3

Realism: The Contemporary Debate—W(h)ither Now?

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I

The philosophical literature about realism displays as many disagreements about what is at issue as about which side of the fence to stand. A signal example is provided by the debates, conducted in almost complete insulation from each other, concerning realism as opposed by Dummettian *anti-realism*—the realism which believes in evidence-transcendent truth and the rest—and realism as opposed by *irrealism* or *projectivism*—the realism which believes in a face-value, 'fact-stating' construal of moral, aesthetic, or scientific-theoretical discourse. Is there any single issue which is the ultimate focus of both the debates, or are the respective 'realisms' alike in little but name?

There is a simple, if rather artificial way to unify the debates. Take it (i) that *truth is the stuff of realism*—the realist about a given region of discourse is someone who holds, simply, that its statements are apt to be true or false—and (ii) that the concept of *truth is, of itself, evidentially unconstrained.* That does not mean that, absurdly, the availability of evidence can never be an analytical consequence of the supposition that a particular type of statement is true; it requires only that, if that is so, it is a reflection not on the concept of truth but on the nature of the particular subject-matter.

With both these assumptions in place, Dummett's anti-realist becomes a species of irrealist. The line would be that there should be no complaint about a truth-conditional conception of meaning where genuinely factual statements are concerned; that, for the familiar anti-realist sorts of reason, there have to be epistemic constraints on truth if a truth-conditional conception of meaning

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is to be sustained; and hence that, where the purported subject-matter of statements of a particular kind fails to impose appropriate such constraints—remembering that the notion of truth has, of itself, no such inbuilt constraints—an irrealist conception of them is imposed, and their content should be accounted for in some suitable, non-truth-conditional way.

One difficulty with this regimentation of the debates is that the non-truth-conditional semantic proposals made by Dummettian anti-realists typically treat as central such notions as proof, verification or warranted assertion, which seem to demand construal in terms of truth. What is a proof if not a demonstration of truth? When is an assertion warranted if not when it is reasonable to believe that what is asserted is true? What indeed, *is* an assertion if not a purported presentation of the truth? But the most basic problem with the proposal, it seems to me, is not its procrustean effects on Dummettian anti-realism but simply that it is doubtful, recent efforts notwithstanding,[1] whether irrealism is any longer a philosophically progressive programme. I do not propose to try to argue this in detail here. The general point is that when irrealism is taken as the anti-realist prototype, the inevitable effect is that the propriety of aspects of the *syntax* of disputed regions of discourse comes to be central to the debate. At least, this is the effect of the would-be conservative kind of irrealism which is not content—contrast the late John Mackie's view of ethics[2]—to hold the discourse in massive error. The would-be conservative irrealist has to attempt to construe the discourse as involving no genuine assertions, no claims of truth; and it is then an open question whether any alternative non-assertoric semantic construal can save all those aspects of the syntax of the discourse which seem to connect most intimately with truth-claiming. It seems to me that, on the contrary, the meaningfulness, ergo syntactic propriety, of the discourse should be agreed by all hands. What ought to be at issue is what *kind* of content it possesses.

Even if the irrealist can somehow save the syntax, the price paid may very well be to call into question whether ordinary canons of logical consistency, and ordinary constraints on the ascription of what appear to be propositional attitudes, continue to have any bearing. Such is one side effect of recent[3] irrealist construal of conditionals with moral antecedents. And again, it seems to me that it should be possible for the realist and anti-realist to agree at the outset that discourse about the moral, modal, or comic is subject to ordinary sentential logic; and that the ascription of propositional attitudes concerning the moral, modal, or comic is constrained accordingly.

The foregoing is no argument, only an expression of scepticism about the irrealist direction. I am sceptical whether it is the direction in which many of the influential anti-realist arguments about different subject-matters really point; I am certain that it cannot satisfactorily accommodate Dummettian anti-realism; doubtful of the propriety of the syntactic issues which conservative irrealists are forced to take as central; and sceptical whether they can, anyway, ever win. But what other direction is there for anti-realism to take?

II

The proposal considered in effect took irrealism as the anti-realist prototype, and attempted to extend it to Dummettian anti-realism. I suggest we try to play matters the other way around. But not in the most immediate way. The suggestion is not, that is to say, that moral anti-realism should be a species of verificationism. Probably no moral realist, whether of secular or religious inspiration, would be comfortable with the notion that moral truth may essentially transcend human appraisal. The key thought is rather that, contrary to the considered proposal, truth is *not* the exclusive property of realism. The central thesis of Dummettian anti-realism is, or ought to be, the claim that truth is, of itself, essentially epistemically constrained. The exact statement of an appropriate constraint may be a matter of some difficulty but that does not now concern us. The crucial point is that the debate between the mathematical realist, for instance, and a Dummettian opponent is not about whether pure mathematical sentences should be thought of as candidates to be true or false; that is agreed on both sides. The question is rather *what* notion of truth informs pure mathematics, how the notion of pure mathematical truth is to be understood if the meaning of theses in pure mathematics is to be thought of as determined by reference to their truth-conditions.

The respect, then, in which the dispute between semantic realism and Dummettian anti-realism should be taken as prototypical is that the applicability of the truth-predicate among statements in the disputed class is not at issue. I am proposing that moral anti-realists, for instance, should grant that moral judgements are apt for truth and falsity, and hence unproblematically enjoy the sorts of combinatorial possibilities focused on by the *modus ponens* argument,[4] and are unproblematically constrained by ordinary notions of logical consistency and validity of inference. What is in dispute concerns, rather, what *else* is true of moral judgements.

Just now, and elsewhere, I have presented this proposal as though it involved dropping the idea that the notion of truth is uniform across different regions of discourse, with the essence of realism about a certain class of statements being the view that the notion of truth appropriate to them was appropriately 'substantial', in a sense or senses to be worked on.[5] But actually it is moot whether the idea of a possible variety of concepts of truth has to be part of the perspective I am recommending. Rather than regard the notion of truth as non-univocal, we can seek to draw relevant distinctions among the characteristics possessed by a single notion of truth as it applies to statements of different kinds. So although in what follows I may sometimes tend to talk in the former kind of way, it will be possible to represent the distinctions I shall draw as reflecting different realism-relevant characteristics of one notion of truth, characteristics which it sometimes possesses and sometimes lacks, rather than distinctions within the notion. And it may well be that, in the end, nothing of importance hangs on this contrast.

