Can There Be a Rationally Compelling Argument for Anti-realism about Ordinary ("Folk") Psychology?

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One way of showing that there can be no such argument would be to provide, to the contrary, some conclusive case for realism. Another would be to show that certain areas of discourse, including ordinary psychology, are somehow off–limits for realist/anti–realist debate — that the conditions for a valid such debate are somehow abrogated when the subject matter is intentional psychology. My particular concern here is to explore a case for a distinct but no less intriguing possibility: that it may actually be a consequence of (the best version of) anti–realism about ordinary psychology that it should admit of no rationally compelling support. That, I shall suggest, may well be the situation; and if it is not, it is not clear how the consequence can be avoided save by a much more radical and sweeping view than the psychological anti–realist is likely to want or to have bargained for.

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I shall try to get by with only the lightest theoretical attention to what may be involved in 'realism' and 'anti–realism' respectively.

For present purposes, a realist about a given region of discourse will be one who holds three things:

(i) that its ingredient statements have a content which fits them for the representation of real states of affairs;

(ii) that the characteristic aim of those who practise the discourse is successful such representation, and

(iii) that the world is furnished to provide states of affairs of the kind which such statements are apt to represent.

Each of these three claims is distinctively denied by a well–known anti–realist paradigm. *Expressivists* and *instrumentalists* character-istically deny that a targeted discourse deals in representational con-tents. *Fictionalists* distinctively deny that the characteristic aim of competent practitioners of the discourse is the representation of real states of affairs. *Error–theorists* distinctively deny that the objects, or properties, characteristically dealt with in the discourse are real, and hence that the world contains states of affairs of the appropriate kind.

Anti–realists about intentional psychology have typically directly denied the third realist component —the worldly reality of the states of affairs which ordinary psychological discourse seems to call for. Since it is doubtful whether someone who repudiated *only* the second component would properly be described as anti–realist, and since any successful attack on the first component: the representationality of psychological discourse —would enjoin rejection of any appropriate category of corresponding states of affairs,[1] we may take it that anti–realists of whatever stripe must converge on such a denial.[2]

The denial can seem like an affront to the merest common–sense. It seems to fly in the face of the characteristic *evidence* of intentional states —the fact that a subject's being in such a state is, as it seems, in typical cases effortlessly and non–inferentially available to them. Surely each of us does have —really have— beliefs, desires, hopes, intentions, wishes, and so on. How else, save by the self–ascription of such states, are we to make sense of most of what we do? How else, save by assuming certain such states, are we ever to decide rationally what to do?

This protest is open to the retort that the "evidence" of ordinary psychological states to their subjects really comes to no more than

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[1] The considerations about indeterminacy of radical interpretation and Cog-nitive Command to be reviewed shortly are one such attack.

[2] Though this will need qualification —see note 15 below.

the phenomenon of *avowal*: that people acquire the propensity, on being educated in ordinary psychological practice, spontaneously to affirm claims concerning their own intentional states which for the most part, both to themselves and others, seem —by the standards of the practice— to make decent sense of their behaviour. It is, so it may be contended, quite another matter whether anything real answers to these claims, particularly in the light of certain well-known challenges to the realist view.

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I'll briefly rehearse three such challenges. First, there is a challenge from considerations of *Cognitive Command* and the indeterminacy of radical interpretation. The idea of the realist about a given region of discourse —unless pessimistic enough to think that what is true there is altogether beyond our ken— is that soberly and responsibly to practise in that region is to enter into a kind of representational mode of cognitive function, comparable in relevant respects to taking a photograph or making a wax impression of a key. The realist conceives that certain matters stand thus and so independently of us and our practice —matters comparable to the photographed scene and the contours of the key. We then engage in a certain process, viz. we put ourselves at the mercy, so to speak, of the standards of belief–formation and appraisal appropriate to the discourse in question —compare taking the snapshot or impressing the key on the wax— and the result is to leave an imprint on our minds which, in the best case, appropriately matches the independently standing state of affairs. Philosophers such as the early Wittgenstein and J.L. Austin tried to be very definite about this type of conception —probably too definite. But even left vague, it does have certain quite definite obligations. If we take photographs of the *same* scene which somehow turn out to represent it in incompatible ways, there has to have been some kind of shortcoming in the function of one of the cameras, or in the way it was used. If the wax impressions we take of a single key turn out to be of such a shape that no one key can fit them both, then again there has to have been some fault in the way one of us went about it, or in the materials used. The price you pay for taking the idea of representation in the serious way the realist wants to take it is that when subjects' representations prove to conflict, then —(prescinding from certain necessary qualifications, mainly to do with vagueness, which I won't elaborate now),— there has to have been something amiss with the way they

were arrived at or with their vehicle —the wax, the camera, or the thinker.[3]

