

**Doubts about the objectivity of ontology**  
December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002

**1. Another story about tribes**

**2. The “Carnapian” view of the tribes**

The principle of charity

**3. Which words have different meanings in the tribes’ languages?**

S There are exactly a trillion things.

M Mars is a red planet

**4. Intertranslatability**

Astronomically Impoverished English

**5. How to translate quantifiers**

Easy direction, e.g.: Organicese to Universalese. ‘There are no chairs’ becomes ‘There are no simple or living chairs’.

Hard direction, e.g.: Universalese to Organicese. Suggestion: ‘Some chairs wobble’ should become something like ‘If composition were universal, some chairs wobble’ or ‘Assuming that composition is universal, some chairs wobble’ or ‘According to the fiction that composition is universal, some chairs wobble’.

**6. How to translate names**

**7. The significance of this for the objectivity of metaphysics**

Interpreting English-speakers: ‘folk metaphysics’

What about the metaphysical questions that folk metaphysics doesn’t resolve? Indeterminacy.

A special language spoken in the metaphysics room?

Example of the tribe with the gong. Three possible views: (i) the gong does nothing; (ii) the gong makes language go completely indeterminate; (iii) the gong makes everyone start talking past each others. Parallel views about the metaphysics room.

**8. Eligibility and the theory of interpretation**

**9. Metaphysical quantification as *absolutely unrestricted* quantification?**

**10. The argument from analyticity**

T Any sentence that can be translated as an analytic truth is itself analytic.

H No sentence that logically entails ‘There is something’ is analytic.

C No sentence is analytic unless it can be transformed into a truth of standard logic by replacing predicates with their definitions, or correct conceptual analyses.

Suggestion: C applies to the language of the metaphysics room, even though it doesn't apply to all languages.

**11. Problems with the argument from analyticity**

Aliens whose only word for water is a term of chemistry.

**12. "Metaphysical analysis"**