The suggestion I am making is apt to provoke a protest. How can we make the notion of truth be neutral ground? How can we think of a statement's truth

except in terms of its corresponding to reality, fitting the facts, 'telling it like it is'? For, contrary to the impression given by old debates about truth—in which the 'correspondence theory' was opposed by coherentists, pragmatists, and so on—such phases incorporate no substantial theory of truth but connect with the predicate, 'is true', platitudinously. I think this thought is correct, but that it needs to be set in a proper perspective. The *representative* aspect of the concept of truth which these platitudinous connections highlight is one of its aspects. Another is its *normativity*: truth supplies a parameter of appraisal, is what our (sincere) assertions aim for. The thought that truth is the stuff of realism, and hence that the anti-realist has to contest its applicability to statements in a disputed class, sees the representative aspect as primary and the normative as a consequence of the representative: roughly, the thought is, it is because we *value* representation that we aim at truth. But that cannot be right. For if it were a question of placing a value upon something determined independently, then it should be possible to describe the patterns that would be assumed by the linguistic practice of people who were capable of the same sort of thoughts as we are, and had the same concept of truth, but placed no value on it. But there is no such conceivable practice. The normative aspect is essential to truth.

Equally, so is the representative; the platitudes ensure that. A notion which functioned normatively for a region of discourse—supplied a constrant to which speech acts within the region had to conform—would not be truth if its practitioners rejected such platitudes. What I am suggesting, however, is that the appropriateness of characterizing utterances of a particular kind as 'true' and 'false' does not await a *separate* justification of their representative fitness, so to speak, which can still be lacking even though the normativity of the truth-predicate and its platitudinous connections with representation are granted. We get the notion of truth off the ground, as it were, by establishing the currency of a norm of correct utterance whose connections with talk of correspondence, representation and their kind are taken to be platitudinous. There is no further question of the authenticity of that kind of talk; if there were, the connections would not be platitudinous.

An analogy may help. Elsewhere[6] I have argued that Frege's Platonism about numbers is best interpreted as based on the view that candidacy to refer to an object, properly so regarded, is a matter of syntax; that once it has been settled that a class of expressions function as singular terms by syntactic criteria, there is no further question about whether they succeed in objectual reference which can be raised by someone who is prepared to allow that appropriate contexts in which they so feature are true. What is here being proposed is a thesis of similar flavour concerning candidacy for truth itself. A significant sentence is a candidate for truth if it has the appropriate syntax. And having the appropriate syntax means, primarily, admitting of significant embedding within negation, the conditional, and other connectives, and within ascriptions of propositional attitude. That a class of sentences will sustain such embeddings is something we should expect if their use is appropriately constrained: if, that is, any particular use may be appraised and criticized for being based on ignorance or error, and if justification for a use can be better and worse. In

particular we should expect indicative conditionals to have a role whenever the correct assertibility of a sentence is something about which we can, at least temporarily, be in ignorance but which can be, in various ways, of practical consequence for us. Likewise for propositional-attitude embeddings: the currency of notions of ignorance and error will provide a use for a potential contrast between any particular subject's attitude to a particular such statement and the attitude which, we suppose, it is proper to take. My claim is not, however, or not merely, that the kinds of syntactic potentialities described are to be expected in discourse which is subject to a constraint of correctness of the relevant kind—a constraint whose demonstrated violation demands withdrawal of an utterance and about whose satisfaction, in a particular case, there is use for the notions of ignorance, error, and improved assessment. It is that the operation of such a constraint has no expression *except* in such syntactic conditioning of a region of discourse; and that it is not a further, metaphysical step to regard its statements as candidates for truth and falsity.

These claims need much more fine-grained development and support than I am here in a position to offer. It is necessary to account, in particular, for the emergence of a contrast—operative in our discourse in so many areas and arguably implicit in the use of a genuine negation—between truth and assertibility; equivalently, the emergence of a distinction between finding fault with a claim and finding fault with its pedigree. A possible strategy of explanation might run like this. Once we have the notion of better and worse justification for particular statements, we can understand the notion of a statement's continuing to be justified no matter how much more information we may gather which is germane to its justifiability. Say that a statement is *superassertible*[7] if that is so. Now, there is no evident contrast between the normative functions of truth and assertibility as far as one's own, currently envisaged statements are concerned. The contrast concerns, rather, the use of statements, whether by oneself or others, on other occasions. And it is appraisals of other-occasion assertibility that are, perhaps surprisingly, the more demanding. I count as appraising the *truth* of what you said yesterday if I (competently) appraise its current assertibility today. But in order to appraise its yesterday-for-you assertibility, I need additionally to know something of your state of information yesterday. And this is an additional requirement, because if I fulfil it, I can hardly fail to be in a position to appraise the statement by the light of my own current state of information, which is all I have to do to appraise its truth. (Which is not to say that truth is current assertibility.) In contrast, I can be in a position to appraise the current assertibility of your statement without knowing anything about your state of information yesterday.

It seems plausible that this distinction is integral to the representative aspect of the notion of truth; the representative platitudes *would* be out of place if the distinction could not be drawn, since it should in general be no disqualification, in appraising the accuracy of a *representation*, to know little or nothing of the situation of others who have believed it accurate. But notice that the *shape* of the contrast just characterized is well enough explained if truth is actually *identified* with superassertibility, and the content of an assertion, subsequently

appraised, taken to be a claim of its own superassertibility. So—in prospect anyway—the introduction of a notion of truth, contrasting with assertibility, does not have to be taken to reflect the operation of a parameter of appraisal quite different to assertibility. It may be that nothing in the uses to which the notion is put distinguishes it from superassertibility. It is, of course, important to what I am proposing whether or not this is so.[8]

I am making, to use a fashionable term, a *minimalist* claim about the notion of candidacy for truth; and suggesting that the irrealist version of anti-realism, issuing in instrumentalism in the philosophy of science, expressive theories of value, etc., is in error in exceeding this minimalism. But, as in the case of singular reference to abstract objects, candidacy is one thing and success is another. There, the suggestion was that reference is, as it were, imposed on a candidate singular term by its occurrence in appropriate true contexts. What is the corresponding condition on the success of a statement which is a candidate for truth? Here too, I am advocating minimalism. John Mackie, for one, might have accepted the overall drift of what I have been saying, but evidently felt that a further metaphysical issue, connecting with a *deep* possibility of misfit, still remains. Talking in all respects as if there are moral facts—saying things which are candidates for truth and whose truth would require the existence of moral facts—is one thing; but the real truth of such talk is quite another. And it is another thing *notwithstanding* the degree of discipline in principle which a governing notion of assertibility imposes on such talk. Moral realism, in Mackie's view, should be identified with the belief that some moral judgements are, in this deeper sense, *really* true—a belief which Mackie rejects.