It follows that one obligation of the realist about intentional psychology will be to hold, and therefore to justify holding, that disagreements about a subject's intentional states, since they involve a clash between what purport to be substantial representations, have to involve defects of process or materials, as it were; —that at least one of the parties to the disagreement has to be guilty of a deficiency in the way he arrives at his view, or to be somehow constitutionally unfit. Contraposing therefore: any suggestion that such disagreement can be *rationally blameless* is a suggestion that the realist —seriously representational— view of intentional psychological discourse is in error. But the well–known thesis of the indeterminacy of radical interpretation suggests exactly that. The claim of the thesis is that, such is the methodology of the discipline, radical interpreters of a given subject's saying and doings who proceed unimpeachably can nonetheless wind up with mutually inconsistent yet unimprovable conceptions of that subject's overall psychological set. If nothing in the methodology of radical interpretation constrains its products to within uniqueness, then it would appear to follow that forming opinions in a manner constrained by that methodology is not, in the sense the realist contends, a substantially representational mode of cognitive function. At least: we must either grant that conclusion or concede that the truth values of such opinions may transcend decision by the methods of radical interpretation, (so that the price of realism becomes what Quine famously stigmatised as the Myth of the Museum.[4])

A second, very familiar challenge derives from a worry about causal over–determination. According to our ordinary way of thinking, the beliefs, desires, and other intentional states of a subject which combine to explain certain aspects of her behaviour contrive to *produce* that behaviour —so that the species of explanation involved is causal. Of course there is a tradition —associated, erroneously as I believe, with the later Wittgenstein— which denies this. But the great difficulty with that view, as Davidson and others have emphasised, is that it seems powerless to explain our intuitions in cases where, although a subject does possess certain beliefs and desires which could make perfectly good rationalistic sense of particular elements in her

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[3]For fuller specification and discussion of the notion of Cognitive Command, see chs. 3 and 4 of my *Truth and Objectivity*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard, 1982.

[4]See pp. 27-8 of W.V.O. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, New York and London, Columbia U.P., 1969.

behaviour, —(she wants, for instance, to kill her husband, and be-
lieves that she would have a good chance of doing so by toppling the
ladder on which he is standing)— it would be wrong to cite them
in the explanation of what she actually does —(if, for instance, she
leans on the ladder thoughtlessly in order to remove a painful shoe.)
However ordinary thought also has it that any *physical* event or pro-
cess must admit of a complete explanation in terms of its physical
causes if it has causes at all. This is uncomfortable if behaviour is
viewed as ultimately physical (and how else?). For then it seems to
have too many causes: any purposive action of mine is apparently
caused not just by the intentional states which explain it, but by
parallel neural and other bodily happenings.

There are various familiar strategies of reconciliation. One is to
try to stabilise the view that ordinary psychological explanations
are not really causal, notwithstanding the sort of difficulty noted.
Another, it hardly needs stating, would be to go for some form of
physicalism —to deny the distinctness of the intentional psychologi-
cal antecedents of a piece of behaviour from all its neural and physical
causes.[5] A third —unusual and interesting— response would be to
deny the identity of the *explananda* in the two kinds of case —to in-
sist on a distinction, for the purposes of explanation, between *action*,
strictly so regarded, which is the province of intentional psychology,
and *tokens of behaviour* whose explanation need not be psycholog-
ical at all. But none of these lines, many would feel, has yet been
presented in fully convincing detail. Each is open to plausible ex-
tant criticisms. So in the present state of play, it seems that someone
might quite reasonably feel pressured to respond to the problem by
disputing the reality of the explanations offered by intentional psy-
chology, —and hence, since it is of the essence of intentional states
to be explanatory of action, the reality of the states that such expla-
nations purportedly depict.

