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## A Proof of Collingwood's Thesis

R. G. Collingwood claimed in *An Autobiography*: "In order to find out [a man's] meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer."<sup>1</sup> In another book he wrote: "Every statement that anybody ever makes is made in answer to a question."<sup>2</sup> This claim can be formulated as: "every statement has meaning only in relation to a question to which it is an answer." We will refer to this formulation as Collingwood's thesis. Although this claim is provocative and potentially relevant to many fields of philosophy, Collingwood never provided a formal proof of it. This paper is intended to formally prove this thesis using the linguistic concept of focus. Toward that end, I will attempt to prove two theses:

- Thesis 1: Focus represents an intrinsic constituent of the meaning of every statement.  
 Thesis 2: Focus can be determined by the relationship between the question and the answer.

After we prove theses, we can easily deduce Collingwood's from them.

Collingwood's thesis: Every statement has meaning only in relation to a question to which it is an answer.

We will next discuss the inadequacy of the truth-conditional theory of meaning and propose a new *a priori* definition deriving from Collingwood's thesis.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1978, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics*, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1998, p. 23. Gadamar referred to Collingwood's idea of "the logic of question and answer" and developed his method of hermeneutics based on it. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamar, "Wahrheit und Methode," 4th edition, J. C. B. Mohr Tuebingen, 1975, pp. 351-360.

<sup>3</sup> This article is based on a part of my Japanese article "Mondo no Imi to Kisozukemonndai" ("The Semantics of Questions and Answers and the Problem of Foundation") in the "Bulletin of the Faculty of Letters, Osaka University" vol. 37, 1997 and on a part of my Japanese article "Hatsuwa no Imi no Dentatsu to Mondo no Hukahisei" ("The Inescapability of Communication and the Relationship between Questions and Answers") in the "Bulletin of the Faculty of Letters, Osaka University" vol. 43, 2003.

## 1. Explanation of Focus

Most sentences are comprised of many words. The relationship among the words constituting a sentence is referred to as “syntagmatic.” On the other hand, the nouns and verbs used in sentences are meaningful in terms of their relationships with similar words of the same kind that might have been used in the sentence. This relationship is referred to as “paradigmatic.” The selection of one word, rather than others of the same kind, to construct a sentence involves the notion: “not others but this.” In the sentence “S is P,” both S and P represent the “this” selected over the “others.” However, we cannot consciously select all words in a sentence. We can consciously select only about one word or phrase in each sentence because such selection involves very complex cognitive efforts. Even if we are conscious about selecting two words, such consciousness is sequential rather than simultaneous. This is similar to the relationship between figure and ground in perceptions. For example, we cannot see a rabbit and a duck simultaneously when viewing a famous reversible figure of a rabbit and a duck. In addition, consider the statement: “An apple is red” and suppose that the apple represents the focus position such that “not a peach, not an orange, not a pear, but an apple” defines its meaning. In this way, red could also serve as the focus position, which would result in the meaning deriving from: “not blue, not yellow, not green, but red.” We cannot consider these two focal positions simultaneously because we select red and not others after we select apple as a subject. If we first select red as a predicate, then we would select apple not others as a subject. We cannot select a subject and predicate simultaneously. In linguistics, this is usually referred to as “focus.” Thus, the focus is ultimately placed on only one element in a statement. A sentence, S is P, can be understood in two ways: 1) a focus is placed on S and it means *no other but S* is P; and 2) a focus is placed on P and it means S is (*not others, but*) P.

## 2. Differences between Focus and Similar Concepts

We turn to a discussion of the differences between focus and other similar concepts in order to explicate the former.

### (a) Distinction between Theme and Rheme (Prague School)

“Theme” refers to a concept and “rheme” refers to a component that provides information

about the theme.<sup>4</sup> Theme differs from focus in this regard:

The prime minister dismissed the House of Representatives.  
<theme> <rheme>  
The House of Representatives was dismissed by the prime minister.  
<theme> <rheme>

### (b) Distinction between new information and known information

The content of a sentence is divided into new information and known information.

Who bought a roll of film with an ASA of 400?  
He bought a roll of film with an ASA of 400.

