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Intuitionism, Realism, Relativism and
Rhubarb*Crispin Wright*

1 THE ORDINARY VIEW OF DISPUTES OF INCLINATION

Imagine that Tim Williamson thinks that stewed rhubarb is delicious and that I beg to differ, finding its dry acidity highly disagreeable. There is, on the face of it, no reason to deny that this is a genuine disagreement—each holding to a view that the other rejects. But it is a disagreement about which, at least at first pass, the Latin proverb—*de gustibus non est disputandum*—seems apt. It is, we feel—or is likely to be—a disagreement which there is no point in trying to settle, because it concerns no real matter of fact but is merely an expression of different, permissibly idiosyncratic tastes. Nobody's wrong. Tim and I should just agree to disagree.

Call such a disagreement a *dispute of inclination*. The view of such disputes just gestured at—I'll call it the *Ordinary View*—combines three elements:

1. that they involve genuinely incompatible attitudes (*Contradiction*);
2. that nobody need be mistaken or otherwise at fault (*Faultlessness*); and
3. that the antagonists may, perfectly rationally, stick to their respective views even after the disagreement comes to light and impresses as intractable (*Sustainability*).

Assuming that there are indeed disputes as so characterized, it is of course an important and controversial issue how far they extend—whether, for example, certain differences of opinion about ethics, or aesthetics, or justification, or even theoretical science, come within range. But my question here is more basic: it is whether the three noted elements can be combined coherently—whether there *are* any disputes of inclination, as characterized by the Ordinary View, at all.

The question is given urgency by the fact that the four most salient alternatives to the Ordinary View all seem rebarbative or misconceived. There is, first, the *rampant realist* proposal—an analogue of the epistemic conception of vagueness. Rampant realism holds that there have to be facts of the matter which either

Tim or I are missing. Rhubarb just has to be either delicious or not, so one of us has to be mistaken, even if there is no way of knowing who. Such a view is vulnerable to a charge of semantical and metaphysical superstition. It also arguably precludes Sustainability—the possibility of persisting in the dispute with rational integrity—since neither Tim nor I have the slightest reason to think that our own tastes reflect the putative real facts about deliciousness, rampant-realistically conceived.

Realism need not be rampant. A more moderate realism might try to domesticate the relevant facts by attempting to construe them as, in one way or another, *response dependent*—proposing, for instance, that what is delicious is what (a majority of) well-qualified judges find to be so. But this seems a misdirection too: for one thing, I don't think we really believe in 'well-qualifiedness' in *basic* matters of taste—that's the point of the Latin proverb. For another, the proposal promises no better than its rampant counterpart in accommodating Faultlessness and Sustainability.

Recoiling from these views, one may be tempted by the thought that perhaps no genuine dispute is involved after all. Perhaps the impression to the contrary is somehow an artefact of language. One—*expressivist*—version of that idea has it that we are misled by the indicative surface of the dispute: maybe Tim's avowal that rhubarb is delicious serves merely to give expression to the pleasure he takes in the stuff and is thus something with no properly negatable content; maybe my avowal to the contrary serves merely to give expression to my corresponding distaste for it. Such a proposal will face all the familiar difficulties in the philosophy of language—difficulties for example in accounting for routine conditional, disjunctive, tensed and attitudinal constructions embedding such apparent indicative contents—which are faced by strict expressivist proposals in general, and to which many believe they have no satisfactory response.

An alternative strategy for denying that there is any genuine disagreement is to take the indicative appearances at face value, but hold that the contents in question are not really in conflict—for instance, that they are elliptical and that when the ellipsis is unpacked, the impression of incompatibility vanishes. It may be suggested, for instance, that Tim's view is properly characterized as being that rhubarb is delicious *by his standards*, and that I am saying that rhubarb is not delicious *by mine*. So we are talking past each other and may both well be right.

This suggestion is open to the charge that it distorts the meaning of what we intend to say when we give voice to judgements of taste. There is, for example, a challenge involved in the question: 'If, as you say, rhubarb is delicious, how come nobody but you here likes it?', which goes missing if the proper construal of it mentions an explicit standard-relativity in the antecedent. So it looks as though a larger package will be called for, involving not just hidden constituents but an error-theory concerning our ordinary understanding of the relevant kinds of claim. A related consideration points out that, on our ordinary understanding, the explicitly standard-relativized kind of formulation represents a fall-back claim

if the original, unqualified claim gets into difficulty—a puzzling phenomenon if they coincide in content.

There are other forms of semantic contextualism, of course, besides those which postulate ellipsis or hidden constituents. But the awkwardnesses just noted will remain on any such view. If Tim's and my differing tastes are sufficient, one way or another, to ensure that we express different concepts of the delicious in our respective assessments of rhubarb, and hence that there is no obstacle to our both being right, then why will we each be inclined to withdraw if suitably many others don't concur? Why doesn't the contextualist explanation of why my judgement is not in conflict with Tim's survive as a means to explain why I can be right *no matter how idiosyncratic my view*? And why fall back on an explicitly standard-relativized claim if the content of my original claim was already implicitly relativized?

Each of the four views canvassed—that there is a real but undetectable fact of the matter about whether rhubarb is delicious, that there is a real but response-dependent fact of the matter, that there is no real matter in dispute because no truth-evaluable content is involved, and that there is no real dispute because the contents involved are elliptical, or otherwise contextually distinct—each of these four views not merely involves compromise of one or more of the three components of the Ordinary View but seems open to additional objection. If we want to avoid metaphysical hypostasis, snobbery in matters of taste, unplayable philosophy of language, or misrepresentation of linguistic practice, then we should want the Ordinary View. So it comes as an unpleasant surprise that it seems, under quite modest pressure, to collapse.

2 THE SIMPLE DEDUCTION

The collapsing argument is what in earlier work I dubbed the Simple Deduction.¹ It is disarmingly straightforward. The idea that there is genuine disagreement involved in the dispute goes with the idea that there is a genuinely indicative content, capable of featuring in attitudes and standing in relations of incompatibility to other such contents. Any such genuine content can also be *supposed*. So: suppose that rhubarb is delicious. Then I'm mistaken. But the Ordinary View has it that no one is mistaken (Faultlessness). So rhubarb isn't delicious. But then Tim is mistaken. So someone has to be mistaken after all. Contradiction precludes Faultlessness.

More explicitly, see table 2.1. The occurrence of genuine disagreement seems to demand, by elementary and uncontroversial logical moves, the existence of mistakes.² Further, once that's recognized, it becomes impossible to see how Tim

¹ Wright (2001, 2002).

² Note in particular that there is no appeal to the Law of Excluded Middle.