Finally, there is a challenge from content anti–realism. The puta-
tive states of affairs in which intentional psychological explanation
trades are individuated by the joint specification of a type of attitude
—belief, desire, hope, etc.— and a content [that p], the explanatory
potential of such states varying as a function of each ingredient in
the pairing. It follows that if a general anti–realism about content is
correct, —if the world contains no real semantic properties,— then

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[5]I take no stand here on the question whether this second strategy might be
successfully be implemented non–reductively, by play with (some notion of the)
supervenience of mental states upon physical ones rather than with any claim of
strict identity.

a complete inventory of items in the world, and of the characteristics which they can possess, will contain no mention of the states characteristically featured in ordinary psychological explanations.

Arguments for the unreality of content are very familiar in contemporary philosophy. Kripke's sceptical argument, advanced in Wittgenstein's name, and Quine's arguments for the indeterminacy of translation are among the more interesting. Putnam's model–theoretic arguments against realism have been held to lend themselves to such an interpretation[6] (contrary to Putnam's own belief that their effectiveness is restricted to use against a metaphysical–realist antagonist.) Each of these lines of argument is, familiarly, criticisable in detail, and has indeed been roundly criticised. But the underlying worry does not go away that what they, in effect, exploit are various defective conceptions of what contents and content–properties might be in a natural world; and that we actually have to hand no better conception of that than those exploited by such arguments.

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To accept that any of these challenges is successful is to accept that ordinary psychological ascriptions[7] serve to represent no real subject matter. That would seem to leave open a choice between, on the one hand, viewing ordinary psychological discourse as hopelessly compromised —the well–known eliminativist response— and, on the other, sticking to it that the discourse as a whole is acceptable, even while conceding that it serves to represent no real matters of fact, by finding for it some other heuristic or instrumental role.

The eliminativist response is deeply unattractive.[8] Indeed, in contrast with cases like astrology, or phlogiston theory, where such a reaction is surely correct, it is hard to feel convinced that there really *is* an intelligible eliminativist option in the present case. To take

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[6] The principal sources are Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private language*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1982; ch. 2 of W.V.O Quine, *Word and Object*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT, 1960; and ch. 3 of Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1981. The latter is in many ways a more satisfactory argument than that of Putnam's famous "Models and Reality", *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, 45 (1980), pp. 464-82.

[7] —or at least those in which negation is not the principal operator.

[8] A useful many–handed catalogue of complaints, together with some important qualifications, is provided in the special number of *Mind and Language*, 8, vol. 2 (1993).

it that ordinary psychology is merely a superstition would presum-
ably be a commitment to dispensing not just with all examples of
ordinary practical–syllogistic reasoning but also with anything like
our ordinary concepts of rationality and cognition, which presup-
pose the authenticity of content–bearing states and processes. Their
elimination would thus threaten to leave us without the resources to
make sense of any kind of behaviour which seems to call for expla-
nation in, broadly, information–processing terms. Not just ordinary
psychology but considerable sweeps of cognitive psychology would
be up for elimination too.[9]

However, although some philosophers have canvassed, and a few
have even urged, this profoundly opaque prospect, I think it's fair
to say that most of those who have been drawn to an anti–realist
thoughts about ordinary psychology have had in mind a different
form of anti–realist response: a conservative response, broadly com-
parable to expressivism in ethics and instrumentalism in the philos-
ophy of science. On such a view, it is not necessary, in order for it to
be legitimate to speak of content and of states individuated by con-
tent, that there be real states of affairs involving content and content
properties; it is enough that such talk is appropriately disciplined,
and that it serves some legitimate purpose. There are other things
for indicative discourses to do besides state facts.