The content of the latter is divided into new information and known information as follows:

He bought a roll of film with an ASA of 400.  
<new information> <known information>

This distinction is different from a distinction between theme and rheme, because new information can appear in a theme and also in a rheme. The following sentence has new information in a rheme:

What did he buy?  
He bought a roll of film with an ASA of 400.  
<known information> <new information>

Sentences divided into new information and known information include not only assertions but also statements used to promise, order, or serve other purposes.

What are you looking for?  
Please give me a roll of film with an of ASA 400!  
<known information> <new information>

Chomsky used “presupposition” and “focus” rather than known information and new information.

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<sup>4</sup> Yoshihiko Ikegami, *Semantics*, Taisyukan Syoten, 1974, p. 340, M. A. K. Halliday, “Functional Diversity in Language as Seen from a Consideration of Modality and Mood in English,” *Foundation of Language*, 6.

Is it JOHN who writes poetry?  
 It isn't JOHN who writes poetry?  
 No, it is BILL who writes poetry.

According to Chomsky, focus is indicated by *the highest point* in the pitch in which ordinary English is spoken. In the aforementioned samples, focus is placed on JOHN and BILL and it is presupposed that somebody writes poetry. Chomsky explained the difference in focus positions as follows:<sup>5</sup>

Bill likes JOHN.  
BILL likes John.

The difference in focal positions between the two sentences is clarified by the following re-phrasing:

The x such that Bill likes x -- is John.  
 The x such that x likes John -- is Bill.

Thus, the focus discussed by Chomsky also represents a part involved in the paradigmatic relationships of a statement.

Chomsky said that new information and known information seem to be identical with focus and presupposition, respectively. To be precise, however, these constructs are distinguishable because the difference between new information and known information is pragmatic and related to the context of an utterance. By contrast, the distinction between focus and presupposition is semantic and related to the internal structures of meaning.

### 3. A Proof of Thesis 1

#### (1) Differences in focus positions are not incidental to the meaning of an utterance.

As mentioned above, the distinction between new information and known information can explain why focus is placed on a particular part of a statement. A speaker places focus on one part of a sentence because that part contains new information; a listener understands this metamessage and focuses on the new information. Because the distinction between new information and known information depends on context, it seems to be incidental to the meaning of a statement rather than intrinsic to the inner structure that confers significance.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Noam Chomsky, "Conditions on Rules of Grammar" in *Essays on Form and Interpretation*, Elsevier North-Holland, Inc., 1977.

The distinction between focus and presupposition materially coincides with that distinction. Therefore, one might think that the distinction between focus and presupposition is also incidental to the meaning of a statement. However, this is not the case, as we prove below.

Differences in focus positions are not incidental factors added after the meaning of a statement is confirmed. Indeed, when we consider a statement, for example that S is P, we necessarily think about the alternative meanings: no other but S is P or S is not others, but P. That is very similar to the perceptions discussed in Gestalt psychology; for example, Rubin's figure is seen alternatively as a cup or as two face-to-face people. However, proof of this does not rely on introspection. Instead, as I will demonstrate, the difference in focus positions is logical rather than psychological.

## **(2) The Difference in Focus Positions is the Logical Difference in Meaning.**

Demonstration that the difference in positions of focus is logical represents a proof that the difference is not incidental but intrinsic to the meaning of a statement. The difference between "no other but S is P" and "S is not others, but P" has been neglected in traditional accounts of logic. Although this difference might be understood as a kind subtle rhetorical nuance, it actually represents a logical difference in meaning. For example, let us consider the following syllogism:

M is P. (major premise)  
S is M. (minor premise)  
S is P. (conclusion)

How can we identify the focus positions in these sentences? If no clue is offered, the focus can be arranged in many ways. However, if this syllogism is treated as a process for answering a question, the positions of focus become explicit according to the following:

*What is S?*  
S is (*not others, but*) M. (minor premise)  
M is (*not others, but*) P. (major premise)  
Therefore S is (*not others, but*) P. (conclusion)

The focus of the question "What is S?" is on "What." Irrespective of the content of the answer, its focus will be in the form of a predicate. Therefore, the focus of the conclusion will also be in the form of a predicate. Suppose that the first thought in response to "What is S?" is "S is M." In this statement, "S is M," S represents known information and M

represents new information; therefore the focus is on M. If the next thought is “M is P,” then M represents known information and P represents new information. In this statement, “M is P,” the focus is on P. Next, the conclusion can be derived. The order of minor premise and major premise in this series of inferences is significant and cannot be changed to its converse because it would be unnatural for the statement “M is P,” which omits S, to be the first reaction to “What is S?” Therefore, a syllogism for answering the following question would involve changes in focus positions and in the order of premises.

