterminacy of translation, and what leaves it indeterminate?²¹⁾ Is the indeterminacy of translation distinct from the underdetermination of scientific theory, and if so, in what points are they different? Though numerous commentaries were written on the *indeterminacy of translations before and after the publication of*

Hamano's paper (see References) these interpretative issues still remain. Investigating his *Word and Object* (WO)²⁾ and later works, this paper explicates the indeterminacy thesis, and identifies and elucidates its ontological as well as confirmatory differences from the underdetermination thesis. Through the process of this explication, I point out the difference of my interpretation from the previous ones. And it turns out that, given my interpretation, some objections to Quine are misplaced or do not have the force that critics believe to have. Unless some evidence or argument suggests otherwise, I assume that Quine's take on relevant issues is consistent throughout WO and his later works.

Epistemic Interpretation and its Problem

In WO, Quine's words often suggest that the indeterminacy of translation is an epistemological claim. For example, he says:

Yet one has only to reflect on the nature of possible data and methods to appreciate the indeterminacy. Sentences translatable outright, translatable by independent evidence of stimulatory occasions, are sparse and must woefully under-determine the analytical hypotheses on which the translation of all further sentences depends. To project such hypotheses beyond the independently translatable sentences at all is to impute our sense of linguistic analogy unverifiably to the native mind. (WO, 72)

However, this characterization of indeterminacy appears to nullify the qualitative contrast between the indeterminacy of translation and his thesis of the underdetermination of our theory of the world (that is, for Quine, the underdetermination of our physical theory): our system of the world can transcend all possible observations of the world, and the theories logically incompatible with one another can be developed on the same observational basis (RIT, 179).³⁾ This interpretation of indeterminacy seems to be against Quine's intent. If the indeterminacy of translation is just this kind of (epistemic) underdetermination, then translation theory and theory of physics are seemingly entirely on a par. Quine wants to establish the indeterminacy of translation to show that there can be no respectable

theory of translation or meaning. However, if our theory of translation is thoroughly on a par with our theory of physics, which Quine regards respectable, he can in no consistent way repudiate the theory of translation.

Ontological Interpretation and its Burdens

Thus, many sympathetic interpreters of Quine take the indeterminacy of translation as an ontological claim.⁴⁾ And it appears that Quine himself often talks in that way. Even in WO Quine says:

The point is not that we cannot be sure whether the analytical hypothesis is right, but that there is not even ... an objective matter to be right or wrong about. (WO, 73)

This impression is strengthened by Quine's response to Chomsky, the first person in print to deny that the indeterminacy of translation essentially differs from the under-determination of scientific theory (Chomsky 1969).

Though linguistics is of course a part of the theory of nature, the indeterminacy of translation is not just inherited as a special case of the under-determination of our theory of nature. It is parallel but additional. Thus, adopt for now my fully realistic attitude toward electrons and muons and curved space-time, thus falling in with the current theory of the world despite knowing that it is in principle methodologically under-determined. Consider, from this realistic point of view, the totality of truths of nature, known or unknown, observable or unobservable, past and future. The point about indeterminacy of translation is that it withstands even all this truth, the whole truth about nature. This is what I mean by saying that, where indeterminacy of translation applies, there is no real question of right choice; there is no fact of the matter even to *within* the acknowledged under-determination of a theory of nature. (RC, 303)

These quotations suggest that the indeterminacy of translation is to be taken as an ontological claim that there is "no fact of the matter" for the selection of translation manuals to be true or false of. The second quotation,

especially the latter half, suggests that the indeterminacy of translation is the view that translation is not metaphysically determined even by all facts, i.e. by all the facts of nature by Quine's light, as Friedman 1975 points out (355).

However, this understanding faces five points to be clarified. First, what does Quine mean by "truths" or, more strictly speaking, "facts of the matter"?⁵⁾ The notion of facts is elusive, so we need to clarify what it means.⁶⁾

Second, what makes it the case that some theory or translation is ontologically determined or not determined by the facts of the matter? How is this relationship different from that of determination or underdetermination by evidence?

Third, even if Quine's notion of "fact" is clarified, he still needs an account of what constitutes "our theory of nature", or "the whole truth about nature." As Friedman points out, Quine has to impose some constraint on what can compose the whole truth about nature. For if some preferred translation is counted as the part of the truth about nature, then the (ontological) indeterminacy of translation by the whole truth of nature is trivially false (Friedman 1975, 355). What is this constraint?

Fourth, as noted above, in WO there are abundant descriptions of the indeterminacy of translation, which focus on the evidence and the methodology of translation. As Friedman concedes, "In fact, it is hard to find any passage in Quine's writings which is clearly an argument for the ontological version of the indeterminacy thesis." (Friedman 1975, 360) These circumstances do not necessarily falsify the above ontological reading, but they must be somehow explained.