Table 2.1. •

1	(1) A accepts P	_____	Assumption
2	(2) B accepts Not-P	_____	Assumption
3	(3) A's and B's disagreement involves no mistake	_____	Assumption
4	(4) P	_____	Assumption
2, 4	(5) B is making a mistake	_____	2, 4
2, 3	(6) Not-P	_____	4, 5, 3 <i>Reductio</i>
1, 2, 3	(7) A is making a mistake	_____	1, 6
• Q1 1,2	(8) Not-[3]	_____	3, 3, 7 <i>Reductio</i>

and I can persist in our disagreement with rational integrity. Apparently one of us has to be mistaken. But if one of us is mistaken, how can we tell who? Isn't it just a conceit to think it has to be the other? So Sustainability is compromised too. Thus the three components in the Ordinary View fall apart.

Faced with this difficulty, the natural temptation for a proponent of the Ordinary View is to try to refine the second component—to qualify Faultlessness. Maybe it's too much to demand that there need be no mistake involved in the dispute. Maybe the most that can be asked is that there be no *epistemically blame-worthy* mistake. Perhaps Faultlessness should be replaced by something like the idea that neither Tim nor I need have done anything which would have opened our opinions to proper suspicion when considered in isolation, by someone with no view on the matter in hand but otherwise as knowledgeable as you like. Or something like that.

But this suggestion doesn't really help. For one thing, part of the attraction of Faultlessness is that, while we want to acknowledge that there may be no settling a dispute of inclination, we precisely don't want that acknowledgement to commit us to the idea of potentially unknowable facts of the matter—that's why the rampant realist proposal strikes us as so bizarre. The rhetoric of 'no fact of the matter' expresses the natural, folk-philosophical view: such disputes are potentially irresolvable, we think, not because the facts in question can transcend our impressions but because the impressions themselves are in some way basic and constitutive; so when they conflict, there need be no further court of appeal. If that thought can be reconciled with the idea of truth at all, then truth—at least in matters of taste—had better be per se knowable. But then the Simple Deduction is easily emended to argue not just that Tim's and my disagreement must involve a mistake but that it must involve a cognitive shortcoming in the stronger sense proposed, since one of us fails to know something that can be known.³

And indeed, even if the Ordinary View can somehow avoid commitment to evidential constraint, the situation is still not stable. For the conclusion of the

³ For elaboration, see the 'EC-Deduction' at p. 60 of Wright (2001).

Simple Deduction, that there is a mistake—false belief—involved in any such dispute, still stands unchallenged, even if no cognitive blame need attach to either disputant. And now, since for all I can tell it may as well be me who has a false belief as Tim, and since Tim is in an analogous position, it still seems impossible to understand how it can be rationally acceptable for us to agree to differ and persist in our respective views. The threat to Sustainability is already posed by the concession that Faultlessness *in the weak sense* is precluded by Contradiction.

So far I've not said anything about relativism. It may be thought that the Ordinary View—the suggestion of the possibility of genuine but fault-free disagreements in which the protagonists are fully rationally entitled to persist in their conflicting opinions—is tantamount to relativism—specifically, to the idea that truth in the region of discourse in which the dispute is articulated should be viewed as relative to the differences in standard, or context, or whatever, which generate the disagreement in the first place. But this is not correct. Relativism, I want to suggest, is best viewed as a *theoretical attempt* to underwrite and reconcile the elements in the Ordinary View. It is a response to the problem, rather than merely a label for the amalgam of ideas which gives rise to it. Whether it is an adequate, or theoretically attractive, response remains to be seen.

3 AN INTUITIONISTIC RESPONSE

First I want to table a different response. The Simple Deduction—exploiting, be it noted, only the most elementary logic and placing no reliance on any distinctively classical moves—elicits a contradiction from the three assumptions, that Williamson believes that rhubarb is delicious, that Wright believes that rhubarb is not delicious, and that nobody is mistaken. The conclusion seems to be forced, accordingly, that somebody has to be mistaken in any genuine such dispute. But it's not forced. There is a distinctively classical move involved in the interpretation of the *reductio* as indicative that mistake always has to be involved. Specifically, take the third assumption as that:

It is not the case that Williamson is mistaken and it is not the case the Wright is mistaken.

Then to interpret the *reductio* as showing that someone must have made a mistake is to take it that the negation of that conjunction licenses us in concluding:

Either Williamson is mistaken or Wright is mistaken.

That's to make an inferential transition of the form:

Not (Not A & Not B)

A V B

—a pattern whose classical validation demands elimination of double negations, and which is not in general intuitionistically valid.

Very well. But so what? How might sticking at the intuitionistically valid conclusion—the negated conjunction—put us in a position to accommodate the components in the Ordinary View, and to reconcile them with each other? And even if resisting the transition to the disjunction would help, how might intuitionistic restrictions sufficient to block the relevant de Morgan Law be motivated in the type of context at hand?

Let’s consider the second question first. The key issue, as always, concerns the status of the principle of Bivalence for statements of the relevant kind. For since:

Not (Not A & Not B)

is, by uncontroversial steps, equivalent to:

Not Not (A V B),⁴

the move at which it is being suggested we may balk is tantamount to double negation elimination for disjunctions. If this class of cases of double negation elimination is accepted, Excluded Middle will hold quite generally, since its own double negation may likewise be established by wholly uncontroversial steps. Thus assuming—as we may in this dialectical context⁵—that Excluded Middle rests upon Bivalence, the defensibility of the transition from the thesis that Tim and I cannot both be right to the uncomfortable claim that *someone in particular*—either Tim or me—is mistaken about rhubarb rests on the defensibility of Bivalence for claims like: ‘rhubarb is delicious’.

In intuitionistic mathematics, the challenge to Bivalence is best seen as flowing from a combination of two claims: first an insistence on a form of evidential constraint—that truth in mathematics may not defensively be supposed to outrun decidability in principle by a certain loosely characterized class of constructively acceptable methods; second that, for any theory at least as rich as number theory, we possess no guarantee that any given statement is indeed decidable by such methods. Simply put: if Bivalence holds for Goldbach’s conjecture—if either the conjecture or its negation is true—then, by evidential constraint, one or the other will be verifiable by intuitionistically acceptable methods. So since we do not, in our present state of information, know that either can be so verified, we do not, in our present state of information, have any right to claim that

⁴ Assume *Not (Not A & Not B)* and *Not (A V B)*. Use the latter, *vel-intro* and *Reductio* to derive each of *Not A* and *Not B*. Conjoin them to derive a contradiction with *Not (Not A & Not B)*, and discharge *Not (A V B)* by a further *Reductio*.