What is P?  
 (Not others but) M is P. (major premise)  
 (Not others but) S is M. (minor premise)  
 Therefore (not others but) S is P. (conclusion)

The focus of this question is on “What” and the focus of the answer/conclusion is on S. If the response to “What is P?” is “M is P,” then M, which is new information, is the focus. If the second response is “S is M,” then M represents known information and S represents new information and is the focus. Next, the conclusion can be derived from these responses.

We can explicitly understand the process of inference by considering the difference in positions of focus. Therefore, the focus in the statements constituting the train of inferences has logical rather than rhetorical meaning.

#### 4. A Proof of Thesis 2

I will turn to the proof of Thesis 2: Focus can be determined by the relationship between the question and the answer. As mentioned above, the same sentence can have different focus positions; that is, focus depends on context rather than on content, which is determined by semantic conventions. It is in the relationship between question and answer that the focus position becomes explicit. The same sentence can be used as an answer to different questions, and the identical answer can have different focus positions. For example:

Q1: Does the Faculty of Letters have this kind of entrance exam?  
 A1: The Faculty of Letters *doesn't have* this kind of entrance exam.  
 Q2: Which faculty does not have this kind of entrance exam?  
 A2: *The Faculty of Letters* doesn't have this kind of entrance exam.  
 Q3: What kind of entrance exam does the Faculty of Letters have?  
 A3: The Faculty of Letters doesn't have *this kind* of entrance exam.

Examples of this sort can be derived from all sentences of at least two words by determining which part serves as the focus and forming a question about the content of this focus. However, because we have an inclination toward avoiding redundancy and verbalizing only the part concerning the focus, the actual answers would be as follows:

- Q1: Does the Faculty of Letters have this kind of entrance exam?  
 A1': It *doesn't*.  
 Q2: Which faculty does not have this kind of entrance exam?  
 A2': *The Faculty of Letters*.  
 Q3: What kind of entrance exam does the Faculty of Letters have?  
 A3': *This kind* of entrance exam.

Very short abridged answers, often one-word sentences, have no alternative focus positions, but this does not indicate that such statements are indifferent to the relationship between question and answer. Indeed, understanding the focus position in such situations depends much more on the relationship between question and answer, as illustrated by the examples provided above.

This observation is not limited to questions that request an *assertive* utterance as an answer. The focus of a *directive* utterance, such as an order or a request, also emerges from the relationship to the question it answers. For example:

- Q4: *Which* do you want to put away?  
 A4: Please put away (*no other, but*) *this*!  
 Q5: *What* do you want me to do about this?  
 A5: Please (*don't do anything else, but*) *put away* this one!

The focus of a *commisive* utterance, such as a promise, also emerges from the relationship between question and answer, as illustrated by the following example:

- Q6: *Who* runs for us?  
 A6: (*No other but*) *I* run.  
 Q7: *What* do you do?  
 A7: I (*don't do other things, but*) *run*.

We could provide similar examples for *expressive* and *declarative* utterances.

We can claim that we understand the focus position of a statement if we can understand the question to which it is an answer. Likewise, if we can understand the focus position of a statement, we can formulate the question it answers. However, this reciprocal relationship does not constitute sufficient proof for concluding that the focus position is determined *only* by the relationship of question and answer. How can we prove that the relationship of

question and answer is the *only* way to determine a focus position? To place focus is to attend to the paradigmatic relationship of a particular constituent in a statement; that is, to attend to the fact that the value of a particular constituent is *not others, but this*. Therefore, if we can prove that attending to that particular part does not relate to the accuracy of the content, then we can insist that the relationship between question and answer represents the only way to determine a focus position.

Sperber & Wilson said, “A statement often raises a relevant question. For example, if I tell you that I am unhappy, I will almost certainly make you wonder why.”<sup>6</sup> They noted that the process by which an utterance is understood might depend on a relevant question formed by the listener and on the answers provided to it. I will briefly introduce the example discussed by these authors.<sup>7</sup>

Jennifer confessed to STEALING.

In the context of this utterance, the listener hears “Jennifer” first and assigns the syntactic category, noun phrase (NP), to it, anticipates that a verb phrase (VP) will follow, and formulates the following hypothesis;

Jennifer did something.