However I do not think the foregoing considerations leave any option of such belief or disbelief. They provide, simply, no space for an account of the kind of metaphysical rift which would generate the truth of a kind of wide-scope negation of all our moral judgements. Moral statements have the relevant potentialities for embedding, and frequently sustain a complex range of justifying considerations, of differing degrees of strength. And if the line sketched above about superassertibility is correct, then the notion of truth for which they are thereby candidates is a very short abstraction from the notion of justification which governs our appraisal of any particular moral statement. It contains nothing to give sense to the idea of Mackie's rift. My claim, in other words, is not merely that it should not be controversial, between realism and its opponents, whether moral, aesthetic, and comic judgements, hypotheses of theoretical science, and theses of pure mathematics are candidates for truth; it is that, in addition, there is as much reason to think that some of them are true are there is reason to accept them by the standards which prevail in the ordinary appraisal of such statements. If anti-realism about a given region of discourse does not profitably channel itself into the conviction that no genuine, apt-to-be-true-or-false statements are made therein, neither should realism express itself as the thesis that some of these statements are genuinely true.

What then is the proper focus of debate? Have we not simply abrogated the resources for a debate—committed oursleves to *quietism*? I do not think so. I have emphasized the inseparability of the normative and representative

aspects of the notion of truth; and I have suggested that the operation of a constraint upon an assertoric practice which is generated out of but, in the fashion described, contrasts with justified assertibility, and is expressed in the relevant kind of syntactic potentialities, suffices to justify the claim that we are there in the business of representation. That is because that claim is anodyne, has no more substance than the claim that we are there in the business of talking truth; and the latter essentially does no more than advert to the relevant features of the assertoric practice. So, I am suggesting, it is never *wrong*, in these circumstances, to endorse the platitudinous expressions of the representative aspect of truth—so long as one remembers that the connections *are* platitudinous, and that one succeeds in claiming no more, by dignifying a statement as 'fitting the facts', or 'corresponding to an aspect of reality', or whatever, than by claiming that it is true. The platitudinous equivalents embody, to repeat, no substantial theory, have no independent content—so far.

I therefore propose that we experiment with the idea that we may get an interesting and progressive exegesis of realist/anti-realist disputes in different areas by focusing on the question whether some kind of independent content and justification *can* be found for the notion of truth as representation or fit, or anyway for something somehow seriously dyadic, as it were—some consideration, perhaps, which forces a contrast between truth and superassertibility. Can we find a home, within this way of looking at the matter, for some of those considerations—concerning, for instance, evidence-transcendence, convergence of opinion, and best explanation of belief, to take just three—which have been regarded as pivotal in the various debates?

That will be the question for the following sections. I close this one by remarking that I personally take satisfaction in the dialectical situation which the strategy of interpretation which I have been outlining establishes. Anti-realism is now properly identified with the view that, with respect to a particular region of assertoric discourse, nothing further can be done to substantiate the representative aspect of the notion of truth beyond what is accomplished by the platitudinous connections with normativity. Anti-realism thus becomes the natural, initial position in any debate. It is the position from which we have to be shown that we ought to move. All the onus, everywhere, is on the realist.

III

To recap. The notion of truth which, I have been suggesting, is, as it were, neutral territory regulates any statement-making practice which displays the interlocking set of characteristics described; a practice, that is, which is disciplined by acknowledged standards of justification and justified criticism, which has the syntax to be subjugated to ordinary sentential logic, which sustains embeddings within propositional attitudes, and where ignorance and error are possible categories of explanation of aberrant performances by its practitioners. As suggested, however, these characteristics subtend an ideal of truth—call it *minimal truth*—which, while contrasting with context-relative

assertibility, may be viewed as constructed out of it. Nothing is so far put into the notion to frustrate its construal *as* superassertibility; nothing to force us to think, for instance, of truth as conferred by factors other than those which determine proper practice within the region of discourse in question. The challenge to the realist to fill out the representative aspect of the notion of truth as applied to the disputed class of statements will be well met if some distance can be interposed at this point, between the determinants of truth and the determinants of those statements' proper use; or if, anyway, some appropriate distinction between the concepts of truth and superassertibility can somehow be disclosed.

Let us begin with the case of *evidence-transcendence*. It is a particularly straightforward case. It would be a decisive *coup* on the part of the realist if it could be shown that the notion of truth which informs our understanding of a disputed class of statements is intelligibly conceived as potentially transcending all possible evidence. Such a demonstration would precisely establish the residual content called for. For superassertibility *cannot* be evidence-transcendent: if there is a case to be made for accepting a particular statement which complies with the acknowledged standards and will endure through all attempts to improve or fault it, it has to be possible to gather (defeasible) grounds for saying so. By contrast, though, a victory for Dummett's anti-realist—a demonstration that only an evidentially constrained notion of truth can feature in an acceptable account of assertoric content—would not be decisive against the realist; the possibility would remain that realism might contrive to meet its explanatory obligations in some other way.

The case of *convergence* is less straightforward. The issue has typically been perceived as central in the debate about evaluative realism, with moral anti-realists, in particular, taking comfort from what they have perceived as unnegotiable diversity in basic moral standpoints. But, on the face of it, it is unclear why one who perceived the responsibilities of realism in the way I am recommending should think that realist capital can be made from demonstrating that truth satisfies a convergence constraint. The constraint, one assumes, will look something like:

Convergence(1)

> If a class of statements are apt to be true, then there will be a tendency, in suitable circumstances, for competent subjects to agree on the truth of members of that class.

Clearly, no realist will want to defend this who thinks that we can be shown to work with a potentially evidence-transcendent notion of truth for the statements in question. For if that could be shown, the realist case could not possibly be *strengthened* by any considerations about convergence. So better to suppose we are concerned with a class of statements—moral judgements perhaps—about which realism in Dummett's sense is not an attractive option. Then Convergence(1) imposes a substantial requirement only if minimal truth fails to satisfy it? But *can* minimal truth fail to satisfy it? And if it can, how exactly is something *realistic* added—something that somehow beefs up the representative aspect, or suggests the operation of factors independent of those which confer assertibility—by demonstration that convergence is satisfied in a particular type of case?

Convergence(1) is terribly weak. Its effect is merely that we are entitled to regard some at least of the given class of statements as true only if there is, or would be under favourable circumstances, some measure of consensus about their truth. But minimal truth is (undifferentiable from) a construction from a notion of assertibility which was to be associated with *acknowledged* standards of justification and criticism. Where such standards are acknowledged, consensus ought—at least sometimes—to be elicitable. So in order to give minimal truth a chance of failing, we need to strengthen the test.

How? Well, two points are salient. First, nothing in the apparatus of minimal truth requires that disagreements cannot occur in which neither disputant can justly be criticized. There are to be operational standards of proper assertibility, and criteria for the ascription of ignorance and error: but nothing was said which enjoined that, in any disagreement, at least one party would be convictable of improper assertion, or of ignorance or error, by those standards. Second, the intuition that convergence is important to the realist has it that (ignoring complications to do with vagueness) it should be a *global* property of the statements at issue—the thought, for instance, that something is shown about the (lack of) objectivity of the comic by the possibility of irreducibly divergent opinions about comedy is not assuaged at all by the reflection that there is, very probably, convergence about some—perhaps many—comic judgements. So it looks as though the intentions of those who have felt that convergence is important might be better reflected by something like:

Convergence(2)

> The members of a certain class of statements are candidates for truth only if each of them will, under suitable circumstances, command a convergence of opinion on its truth, or falsity.