Fifth, even in his reply to Chomsky, Quine admits that the indeterminacy of translation is "parallel but additional" to the underdetermination by evidence of our theory of nature. This phrase suggests again that the indeterminacy of translation is an epistemic claim. If we take the phrase "parallel and additional" seriously, the second quotation might be read to mean that our theory of nature is underdetermined by all possible basic data, i.e., *observations*, and that our theory of translation is underdetermined by all possible data, this time *all that our theory of nature takes or is going to take as true*. Can this purely epistemic reading be denied in order to make sense of the qualitative contrast between the indeterminacy of translation

and the underdetermination of the theory of nature?

Preparatory Remarks

I will answer these five questions in order, occasionally highlighting the difference of my interpretation from the others. However, brief comments are now due on how Quine individuates translation manuals, on what cases of translation are indeterminate, and on what is indeterminate.

Quine does not distinguish translation manuals by their meanings as the sets of propositions, for he is questioning the reality of propositions.⁷⁾ To avoid making the indeterminacy of translation trivial,⁸⁾ Quine often distinguishes translation manuals by whether they are “incompatible with one another” (e.g., WO, 27). I am unsure whether Quine can define incompatibility without presupposing (the determinacy of) meaning or its cognate, and whether he can otherwise individuate the translation manuals without trivializing the indeterminacy of translation.⁹⁾ But I leave behind this problem.

Now, any arbitrary case of translation — even a domestic case, for example, the translation from your English to my English — is said to be indeterminate (WO, 78). Quine makes the indeterminacy of translation so wide-ranging that, he thinks, it will not become a mere triviality: indeterminacy is neither the mere consequence of the ambiguity of ordinary sentences, nor the mere coexistence of different translations of a language with vocabulary, syntax and use different from those of the translating language.¹⁰⁾

But Quine does not contend that for all sentences of a given language, their translation is totally indeterminate. In WO, he concedes that some sentences, such as observation sentences, can be translated definitely, and that, for some pairs of sentences, though there is no single correct translation, some translations are incorrect (68).¹¹⁾ Quine says: “[T]he conformity of a translation manual to speech dispositions is decidedly a matter of fact. It is only the choice between certain rival manuals that lacks factuality.”

(RPR, 459–460) One might question whether this limited indeterminacy can avoid becoming trivial,¹²⁾ underlie the eliminativism of (sentence) meanings and of propositional attitudes that have them as their objects (see Wright 1997) and support semantic holism. But I again put aside this

question.

The Facts of the Matter

Now, first of all, what is Quine's notion of "the facts of the matter"? Quine rejects the notion of a thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*) (TPT, 22). Quine also rejects the view that a true sentence is one that fits the facts (VITD, 39). He embraces no transcendental notion of facts or truths; his notion of facts is immanent: "Factuality, like gravitation and electric charge, is internal to theory of nature." (TPT, 23)

However, things become less clear when it comes to Quine's concrete account of "truth" or "the facts of the matter." Specifying the facts of the matter is particularly troublesome for Quine, an empiricist who holds the underdetermination of the theories of nature. As R. Gibson puts, "For what further requirement for the truth of a theory could such an empiricist want besides its ability to make all possible true (and no false) predictions?" (Gibson 1988, 115) Suppose that there are two logically incompatible theories of nature that make all the predictions right (in addition to making successful explanation of all present and past events);¹³⁾ these theories are underdetermined by all the possible observations. Then, do both or none of the theories state the facts of the matter? It is intuitively absurd, but on what ground can such an empiricist as Quine claim that just one of the theories state the truths? In fact, as Quine's analysis and understanding of the underdetermination of a theory progresses, he vacillates between the sectarian position and the ecumenical position: where the underdetermination of two competing theories happens, the sectarian Quine takes only one of them to be true, and the ecumenical Quine takes both of them to be true.¹⁴⁾ I do not have space to discuss this issue further here.¹⁵⁾

Ontological Determination

Now we should consider the second question: what makes translation ontologically determined? I agree with Friedman, who takes Quine's thesis of the (metaphysical) indeterminacy of a theory of translation to claim the impossibility of the reduction of the theory to physics. Friedman talks about two forms of reduction to physics. A theory is reducible to physics in the

strong form “if each [primitive] predicate of the theory is coextensive with a predicate of physics and the laws of physics constrain the corresponding physical predicates to satisfy the theory.” (Friedman 1975, 357) A theory is reducible to physics in the weak form if each primitive predicate of the theory is coextensive with *a set* of predicates of physics and the laws of physics constrain the corresponding physical predicates to satisfy the theory (Friedman 1975, 358-359).¹⁶⁾ Put in another, metaphysical way, the strong form of reduction of a theory to physics requires the identity of each property in the theory with a physical property while the weak form requires only the supervenience of each property in the theory on physical properties. It is clear that Quine takes physics as the only base of reduction, and that he takes the weak form of reduction (in Friedman’s sense) to be not only as legitimate as the strong, but also the more plausible. He talks of his physicalism as follows:

It [physicalism] is not a reductionist doctrine of the sort sometimes imagined. It is not a utopian dream of our being able to specify all mental events in physiological or microbiological terms. It is not a claim that such correlations even exist, in general, to be discovered; the groupings of events in mentalistic terms need not stand in any systematic relation to biological groupings. What it does say about the life of the mind is that there is no mental difference without a physical difference.... It is a way of saying that the fundamental objects are the physical objects. It accords physics its rightful place as the basic natural science without venturing any dubious hopes of reduction of other disciplines. (FM, 163)

As the last sentence suggests, Quine does not call the weak form of reduction “reduction.” However, it is a mere terminological question. The weak form of reduction in Friedman’s sense is tantamount to the claim that there is no real difference without a physical difference, and this is what Quine says above.

Gaudet 2006 criticizes Friedman for taking the indeterminacy of translation as the irreducibility of translation to physics, because Quine does not endorse reductionism (92-97 & 18-19). However, Gaudet does not notice that Friedman and Quine use the words “reduction” and “reductionism”

differently: if Quine agreed with Friedman in the extension of “reduction” to include the weak form of reduction, Quine would agree with Friedman in taking the indeterminacy of translation as the failure of its reduction to physics.

Hamano 1990 apparently makes the opposite mistake. Hamano claims that “Quine strongly asserts the difference between the underdetermination of physical theories and the indeterminacy of translation on the basis of there being no real fact that entirely determines the truth and falsity of incompatible translation manuals, that is to say, on the basis of the impossibility of reducing semantic properties physically...” (Hamano 1990, 146; translated from Japanese by the author of this paper). And Hamano takes reductionism as the claim that there is a type-type identity between a certain non-physical property and a physical property (Hamano 1990, 156 and 159). Thus, it seems that Hamano takes Quine to hold that there is no fact that determines the truth and falsity of incompatible translation manuals if and only if there is no type-type identity between semantic properties and relevant physical properties. However, as we have seen above, Quine does not hold this view. Quine holds another claim, i.e., there is no fact that determines the truth and falsity of incompatible translation manuals if and only if semantic properties even fail to supervene on relevant physical properties. This claim is quite plausible, so critics should rather accept it and try to show that semantic properties in fact supervene on relevant physical properties.

What Leaves Translation Indeterminate

The contrast between the indeterminacy of a theory or translation and its underdetermination now becomes clearer. While the latter is the thesis of underdetermination by evidence, the former is the thesis of irreducibility to physics. So, to answer the third question, what leaves translation indeterminate, we have to know what Quine takes as physics.¹⁷⁾

When Quine talks of physics in the strict sense, he distinguishes physics from biology or psychology in that physics uncovers, or is supposed to uncover, the laws of nature while biology or psychology at best discovers local generalizations. “Physics investigates the essential nature of the world, and biology describes a local bump. Psychology, human psychology,

describes a bump on a bump.” (TT, 93; cf. Hookway 1988, 98) Thus, the universality and the fundamentality of the objects of the study are what characterizes Quine’s notion of “physics.”¹⁸⁾ The important thing is that according to this characterization, linguistics, the studies of meaning or translation in particular, does not count as physics since they do not study universal laws, but at best study local generalizations about human beings.

When it comes to translation, Quine often talks of speech dispositions as the relevant facts of the matter.¹⁹⁾ However, as far as the consistency of this with his view of physics is concerned, there is no problem. Even when Quine talks about translation, he does not take speech dispositions as basic physical facts; speech dispositions are (strongly or weakly) reducible to the distributions of microphysical states.

My thesis of the indeterminacy of translation is that mutually incompatible manuals of translation can conform to all the same distributions of speech dispositions. But the only facts of nature that bear on the correctness of translation are speech dispositions. Thus mutually incompatible manuals of translation can conform to all the same overall states of nature, hence all the same distributions of microphysical states. Yet, being incompatible, both manuals can scarcely be right. Which one is, if either? I say there is no fact of the matter. This illustrates my identification of facts of the matter with distribution of microphysical states. (RHP, 429)

Nonetheless, there remain questions: are speech dispositions (or that portion of the distribution of microphysical states to which they are reduced) the only facts relevant to the correctness of translation? And why? This constraint on relevant facts seems to be unreasonably severe, so I will explain what grounds it and how much more inclusive it is than appears to be.