This hypothesis raises the following question in the mind of the listener:

What did Jennifer do?

Following that, when the hearer hears “confessed,” she thinks that an NP will follow and formulates the following hypothesis;

Jennifer confessed to something.

This hypothesis raises the following question:

What did Jennifer confess to?

Eventually, understanding the statement with the focus put on “stealing” answers this question.

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<sup>6</sup> D. Sperber & D. Wilson, *Relevance*, second ed., Blackwell, 1995, p. 207.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 206-207.



Jennifer confessed to STEALING.

This sort of process of questions and answers would not be noteworthy because it occurs very rapidly and very quickly. The discussion by Sperber & Wilson cannot prove that every constituent of an utterance is understood as an answer to some relevant question, as they claim, but it might suffice to convince us that the most important constituent is understood as an answer to some relevant question. 1) Every utterance has only one focus; 2) to understand a focus is to pay attention to a particular part and to understand a particular term as the selection from among similar terms that are in paradigmatic relationships with each other; and 3) such selection emerges only as an answer in the form of “not others, but this” to a wh-question. Interrogative words such as what, which, how, when, where, and so on underpin the selection. To make a choice is always to answer a question. Therefore, we can claim that understanding a focus position is possible *only* by virtue of the relationship of question and answer.

## **5. Another Proof of Collingwood's Thesis**

There are many ways to prove Collingwood's thesis, and I will do so from another point of view.

### **(1) Context and Default Inference**

It can be taken for granted that, in general, the meaning of an utterance is understandable only in context. When we understand the meaning of an utterance on the basis of its context, we presuppose the context and infer the meaning of the utterance from this context. Therefore, we infer the context of an utterance as a presupposition and the meaning of the utterance emerges as a conclusion. The inference here is not a classical deductive inference but, rather, a default inference, which I will explain with the following example.

(1) John bought the Times.

This utterance can be understood in terms of at least two meanings:

(2) John bought a newspaper called the *Times*.

(3) John bought stock in the company, the Times.

In ordinary cases, we can select the right meaning on the basis of the context in which the statement is uttered.

(4) John stopped at a kiosk in a station and bought the *Times*.

In this context, John would be understood to have bought the newspaper, the *Times*.

(5) John called an investment company this morning and bought the *Times*.

In this context, John would be understood to have bought stock in the *Times* corporation. Understood alone, statement (1) is ambiguous but it seems to have unique meanings in context. As mentioned above, the context emerges as a presupposition from which the meaning of the utterance is deduced. At first glance, it may seem impossible to deduce many conclusions from one particular context. However, the following illustrates that this is not the case.

(6) John stopped at a kiosk in a station this morning and bought the *Times*. He always buys stocks by telephone at the kiosk.

In the context of statement (6), statement (1) should be understood as meaning that John bought stock in the *Times* corporation.

(7) John stopped at a kiosk in a station this morning and bought the *Times*. He always buys stock by telephone at the kiosk. But today he only looked at the stock columns and didn't buy any.

In the context of statement (7), statement (1) should be understood as meaning that John bought the newspaper, the *Times*. The meaning of utterance (1) changes by adding other utterances to (5). Of course, one could say that (5), (6), and (7) have different meanings as different conclusions because different contexts emerged from different presuppositions. However, the utterance that constitutes the presupposition in (5) did not change. Instead, other presuppositions were added to it, thereby changing the conclusion. Let us suppose the inference:

(8)  $p \vdash x$  (p, q, and x express propositions.)

Suppose that (8) holds now. If another presupposition is added, then the conclusion might change as follows:

(9)  $p, q \vdash \sim x$

According to classical logic, it is impossible for both (8) and (9) to hold simultaneously. To explain their compatibility, we must suppose the presence of tacit presuppositions in (8) and (9). If we express the tacit presuppositions explicitly, we can rewrite, for example, (8) to (10) and (9) to (11):

(10)  $p, D1 \vdash x$   
 (11)  $p, q, D2 \vdash \sim x$  (D1 and D2 express sets of propositions.)

Context is always open to change by adding utterances, indicating that when we infer a conclusion from presuppositions, tacit presuppositions, such as D1 or D2, always remain.

