Chapter Eight
Concluding Summary

This thesis will be concluded with a brief summary, which may be supplemented by section C of chapter one. (see especially 1.C.2, concerning the limitations on the discussion.)

Meaning and truth.

The description of the general connection between meaning and truth (between understanding and knowing) began with some general remarks about the presuppositions of talk about meanings and propositions, and criteria for identity of meanings, preparing the way for much of what followed.

We saw that descriptive words have their meanings in virtue of semantic correlations with combinations of observable properties (or relations), which one must learn to recognize in learning to use the words. A system for classifying such words on the basis of the ways in which they are correlated with universals was described, which enabled us to give an account of many hidden complexities in the meanings of simple-looking adjectives and common nouns.

The role of logical words in sentences was described by developing some ideas of Frege and Wittgenstein. It is possible to regard the logical form of a proposition as corresponding to a rogator, which takes descriptive words and expressions as arguments and takes as values the words "true" and "false": to each logical rogator there corresponds a "logical technique" for determining the value given the meanings of the non-logical words taken as arguments,
the outcome of which generally depends on how things happen to be in the world. In learning the use of logical words and constructions, we learn how their occurrence in sentences determines the logical form of the propositions expressed, by determining which logical techniques or which rogators correspond to those sentences.

Thus, the semantic correlations between descriptive words and universals, together with the correlations between “logical forms” of sentences and logical techniques, determine the conditions in which sentences containing descriptive and logical words express true or false propositions. This is how meanings of statements are determined by the meanings or functions of individual words.

(This inquiry was not without by-products. We found reason to reject the reduction of logic to syntax. We were able to clarify the difference between “presuppositions” of a statement and its “implications”, by talking about the conditions in which logical techniques are applicable. This, and the notion of the “domain of definition” of a rogator, looked like a suitable basis for a doctrine of “types” and “category rules” slightly more general and less arbitrary-looking than theories based on “ranges of significance” of predicates. See end of Chapter Five.)

Meaning and necessary truth.

Making use of some of the early general remarks about meanings and propositions, especially the remarks about conceptual schemes, we analysed some aspects of the concepts of “possibility” and “necessity” by drawing attention to general and fundamental facts of experience, but for which our language and thought could not be as they are, such as the fact that universals are not essentially tied
to their actual particular instances. Necessity was explained in terms of connections between universals which limit the possible ways in which they might have occurred in other instances than those which actually possess them. Such connections between universals may also explain our use of subjunctive conditional statements in some contexts.

The descriptions of the connection between meaning and necessary truth (between understanding and knowing apriori) followed on naturally from the earlier description of the general connection between meaning and truth. Though the value of a logical rogator for a set of arguments normally depends on how things are in the world, and has to be discovered by applying the appropriate technique, nevertheless there are "freak" cases where the truth-value may be discovered by examining the technique and relations between the meanings of non-logical words taken as arguments. (Though even here it may be discovered also in the normal way, by applying the technique.) Relations between the meanings of descriptive words, which may help to determine the truth-value of a statement in all possible states of the world, may either be identifying relations, corresponding to definitions or partial definitions, or non-identifying relations, corresponding to connections between universals (observable properties and relations). Thus there are two sorts of propositions which are necessarily true, namely those which are analytic and those which are synthetic. The discovery of the relations which may make a synthetic proposition necessarily true is made by examining observable properties or relations, possibly with the aid of an informal proof.
(It is assumed throughout that the statements under discussion do have truth-values, that the applicability-conditions for rogators are satisfied. This may not always be discoverable apriori. See 5.E.6, ff.)

All this showed that there were four types of true or false statements using only descriptive and logical words.

1) Formal truths and falsehoods, whose truth-values are determined by their logical form alone.

2) Analytic, but non-formal, truths or falsehoods, whose truth-values are determined by both their logical form and identifying relations between meanings of some non-logical words.

3) Synthetic necessary truths and falsehoods, whose truth-values are determined by the factors mentioned so far, together with synthetic or non-identifying relations between the meanings of some of the non-logical words.

4. Synthetic contingent statements, whose truth-values depend on their logical form, on the meanings of their non-logical words, and on how things happen to be in the world (i.e. on which particular objects have which properties, etc.).

In order to know the truth-value of the first kind, it is enough to know how logical constants (topic-neutral words and constructions) work, and perceive properties of the corresponding logical techniques. Of the other words one need know nothing except that they are descriptive words referring to properties.

For knowledge of the truth-value of the second kind, something must, in addition, be known about the descriptive words, such as that some of them are used as abbreviations for other expressions, or that the meanings stand in certain identifying relations. What the meanings are need not be known.
Knowledge of the truth-value of the third kind of proposition requires, in addition to the factors so far mentioned, a complete understanding of at least some of the descriptive words. One must know which properties are referred to, in order to be able to examine them and discover the connections between them.

Finally, not only is complete understanding required for knowledge of the truth-value of propositions of the fourth kind, but also an empirical enquiry to find out how things stand with the particular objects which have (or do not have) the properties referred to. Here knowledge of meanings and logical techniques is applied, where in the other cases it was only examined.

The discussion of section 2.C showed that the failure of many philosophers to see all this could be explained not only by their confused understanding of the terms “synthetic”, “necessary”, etc., but also by their unwitting use of loose and fluctuating criteria for identity of meanings. They have failed to use Kant’s “engraver’s needle”, partly on account of not having noticed that a theory of universals (properties and relations) need not rely on the oversimplified “one-one” model. (Cf. 2.D.6-7, 3.B.5, 4.B.1, etc.).

This concludes my answer to the main question raised in section 1.1 Many subsidiary questions have been raised which could not be answered in the limited space available - some of these are dealt with briefly in the appendices. I claim to have shown that Kant was justified in describing some kind of knowledge as both synthetic and a priori,¹ and, which is perhaps more important, to

1. See Appendix VI.
have revealed some relations between very general con-
cepts, such as "property", "meaning", "truth", "proof",
"possibility" and "necessity".