Assume *Not Not (A V B)* and *Not A & Not B*. Assume *A V B* and reason by *vel-elim* and *Reductio* to *Not [Not A & Not B]*. A further step of *Reductio* yields *Not [A V B]* on *Not A & Not B* as assumption. One more step of *Reductio* then gives *Not [Not A & Not B]* on *Not Not (A V B)* as assumption.

⁵ To explain: the present dialectical context is one in which we are assuming that disjunction is distributive—that the truth of a disjunction requires the truth of at least one of its disjuncts in particular. Otherwise, the conclusion that either Tim is mistaken about rhubarb or I am carries no implication of the actual existence of a mistake. But where disjunction is distributive, the validity of Excluded Middle rests on Bivalence.

Bivalence holds for Goldbach's conjecture, nor therefore throughout number-theoretic statements as a class.

The intuitionistic reservation about Bivalence is thus one of agnosticism. But it is not an agnosticism based on the spectre of third possibilities—additional truth-values, or truth-value gaps. Rather it is based on our inability to guarantee the possibility of knowledge, along with the thesis—held for independent reasons—that the truth requires that possibility for the type of statement for which the validity of Bivalence is under review.

Either of these claims may of course be contested for a given class of statements. But both may seem attractive for each of two non-mathematical kinds of example, for which, accordingly, the validity of Bivalence may consequently come into question. One comprises those vague statements typified by predications of adjectives like 'red' and 'bald'. The other is precisely our present focus: judgements of taste and other matters of inclination. In both these cases we are antipathetic to the idea that truth has no implication of ascertainability; but in both cases we are likewise uneasy with the suggestion that claims have to be decidable, one way or the other. In the terminology I have used in earlier work, borderline cases of vague predications, and predications of concepts of taste, are, no less than mathematical statements like Goldbach's conjecture, liable to present *quandaries*: examples where we may be uncertain not merely what it may be correct to think but even whether there is any metaphysical space for knowledge, or all-things-considered *best* opinion, properly so-termed. These two pressures—evidential constraint and the potentiality for quandary—squeeze out an unqualified acceptance of Bivalence over the two classes of statements in question; but they put no pressure on a continued adherence to the law of non-contradiction. So we should not, in reasoning among these statements, rely on a logic which forces us to be insensitive to the distinction between them which, it appears, had better be made.

This comparison—between statements like Goldbach's conjecture, borderline predications of vague concepts and judgements of taste—has been misunderstood by at least one commentator⁶ so further clarification may help. Undeniably, there is the following difference. While no one knows whether knowledge either of Goldbach's conjecture or its negation is metaphysically possible and—it is tempting to add—no one is really entitled to an opinion (contrast: a hunch) about the matter, borderline cases of vague predicates may quite defensively give rise to weak, qualified opinions. And matters of taste, for their part, may give rise to strong ones. So what is the intended analogy between the three kinds of statements? What similarity is the notion of quandary meant to mark? The answer is: a similarity which is manifested by each of the three kinds of statement *as a class*. Sure, any particular statement of each of the three kinds in question is such that we cannot rule out the possibility of a competent determinate—positive or

⁶ Kölbel (Unpublished).

negative—view of it (though with statements about borderline cases of vague concepts we can, admittedly, rule out the possibility of a competent but *strong* view). But nor, in each of the three kinds of case, do we have any grounds for thinking that knowledge, or in all things considered best opinion, has to be possible *for every example*. In particular, while I may indeed have many opinions on matters of taste, and consider them competent, or even superior, I have to acknowledge that I know nothing which ensures that a determinate knowledgeable or best opinion is possible about every matter of taste or inclination generally. That would be a guarantee that all disputes of inclination have a winner. We have no such guarantee.

There, then—in the combination of quandary and evidential constraint—is one kind of motivation for broadly intuitionistic reservations about classical logic in general, and about the (in my formulation above, implicit) final step in the Simple Deduction. If accepted, it allows us to stop short of letting the Simple Deduction conclude that someone has to be mistaken in any dispute of inclination—indeed in any dispute about a genuinely indicative content.

Maybe the foregoing train of thought is of most interest in a context in which the primary question is whether the intuitionists' ideas about the logic appropriate to mathematics can be generalized to other regions of discourse. Anything properly viewed as an extension of their ideas will have to involve *some* kind of play with evidential constraint, since that is the role, in the mathematical case, of their very *constructivism*. However we should not overlook another, simpler, and perhaps yet more compelling line of reservation about Bivalence in the cases that concern us, which puts evidential constraint to one side. Reflect that the opinion that Bivalence holds, of necessity, throughout vague discourse is a commitment to holding that each vague predicate is associated with a property of absolutely sharply bounded extension as its semantic value. But for a very wide class of such expressions—including especially predicates of Lockean secondary qualities—we have no clear idea what kinds of properties these may be. Nor, in general, do we have any clear idea how the required semantic associations might have been established. A commitment to Bivalence holding of necessity in all such cases is a commitment to postulating a kind of arcane natural history of semantic relationships for which we have absolutely no evidence. And it's just the same with predications of taste. There is just the same semantic mystery, just the same puzzlement, in a wide class of cases, about the nature of the properties that would be fit to discharge the demanded role. What *is* deliciousness if it is to be possible for normally competent speakers, like Tim and me, to go so completely astray about it in a perfectly ordinary case? The idea that there is a mandate for unrestricted Bivalence is, one way or another, a commitment to philosophical obligations—perhaps rampant realist, perhaps response-dependence realist—which we simply do not know how to meet. Surely the mere idea that Tim and I hold contradictory opinions about rhubarb ought to impose no such obligations. The *reductio* carried out in the Simple Deduction properly

takes us no further than to the conclusion that our opinions cannot both be true. It is classical logic that is responsible for muddying the distinction between that and the idea that one in particular of us is missing the real fact.

4 CAN THE INTUITIONISTIC RESPONSE RESCUE FAULTLESSNESS AND SUSTAINABILITY?

As remarked, however, it is one question whether there is a well-motivated intuitionistic distinction to draw, in the service of stabilizing the Ordinary View, between the claim that Tim and I cannot both be right about rhubarb and the claim that one of us in particular must be wrong. Even if so, it is a further question whether we thereby secure the means to say something effective in stabilizing the Ordinary View of disputes of inclination. The challenge was to harmonize the three ingredients—Contradiction, Faultlessness and Sustainability. And the point hasn't gone away that if it is insisted that a dispute can be regarded as fault-free only if it's open to us to suppose that each antagonist has a correct view, then a mere acceptance that the dispute is genuine—so involves contradictory opinions—precludes regarding it as fault-free. Punkt.