We cannot completely enumerate all default presuppositions, such as D1 in (10), because this would require enumeration of the negations of all logically possible conditions that could disturb the occurrence of the fact expressed by the result of the default inference. Nonetheless, we can at least endorse the empirical conclusion that the meaning of any utterance can be changed by the addition of other utterances.

If we actually infer a meaning, such as that in statement (10), without explicit acknowledgement or awareness of D1, the inference is not deductive but, rather, default. In default inferences, different conclusions can be reached by adding other presuppositions.

## **(2) Default Inference and the Relationship of Question and Answer**

If understanding an utterance in context relies on default inference, sufficient proof of Collingwood's thesis would involve proving the following thesis:

Thesis 4: Every inference, including every default inference, is possible only by virtue of the relationship it holds to the question that is answered by the conclusion of the default inference.

Many conclusions are logically deducible from certain presuppositions in deductive inference processes and, to a greater extent, in default inference processes. Despite its ostensible triviality, I will explain this point. Suppose that we premise two propositions: S is M and M is P. We can then directly deduce that S is not non-M, that some M is S, that some non-S is non-M, and so on from S is M. We can directly deduce that M is non-P, that some P is M, that some non-M is non-P, and so on from M is P; and we can indirectly deduce that S is P, that S is not non-P, that some P is S, that some non-S is non-P, and so on from the two

premises. In this manner, we can deduce many conclusions from particular premises using deductive inferences. In cases of default inference, we can presume that other sentences are tacitly presupposed; if these were added explicitly, we could deduce many more conclusions by this method than by deductive inference.

Although we cannot decide to deduce *only one conclusion* from particular premises, we are, in fact, deducing one conclusion by inference. We can actually logically deduce only one conclusion from particular premises because there must be something other than premises that constrain deduction to *only one conclusion*. This observation underscores the relationship between question and answer. In which situations are we making inferences? When we want to answer a question. In order to reach an answer to a question, we make an inference. Let us return to the example described in chapter 1:

*What is S?*  
 S is (*not others, but*) M. (minor premise)  
 M is (*not others, but*) P. (major premise)  
 Therefore, S is (*not others, but*) P. (conclusion)

We can logically deduce many conclusions from these two premises. To answer the question, What is S?, we must conclude that S is P. What mechanism governs the selection of one meaning for an utterance? If a question occurs in the context of a conversation, the utterance might represent an answer to this question. To understand the given utterance, we must first find out the most appropriate question that the utterance answers. Then we arrive at a default inference that has the utterance as a conclusion. If so, meaning is determined via default inference. The most appropriate answer to the question will be selected from the many logically possible interpretations of its meaning. Even if no question requiring an answer makes an explicit appearance in this context, we are still understanding utterances. That is, we are selecting one interpretation of an utterance by using default inference and supposing a relevant relationship between question and answer. If not, we cannot reach only one conclusion by default inference. Therefore, we can claim the validity of Collingwood's thesis holding that every statement has its meaning only in the relationship to a question it answers.

## 6. The Truth-Conditional Theory and the Focus of Utterances

I will attempt to prove that, as a result of Collingwood's thesis, the truth-conditional theory is insufficient for the theory of meaning.

### (1) The Truth-Conditional Theory of Meaning

Two assertions drawn from a single sentence but with different focus positions have the same truth-value because they express the identical fact. For example, suppose that there is an apple on a table in front of me; I can make two assertions: "There is (*no other but*) *an apple* on a table" and "There is an apple (*not anywhere else but*) *on a table*" on the basis of my observations. Therefore we can also say that the two utterances with different focus positions would have the same truth-value. To show the truth-value of the utterance, we must express it in terms of a meta-language as follows:

- (a) "There is an apple on a table" is true if and only if there is an apple on a table.

However, if the difference in focus positions is significant for the meaning of an utterance, the following two formulations must be distinguished:

- (b) "There is (*no other but*) *an apple* on a table" is true if and only if there is an apple on a table.  
 (c) "There is an apple (*not anywhere else but*) *on a table*" is true if and only if there is an apple on a table.

It should be noted that (b) and (c) cannot express the difference in the meaning caused by the difference in focus positions. Indeed, utterances in the meta-language also have foci that can be expressed as follows.