Is this a test which may be failed by statements of which minimal truth and falsity are predicable? Obviously it would, again, be applicable only for statements for which the possibility of evidence-transcendent truth had been ruled out. The intuition it is trying to reflect is that, in any region of discourse where we cannot provide that excuse—cannot explain how relevant aspects of the world may simply outstrip our cognitive powers, even in principle—we may think of ourselves as dealing in genuine fact only if we have a guarantee that no intractable disagreements will arise.

The question, then, is: when the statements in a particular class pass this test, does that indicate that the truth-predicate applicable to them has the kind of additional substance which, for instance, evidence-transcendence would also bestow on it? Not yet. For one thing, the test only offers a necessary condition. For another, a class of statements which fails it—judgements of comedy, may be—might command convergence in different possible circumstances. There might have been a universal sense of humour. Why would not this count as

one of the relevant kind of 'suitable circumstances'—so that judgements about comedy could pass the test after all?

Clearly, the phrase 'in suitable circumstances' marks a place that has to be filled somehow or other; it would be futile to impose a condition of convergence *tout court*. But it must not, obviously, be allowed to mean anything equivalent to 'conditions actually conducive to the emergence of a consensus'. And when we begin to reflect on what it ought to mean, if a substantial test is to be conveyed in keeping with the original intuitions, we can see that the notion of convergence itself is actually inessential and that those who have thought it important have somewhat misformulated their requirement.

Think of a device—a camera, say—whose function is to produce a representation of a state of affairs. There is a platitudinous enough connection between the accuracy of any particular such representation and convergence: simply, a particular representation—photograph—is accurate (within the limits of the apparatus) only if other cameras of the same marque which function properly and are presented with the same input produce convergent representations (very similar photographs). It is thus a necessary condition of ascribing a representational function to a class of devices that divergent output be explicable, at least in principle, in terms either of divergent input or of less than perfect function. Similarly: the representative aspect of truth in some region of discourse is rightly conceived as more than the minimum imposed by the platitudes only if genuine divergences of opinion have to be explicable, at least in principle, in terms of some breach of ideal cognitive function. *Either* some material ignorance or error must be involved in the information at the disposal of one of the relevant parties *or* one of the parties must be guilty of misappraisal of the information at their disposal—of inferential error, or prejudicial over- or under-rating of data, or deployment of faulty background information, or whatever. Now, the 'suitable conditions' for convergence, mooted in the two principles formulated above, can hardly be meant to include anything other than circumstances suitable for *cognitive* functioning. *Suitable* circumstances, in the spirit of the proposal, are circumstances in which subjects have access to a sufficiency of information of some appropriate kind and are in a position, internally and externally, to respond to it in an appropriate way. But then, rather than impose a requirement of convergence, we might as well impose a requirement that *divergence* always be explicable by circumstances being less than suitable, in the sense just sketched. So what the convergence constraint is after, I suggest, is nothing other than what I have elsewhere called the *cognitive command* of truth: where truth has cognitive command with respect to a certain class of statements if and only if

> *Cognitive Command*
> It is a priori that disagreements, when not attributable to vagueness, are ultimately explicable in terms of cognitive shortcomings; specifically, some material ignorance, material error, or prejudicial assessment.

And the connection of this idea with our concerns is, as noted, its link with the idea of representation. Where the truth-predicate lacks this feature, it will not be *wrong* to think of discourse as aimed at 'representing the facts'; but if statements satisfy the cognitive command condition, the imagery of representation draws additional substance from the analogy which may then be displayed with the products of other uncontroversially representational systems.

IV

Wiggins[9] formulates the convergence requirement as

> If x is true, then x will under favourable circumstances command convergence, and the best explanation of the existence of this convergence will require the actual truth of x.

Later[10] he further specifies the second part of that as

> we have the truth-relevant sort of convergence where *the statement of the best explanation of the agreement in the belief needs a premise to the effect that item t is indeed F, and the explanation would be simply invalidated by its absence.*

This actually introduces a distinct idea, which does not need to keep company with convergence. It is that when the beliefs which we express in a given region of discourse are rightly viewed as responses to, reflections of a reality 'out there', features of that reality ought to have an ineliminable part to play in any fully satisfactory explanation of our formation of those beliefs. The perceived importance of this idea coheres nicely with the re-direction I am recommending. For a genuine explanation has to advert to something *independent*, a cause or source of the phenomenon to be explained. So where the best account we can give of the epistemology of statements of a certain kind represents the beliefs which they enable us to express as the products of interaction with the states of affairs which they describe—or anyway essentially adverts, one way or another, to those states of affairs in explaining why we hold those beliefs—our conception of what it is for those statements to be true crucially exceeds the minimal conception. It is not open to us to think of the 'facts' to which such beliefs may correspond merely as things we are licensed harmlessly to talk about by way of spin-off from platitudinous links with the propriety of regarding them as candidates for truth, minimally conceived—not if a reference to such facts has to be made in any finally satisfactory explanation of why we form beliefs of that sort.

This third constraint—the constraint of *best explanation*—represents a sufficient condition for the propriety of a move away from minimalism (anti-realism). It is not obvious that it represents a necessary condition (it cannot do so unless its satisfaction is implicit in the satisfaction of any other condition which might suffice for such a move, which seems doubtful). But at least some of the literature which has pivoted around it seems to be proceeding on the assumption that it is something which a would-be realist about a certain region of discourse *has* to argue is satisfied. Harman,[11] for example, argues against moral realism on the ground that the best explanation of our moral

responses to a particular action can dispense altogether with any reference to its moral status. The explanation can proceed entirely in terms of the non-evaluative properties of the act, and the features of our natures and moral upbringing which have resulted in a disposition, for example to deplore acts with such features. No *moral* facts need be cited; the explanation may be wholly contained within references to the 'natural' features of the act and the origins of the psychological conditions which sustain the effects upon us which those features work.