Many will find this direction unattractive too, though not perhaps
as unattractive as eliminativism. What sort of purpose might in-
tentional psychology, divorced of any claim to reality, really serve?
One well known kind of instrumentalist conception, pioneered in the
writings of Dennett,[10] is that the rationalisation of others' behaviour
within the familiar ordinary psychological categories can prove an
economical way of anticipating it —that it is much easier to predict
the moves of a good chess–playing computer, for instance, if I think
of it as an intentional strategist rather than merely as a physical
mechanism. Now, it seems fair to object that the model implied
by this proposal of the explanatory content and utility of ordinary
psychological theorising seems somewhat off–beam: ordinary psy-
chological claims do not generally contribute in any spectacularly
successful way to *prediction*, seeming to bestow a more character-
istically retroactive and interpretive kind of understanding. It is

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[9]The point is forcefully made in Barbara Hannan's lead–off contribution to
the *Mind and Language* special, cited in note 8.

[10]See especially ch. 1, "Intentional Systems", of Daniel C. Dennett, *Brain-
storms*, Montgomery, Vermont, Bradford, 1978 and his *The Intentional Stance*,
Cambridge, Mass., MIT/Bradford, 1987.

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moreover difficult to understand how the impression of *explanation* which ordinary psychological accounts of people's behaviour contrive to give could survive taking quite seriously the thought that such accounts describe nothing real. However the most awkward aspect of any broadly Dennettian view emerges, as it seems to me, when one puts on one side the other–directed uses of ordinary psychology —by which Dennett was preoccupied— and focuses instead on one's own case. It is not just *difficult* to think of the most ingrained elements of one's own self–conception as accepted merely as the components in a self–directed "stance"; it is not clear that it is even *coherent* to do so. For is not such a stance itself individuated by its content —by the attitudes one ascribes to oneself? And does not the Dennettian take it as a *matter of real fact* that one is taking such a stance? If not, what? —a second order stance? It is one thing to take a broadly instrumentalist view of a particular type of theory; quite another to be implicitly told that one must also take an instrumentalist view of the taking of the instrumentalist view. Self–consciously to deploy a complex of supposed fictions in the Dennettian manner is to engage in a complex attitudinal state which there is then no remaining room to construe as fictional or merely instrumental.

Another very familiar anti–realist paradigm —that provided by the expressivism in ethics championed by such writers as A.J. Ayer and R.M. Hare[11]— also teeters into incoherence when applied in the present instance. It is of the essence of any such view to rely on a robust distinction between genuine assertions and other forms of speech act. But any such distinction must ultimately be explained by reference to certain *characteristic intentional states* of participants in the discourse in question —that is why expressivists have

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[11] The loci classici are of course the famous "Critique of Ethics and Theology" offered in Chapter six of Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936); and R.M. Hare's *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1952). Ayer and Hare proposed the strict expressivist view that moral discourse, properly understood, is only apparently assertoric, and that moral utterances are characteristically governed by a different kind of illocutionary force, serving to fit them for a quite different role than the statement of fact —the expression of attitude, endorsement of norms, or whatever. The strict expressivist line is softened in the more recent treatments of Simon Blackburn and Allan Gibbard. Chapter 6, "Evaluations, Projections and Quasi–realism", of Blackburn's *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984) remains the best introduction to his view; Alan Gibbard's ideas are developed systematically in his *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (Cambridge, Mass,: Harvard University Press, 1990). It may be wondered, however, whether their proposals would not to better to travel under the banner of 'minimalism' in the sense of Truth and Objectivity, or 'non–factualism' in the sense of section IV to follow.

thought they could excuse ethical pronouncements any genuinely as-
sertoric role on the ground that they are characteristically aimed
at the expression not of beliefs but of certain distinctive feelings
and at shaping the corresponding feelings of others. Genuinely as-
sertoric discourses, that is to say, will be marked off from merely
expressive discourses by systematic differences in pragmatics which
will simply not be stateable without recourse to the categories of
intentional psychology. So the very statement of the detail of such a
view will demand the possibility of *assertions* about matters in that
province.

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There is an urgent need, then, to consider what —if not elimina-
tivism, nor Dennettian instrumentalism, nor some analogue of eth-
ical expressivism— is the happiest form for an anti–realism about
ordinary psychology to assume. This is a big question. But the key
move, I believe, is to realise that the *truth–aptitude* of a discourse,
and indeed the *truth* of very many of its characteristic assertions,
do not have to be in dispute between views about it that are quite
justifiably regarded as realist and anti–realist respectively. We need
the resource of a conception of truth which allows us to grant truth–
aptitude, and indeed truth, to responsible judgements within a given
discourse without thereby conceding a realist view of it.