The question, of course, is what, in regarding such a dispute as potentially fault-free, we really intend to maintain. Well, each will have to examine their own preconceptions. But my own impression is that the principal point is to contrast the case with situations where, should attempts at resolution fail, the mere existence of a contrary opinion, no worse supported than one's own, is sufficient to put one at fault in persisting in one's view. That will be a characteristic of the rhubarb dispute once the Simple Deduction is allowed to establish the disjunctive conclusion: either Tim is mistaken or I am. As soon as it is accepted that one of us has to be mistaken, the fact that neither of us is able to make his opinion prevail ought to encourage the worry that the mistaken party could as well be him as his antagonist. And once one recognizes that, then it should seem at best pig-headed not to withdraw from one's initial opinion. If this is right, then the really important thing about the idea of fault-free disagreement in such cases is actually its implication of Sustainability—its implication of the idea that the opinions in a dispute of inclination may justifiably be persisted in, even when it is clear that it is a stalemate.

This comes close to but is not quite the same thing as suggesting that the essence of the Ordinary View can be captured just by the first and third components—Contradiction and Sustainability. But that conclusion is not right. There are readily conceivable cases where Contradiction and Sustainability are satisfied but where there is—or may be, depending on one's view—no proper comparison with disputes of inclination. Consider for instance two rival scientific theories which match in their empirical, explanatory and other virtues, which are unsurpassed by any other extant theory, and for which we've yet to

devise a crucial experiment. It is debatable whether it should be regarded as irrational for a supporter of either theory to persist in holding to it even after he becomes aware of the credentials of the other. After all, there is, by hypothesis, no sufficient reason to adopt the opposing view—there is, by hypothesis, parity of virtue. And merely to abandon either theory without putting anything in its place would mean restoring all the disadvantages, whatever they may be, of having no theory of the subject matter in question at all. In such a case, then, regarding the dispute as genuine and factual is quite consistent with Sustainability. If so, then even if the intuitionistic response can indeed save Sustainability—I will address that in a minute—the scientific example shows us is that we need something extra, *something* to play the role of Faultlessness, if we are to explain the difference between the two kinds of case. And we are still no wiser about what that extra might be, consistently with the Simple Deduction, nor about whether the intuitionistic setting can provide it.

The difference between the two kinds of case—rhubarb and the scientific theoretical disagreement—consists in the way in which Sustainability is supported. In the scientific example, there *is* reason to accept (at least if one is scientific realist) the disjunctive claim: one theory or the other—and perhaps both—will be false to the facts. One in particular—perhaps both—of the rival theorists will be proposing a misrepresentation of Nature. And the point is then that, notwithstanding that consideration, there are nevertheless overriding *pragmatic* reasons, grounded in the desirability of having a theory in the first place, for each to persist in their respective views—so that we have Sustainability anyway. In the rhubarb dispute, by contrast, there is—according to intuitionistic proposal—no impartial reason to suppose that one disputant in particular—Tim or me—is making a mistake; and it is *because there is no reason so to suppose* that we have Sustainability.

So the suggestion at which we arrive is this: disputes of inclination may indeed be stably characterized by ascribing to them versions of all three features proposed by the Ordinary View: they are genuine disputes in which conflicting opinions are held; they may be fault-free; and they may be rationally sustained even after it becomes clear that they are stand-offs. The refinements we need to add are, first, that in disputes of inclination Sustainability is properly seen as grounded in Faultlessness; in disputes of fact, by contrast, Sustainability, where it occurs, is grounded otherwise—in the scientific theoretical example, for instance, it is grounded pragmatically. Second, Faultlessness needs to be interpreted not as something flatly inconsistent with genuine conflict—with Contradiction—but rather as something that resides in the unavailability of any impartial reason to make (the relevant analogue of) the disjunctive claim: to insist that there is fault somewhere. What counts against rationally sustaining a dispute, once debate is exhausted without producing a winner, is the thought, roughly, that someone is mistaken here and, for all that has emerged, ‘it could as well be me’. Once it is granted that someone has to be mistaken, that thought locates a concern that rationally ought to occur to each of the antagonists. The concern may still not

mandate withdrawal if, as in the scientific theory case, there are overriding reasons that license retaining a view. But—the crucial point—it does not get off the ground without independent⁷ reason for the disjunctive claim. It is by refusing the disjunctive claim that the intuitionistic proposal rescues Sustainability, and grounds it on Faultlessness, with the latter now understood precisely as located in the shortfall between the negated conjunction—which, it is conceded on all hands, the Simple Deduction establishes—and the stronger disjunctive claim which is what it takes to implicate error on one side or the other.

This proposed way of developing the Ordinary View and staving off the threat posed by the Simple Deduction seems to me to be stable this far. The question is whether there is any serious additional cause for dissatisfaction with it.

5 A PROBLEM FOR THE INTUITIONISTIC RESCUE

The intuitionistic rescue reconciles Contradiction with Faultlessness by insisting that it is insufficient for a dispute to involve Fault merely that it be a genuine dispute—genuinely involving contrary or contradictory opinions. Conflict of opinion—it is contended—suffices for the presence of mistake only when Bivalence is guaranteed to hold for the discourse of the dispute; and that, it is argued, is something for which there is—in the cases which concern us—no guarantee.

Someone who is sympathetic to intuitionistic ideas is not likely to find this a particularly controversial application of them. And indeed I would suggest that this also makes for an argument in the opposite direction. Absent a better kind of proposal, the need to make sense of the Ordinary View, and the apparent impossibility of doing so in a classical framework, provides a powerful argument for sympathy with intuitionistic distinctions and for further work on them.

There is, however, a problem with the approach which, if we are convinced that coherent provision must be made for the Ordinary View, threatens to force us to look further afield. Simply stated, it is this: that since the Ordinary View is inconsistent with rampant realism, no justice can have been done to it by an account that is consistent with the possibility that rampant realism is correct. But the intuitionistic proposal merely leaves us in a position of agnosticism about that. The response to the Simple Deduction was to argue that there is no justification for the relevant transition of the form:

Not (Not A & Not B)

A V B

Even granting the proposed interpretation of Faultlessness, that is merely to say that there is no extant justification for regarding either Tim or me as having a

⁷ Independent, that is, of one's view of the matter in hand.

mistaken opinion. But to say that *there's no justification* for regarding the dispute as involving a mistake is not to say that *it's not the case* that the dispute involves a mistake. Yet surely, the objection says, Faultlessness should involve the latter. Yet the latter—the negation of the disjunction—does entail, even intuitionistically, the negations of both disjuncts. And those, conjoined, are then inconsistent with the intermediate conclusion—the negated conjunction—which, everyone agrees, the Simple Deduction does establish (and indeed inconsistent in their own right).