Constraint on Relevant Facts

The limitation is placed presumably because Quine takes the relationship between meaning and translation as follows: “For meaning, supposedly, is what a sentence shares with its translation” (WO, 32). If there were such a

thing as the meaning of sentences, the correctness of a translation would depend on whether it preserves the meaning of the original sentences.²⁰⁾ By Quine's light, the respectable notion of meaning is that of "stimulus meaning," which is defined in terms of the classes of stimulations individuated by speech dispositions to assent and to dissent to sentences.²¹⁾ This is why Quine limits the relevant facts for translation to these speech dispositions. But why should we take "stimulus meanings" as sentence meanings or the contents of the original sentences?

One of Quine's central tenets is his verification theory of meaning: "the meaning of a sentence turns purely on what would count as evidence for its truth [...]" (EN, 80) Evidence is gained only through the triggering of our sensory receptors. Thus, Quine defines the meaning of sentences in terms of sensory stimulations. How are sensory stimulations to be distributed to each sentence? Quine thinks that the proper way of the distribution is to assign a set of sensory stimulations to a sentence when there is a speech disposition to assent or dissent to the sentence given that set of sensory stimulations. Quine replies to Chomsky's quarrel that he arbitrarily limits the kind of speech dispositions, as follows: "I am free to pick, from that totality [of speech dispositions], whatever dispositions are favorable to my purpose of distinguishing ostensive meanings." (RC, 307-8) So, the verification theory of meaning is the basis for taking "stimulus meanings" as sentence meanings.

Even given the verification theory, however, we may still wonder why speech dispositions are the only (physical) facts relevant to translation. For it seems that the classes of stimulations can be properly individuated and assigned to each sentence not (only) by speech dispositions, but also by something else, say, the speaker's mental states. Why does a native's mental structure not constitute part of the facts relevant to the translation of her language?

Quine gives the most promising reply in *Pursuit of Truth* (PT):²²⁾

Each of us learns his language by observing other people's verbal behavior and having his own faltering verbal behavior observed and reinforced or corrected by others. We depend strictly on overt behavior in observable situations. As long as our command of our language fits all external checking-points, where our utterance or our reaction to

someone's utterance can be appraised in the light of some shared situation, so long all is well. Our natural life between checking-points is indifferent to our rating as a master of the language. There is nothing in *linguistic meaning* beyond what is to be gleaned from overt behavior in observable circumstances. (PT, 38)

The affluence of such words as “checking,” “appraised,” “well” or “a master of language” suggests that Quine here says the standard of whether and what we mean by language is provided solely by observable behavior. We learn language through observing the speech behavior of others, and having our speech behavior reinforced or corrected by others' approval or disapproval.²³⁾ An utterance type has a certain meaning as long as tokens of that type pass the check provided by the verbal behavior of others.²⁴⁾ Then, it seems that there is no meaning over and above the stimulations classified by “what is to be gleaned from” speech behavior.²⁵⁾

Quine thus selects the relevant facts of the matter — the reduction base — for translation on the basis of physicalism, the verification theory of meaning, and the view that the standard of what we mean is provided solely by “what is to be gleaned from” observable behavior. Still there is a question about the way in which Quine expresses his thesis that “what is to be gleaned from” speech behavior or dispositions are the relevant facts of the matter. Quine says in another place, “From the point of view of a theory of translational meaning the most notable thing about the analytical hypotheses is that they exceed anything implicit in any native's dispositions to speech behavior.” (WO, 70; cf. OR, 27) (Analytical hypotheses are hypotheses the translators make in the process of constructing translation manuals (WO, 68).) What does Quine mean by anything *implicit* in speech dispositions that these hypotheses exceed? I think it means “anything in speech dispositions *accessible to* language learners in the natives' environment.” In p. 75 of WO, we encounter the passage that suggests “all theoretically accessible evidence” is relevant; and evidence for translation is speech dispositions. Further, the above argument for limiting the fact of matter of translation in turn suggests that anything in speech dispositions accessible to speakers can in principle set forth or accommodate a (standard of) meaning for a sentence. If so, any information language learners in the natives' environment can get from speech dispositions is relevant to transla-

tion.

This interpretation mitigates one of the permanent objections to Quine's argument for the indeterminacy of translation: Quine restricts the class of relevant facts too narrowly. Critics note that Quine argues that the contents of linguistic expressions are determined by publicly observable behavior because people learn a language on the sole basis of publicly observable behavior. However, they argue that "...even if the data we rely on in learning a language are based on the data of behavior, it does not directly follow from this that the materials we are given in learning a language are only the data of behavior." (Hamano 1990, 151; translated from Japanese by the author of this paper) The above investigation shows, however, that actually neither Quine nor his argument restricts relevant facts to the data of linguistic behavior, or of the dispositions of linguistic behavior. Any fact that language learners can access through the dispositions of observable speech behavior in the natives' environment is relevant to translation.