Such a view will hold that to ascribe truth to a statement need
not be to ascribe a property of controversial metaphysical content,
that any sentence is a candidate for truth which is possessed of asser-
toric content, and that possession of assertoric content is essentially
a matter of meeting certain syntactic and disciplinary constraints
—essentially, sentences have such content which are capable of sig-
nificant embedding within constructions such as negation, the con-
ditional, and in contexts of propositional attitude, and whose use is
subject to acknowledged standards of warrant. When such standards
are satisfied that will then suffice, other things being equal, defea-
sibly to justify the claim that the sentence in question is true. The
crucial question thus becomes not whether ordinary psychology deals
in truth–apt claims, nor whether those of its claims which are justi-
fied in the light of its proper standards may defensibly (if defeasibly)
be regarded as true, but rather what *kind* of truth its statements are
fitted for. And the claim of the anti–realist will be that they are
not fitted for the kind of robust, non–deflationary truth aspired to
by the realist: that the discourse of intentional psychology does not

deal in contents which are apt for the representation of aspects of objective reality.

Work is needed, of course, to explain what such a claim really comes to: to explain the form an anti–realist conception of truth may assume in detail, and how it may deserve the tag, "anti–realist". We need to say what qualifies something to be a truth predicate, and to explain by having, or lacking, which features such a predicate may qualify as a vehicle for realist or anti–realist intuitions. I have entered into these matters in some detail elsewhere[12] and will not enlarge upon them further here, except to say that matters are complicated by the fact that, as I believe, the standard deflationary conception of truth, according to which "true" is merely a device of 'disquotation', serving to express no real property, is of no help in this context; and that there is no simple crux between realism and anti–realism but a variety of features whose possession by a discourse may give some point to realist/anti–realist thinking about it.

We envisage, then, a form of anti–realism about ordinary psychology which will grant that its distinctive claims, literally construed, are truth–apt, and that we are justified in taking many of them to be true. What will be denied is that the discourse generally, and its truth predicate in particular, exemplify any further features which give point to the kind of imagery characteristic of realism: par excellence, the conception of a correspondence between ordinary psychological claims and any aspects of the real objective world.

The acceptance of such a distinction still leaves a space for a kind of error–theoretic anti–realism about psychology: a view which regards psychological statements as (abortively) representational of certain purportedly real states of affairs. There is space, in other words, for a view which holds that psychological discourse *semantically aspires* to realist truth, as it were, but —whether or not speakers are char-acteristically deluded on the point— systematically fails to secure it.

Again, I think we should foreclose on this option. The reason is simply that ordinary psychology must in any case incorporate ac-ceptability conditions —standards of appropriateness and inappro-priateness for its claims— which have nothing to do with truth and falsity as interpreted by realism That is, among the welter of strictly

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[12]They supply virtually the whole agenda for *Truth and Objectivity*. For an anticipation of the directions there taken, see my "Realism, Anti–realism, Irre-alism, Quasi–realism" in French, Uehling and Wettstein, eds., *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 12 (1988), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, pp. 25-49; and "Anti–Realism: The Contemporary debate – W(h)ither Now?" in Hal-dane and Wright, eds. *Reality, Representation and Projection*, New York, Oxford University Press 1993, pp. 63-84.

false claims which, on the sort of vew mooted, ordinary psychological discourse involves, there will be a distinction between those which are nevertheless appropriate —acceptable, in the light of the ordinary purposes of the discourse,— and those which are not. Given that such a subsidiary set of standards has to be recognised by any account, there then seems no evident point to the play with global falsity, realistically conceived. Better, rather, to construe the practice of the discourse purely in terms of the supposedly subsidiary norms.[13]

Let us identify *non–factualism* about a discourse with the view that there is, when it is correctly conceived, no realist semantic aspiration —that its ingredient claims are merely minimally truth-apt, as I have elsewhere expressed it,[14] and involve no claim, even in a fictionalist spirit, to the representation of real states of affairs.[15] Then the recommendation I am making is that the most competitive