So, a critic may contend, the intuitionistic rescue has not really saved Faultlessness in any intuitively sufficient sense. The most that has been saved is justification for our reluctance to *attribute* fault in relevant cases, consistently with acknowledging the Simple Deduction. This leaves it epistemically open that there is indeed a determinate fact of the matter in the rhubarb dispute, and indeed in such disputes in general, and hence that there is indeed a determinate fault on one side or the other. And that is exactly what we—most of us—are reluctant to believe. It is good if the intuitionistic proposal can save us from being forced to think it true just by elementary logic. But we would like to be in a position to think it *false*.

A supporter of the intuitionistic rescue may rejoin that it is no serious shortcoming in the proposal that it leaves us at most unsympathetically agnostic towards the rampant realist view of the dispute. After all, that, as it may seem, just is the extent of the justified position. The rampant realist view calls for the association of the predicate 'delicious', understood as by both Tim and me, with a property that determinately applies or fails to apply to stewed rhubarb. We may not believe there is, as a matter of metaphysics, any suitable such property, much less that our linguistic practices somehow enthrone such a property as the *Bedeutung* of 'delicious'. But come on: we do not *know* that these things are not so—not if knowing requires being in a position to prove it. The honest objection to rampant realism is not that we know that its presuppositions are not met but that there is not the slightest reason to regard it as true. If the preconceptions that underwrite the Ordinary View slur that distinction, they are not to be respected to the letter. We should stick to what we can justify.

This reply, though, only partially addresses the objection. Maybe we do not, strictly, know that rampant realism is false. But at the level of analysis displayed by the Simple Deduction, even with intuitionistic distinctions superimposed, the point remains that no space is left for a coherent belief that neither Tim nor I is mistaken in the original dispute. In particular, no way whatever has been offered of recovering a content for the idea that there is no 'fact of the matter' to be mistaken about. Even if we don't know that the rampant realist's insistence that there is indeed a fact of the matter is itself mistaken, it may yet be felt as a very serious limitation of the intuitionistic treatment if it does not, so far, allow us so much as to attach content to the idea of that mistake. The worst mistake of which we have been empowered to make sense is an epistemic mistake: one of lack of

warrant—the unwarranted insistence that the world and the relevant concepts are bound to conspire to render true one of the disputed opinions or the other. But nothing has been said to explain how, or in what respect, rampant realism might be incorrect, rather than merely unjustified.

The intuitionistic rescue provides theoretically respectable houseroom for our reluctance to be press-ganged into realism by the Simple Deduction. But it does not offer—and it seems has no resources to offer—any account of what it would be for (rampant) realism to be, not merely not imposed, but false: a misrepresentation in its own right. Surely, it may be felt, a satisfactory account of disputes of inclination should explain how it is possible that this might be so, even if we are forced to grant that, in the end, we are not in position to show, once and for all, that it is so.

6 THE INTUITIONISTIC RESCUE RESCUED?

The objection may seem convincing. But in fact it runs together two distinct complaints and arguably derives some of its force from the conflation.

One complaint is that the intuitionistic rescue treats the transition from the conjunction:

It is not the case that neither Williamson nor Wright is mistaken
to the disjunctive conclusion:

Williamson is mistaken or Wright is mistaken

merely as a *non-sequitur*, whereas someone who takes the Ordinary View will want to reserve space for the belief—even if conceded not to be a strictly *knowledgeable* belief—that the disjunctive conclusion is *incorrect*: that nobody need be mistaken. Since there is no provision within an intuitionistic framework for a coherent denial of the disjunction, it appears that the intuitionistic rescue cannot do justice to the Ordinary View. However a second, distinct complaint is that the intuitionistic rescue cannot so much as provide for a coherent belief that *rampant realism* is false—even if it were granted that such disbelief would involve a degree of presumption. Since the Ordinary View is indeed inconsistent with rampant realism, the two complaints converge on the thought that the intuitionistic rescue cannot do justice to the Ordinary View. Nevertheless the complaints are not the same—for the straightforward reason that denial of the disjunction is not required by the denial of rampant realism.

What are their relations? Well, rampant realism is—presumably—committed to the disjunction; conversely, an acceptance that the disjunction follows just from the premiss that Tim and I have contradictory views is, arguably, a commitment to rampant realism. But that is not to say that only a framework that provides for a coherent denial of the disjunction can provide for a coherent disbelief in the metaphysical and semantic postulations of rampant realism. That

would be true only if disbelief in rampant realism were a commitment to denying the disjunction. But that cannot be correct: after all, both Tim and I accept the disjunction, presumably (since each thinks the other is mistaken)—but at most one of us is a rampant realist about matters of basic taste in desserts!

It is not—the point is—an acceptance of the disjunction *qua propositional content* that commits to rampant realism; it is an acceptance that its truth is ensured simply by the fact of Tim's and my respective views being contradictories. In fact, anyone with a determinate—positive or negative—view on whether stewed rhubarb is delicious should accept the disjunction; no *philosophical* commitment is entrained. A philosophical commitment is entered into only when one regards the disjunction as imposed by the nature of the subject matter and the kind of content carried by claims of the kind in dispute. One may therefore reject a rampant realist—indeed, any form of realist—view about those matters without commitment to any particular attitude to the disjunction.

The second of the two complaints is accordingly misconceived. A supporter of the intuitionistic rescue is quite at liberty to *deny* rampant realism. It is not true that he can go no further than agnosticism about the point. He thereby denies that the truth of the disjunction is guaranteed in the way rampant realism supposes. The dialectical situation is, in fact, exactly analogous to that in the philosophy of mathematics, where the intuitionist may quite coherently—if he wishes—deny the Platonist metaphysics of a crystalline world of determinate mathematical structures, potentially conferring truth and falsity upon our mathematical statements in ways transcending all possibility of proof. That denial commits him to denying that Excluded Middle holds of necessity for reasons connected with that metaphysics. But it does not commit him to denying Excluded Middle itself, still less any instance of it. Rather, in the absence of justification for the principle of any other kind, he merely regards it as unacceptable.

The first complaint still stands, though: the thought that the intuitionistic rescue leaves no space for a coherent belief that neither Tim nor I is mistaken in the original dispute. The closest the intuitionistic rescue gets to this is in establishing a position from which it can be allowed that the presence of error is dictated neither by elementary logic and the contradictoriness of the attitudes involved nor—I have just argued—by the semantics and metaphysics of discourse of taste. So we save *a* negative modal claim: there doesn't have to be error for *those* reasons at least. But we don't, it seems, give sense to the idea that there doesn't have to be error *tout court*, nor therefore provide any possibility for someone coherently to believe that there *isn't* any error in the case in point. But wasn't that suggestion just the force of the Latin proverb? Recall that we initially glossed the Ordinary View with the words, 'Nobody's wrong. Tim and I should just agree to disagree.'