Even if the relevant facts get that inclusive, you might still question whether all relevant physical facts are taken into account. Many commentators have argued that there are other potentially relevant physical facts: for example, the tendency to find certain aspects of similarity in presented material salient and other aspects not so; a native's language learning history (e.g., whether the native masters the word in question through verbal explanations or through paradigmatic examples); the makeup of her environment including how the words are introduced into the language (e.g., whether the word in question is introduced into language by verbal definition or ostensive illustration); the causal-historical relationship between her or their words and external objects; and her neurology (Cf., Wright 1997, 399-400 and Soames 2003, 241-242). Actually, perhaps some of these facts, e.g., people's language learning history, might be accessible to language learners through speech dispositions. Quine will admit that these accessible facts are relevant to translation, but will deny that the remaining, inaccessible facts are relevant. The critics need to refute Quine's reason for restricting relevant facts, i.e., the verification theory of meaning, or the view that the standard of whether and what we mean by language is provided solely by what is implicit in speech dispositions. They must also provide us with a reason to think that any of the above facts is actually relevant. For example, as for the relevance of neurology, commentators might point out that

as far as we know, only creatures with normal human neurological endowment can learn (human) language when exposed to the relevant behavior. (Hylton 2007, 221.²⁶) See also Gaudet 2006, 58–61.)

Puzzle about Argumentative Strategy

Let me move on to the fourth question. In WO, there are abundant descriptions of the indeterminacy of translation that focus on the evidences and the methodology of translation. It is hard to find any passage in Quine's writings that is clearly an argument for the ontological indeterminacy of translation. Why?

Through the previous investigation, it has turned out that what can be gleaned from speech dispositions is both the evidence for the correctness or incorrectness of translation and the only fact of the matter that determines its correctness or incorrectness.²⁷ The evidence for the ascription of a meaning — hence a translation to a sentence — is what is implicit in natives' speech dispositions; and that meaning — hence the correct translation — is determined by the same fact. So, if there is no possible fact that can serve as evidence for a choice of two competing translations, then there is no fact of the matter for that choice; nothing determines the correctness of one translation over the others: that is, the 'fact' about translation is not reducible to (i.e., supervenient on) the relevant facts of the matter. Thus, if Quine succeeds in showing the antecedent, he simultaneously establishes the consequent, the ontological indeterminacy of translation. Then, it seems that the abundance of the reference to the lack of evidence for translation in WO is understandable. The lack of evidence in the case of translation is the lack of the fact of the matter. Further, the apparent lack of an argument specifically for the ontological thesis is taken to show Quine's recognition that if the lack of evidence is shown, then the lack of the fact of the matter is also shown.

Methodological Disparities between Theories of Physics and Theories of Translation

Quine's methodological remarks in WO are made to destroy the firm preconception that the correct translation can somehow be determined with

additional constraints on translation. One of the translation manuals might be selected by certain methods, such as the principle of charity (WO, 69) or the projection of the structure of one's mother tongue (WO, 70). However, Quine argues that these methods would not be the kind of methods used in science to establish the facts of the matter; rather they are directed to "the holistic objective of communication." (FSS, 82) Such unscientific methods do not detect but project the correct translation (OR, 34). It should be noted, however, that even putatively scientific methodology, such as simplicity and conservatism, is irrelevant to the determinacy or indeterminacy of translation when it is used to select a translation manual only and not to determine facts in general.²⁸⁾ The indeterminacy of translation consists in the failure of its reduction to (i.e., supervenience on) physical facts, which have been already determined by scientific methodology. Once physical facts are determined, what counts as facts is limited to those reducible to physical facts. If at that point a translation manual is determined, i.e., reducible to physical facts, the indeterminacy of translation will be false. However, provided that it is not determined, the indeterminacy will be true even if one can choose a translation manual by using the methodology once again.

The critical commentators of Quine, for example, Rorty 1972, argue that if the same methodological principles are applied to the choice of translation, any significant indeterminacy will be excluded. However, this argument might fail to refute the indeterminacy thesis for the above-mentioned reason. Kirk 2004 makes a similar point if I understand him correctly (174).

Emphasizing the methodological disparity between physics and translating, I am probably in disagreement with R. Gibson, who says that in Quine's view "physics and translation are on a par methodologically." (Gibson 1988, 109) My line of interpretation is similar to Hookway 1988, 135-136, and Hylton 2007 criticizes Hookway as making Quine's position arbitrary: "A physicist, on this account, is entitled to use "pragmatic" factors to come up with the best theory, without our impugning the truth of that theory. Why is the linguist not entitled to the same latitude?" (Hylton 2007, 223) I think Quine would answer that it is because the methodologies used by physicists — simplicity, conservatism and so on — are not merely pragmatic but also conducive to discovering truths, but the methodologies used by linguists are merely pragmatic, i.e., instrumental to facilitating "fluent dia-

logue and successful negotiation” with the speakers of the translated language (FSS, 80).²⁹⁾