- (b1) "There is (*no other but*) *an apple* on a table" is true if and only if there is (*no other but*) *an apple* on a table.  
 (b2) "There is (*no other but*) *an apple* on a table" is true if and only if there is an apple (*not anywhere else but*) *on a table*.  
 (c1) "There is an apple (*not anywhere else but*) *on a table*" is true if and only if there is (*no other but*) *an apple* on a table.  
 (c2) "There is an apple (*not anywhere else but*) *on a table*" is true if and only if there is an apple (*not anywhere else but*) *on a table*.

However, (b1), (b2), (c1), and (c2) express the same truth condition because we can say that there is an apple (*not anywhere else but*) *on a table* if and only if there is (*no other but*) *an apple* on a table. Therefore, the truth-conditional theory cannot distinguish the difference in meaning caused by different focus positions. This might be evident when the syntax of a meta-language is quite different from an object language.

## 7. A Proposal for a New Definition of *a Priori* and *a Posteriori*

An account of the distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* also follows from Collingwood's thesis. According to Kripke, the notion of *a prioricity* represents an *epistemological* concept, the notion of necessity represents a *metaphysical* concept, and the extensions of the two notions are not identical. He defines *a prioricity* as follows: "*a priori* truths are those which can be known independently of any experience."<sup>8</sup> If Collingwood's thesis is true, every statement is true only in relation to the question it answers. This leads us to define the notion of *a prioricity* as follows:

*a priori* statement = a statement that is justified as an answer to a question independently of any experience.

The distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* is epistemological and refers to how a statement is known. If a statement were always known as an answer to a question, the distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* would represent the distinction that characterizes the relationships between questions and answers. The notion of *a prioricity* should be understood as originally addressing the relationship between questions and answers. Furthermore, on the basis of this definition, we can claim that different utterances of a sentence become *a priori* in some cases and *a posteriori* in other cases.

Kripke made the distinction between definitions that fix a reference and definitions that give a synonym. As an example of the former, he provided the statement, "stick S is one meter long," a definition of a meter that fixes the reference. The statement is a definition and therefore known as *a priori*. However, this conclusion is contingent rather than necessary because in some possible worlds, the stick S might not be one meter long. Statements that define reference points are *a priori* and contingent. However, these statements are not always presented as definitions. For example, "Nixon was the President of the U.S. in 1970" is *a priori* only for people who learned this statement as the definition fixing the reference. For people who knew him before he became President, this statement is *a posteriori* and contingent. The difference appears in the relationship between question and answer, as follows:

Q1: Who is Nixon?

A1: Nixon was the President of the U.S. in 1970.

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<sup>8</sup> S. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Basil Blackwell, 1972, p. 34.

This answer is uttered as a definition fixing a reference. However, if the respondent had known Nixon before he became President, would this answer represent an *a posteriori* statement? Before the respondent was asked this question, the statement “Nixon was the President of the U.S. in 1970” would represent an *a posteriori* statement. But when he offers this statement as the answer to the question, he gives the definition fixing a reference. The questioner, therefore, understands the answer as an *a priori* statement.

Q2: What was Nixon doing in 1970?

A2: Nixon was the President of the U.S. in 1970.

If the respondent knows this answer as the definition of Nixon, this answer is *a priori* for him. But if the respondent knows this answer as an historical fact, then this answer is *a posteriori*. The questioner must know Nixon by a different definition; therefore, he understands this answer as an *a posteriori* and contingent statement.

The context of the relationship between question and answer determines whether a statement is uttered as a definition fixing a reference. Different contexts for relationships between questions and answers render different utterances of the same sentence *a priori* in some cases and *a posteriori* in other cases.

## **8. Conclusion**

We can prove Collingwood's thesis mainly by attending to the concept of focus. This thesis will have many significant implications for theories of meaning and knowledge, and I have briefly discussed two of these. On the basis of this thesis, Collingwood claimed: “No two propositions, I saw, can contradict one another unless they are answers to the same question”<sup>9</sup> and suggested the “logic of question and answer.” Thus, this thesis holds significance for the domain of logic. As mentioned above, Collingwood's thesis is concerned not only with assertive utterances but also with *directive*, *commissive*, and other types of illocutionary act. Therefore, this thesis is also significant for practical philosophy. I hope this article represents a beginning in the research of such themes.

Keywords: Collingwood, Focus, Question, Truth-conditional theory, *a priori*, Default

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<sup>9</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *ibid.*, p. 33.