It is easy, of course, to dismiss the idea that there *is* any such coherent belief, stronger than any of the beliefs that the intuitionistic rescue can accommodate and still remaining to be made sense of. After all, Tim and I do disagree. So Tim

must think, presumably, that my view is mistaken. And I must think that his is mistaken. So someone who thinks that nobody actually is mistaken is committed to disagreeing with us *both*—and so to regarding *everybody* as mistaken: Tim, me, and indeed themselves! If there is a way further forward, it must consist in finding the means to deny that Tim and I must, in fact, each regard the other's view as mistaken—this despite the fact that our views are genuinely contradictory. So in a certain sense, their contradictoriness notwithstanding, we have to agree that our views are not in conflict—that we do *not* disagree.

This extra step is inaccessible on the intuitionistic treatment, and it is unquestionably of interest to consider what kind of position could possibly accommodate an insistence on it while avoiding aporia. One may well think that, for all we have so far seen, the intuitionistic treatment delivers enough to rank as a satisfactory explication of the Ordinary View. But if there is a stable account which manages the extra step—which can somehow allow that while Tim and I have genuinely contradictory attitudes, neither of us need regard the other as mistaken—it may well be felt to offer progress.

7 TRUE RELATIVISM

That is the prospectus that what I will call the *True Relativist* exegesis of the Ordinary View aims to fill. According to true relativism, it can be the case that Tim and I are both right even though we understand the claim that rhubarb is delicious in the same way, and even though we are making incompatible judgements about it. And the reason is because there are no absolute facts about taste—what it is true to say about taste depends upon a stance, or a set of standards, or a set of affective dispositions. The very same claim can be true for Tim and false for me—and that it is so can be something that is available to us both.

Familiarly, the idea that truth is *globally* relative—that some form of relativity is of the nature of truth—has often been held to implicate dialectical incoherence, or worse. Whatever the fact about that, our questions are more specific: whether relative truth is even *locally* coherent; whether, if so, whether it can accommodate each of Contradiction, Faultlessness and Sustainability at all; and whether it can do so without undue metaphysical cost, and in particular in a way which allows for more robust understanding of Faultlessness than could be secured by the intuitionistic proposal—one which allows for a consistent profession that Tim's and my views can both be correct.

Obviously, in order to accomplish the last of these things, true relativism has to have the means to block the Simple Deduction *before* it reaches the problematical line:

It's not the case that (it's not the case that Williamson is mistaken and it's not the case that Wright is mistaken).

It is clear how the attempt should be made. The true relativist must insist that, for statements of the kind that concern us, we may no longer validly infer from the supposition that P that someone who holds that not-P is making a mistake. A mistake will be implicated only if the judgement that not-P is held accountable to the same standards, or perspective, or whatever, that are implicated in the (hypothetical) supposition that P is true. Very simply: if P is true by one set of standards, or whatever the relativistic parameter is, and I judge it false by another, then what makes P true need not be something which, in judging that it is not true, I mistakenly judge not to obtain.

That, then, will be the *shape* of the true relativist response to the Simple Deduction. The question is whether it can be made sense of. There is a temptation to think that making sense of it is easier than it really is which we need to expose straight away. A philosopher seeking to stabilize the Ordinary View should not be interested in relativity—as a function of context of utterance, or whatever else—in the truth-conditions, and hence the truth-values, of *sentences*. The relativity that needs to be made out is relativity in the truth of *thoughts*, or *propositions*. If we identify a proposition by its truth-conditions, the relevant form of relativity is relativity in the question whether *those very truth-conditions* are satisfied. Suppose that in the course of a medical procedure, a surgeon says of a scalpel that's been poorly prepared: 'This instrument is dangerously blunt.' Later, when the instrument is about to be re-sharpened and sterilized, his assistant may warn an inexperienced orderly: 'Watch out when you handle that—it's dangerously sharp.' Granted, it would be crass to say that the surgeon and his assistant mean different things by 'sharp' and 'blunt' respectively. What is true is that there is a relativity of standard: the surgeon's needs require a much finer edge on the blade than would suffice to justify his assistant's subsequent warning.

A similar set-up is illustrated by the kind of attributer-contextualist accounts of knowledge proposed by writers such as Keith DeRose and Stewart Cohen.⁸ The point to note, however, is that the kind of relativity involved in these examples—plausible in the case of the scalpel, more controversial in the case of knowledge-contextualism—is not at all to our present purpose. For while it would be crass to see them as involving anything comparable to simple ambiguity in 'sharp' or 'knows', they do involve that the truth-conditions of ascriptions of sharpness and knowledge are so affected by contextual or other relevant parameters that *there is no single content* respectively affirmed and denied by the surgeon's claim and that of his assistant, or—to cut a long story short—by G. E. Moore's claim that he knows he has a hand and the sceptical claim that he does not. These views might naturally, if perhaps a little loosely, be described as involving relativism about sharpness, or knowledge. But true relativism is relativism about *truth*. It is *not* the thesis that the content of a certain kind of ascription can vary as a function of varying standards, or contexts, or other

⁸ See, for instance, DeRose (1992, 2002), and Cohen (1999).

parameters. That's a thesis that, applied to our present problem, simply gives up on the attempt to satisfy Contradiction and so holds out no comfort to the Ordinary View. True relativism is the thesis—to repeat—that *after* the truth-conditions of an utterance have been settled, there can be relativity in the question whether they are satisfied. It is a thesis that engages at the level of content, rather than at the level of speech-acts. Or if it is not, then it's merely a slightly more sophisticated cousin of the simple indexical relativist proposal I canvassed at the start—a variant which holds that while a statement on which a dispute of inclination is targeted is indeed not an ellipsis for something which explicitly mentions some parametric standard or perspective, etc., it is nevertheless something whose content is implicitly fixed by reference to such a parameter, so that—as before—Tim and I will have no genuine conflict of opinion about rhubarb. A true relativist accommodation of the Ordinary View must demand that it is the very same proposition that Tim affirms and that I deny—and at the same time that neither the affirmation nor the denial need be mistaken, with this a point which the antagonists themselves can coherently take on board. The latter point is entirely unproblematical if it is not really the same proposition that is involved. What the relativist has to explain, in contrast, is how to maintain the point alongside the claim that there is a single proposition affirmed and denied respectively. What is the relevant notion of propositional identity, and how is it possible rationally to affirm the truth of such a proposition consistently with allowing that someone else's denial of it is also true?