Ontological Disparity

Now we can address the fifth and last problem, i.e., Quine’s apparently perplexing admission that the indeterminacy of translation is “parallel but additional” to the underdetermination by evidence of our theory of nature. Quine tries to clarify this point in PT:

There is an evident parallel between the empirical underdetermination of global science and the indeterminacy of translation. In both cases the totality of possible evidence is insufficient to clinch the system uniquely. But the indeterminacy of translation is additional to the other. If we settle upon one of the empirically equivalent systems of the world, however arbitrarily, we still have within it the indeterminacy of translation. (PT, 101)

We are perhaps tempted to read the above quotation to mean that our theory of nature is underdetermined by all possible basic data, i.e., *observations*, and that our theory of translation is underdetermined by all possible data, this time *all that our theory of nature takes or is going to take as true*. However, this reading does not get at the crucial difference between the indeterminacy of translation and the underdetermination of natural science. The indeterminacy of translation and the underdetermination of natural science are parallel in that they both imply that the totality of possible relevant evidence is not enough for the choice of a single theory: speech dispositions are insufficient for the choice of a single translation manual while observations are insufficient for the choice of a single theory of the world. However, the indeterminacy is ‘additional’ to the underdetermination in that even if a theory of nature is not underdetermined but determined, the choice of translation is not determined within the ontology of the theory. Actually, the term ‘additional’ is misleading, for the former use of ‘determined’ is merely epistemological — uniquely warranted — while the latter use is primarily ontological — reducible to, i.e., supervenient on natural things. If we do not take Quine this way, he fails to contrast the

indeterminacy of translation with the underdetermination of natural science.

Recapitulation

Many sympathetic interpreters of Quine take the indeterminacy of translation as an ontological claim, but many of them fail to identify what the indeterminacy amounts to. I follow Friedman in taking it to consist in the failure of supervenience on relevant physical facts. Quine takes the facts of the matter as being internal to the theory of nature though his concrete account of factuality involves ambivalence. Quine regards physics as investigation into the universal and the fundamental aspects of nature. He does not count linguistics, the studies of meaning or translation in particular, as part of physics because they at best study local generalizations about human beings. That is why linguistic facts exist only if they supervene on the relevant facts that physics studies. I take Quine to argue that the physical facts relevant to the correctness of translation are any (physical) facts that language learners can access through the dispositions of observable speech behavior in the natives' environment. This characterization of relevant facts is more inclusive than many critics of Quine have thought, and it somewhat deflects their objection that he restricts the class of relevant facts too much.

For Quine, what is implicit in speech dispositions is both the evidence for the correctness of translation and the only fact that determines its correctness. That is why he thinks that the lack of evidence shows the lack of the fact of the matter about translation. While Quine admits that evidence underdetermines not only the correct translation but also the correct theory of physics, he rejects the view some commentators attribute to him, i.e., that physics and translating are methodologically on a par. Linguists might need and use specialized methods like the principle of charity, the projection of the structure of one's mother tongue, or simplicity and conservatism applied exclusively to linguistic theories (distinguished from simplicity and conservatism applied to physical theories in general). But these are unlike the methods of physics in that the former are merely pragmatic and not conducive to the discovery of facts. So, despite what critics like Rorty argues, linguists might need *unscientific* methods to choose one translation

among others.

Disparity between physics and translation is, however, mainly ontological: there are physical facts, but there is no fact about translation because it is neither the subject of physics nor supervenient on the facts that physics studies. While the underdetermination of physical theories is an epistemological doctrine, the indeterminacy of translation is primarily an ontological thesis.³⁰⁾

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- 1) This paper concerns the indeterminacy of the translation of complete sentences rather than the inscrutability of reference. The latter thesis claims that even provided the determined translation of complete sentences in a language, there is still no definite referent of sentence parts. Many commentators do not distinguish the two theses clearly (e.g., Evans 1975; Hamano 1990), perhaps because they focus on *Word and Object*. Orenstein explains how Quine comes to distinguish the indeterminacy of translation from the inscrutability of reference (Orenstein 2002, 142-146).
 - 2) In the following, Quine's texts are indicated by capitalized abbreviations. Other authors' texts are indicated by their names. See References in the end of this paper to understand what they stand for.
 - 3) As Friedman 1975 suggests (357), Quine sometimes puts the doctrine of the underdetermination of theories in the stronger form: there can be incompatible theories that are not only respectively compatible with all possible data, but also equally in line with "the ideal organon of scientific method." (WO, 22) However, this difference does not matter much in the following discussion, so I will let his underdetermination thesis remain ambiguous.
 - 4) For example, Gibson 1988, 109-113; Friedman 1975; Hookway 1988, 137; Orenstein 2002, 141-2; and Hylton 2007, 202-203.
 - 5) Quine's considered view concerning truth is disquotational (see, for example, PT, sec. 33). So, strictly speaking, Quine's theory of truth is an account of the term "be true" and not of what truth is.
 - 6) Actually, we should rather ask what "factuality" means for Quine. Quine is against reification of facts in that facts have no proper criterion of individuation. Thus, if we take "facts" literally, trivially there is no fact about the choice of translation manuals, or about anything. But surely Quine means something more substantial by the indeterminacy of translation. See, for example, the following passage from Quine's reply: "Barry startles me by asking how I individuate facts of the matter. Ever since my 1940 review of Russell, or earlier, I have lashed against reification of facts. In my recent writings I should perhaps have forgone the breezy