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[13]I do not mean to assert that there could *never* be justification for an error-theoretic view of a discourse of the kind just outlined. My point is rather that the *default* view should be that just recommended —that the obligation is on the error–theorist to show that any other construal of the content of a discourse's characteristic claims than in terms of a kind of truth–conditions which allow the charge of global falsity, would result in serious distortions of our practice and understanding of it. I do not say that cannot ever be done. It might be accomplished in the present instance, for example, by making good the three claims that our understanding of rational explanation is as causal, that physical effects have only physical causes, and that intentional states are not physical. In that case the received truth–conditions of psychological ascriptions would indeed incorporate metaphysical error, and it would indeed be a distortion of our understanding of ordinary psychology to construe its truth–predicate merely as a construct out of its own internal discipline. But I am sceptical whether such a case can be made, in that way or any other.

[14]In *Truth and Objectivity*.

[15]We now need to make the qualification advertised in note 2 above. Earlier it was suggested that anything worth regarding as a form of psychological anti-realism would involve the denial of the worldly reality of psychological states of affairs. But it is also clear that the identification of truth with 'correspondence to fact' as at one level a platitude, so that (for the anti-realist) to grant that we are justified in taking certain psychological claims to be true is already a commitment to recognising the existence, in some sense, of psychological states of affairs. The necessary qualification, then, has to be that it is *only* in a platitudinous, metaphysically non–committal sense that our anti-realist may countenance psychological states of affairs.

In general, once it is granted that "true" is open to variously more or less 'robust' —i.e., realism–implicating— interpretations, the same will go for its cognates, "fact", "state of affairs", "correspondence to fact", "real", and so on; and it will no longer do to identify anti–realism about a discourse with the range of views converging on the simple denial of the reality of the germane kind of states of affairs. What all such views must deny, rather, is their reality in a

shape for anti–realism about ordinary psychology to assume is that of non–factualism. The anti–realist should allow that psychological discourse is genuinely assertoric and highly disciplined and thereby sustains the introduction over its characteristic claims of a predicate with all the essential features of a truth–predicate. But she should insist that nothing is true of it which licenses the interpretation of this predicate in terms of the imagery of correspondence to external, objective matters, in the fashion characteristic of realism, rather than as a construct out of its own internal discipline.

I have taken space to characterise what I consider to be the best general direction for anti–realism in this area to take because I want it to be clear that it is open to the specific problem I shall now proceed to describe. But actually —though I shall not try to do so on this occasion— it would not be difficult to develop analogues of the problem which would directly engage the other —instrumentalist or eliminativist— forms of psychological anti–realism which we have reviewed, —and which of course have in any case additional difficulties of their own,— since any form of denial of the reality of psychological states of affairs may be expected to have ramifications along the general lines we shall explore.

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We begin with the following Lemma (1):

> It is not possible consistently to be a non–factualist about intentional states but realist about *linguistic* content —about semantics.

Obviously, no–one who favours any broadly Gricean story about linguistic content, according to which the content of any expression will be a construct from some set of characteristic intentions of those who use it, can have any reservations about this claim. But there are two considerations which, even for one with no sympathy for the Gricean approach, are strongly supportive of it.

First, even if the meanings of expressions are not directly determined by the intentional states of language users, after the Gricean manner, a realist about linguistic meaning who wishes to be a non–factualist about contentful psychological states, will presumably have

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sense —(not necessarily the same in every case: realism may admit of degrees)— cognate to a realist interpretation of "true".

to suppose that there is not even a *supervenience* of the former on
the latter. For the real cannot, presumably, supervene upon the
unreal.[16] But there surely is such a supervenience: meanings cannot
change without change in the psychology (if only the 'wide' psychol-
ogy) of language–users.

That's the first thought in outline. And if supervenience is taken
to be a *constitutive* relation —if we may simply take it that in every
case the subject matter of a supervening discourse is somehow com-
posed out of, or otherwise depends for its existence on that of the
discourse supervened upon— then the asserted principle of asymme-
try, that the real cannot supervene upon the unreal, may seem incon-
testable. But that supervenience is thus constitutive is not obvious
if the supervenience of one discourse upon another is understood, in
the usual intuitive sense, merely to consist in its being (conceptually)
necessary that any change in the distribution of truth–values among
statements in the former would entrain change in the distribution of
truth–values among the statements of the latter.[17] What, on that
understanding, is there to be said for the principle of asymmetry?
Certainly, in cases which most immediately spring to mind of other
asymmetric superveniences in the relevant sense —of the moral upon
the natural, for example, or the psychological upon the physical— it
is never the supervened–upon discourse, rather than that superven-
ing, which has been prone to provoke the anti–realist instinct. But
is there any reason why that has to be the pattern?

