Summary
Quine criticised the semantic notion of analyticity that is often attributed to Frege and Kant for presupposing an essentialist theory of meaning. In what follows I trace back the notion from Quine via Carnap to Frege and Kant, and eventually examine Kant’s distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements in more detail. It turns out that the so called Frege-Kant-notion of analyticity can not be attributed to Kant. In contrast, Kant had a distinctly pragmatic notion of analytic judgements. According to him analytic propositions elucidate certain presuppositions of our conceptual scheme, thereby serving the anti-metaphysical project of transcendental philosophy.

1. Quine’s background assumptions
According to Quine there are two dogmas of empiricism: first that a clear distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions can be made, second that all statements can be reduced to empirical ones. The second dogma is dependent on the first, since the confirmation conditions for a statement are part of the statement’s analytic implications, if verificationism should be true (Fodor/Lepore 1992, 37). Therefore, if the a/s-distinction fails, reductionist empiricism has to be abandoned as well.

While reductionism was a prominent and provocative thesis of neo-empiricism, the a/s-distinction seems to have been a rather traditional assumption that for some time was not put into doubt. An early article by Morton White (White 1952)¹, however, shows that there was some discussion of the concept of analyticity even before Quine’s Two Dogmas

¹. The paper is a revised version of one read 1949.
was published in 1951. Quine’s main arguments, as explicated also by White, were officially directed against the notion of analytic statement (the first dogma of empiricism), but were meant to destroy meanings as merely postulated entities. The argument goes as follows: Analytic statements are statements that are derived from logical truths (identity statements) by substitution of synonyms. Thus, the identity statement “All bachelors are bachelors” becomes the analytic statement “All bachelors are unmarried men” by substituting the term “bachelor” with the complex synonymous term “unmarried men”. The origin of analyticity thus is synonymy, synonymous terms being explained as “having the same meaning”. In this sense the notion of analyticity is grounded in the notion of meaning.

It seems, however, that the notion of analyticity was meant to be used the other way round, i.e. as an explication of the concept of meaning. Thus Carnap, at whom Quine’s attack was directed, explains in his preface to the first edition of Meaning and Necessity that the main target of his book is a semantic analysis of meaning, and that “the method here proposed takes an expression, not as naming [a concrete or abstract entity], but as possessing an intension and an extension” (Carnap 1956, ii). Intension is then defined in terms of L-truth, while L-truth must be given by the semantic rules of the system in question. The formal definition of L-truth makes use of the notion of possible worlds or state-descriptions, postulating that the L-true or analytic sentences of S are those true in all state-descriptions of S. But state-descriptions, in turn, presuppose semantic rules, which are of two kinds: the first kind, explicitly formulated by Carnap, states relations between certain constants and their designation. Thus, for a very restricted object language S there is a rule that says: “‘Hx’—‘x is human’”, where the hyphen is to be read as “means the same as” (ibid., 4). In Meaning and Necessity the second kind of semantic rules, which Carnap later calls “meaning postulates”, is merely given as an aside, when Carnap says: “The English words here used are supposed to be understood in such a way that ‘human being’ and ‘rational animal’ mean the same.” (ibid.) Analyticity is thus in fact based on a prior notion of meaning, and Carnap’s attempt to explicate meanings in terms of abstract entities (with help of state descriptions and possible worlds) failed. Since meanings are not defined through or reduced to other concepts, they are simply presupposed.

As Quine later said in his reply to Alston it was not so much the hypostasis of meanings itself that was the target of his critique, but the