Analyticity and Analytical Truth

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In the literature, there are *two* distinct characterizations of analyticity. One is purely syntactical: it refers to the structure of a sentence only. Limiting our attention for the moment to subject-predicate sentences, a first approximation to such a characterization can be given by the following variant of the classical Kantian definition:

(1) A sentence of the form 'the P is (a) Q' is analytic if P is a predicate that (in some sense to be specified) *includes Q.*

The second characterization brings semantics, and truth in particular, into the picture:

(2) A sentence is analytic if it is *true* by virtue of its form alone.

There are reasons to think that the two characterizations are in conflict. For consider sentences like

(3) The square that is not a square is a square that is not a square.
(4) The winged horse that exists is a winged horse that exists.

Whatever construal you give of 'includes' in (1), both (3) and (4) are analytic in the sense of (1). Then, since trivially (3) and (4) have the form they have, according to (2) they must be true. But for most people, (3) and (4) are *not* true. So if we assume that (1) and (2) are both characterizations of analyticity, we (apparently) reach an absurd conclusion.

People have had two basic reactions to this problem. Some have insisted that (3) and (4) *are* true, that is, that the above conclusion is *not* absurd. The results of this attitude have been various kinds of Meinongian or dialectical logics, committed to either the claim that there are nonexistent objects or the claim that reality is contradictory (or both).[1] The difficulty with such results is that they saddle logic with debatable (though in themselves perfectly respectable) metaphysical theses: if these commitments are accepted, it would seem to follow that one cannot always argue rationally with people who do not accept such theses (in fact, that one cannot always understand what they are saying).