The question, however, is what we should look for from a 'best explanation' (or one which is good enough). One strand in Wiggins' attempted rebuttal of Harman's argument[12] is based on the thought that natural science will not actually be able to deliver the goods that Harman needs. I shall not engage that. A second and more important contention in Wiggins' discussion is to the effect that, insofar as there is a legitimate constraint here, it is one which ethics and mathematics, to take the two most widely disputed examples, may be seen, when it is properly conceived, to comply with. The impression to the contrary, in Wiggins' view, derives from a misplaced emphasis on causality, the belief that 'People think that p because p' is an acceptable claim only where the 'because' is causal.[13] Wiggins writes—remember that he intertwines the convergence and best-explanation constraints—as follows:

> there is at least one general way in which we might try to conceive of the prospects for moral judgements' commanding the sort of convergence that truth requires. This is by analogy with the way in which arithmetical judgements command it. There is an impressive consensus that $7 + 5 = 12$; and, when we rise above the individual level and look for the explanation of the whole consensus, only one explanation will measure up to the task. There is nothing else *to* think that 7 and 5 add up to. ... Since any other answer besides '12' will induce a contradiction in arithmetic, no wonder we agree. We believe that $7 + 5$ is 12 because $7 + 5$ *is* 12. We have no choice.[14]

Put on one side the question how the arithmetical case might illuminate the moral. The question is, does the acceptability, in the spirit which informs Wiggins' remarks, of 'We accept that 7 and 5 make 12 because they do' suffice to show that the citation of arithmetical truths should feature in the best explanation of our arithmetical beliefs. Well, if the 'because' is not causal, what is it? Reason-giving, presumably. But then it is an ellipsis to describe our reason for believing that $7 + 5 = 12$ as consisting in the fact that it is so. The reason is rather, what Wiggins adverts to, that we have *proof*, that we can, for instance, generate contradictions from '$7 + 5 \neq 12$'.

One immediate consequence is that it begins to seem less clear that there can be any uncontentious moral parallel. If the 'because' in

> We think that wanton cruelty is wrong because it is

is likewise reason-giving, what exactly constitutes the reason (when unpacked)? What corresponds to proof? A second, more important reflection is that the reason, in the arithmetical case, is simply constituted by our recognition of a

canonical form of *assertibility*—the availability of a proof. Whereas what we were looking for was something which would impose some distance or, anyway, somehow *distinguish* between truth and superassertibility. If the best-explanation test is to provide a basis for such a distinction, then Wiggins' remarks have no tendency to show that our arithmetical judgements pass the test.

If we so understand the best-explanation constraint that Wiggins is right, for the reasons he gives, to think that elementary arithmetical equalities satisfy it, no departure from arithmetical minimalism seems thereby justified. But that is a fair complaint only if the test may be interpreted, otherwise, in such a way that passing it *does* justify a departure from minimalism. Can it be?

I think it can, and that the analogy with abstract singular terms, viewed in what I see as Frege's way, is once again helpful. Dummett writes as follows about the referents of such abstract singular terms as numerals and expressions purportedly standing for sets:

> Pure abstract objects are no more than reflections of certain linguistic expressions, expressions which behave, by simple formal criteria, in a manner analogous to proper names of objects, but whose sense cannot be represented as consisting in our capacity to identify objects as their bearers.[15]

A Fregean will reject the last part of this thought, with its anti-Platonist overtones. But he must accept that there is something right about the spirit of this and similar remarks in Dummett's discussion. Abstract objects can, in general, impinge upon us only as the referents of understood abstract singular terms. There is no question of such an object influencing the thought of someone who does not know what it is, or producing other kinds of effects on our consciousness, or on our bodies, or on non-human objects of any kind. By contrast to the ordinary, 'robust' objects with which Dummett is tempted towards a disadvantageous comparison, abstract objects play a decidedly limited role. The Fregean—in effect, a minimalist about singular reference—finds no reason in that reflection to doubt the *reality* of reference to abstract objects. But the fact remains that there are reasons which force us to think of concrete objects as playing a role in the world quite independent of our thought and talk about them—reasons which impose what Dummett calls, I think unhappily, a 'realistic conception of reference' for concrete singular terms, and which simply have no counterparts for abstract objects.

Now let's transpose the passage I quoted from Dummett as follows

> The states of affairs which (merely) minimally true sentences represent are no more than reflections of those sentences, sentences which behave, by simple formal criteria, in a manner analogous to sentences which are apt to depict real states of affairs, but whose senses cannot be represented as consisting in our capacity to identify states of affairs necessary and sufficient for their truth.

Once again, the minimalist's response will be to reject the concluding part of the thought—the suggestion that understanding such a sentence does not really

consist in grasping its truth-conditions, with its attendant irrealist overtones. But the parallel is striking. Like pure abstract objects, the states of affairs to which merely minimally true sentences correspond do not *do* anything except answer to the demands of our (true) thoughts.

We can now see some cause for sympathy with Wiggins' suggestion that an emphasis on causality may not provide the best way of explaining what the best-explanation constraint is after—that it is not most happily formulated as to the effect that states of affairs of the sort depicted by a given class of judgements should be mentioned in the best *causal* explanation of our making those judgements. However, the reservation about the causal emphasis ought to be, it seems to me, not that the constraint can be satisfied in cases where no causal relations obtain, but that causality is—if it is—a *consequence* of what is important, which should be characterized differently. And what is important for this particular constraint is that the states of affairs which we regard our judgements as reflecting enjoy a *width of cosmological role*, as it were, sufficient to force us to regard their role as truth-conferrers in more than minimal terms. They must therefore participate in other kinds of explanation besides those in which germane beliefs of ours are the explananda. There must be more things which are so *because* of the obtaining of such states of affairs than the formation in us of certain beliefs.

So far as I can see, this will always be so when best explanations of the appropriate kind are causal, since to play any kind of causal role at all is to play, at least potentially, a wide causal role: states of affairs apt to cause the formation of certain beliefs in us will also be essentially apt to cause other kinds of effects in items which do not form beliefs at all. Perhaps the constraint, properly developed, will be seen to have only causally active satisfiers, though it's notable that mathematics contributes to the explanation of other phenomena besides belief. (Why do these rectangular titles not cover, without remainder, this rectangular floor? Because there are a prime number of them.) But notably, to revert to the moral case, the unjustness of a particular act seems to have a role in explaining nothing other than people's *beliefs* that it is unjust; more accurately, anything else it might explain—like our sympathy for a victim or his chagrin—will, *qua* so explicable, be a consequence of such beliefs.[16]

In general, then, the suggestion is that an explanation of our belief that p in terms, *inter alia*, of the obtaining of the state of affairs that p counts as best (or good enough) for the purposes of a useful best-explanation test only if *other* kinds of things are also to be explained by, *inter alia*, the obtaining of that state of affairs. This is just a consequence of the simple reflection that good explanations involve disclosing some sort of underlying unity in phenomena of overt diversity. Finding acausal satisfiers of the constraint will require, naturally, scrutiny of apparently acausal forms of explanation. But it is worth noting, to conclude this section, that the range of causal satisfiers is, at least prima facie, wider than might as first be expected. In particular, ascriptions of Lockean *secondary qualities*—colours, tastes, sounds, smells, palpable textures, and so on—seem to pass the test. It is not a *conceptual* error to suppose that bulls are enraged by red rags, and colours do as a matter of fact figure in the explanation

of the behaviour of bees and butterflies, of small children without language, and of certain purely physical phenomena. (What is the best explanation of the manifest colours on a photographic negative?) Sounds startle babies and animals, and activate reflexes like blinking. The smell of cheese in a trap may attract a mouse. A cat sits by a fire because it is warm. And so on. The effect of the constraint is not to create a club admitting only statements couched in the austere, primary quality vocabulary of physical science.