I have no space to explore the matter properly here, but I'll ven-
ture one suggestion about why there may be a general difficulty in
the idea of any *asymmetric* real–on–unreal supervenience —and if
the suggestion is right, that will suffice for the present purpose, since
the supervenience of the semantic upon the psychological is an asym-
metric one. Suppose we are concerned only with *maximal* discourses
—discourses capable of representing *all* states of affairs of a certain
general kind. (Morals, ordinary psychology, aesthetics, physics, se-
mantics would all count as maximal in this intuitive sense.) Suppose
too that we are persuaded that non–factualism cannot coherently be
a *global* view.[18] More specifically, suppose it accepted that

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[16]Here and in what follows, the reader should take "real" and "unreal" as a
blanket terms of art denoting whatever status particular forms of realism or anti–
realism respectively assign to the states of affairs which the truth of statements
in the targeted disourse would require.

[17]Naturally, "truth–value" is not, in this context, to be understood as import-
ing a realist conception of truth.

[18]As argued at pages 769-70 of my "Kripke's Account of the Argument Against
Private language", *Journal of Philosophy*, LXXI, 759-778, (1984). For misgivings,

> Any non–factual assertoric discourse must supervene upon some factual discourse.[19]

Then a case —assumed for reductio— where a factual discourse, D_1, asymmetrically supervened upon a non–factual discourse, D_2, would in turn —by the transitivity of supervenience— require the supervenience of D_1 upon some factual discourse, D_3, upon which D_2 supervened. But it is not intelligible how one factual discourse could supervene upon another unless, as a matter of (conceptual) necessity, there was some common range of states of affairs which each could serve to depict.[20] And if that were so, it would be obscure why D_2, qua supervenient on D_3, did not also supervene upon D_1 —contrary to the hypothesis that the original supervenience is asymmetric— unless some of the facts representable in D_3 were not representable in D_1 —contrary to the hypothesis that the discourses concerned are maximal. We may conclude that someone who would wish to hold to the factuality of semantics alongside the non–factuality of psychology, and who acknowledges the evident supervenience of the former on the latter, must make a case *either* that some non–factual discourses supervene on no factual one *or* that semantics is a merely a restriction of some wider factual discourse on which psychology supervenes. Neither option seems promising to me (though of course the latter is just what is involved in the Fodorian programme of 'naturalising'.semantics.)

The second consideration on behalf of Lemma (1) is less intricate and should be less contestable. It is simply the reflection that, whatever the correct account in detail, linguistic meanings cannot exist without *conventions*. And conventions, whatever the proper analysis of the notion, have to be constituted in the beliefs and intentions

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see Paul Boghossian at p. 525 of "The Rule–Following Considerations", *Mind*, XCVIII (1989), 507-49. Some of the issues to do with the tendency of non–factualism (minimalism) to globalise are treated in detail in ch. 6 of *Truth and Objectivity*.

[19] I don't claim this is obviously correct; rejection of it may provide one escape route from the argument to follow. But it seems very plausible. One motivation would spring from the thought that to count as assertoric at all, a discourse must at least to disciplined to a degree; that change in the distribution of truth–values among the statements in a non–factual discourse has to be a matter of change in which of its statements comply with its proper disciplinary constraints; and that such change is unintelligible —when the constraints remain the same— unless in a context where certain real circumstances have changed.

[20] Otherwise, their respective subject–matters would constitute Humean 'distinct existences', and the suggestion of supervenience would violate the Humean intuition that such existences must be logically independent.

of those who are party to them. So if linguistic meanings were real worldly items, and intentional states were not, then reality would, *per impossibile*, be in part constituted by what was unreal.