- vernacular of “fact of the matter” and written of factuality.” (Barrett and Gibson 1990, 334) However, because this point is not crucial to understanding the indeterminacy thesis, I stick to the phrase “fact of the matter” in the text.
- 7) Quine says in Orenstein & Kotatko 2000: “My thought experiment in radical translation, in *Word and Object*, was meant as a challenge to the reality of propositions as meanings of cognitive sentences.” (417)
 - 8) If translation manuals are individuated finely, the indeterminacy of translation obtains trivially. For instance, consider the translation of the Latin utterance “Cogito, ergo sum”. Translation manual A translates it as “I think, so I exist”; manual B translates it as “I am thinking, and therefore I am being”; manual C translates it as “As I think, there is I”. If the criterion of individuation distinguishes between A, B and C, and if, as it seems, these translations of “Cogito, ergo sum” are equally good, then the indeterminacy of translation obtains. However, this indeterminacy is trivial — it casts no doubt on the existence of meanings or propositions, for these translations intuitively mean the same proposition.
 - 9) See Kirk 2004, 177n2 and Hylton 2007, 201 for Quine’s struggle to express the idea that one translation manual excludes another.
 - 10) Kirk 2004 emphasizes the importance of domestic cases for avoiding trivialization (167-168).
 - 11) i.e., pairs of stimulus-synonymous sentences, pairs of stimulus-analytic sentences and pairs of stimulus-contradictory sentences. Tanji 1997 notes that these results might not be achieved if, as Quine later admits in PTF, even observation sentences are theory-laden (158-159 & 168).
 - 12) On the question of triviality, see, for example, Davidson 1986, 313 and its criticism by Tanji 1997, 182.
 - 13) If you take Quine’s underdetermination thesis in the stronger form (see note 3), then also suppose that these two theories of nature are equally in accordance with the ideal organon of scientific methods.
 - 14) The terms “sectarian” and “ecumenical” are Quine’s own. See RG, 156-7, where you can also find Quine’s own summary of his arguments for and against each position.
 - 15) See Gibson 1988, 113-127 for the elaborate follow-up of the transition of Quine’s position on this issue.
 - 16) For a more precise formulation of the strong and weak forms of reduction, see Friedman 1975, 357-359.
 - 17) To understand the *significance* of the indeterminacy of translation, we also have to know what reasons Quine has to believe physicalism. For, unless there is a compelling reason to believe physicalism, the indeterminacy of translation can be taken to show just that translation gives an irreducible-to-physics but *real* description of a portion of the world, which is squarely against Quine’s intent. However,

this paper only purports to elucidate what the indeterminacy of translation is, and also there is no space to discuss such a big issue as the legitimacy of physicalism, so I just leave behind this problem. See Hookway 1988, 71-4 and Gaudet 2006, 15-17 for Quine's reasons for physicalism.

- 18) Of course this characterization, especially "universality," needs clarification, and it might well be doubted whether it, even if clarified, is an appropriate criterion of objects in physics. Many putatively physical laws, for example, Boyle and Charles's law, are apparently neither universally applicable nor fundamental. Geophysics studies a particular object: Earth. However, I will leave behind this problem again because it is beyond the scope of this paper.
- 19) I think that Quine does not mean to exclude writing dispositions from "speech dispositions." Quine's above-mentioned reasons for the limitation to speech dispositions do not seem to have any bearing on them. Hereafter I take Quine to mean both speech and writing dispositions by "speech dispositions."
- 20) This claim is expressed as a counterfactual because in WO Quine is going to argue that, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as the meanings of sentences.
- 21) "We may begin by defining the *affirmative stimulus meaning* of a sentence such as 'Gavagai', for a given speaker, as the class of all the stimulations ... that would prompt his assent. ... We may define the *negative stimulus meaning* similarly with 'assent' and 'dissent' interchanged, and then define the *stimulus meaning* as the ordered pair of the two." (WO, 32-33) This definition neglects the disposition to withhold a verdict, which is supposed to constitute part of the relevant facts.
- 22) Another reason Quine seems to give for the exclusion of internal factors is this: they do, or may, radically vary among us even though we not only share the conditioned relation between our speech dispositions and sensory stimulations but also communicate naturally, so internal factors cannot be the facts that determine the correct translation. If we use Friedman's vocabulary, it means that (the fact about correct) translation is not reducible to these internal factors. "Internal factors may vary *ad libitum* without prejudice to communication as long as the keying of language to external stimuli is undisturbed." (EN, 81) "Different persons growing up in the same language are like different bushes trimmed and trained to take the shape of identical elephants. The anatomical details of twigs and branches will fulfill the elephantine form differently from bush to bush, but the overall outward results are alike." (WO, 8) However, as Friedman points out, such interpersonal differences might show that translation is not strongly reducible to internal physical factors, but fail to show that translation is not weakly reducible: a set of multifarious internal factors might determine a correct translation (Friedman 1975, 367-368). Besides, Quine in later works admit that stimulations caused by the same cue might vary from one person from another (see, for example, PT, sec. 15; I thank Steven James for pointing this out). If Quine excludes internal factors, he