V

We have been trying to find a place for and, to some extent, refine constraints—evidence-transcendence, convergence, and best explanation—whose importance in the debates about realism has already been widely perceived. It is that which makes it possible to present the general reorientation which I have been recommending as a rationalization of existing debates. But it is otherwise with the fourth and final constraint which I shall discuss here. The importance of this has been less widely perceived, although the basic idea goes back to Plato[17] and it promises well for the exegesis of the old form of anti-realism illustrated by Locke's view of secondary qualities. The idea has a potential bearing on a number of issues of recent and contemporary concern, including the status of the self-ascription of 'folk-psychological' states, and the interpretation of Wittgenstein's ideas about rule-following.

The constraint is what I have called the *order-of-determination* constraint.[18] Intuitively, it marks the distinction between classes of statements about which our *best* opinions—opinions conceived by subjects and in circumstances which we think of as cognitively ideal for statements of that kind—(partially) *determine* the extension of the truth-predicate among them, and classes of statements our best opinions about which at most *reflect* an extension determined independently. A demonstration that a given class of statements comes in the latter category provides one, very direct way of distinguishing truth, as applied to them, from anything constructible out of assertibility, and so for enforcing a departure from minimalism. For a judgement is the deliverance of our *best* opinion, in the above sense, just in case it meets our highest standards of assertibility, and is therefore superassertible.

That explains the shape of a distinction which it would certainly be germane to draw, but it does not draw it. What should be the criteria for saying that a class of statements should be regarded in one way rather than the other? The matter is complicated, and I have no space to do more than sketch some initial moves here. We can usefully begin with the general form of what has come to be known as a *basic equation*:[19]

$P \leftrightarrow$ for any S: if conditions C obtain, then S believes that P.

Here conditions C are to be thought of as concerning the *pedigree* of S's belief. They are to be such that any belief whether or not P which is generated under

them is true. For particular choices of P there may, of course, be no such conditions. For instance, there are, plausibly, no conditions C such that, if S forms a belief about the Generalized Continuum Hypothesis under C, he will believe that the notorious Cantorian imponderable is true if and only if it is. Likewise if we believe, whether because accepting the underdetermination of all scientific theory by empirical data or for some other reason, that best scientific method is impotent to distinguish the total truth about the world from certain false accounts of it, then for suitable P selected from among the hypotheses in the 'total truth', there are, again, no appropriate C-conditions. So we put those cases on one side and concentrate on examples of P where we do believe, at least in principle, in the feasibility of such cognitively ideal conditions.

Consider, for any such P, the following rather trivial elaboration of the basic equation:

Whatever-it-takes

$P \leftrightarrow$ for any S: if S is a *suitable* subject, and operates in conditions which are *conducive* to the appraisal of P, and goes through a procedure *appropriate* to the appraisal of P, and goes through it *properly*, then S forms the belief that P.

This is trivial, of course, because the C-conditions are specified totally *insubstantially*; we are told no more than that S and the prevailing circumstances are to have whatever-it-takes for a successful appraisal of P. Just for that reason, granted only that there is some content to the idea that such conditions might obtain, the biconditional holds a priori. Now, the distinction we wish to draw begins to emerge, I suggest, when we ask: what is the effect on the status of such formulations when we replace these trivially formulated, whatever-it-takes C-conditions with *substantial* specifications of what it does take? In particular, can the a priority of such a basic equation survive such specifications? If it cannot, then that is just to say that any convergence between best opinion, when we give a substantial account of what makes opinion best, and truth is itself at most an a posteriori truth; accordingly, since the tie between best opinion, substantially accounted for, and superassertibility will not presumably be merely a posteriori, a distinction will be imposed between the concepts of truth and superassertibility, even if not between their extensions. By contrast, if the a priority of the basic equation survives substantial specification, then, subject to qualifications to emerge below, we have the makings of a case for regarding best opinion as playing an extension-determining role.

A possible exemplification of this rather abstract train of thought is provided by the contrasting situations of judgements of shape and of colour. Consider first the latter. What conditions do we need to impose on a subject S in order to ensure that it is true that something is red if and only if S believes that it is? Well, S has to be equipped to experience the object as red, and must suffer no internal impediment to the formation of the belief appropriate to that

experiential content; and the background conditions must assist the exercise of these abilities. In more detail, and to a cut a longish story short, the following, it seems, is plausible:

Red

x is red $\leftrightarrow$ for any S: if S knows which object x is, and knowingly observes it in plain view in suitable perceptual conditions; and is fully attentive to this observation; and is perceptually suitable and is prey to no other cognitive disfunction; and is free of doubt about the satisfaction of any of these conditions, then if S forms a belief about x's colour, that belief will be that x is red.

There are still two occurrences of 'suitable' which might make us wonder whether we yet have sufficient distance from the whatever-it-takes type of formulation. But we can effectively gloss them as follows: 'suitable perceptual conditions' can be conditions of lighting like those which actually normally obtain out-of-doors and out-of-shadow at noon on a cloudy summer's day (such conditions are actually *more* than suitable, though that does no harm). But 'normally', construed broadly statistically, is still required because the lighting conditions on such occasions are sometimes disrupted by solar eclipses, nuclear explosions, and so on. And more simply: 'perceptual suitability' involves nothing other than having perceptual capacities which fall within the range of statistical normality among actual human beings.

My suggestion is that, even when the C-conditions in the above basic equation are specified in this substantial, broadly statistical way, it still remains a priori true that their satisfaction ensures that correctness of S's belief about x's being red or not. That, by itself, need be of no significance for the order-of-determination constraint. But, I suggest, it becomes so when supplemented by the consideration that satisfaction of the C-conditions as glossed above is logically independent of any truths concerning the extension of colour predicates; and could, indeed, be appraised by someone who, because possessed only of monochromatic vision, for example, had no concept of colour at all. If this were not so, it would not be unquestionable—to express the matter cautiously—that the a priority of the connection between satisfaction of the C-conditions, S's believing that p, and its truth, makes a case for best opinion being extension-determining. But it is so, and no other suggestion comes to mind of what *else*, quite independently of human judgement, might be viewed as determining the extension of the truth-predicate among judgements of colour—some different kind of account of which the a priori connection illustrated would be a consequence. I therefore conjecture that judgements of colour *fail* the order-of-determination test: our best opinions about colour constrain, rather than reflect, the extension of colour predicates among the objects which they concern.