It is not, it seems to me, at all straightforward to see that the demanded notion of relative truth—relative truth at the level of propositions—is fully intelligible. But the difficulties are especially daunting if we essay to think of truth as *correspondence*, in a robust sense of correspondence with calls for an internal relation between a proposition, conceived as an articulated abstract entity, and some correspondingly articulated aspect of non-propositional reality. On any such picture of truth and truth-conferral, it seems impossible to make room for the additional parameter which relativism posits; the internal structural relationship between propositions and the things that make them true or false is so conceived as to be essentially dyadic. It's like the congruence in form between a head-and-shoulders sculpture and the model who posed for it. No doubt the former may be an accurate representation, or not, relative to the conventions of representation, but we are looking for something to illuminate an alleged relativity which bites *after* the conventions of representation have been fixed. And we draw a blank. The unavoidable conclusion seems to be that, while particular such conventions may allow of degrees of accuracy in representation, the degree to which there is accuracy is something which supervenes entirely upon the respective physiognomies of the statue and the sitter. There is no place for a third term in the relation.⁹

⁹ As JC Beall points out in his contribution to this volume, (p. 00) this conclusion is good only if one assumes that a *single world* furnishes the facts to which the propositions at issue are liable to

If that is correct, the immediate lesson to draw is merely the unremarkable one that to attempt to think of truth—propositional truth—relativistically is to foreclose on thinking of it as correspondence. That's an objection to relativism only if it's impossible to think of truth in any other viable way. Suppose on the contrary that, at least in some regions of thought, truth may satisfyingly be construed as consisting in some kind of coherence relation, with coherence an internal, analytic relationship, fixed by the content of the propositions among which it obtains. Let it be proposed, for example, that the truth of a proposition consists in its participation within a maximal, coherent system of propositions incorporating some specified base class of propositions, *B*. Then depending on the choice of *B*, a proposition may be true or not—may be a member of the relevant maximal set of coherent propositions or not—even after its content is fully fixed. Such a conception of truth may only locally have any attraction at all—one might, for example, think of truth in pure set theory along such lines—but it provides at least a *prima facie* model of how a truth predicate for propositions may intelligibly be conceived as relative.¹⁰

No such coherentist model is presumably wanted for the notion of truth that is to engage disputes of taste and other matters of inclination. Still, the example suggests that once one begins to think of truth along the kind of pluralist lines that a number of philosophers, myself included, have canvassed in recent work,¹¹ it may be possible to come closer to a stable working-out of true relativism than one might otherwise suspect.¹² I'll conclude by outlining one specific suggestion in that direction.

(mis)-correspond. If sense could somehow be made of the Goodmanian figure of distinct worlds to correspond to distinct sensibilities, Tim and I could each be thinking the literal (correspondence-) truth about our respective worlds.

¹⁰ For the credentials of coherence, so conceived, to count as truth, and for more general discussion of what it takes for a predicate to express the concept of truth, see Wright (1998).

¹¹ See especially Wright (1992, 1998); and Michael Lynch (2001, 2004).

¹² The tension between correspondence truth and relativistic truth, and indeed an implicit pluralism about truth, is actually close to the surface, it seems to me, in several of the treatments canvassed in the recent revival of sympathetic discussion of relativism within analytical philosophy. John MacFarlane, for example, in a growing series of important discussions (for instance, MacFarlane (2003, 2005) and forthcoming) has tended to promote a conception of the conferrers of relativistic truth as consisting in ordered pairs of a world and a 'context of assessment'. Likewise Max Kölbel (2002, 2004) proposes that truth is relative to what he terms 'perspective'—where the very word conjure the idea of an argument-place: something the perspective is a perspective *on*. These proposals are, of course, partly formal: what may vary with variation in the context of assessment, or the perspective, is just whatever truth is being conceived as relative to—perhaps standards, perhaps taste, perhaps information, perhaps time. But it is unintelligible what contribution a *world* is supposed to make except as providing an input of unreconstructed states of affairs, things standing thus-and-so. The very intelligibility—even *prima facie* intelligibility—of the kind of framework MacFarlane explicitly, and Kölbel implicitly, propose thus seems to call for a prior domain of circumstances—the kind of thing a 'world' contributes to the ordered pair, or what a perspective is exercised on—of which, presumably, there is no obstacle in principle to an independent self-standing statement. For such statements there will then be no need—and, on pain of vicious regress, ultimately no space—for a relativistic conception of truth.

8 RELATIVISM AND IDEALIZED ASSERTIBILITY

Assertibility¹³ is manifestly a relative notion: a statement may be assertible relative to one state of information and not to another. Might notions of truth arrived at by idealization of assertibility retain this, or a kindred, relativity?

There are two principal such proposed idealizations to be found in the literature. The first, in the Peircean tradition and associated with Hilary Putnam's latterly renounced 'internal realism', idealizes on the state of information: what is true is what is assertible in a state of information incorporating all possible relevant data for the proposition in question. It's obvious that this proposal, whatever we might want to say pro- or anti- the credentials of the resulting truth predicate, holds out no interesting prospect of relativism, since the whole point of the idealization involved is that it is supposed to ensure *convergence*. Either a proposition is assertible at the relevant Peircean limit of information gathering—in which case it is true *simpliciter*—or, even at the limit, its credentials are matched by a rival, in which case it is neither assertible nor—for internal realism—true.

Matters may turn out interestingly differently, however, if the idealization assumes the form proposed in the notion of *superassertibility*.¹⁴ Superassertibility is the property not of being assertible in some ideal—perhaps limiting—state of information, but of being assertible in some ordinary, accessible state of information and then remaining so no matter what additions or improvements are made to it. When superassertibility for a given class of statements is taken to be truth, then truth is held to consist not in assertibility at some ideal limit of information gathering but in enduring assertibility over indefinite improvements. Does superassertibility offer the prospect of an interesting relativity? More specifically: can this happen—that *in a single world* one thinker, Hero, is in position to accept P, and another, Heroine, is in position to accept not-P, and that each can retain their respective situations no matter what improvements or enlargements are made to their states of information?

Well, not if Hero's and Heroine's respective bodies of information allow of *pooling*, and if it is determinate and unique what the resulting pooled state of information should be, and determinate whether it supports P, or not-P, or neither. But those conditions may not all be met. When Hero and Heroine bring their respective bodies of information together, it may be that there is more than one equally rationally defensible way for accommodating the components into a unified state, each maybe involving some discards, with none superior to the others in virtue of the number or kind of discards involved or the quality of the information remaining. It may also happen that some of the resulting

¹³ I use 'assertibility', as is customary if a little unhappy, as a shorthand for *warranted* assertibility, where the relevant notion of warrant relates just to the *acceptance* of the content asserted and has no other bearing on the justifiability of (publicly) *asserting* it.