- must exclude stimulations related to speech dispositions, too.
- 23) The reason Quine frequently refers to the process of acquisition of language in defense of his behaviorism (e.g. OR, 26-7) is probably to make it vivid that, through having our speech behavior corrected, we come to 'mean' something by language.
 - 24) Unless Quine abandons his characterization of relevant facts as dispositions to assent, dissent, approve or disapprove, his behaviorism cannot be a strict one. For assent and dissent, and approval or disapproval over them, cannot be defined in terms of behavior. As Soames 2003 says: "To assent or dissent is not just to utter the English words 'yes' or 'no', for there are other ways of assenting and dissenting, and there are other languages in which one can assent or dissent." (244-245) Quine needs a version of behaviorism which is relaxed enough to make sense of assent and dissent, and of approval and disapproval over them, but which does not assume the existence of sentence meanings or the attitudes that have them, such as beliefs. This is not an easy task.
 - 25) However, notice that Quine here recognizes that language learning relies on not only the dispositions to assent or dissent to statements but also other speech dispositions, notably the dispositions to endorse or correct — approve or disapprove of — such assent or dissent. Then, the latter speech dispositions can affect the proper distribution of stimulations to each sentence and hence be part of the relevant facts of the matter about translation. Further, actually Quine admits that what goes into language learning is not only having certain speech dispositions to assent or dissent, but also having certain non-verbal responses to heard language (PR 45-46). So these non-verbal dispositions can affect the appropriate assignment of stimulations to each sentence and hence count as relevant facts (Cf. Kirk 2004, 157-158). On Quine's considered view, relevant 'speech dispositions' might well include these diverse behavioral dispositions that bear on people's language learning.
 - 26) Hylton himself does not argue that neurology is relevant, and explains how Quine rebuts this view (Hylton 2007, 223).
 - 27) As is apparent, I do not ascribe to Quine the conceptual confusion of evidence with the fact of the matter.
 - 28) Quine endorses simplicity and conservatism as the methodological principles of science. See, for example, WO, 20-25 and RR 137ff.
 - 29) Of course, whether this answer is plausible is another question.
 - 30) I thank Steven James for reading and commenting on a draft of this paper. Thanks also to two anonymous referees at *The Journal of Philosophical Studies* for helpful comments.

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The concept of Hannah Arendt's "the Public", Part 1 glad tidings of our times

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The present situation of Hannah Arendt study shows increasingly elaborate and diverse aspects. However, I think that there is common understanding about her originality. That is her effort to treat each human birth as an invocation of new beginning to the world and fix this "Birth" on the central category of her political thinking. The aim of this study is to clarify the center position of Arendt's thought by surveying the concept of her "the Public" which is recognized as her contribution to contemporary political theory. To begin with, we analyze the basic structure of her "the Public". Secondly, we appreciate the difference between her "the Public" and the concept of modern Publicness. Then we demonstrate that the today's significance of Arendt's thought consists in her vantage point of viewing Christianity.

「翻訳の不確定性」を理解する

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『言葉と対象 *Word and Object*』以来、W. V. クワインは翻訳の不確定性を支持する議論をしてきた。この主張は文の意味などというものが無いという含意をもつとされていたので大論争的になったが、この翻訳の不確定性テーゼでクワインは実のところ何を意味しており、何がどのように翻訳を決定しないというのだろうか。翻訳の不確定性は、科学理論の非決定性と質的に異なるのだろうか。もしそんな相異があるとしたら、それは何に存するのだろうか。翻訳の不確定性について数多くのコメントが書かれてきたけれども、こうした解釈上の論点は未だに残っている。この論文

は、『言葉と対象』やクワインのその後の著作を検討し、これまでの解釈との異同を指摘しながら、翻訳の不確定性テーゼを解明し、翻訳理論と科学理論の間に認識論的
身分の違いと存在論的身分の違い（とクワインにみなされたもの）を特定する。その
際、いくつかのクワインに対する批判に問題があることを示唆する。