Contrast the situation of shape. Consider, for instance, the judgement that x is pear-shaped. (I choose a shape-property which, unlike, e.g., sphericity—if a sphere has to be perfect—is visually salient.) The following is a plausible start:

Pear-shaped

x is pear-shaped $\leftrightarrow$ for any S: if S knows which object x is, and knowingly observes it in plain view from a sufficient variety of positions in suitable perceptual conditions, and is fully attentive to these observations, and is perceptually suitable and is prey to no other cognitive disfunction, and is free of doubt about the satisfaction of any of these conditions—then if S forms a belief about x's shape, that belief will be that x is pear-shaped.

No doubt this is not beyond objection. For instance, S might lack the concept, pear-shaped, and form a belief about x's shape whose content featured some still cruder concept. But let us bypass that. The question is: is something a priori true in prospect involving only substantially specified C-conditions? Well, only if an appropriate gloss can be placed on the two occurrences of 'suitable' to distance them from whatever-it-takes construal. But when we try to envisage such a gloss, two apparent disanalogies emerge with the case of colour.

First, since multiple observations are essentially involved in any *best* opinion about three-dimensional shape, 'suitable perceptual conditions', however glossed, will count for nothing unless x's *stability* in shape through the period of observation is somehow ensured. A dilemma ensues. Suppose that we elaborate the C-conditions, somehow or other, so as to have them logically entail that x is indeed stable in shape throughout S's observations. Then, in contrast with the case of 'red', their satisfaction will not be independent of all matters concerning shape, but will imply that there is some particular shape which x has throughout. It will consequently be open to question—even if the resulting basic equation is fully substantial and holds a priori—whether a best opinion about x's shape, characterized as an opinion meeting *these* C-conditions, may coherently be viewed as determining what the truth about x's shape is. For if facts about x's shape enter into the determination of whether or not S's opinion is best, how can best opinion be regarded as determining what are the facts about x's shape? Suppose, on the other hand, we so elaborate the C-conditions that the question of x's stability in shape is logically independent of their satisfaction. Then it will not be true a priori that when the C-conditions are satisfied, x is indeed stable in shape. Consequently, since x's stability in shape is, a priori, a precondition of S's opinion being best, it follows that the basic equation will not now concern *best* opinion. And more: it seems impossible to understand how *Pear-shaped* could now be a priori—how satisfaction of these C-conditions could provide an a priori guarantee that S was operating under conditions which ensured the correctness of his judgement. For how could that be guaranteed if, for all anyone, including S, could a priori affirm to the contrary, x's shape might be undergoing unnoticed changes? On each horn of the dilemma, then, a case will not have been made that best opinion is, in this instance, extension-determining.

The dilemma argues that the a priority of *Pear-shaped* can be conserved under substantial specification of its C-conditions only if the specification begs some independent determination of truth-value among judgements of the appropriate kind. Neither horn is conclusively developed. But it might seem that its suggested conclusion, that best opinions about shape are extension-reflecting, is premature in any case, since it depends on the assumption that a best opinion about shape is accessible to a subject working alone. For there is the alternative of spreading the responsibility for the judgement of x's shape among a number of simultaneous observers. For instance, the extension of 'pear-shaped' might be constrained not by the best opinions of a single observer but by the overall drift of the not-quite-so-good opinions—not-quite-so-good because based on single observations—of a sufficient number of sufficiently variously positioned observers. And in this scenario, instability is not a consideration.

Enter the second disanalogy with colour. The fact is that it is not a priori true of our actual typical visual capacities and of the circumstances in which we typically consider that their exercise is at its most effective, that they are conjointly suitable for the reliable visual appraisal of shape.[20] We can make theoretical sense of worlds in which, even by beings with such capacities, reliable visual appraisal of shape would be impossible—because, for example, the paths assumed by photons were subject to massive gravitational distortion, or because the physics of light was entirely different. Likewise we can make good sense of the idea of sighted beings who, in a world like the one we actually inhabit, are relatively poorly endowed for the visual appraisal of shape. It is not an a priori truth that we as we actually are and our actual world come into neither of these categories. Perhaps it is something which humankind, in some sense, has always *held* a priori—started out without questioning, as it were; but that we have found no cause to question it is courtesy of eons of congenial experience. So even judgements based on collectively pooled impressions of shape must lack the requisite a priori guarantee: there are no conditions, specifiable in such a way that their satisfaction is logically independent of any truths concerning shape, of which it holds a priori that collectively pooled visual judgements made under them will furnish truthful syntheses about objects' shapes. So there is a case for saying that judgements of shape *pass* the order of determination test.

The principle governing the development of the disanalogy, as far as I have here taken it, is that best opinion may, at least prima facie, be regarded as constraining the extension of the truth-predicate among a given class of statements if we can substantially specify what makes an opinion best without presupposing that extension to be determined independently, and if it is then a priori that opinions which are formed when the specification is satisfied are correct. By contrast, there is a prima-facie case for regarding best opinion merely as at most extension-reflecting if these two constraints cannot simultaneously be met. I say both times a 'prima-facie case' because there probably are other ways of substantiating the order-of-determination test. The condition met in the case of colour—that satisfaction of the appropriate kind of C-conditions is *globally* independent of truth about colour—is a very demanding one, and invites the thought that less demanding conditions might yet subserve the direction of determination from best opinion to truth. One kind of possibility would be *mixed* cases: cases where best opinions have to bear some specified

relation to a core of judgements of the appropriate kind whose truth is conceived as determined independently of their being the deliverances of best opinion, although outside this core best opinion is determinative rather than reflective. More generally, it ought not to matter if what qualifies an opinion as best can only be explained in a way that presupposes antecedent determination of the truth or falsity of certain judgements in the germane class, provided none of these are logically connected with the particular judgement in question—more generally, provided detailed specifications of the *C*-conditions can have some sort of overall predicative structure, as it were.

Whether these rather abstract possibilities are realized by any familiar class of judgements I am not sure. But at least one other kind of case is. It is the case where it is a priori that an opinion is best unless there is positive reason to think otherwise. Consider, for instance, avowals of psychological states—a self-ascription of an intention, say. Here the appropriate *C*-conditions would seem to be: a clear-headed appreciation of the content of the intention avowed: a lack of any material self-deception which might motivate one to believe that one had the intention in question when one did not; and, perhaps, the lack of any distracting or muddling influence—a drug or whatever—which might induce something of the phenomenology of intending while impairing the ability to form genuine intentions. But it seems a priori true that, subject to the provisos, I believe I have a certain intention only if I really do. Now, there is every cause to be sceptical whether one can specify what is involved in the satisfaction of these conditions—the absence of any material self-deception, for instance—in a fashion which presupposes no prior determination of facts about a subject's intentions and intention-related states. But it is open to us, nevertheless, to regard subjects' beliefs about their intentions as at least *provisionally* extension-determining precisely because the *C*-conditions in question are *positive presumptive*: rather than representing a hurdle which the opinion has to jump, as it were, before it can be taken seriously, they merely constitute the categories of criticism within which someone who would reject the opinion is obliged to make their case.[21]