¹⁴ See C. Wright (1992, 1998).

enlarged states of information continue to warrant acceptance of P, and others acceptance of not-P. And once granted to be possible at all, it's difficult to see how to exclude the thought that such a situation might persist indefinitely. In that case superassertibility would be relative to a starting point, an initial basis for acceptance or rejection. If one were satisfied there were no other obstacles to the identification of truth with superassertibility over the region of discourse in question, that would be a kind of relativity of truth.

However, the kind of case which is our main focus—disputes of taste—is marked by the following peculiarity: that the basic form of assertibility condition for statements of the relevant kind is given by a subject's finding herself in a certain type of *non-cognitive* affective state: liking the taste of rhubarb, for instance. The basic form of assertibility condition, that is to say, for the impersonal statement—about the vegetable—coincides with that for the self-ascription of a subjective state that is not conceived—at least not by anyone attracted to the Ordinary View—as a cognitive response. In that case Hero and Heroine may respectively be in a position to assert P and to assert not-P, not because they possess differing initial information bases but just by virtue of differing in their non-cognitive responses to things—and because these responses are non-cognitive, there will be no clear sense to the idea of 'pooling' their respective starting points and determining what is warranted by the result. Of course there is such a thing as enlarging one's information by the addition of the datum that others do not share a particular non-cognitive response. But if that datum is not treated per se as a defeater, then there will be no immediate threat to the superassertibility of the original claim.

Much more would need to be said if a satisfying proposal in this direction is to be developed. In particular, if a content is to be associated with the impersonal statement—'Rhubarb is delicious'—contrasting with that of a subjective report, then something has to be said about how the contrast between the two is sustained. Presumably such an account will give central place to asymmetries in the conditions of defeat, with the assertibility of, for example, 'I relish eating rhubarb,' surviving in circumstances where that of 'Rhubarb is delicious' is lost. It's hard to envisage how the story might plausibly go without some kind of play with intersubjective accord: what purposes could be served by our having the impersonal form of statement if one could seldom reliably encourage expectations in an audience about their own affective states and responses? Still, if one's own tastes are not too idiosyncratic—if enough of a constituency goes along with them—then that may be enough to license a claim, even if significantly many may, with the same license, dissent from it. And in that case there may be theoretical advantages in representing the situation as one in which conflicting claims are each true relative to varying parameters of taste, with truth construed as superassertibility on the basis of a notion of assertibility grounded on the relevant non-cognitive affect.

Such a proposal looks to be promisingly placed to handle Faultlessness and Sustainability. But matters may seem less clear with Contradiction—the claim that genuinely incompatible opinions are involved: how exactly does the proposal promise a better accommodation of the Ordinary View in this respect than the kind of position, illustrated by the examples of the blunt scalpel and knowledge-attributions when construed along contextualist lines, which effectively diagnoses disputes of inclination as illusory? What can be said, in the spirit of the superassertibilist-relativist proposal, to support the idea that it is the *same* content that, as it may be, is superassertible for Tim but not for me?

To think of truth in some area of discourse as constituted by superassertibility no doubt leaves considerable latitude when it comes to theorizing about propositional content. I shall not here attempt such a theory. However, if Tim and I do have an understanding in common of the proposition that rhubarb is delicious, as it occurs in our respective affirmation and denial, it would be natural to locate the commonality in a shared conception of basic, sufficient—if defeasible—grounds for accepting the proposition (one's enjoying rhubarb, presumably) and a shared conception of the consequences of regarding it as correct. Among the latter might be, for example, the desirability of regular harvesting of one's rhubarb crop when in season, a high ranking for choosing a dessert in a German restaurant identified to one as rhubarb crumble, a high priority assigned to the rhubarb patch in the reorganization of the vegetable garden, and so on. Commonality of understanding will involve that my negative view, by contrast, will lead to corresponding low priorities and opposed choices. This is the pre-theoretic background against which it seems intuitive to say that Tim and I have genuinely conflicting views about a single proposition. An explicit theory subserving the point would be one in the broad tradition deriving from Gentzen's work on the logical constants which locates the individuation of content in canonical grounds and consequences.

Against this kind of background, it's salient that the situation contrasts with the case of the rejected scalpel. Baldly, suitable grounds for the attribution of sharpness that the surgeon denies would be quite different to those sufficient for the attribution of sharpness that the orderly affirms. When the latter asserts that the scalpel is (dangerously) sharp he is not challenging the surgeon's judgement that it is not—as indeed the surgeon is not challenging the orderly's judgement that great care is necessary in handling it and preparing it for sharpening and sterilization. But more: each can quite coherently accept and, in various ways, appropriately *act on* the other's claim while still maintaining his own—surely a conclusive consideration in favour of the point that different, and compatible, contents are involved. By contrast, that Tim and I are involved in genuine disagreement is borne out by the fact that we agree about the, loosely described, consequences of each other's views and then sustain our disagreement through our respective acceptance or rejection of those consequences and the courses of action involved. Tim orders the crumble; I don't. Tim designs his vegetable patch

in a certain way; I don't.¹⁵ Rational action on either of the views excludes rational action on the other.

So here's the package: Tim and I are in genuine disagreement about whether rhubarb is delicious. Our opinions are incompatible. And the common understanding, necessary to ground that incompatibility, is based on a common conception of the assertibility conditions of the claim—that, absent defeating considerations, it may be asserted just if one relishes eating rhubarb—and on a shared conception of a range of consequences, both analytical and practical, which attend its correctness. Our disagreement can be faultless because it can be based on our respectively perfectly proper responses to our respective non-cognitive propensities. And it can be sustainable because—precisely—neither claim has been defeated nor has to be defeasible. Finally, the Simple Deduction is blocked in exactly the way prefigured: when truth is conceived as superassertibility relative to a subject's non-cognitive responses, the supposition that P is true will be answerable to the corresponding responses of a tacitly understood constituency of subjects; and it will implicate a mistake in the opinion of one who takes it that not-P is true only if their opinion is properly held answerable to the responses of the same constituency.

If all this is soundly conceived, then a relativism about truth, fashioned along the indicated lines, may be the natural companion of non-cognitivist conceptions of competence in particular regions of discourse. But here I must be content merely to have outlined the approach.

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¹⁵ Notice that attributor contextualism—which proposes to construe 'x knows that p' as comparable to 'that instrument is dangerously sharp', rather than to 'rhubarb is delicious', understood as by the Ordinary View—has work to do with this point. A third party can accept not merely that the surgeon's and the orderly's claims are both correct in context: she can, as it were, take both claims on board—indeed the orderly does so, in effect, by replacing the knife with a better prepared one for the purposes of the surgery and then taking appropriate personal care while he sharpens and sterilizes the rejected knife. But what would it be to take on board the claims both of G.E. Moore and a Sceptic: how would one act out a simultaneous acceptance of both claims?

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Queries in Chapter 2

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