VI

A major question for further work concerns the extent to which the four constraints focused on—evidence-transcendence, cognitive command, best explanation/cosmological width, and order-of-determination—are complementary or cut across each other. We have seen reason to think, for instance, that secondary qualities fail order-of-determination but pass best explanation. One might anticipate that elementary arithmetical equalities would pass cognitive command, but their situation with best explanation is not so clear. If in the end best explanation does turn out to be a requirement with only causal satisfiers, then arithmetic will presumably fail—at least on any view but the most far-fetched (lunatic) platonism. I would also anticipate that arithmetic will fail order-of-determination. But that is an expression of the conviction that

platonism is untenable. For the essential epistemology of platonism is exactly the view that mathematical propositions *pass* the order-of-determination test—that proof in mathematics is a mere cognitive auxiliary whereby finite minds may bring their opinions into line with states of affairs constituted independently. Of course, that belief very naturally finds expression in the conviction that mathematical truth may be evidence (proof)-transcendent. One rather attractive prospect to have emerged from the preceding reflections is that there may be a way of appraising the root epistemology of platonism, which finds expression in the endorsement of evidence-transcendence, otherwise than by directly engaging the commitment to evidence-transcendence. For instance, the thesis that best mathematical opinion is wholly extension-reflecting may be forced to acknowledge certain quite definite commitments concerning the epistemic status of certain appropriate basic equations—or whatever supplants them in a better formulation of the distinction—and may therefore be criticizable without engaging the very large issues which evidence-transcendence raises. However, the evidence-transcendence and order-of-determination tests remain distinct: there is, of course, no space for the idea that statements may possess in principle indeterminable truth-values if those truth-values are precisely determined by our best opinions;[22] but statements may pass the order-of-determination test without allowing of evidence-transcendent truth-value—the judgement that x is pear-shaped is a plausible example.

I tentatively conclude that the four ideas on which I have focused are each available to motivate a departure from minimalism, and perhaps even allow a simple arrangement in order of strength. That, and the notification of other cruces besides these four, are among the issues for further study. There is a great deal that is unclear about this programme. But perhaps I have made it clear that it would be worth making it clear.

Notes

1. See for instance chapter 6 of Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word*. Compare his contribution in the present volume.
2. See Mackie, *Ethics—Inventing Right and Wrong*.
3. Cf. n. 1. Blackburn's proposal has the effect that one who accepts both
   (i) Lying is wrong
   and (ii) If lying is wrong, getting others to lie is wrong,
   but rejects (iii) Getting others to lie is wrong,
   is guilty merely of a *moral* shortcoming. For further discussion see my Gareth Evans Memorial Lecture, 'Realism, Anti-realism, Irrealism, Quasi-realism', in P. French, T. Uehling Jr., and H. Wettstein (eds.), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 12.
4. See n. 3.
5. This is the line taken in 'Realism, Anti-realism, Irrealism, Quasi-realism'.
6. In Wright, *Frege's Conception of Numbers as Objects*.
7. Cf. my *Realism, Meaning and Truth*, ch. 9.
8. For more detail on this matter, see especially the first two Waynflete lectures.
9. D. Wiggins, *Needs, Values, Truth*, p. 147.

10. Ibid., p. 151.
11. G. Harman, *The Nature of Morality*, ch. 1.
12. Wiggins, *Needs, Values, Truth*, pp. 156 ff.
13. Ibid.; cf. Wiggins' remarks about Harman and Benacerraf at the foot of p. 153.
14. Ibid.
15. M. Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, p. 505.
16. Matters are of course more complicated. For discussion of some of the complexities, see *Truth and Objectivity*, ch. 5.
17. To the *Euthyphro*, in fact. See *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett, Vol. II, pp. 84–6.
18. See my 'Wittgenstein's Rule-Following Considerations and the Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics', in A. George (ed.), *Reflections on Chomsky*, pp. 246 ff.
19. So styled by Mark Johnston. There are well-known drawbacks, from which I here prescind, to using 'basic equations' as a framework for discussion of the contrast in which we are interested. But it would take us too far afield to go into them here. For some indications, see my 'Moral Values, Projection and Secondary Qualities', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume LXII, section IV, n. 26 and my 'Wittgenstein's Rule-Following Considerations and the Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics'. The matter was discussed in some detail in my circulated 'Notes on Basic Equations' to which Johnston refers below (this volume p. 122). See also the Appendix to chapter 3 of my *Truth and Objectivity*.
20. Of course, the two uses of 'actual' in that sentence may have the effect that it is a *necessary* truth that the capacities so specified are, in the circumstances so specified, up to the job. But necessity is one thing and a priority is another.
21. Perhaps the effect of that last point is that we can in effect express the relevant *C*-conditions in *second intension*: if no reason is available to doubt that . . . , then a subject intends that *P* if and only if they believe that they do. If that is right, then perhaps the case may be assimilated to colour after all. For some elaboration of the application of these ideas to intentional psychological states, see my 'Wittgenstein's Rule-Following Considerations and the Central Project of Theoretical Linguistics', section IV.
22. Unless any relevant opinion's being best is itself indeterminable.

4

Objectivity Refigured: Pragmatism Without Verificationism

Mark Johnston

Let us say that metaphysics in the pejorative sense is a confused conception of what legitimates our practices; confused because metaphysics in this sense is a series of pictures of the world as containing various independent demands for our practices, when the only real legitimation of those practices consists in showing their worthiness to survive on the testing ground of everyday life. Then metaphysics is not just a technical discourse within philosophy to which, since Kant, a technical apparatus of philosophical criticism has been opposed. It is endemic to our culture. So defined, metaphysics is the proper object of that practical criticism which asks whether the apparently legitimating stories which help sustain our practices really do legitimate, and whether the real explanations of our practices allow us to justify them. There then ought to be a critical philosophy which not only corrals the developed manifestations of metaphysics within philosophy but also serves the ends of practical criticism. Such a critical philosophy would be the content of anything that deserved the name of a progressive Pragmatism.

Alas, Pragmatism has now become so dissolved in Verificationist idioms that commanding a clear view of its prospects requires precipitating out the pragmatic insights from the heady Verificationist concoction.

The alliance between Pragmatism and Verificationism is not a wholly unnatural one. They both have a common enemy in a certain kind of Realist, a Metaphysical Realist, for want of a better name. To my taste, what is most distinctive about Metaphysical Realism comes out when set against the background of mediaeval natural theology, a theology according to which God is a being who created the world by realizing one of his own consistent and complete conceptions of how things might go. The world is then a divine artefact. The real structure of this divine artefact is therefore the structure that God represented to himself when he made the world. So God is, among other things, the solution to the problem about what makes one of the many alternative accounts of the world the account attributing the right structure to the world. The privileged cognitive task is therefore set in advance: it is to