That seems compelling. There seems every prospect, accordingly, that Lemma (1) should be sustained: non–factualism about intentional psychology must embrace non–factualism about semantics as well.[21]

6

On consequence of Lemma (1) is that any demonstration of the *incoherence* of non–factualism about linguistic content would represent an actual refutation of (what I have suggested is the best form of) psychological anti–realism Paul Boghossian's "The Status of Content"[22] contains precisely such a purported demonstration: specifically, an argument to show that non–factualism about linguistic content must wind up committed to incompatible claims about the interpretation of the truth predicate. That would be a rather blunter, more conclusive problem than the one I have prefigured!

I have explained elsewhere why, as it seems to me, Boghossian's argument does not perform as advertised and will not recapitulate those discussions now.[23] What will concern us is rather something they brought out, which I shall here elicit in a more direct manner.

We have spoken of the sort of truth to which a realist about a given discourse would have its statements aspire and contrasted it with a more minimal conception of truth, apt for the purpose of the anti–realist, which will be some form of construct from the standards of appropriateness governing a discourse about which a non–factualist view is taken. In order to proceed, it will now be convenient to regulate our terminology, reserving "true" for a substantial, realist notion, and "correct" for the minimal conception. Non–factualism about semantics will thus have it that statements about linguistic content, and all cognate matters, will lack substantial *truth*–conditions. So instances of "S says that P" and "S means that P", for

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[21] For complementary though, as it seems to me, less conclusive considerations in this direction, see pages 170-3 of Paul Boghossian's "The Status of Content", *The Philosophical Review*, XCIX (1990), pp. 157-84.

[22] See note 21.

[23] See the Appendix to ch. 6 of Truth and Objectivity and my "Eliminative Materialism: Going Concern or Passing Fancy", in the *Mind and Language* volume cited in note 8 above. The present paper is in effect a sequel to the latter discussion and is prefigured in its concluding paragraphs.

example, while governed by conditions of correct and incorrect assertion, will not be apt for truth and falsity in any full–bloodedly realist sense.

Now, to speak of the truth–conditions of a sentence (which has truth–conditions) is, on one view, simply a way of talking about that sentence's content itself; and even if that identification is contested, talk of truth–conditions is certainly "cognate" talk in the relevant sense —there is absolutely no way a non–factualist about semantics could coherently cling to a factualist view of ascriptions of truth– or correctness–conditions. So statements of the form,

> S has the truth–condition that P,

will come within the scope of semantic non–factualism, which will therefore be committed to the following:

> For all S and P: "S has the truth–condition that P" is not truth–conditional

—ascriptions of realist truth–conditions are not up for realist truth and falsity.

Now we observe that if statements of the form "S has the truth–condition that P" do not themselves have truth–conditions, then the corresponding statements of the form, "S is true" cannot be truth–conditional either. One way of seeing the point is as follows. What truth values statements take depends, obviously, on their truth–conditions. Suppose we are Gods who have it in our power to fix everything *real* about the world —to create all genuine facts as it were. If statements' truth–conditions are not part of the real furniture of the world, then we shall not, just by determining everything real, have determined —in any save, possibly, a causal sense— what truth–condition any particular statement has. But then we shall not have fixed statements' truth–values either, since, to repeat, they depend on truth–conditions. Since, by hypothesis, we have fixed everything real, it follows that truth–values are not real characteristics. Statements of the form, "S is true" are accordingly not factual.

Remember that we are reserving "true" for realist interpretation. So in supposing that a range of statements are true —or, for that matter, false— we are saying that they are amenable to realism —that a realist conception of their content and subject matter is appropriate. It follows, accordingly, that the latter claim is *itself* a non–factual one: that the distinction between truth–apt and merely correctness–apt assertoric discourses is one the details of whose extension are not themselves stateable by *truths*, but only permit of *correct* statement; that (Lemma (2))

> Non–factualism about semantics enforces non–factualism about
> the factual/non–factual distinction itself.

Really, this is rather obvious. For however exactly the distinction
is drawn, which side of the factual/non–factual divide a given dis-
course falls is going to be, in general terms, a function of the *type of
content* which its sentences possess. So the non–factuality of claims
which place a discourse to one side or the other of the factual/non–
factual divide must follow from a general non–factualism about mat-
ters to do with content. If, resuming our God–like role, we fail, when
determining everything real, to determine —in any save, possibly, a
causal sense— any matters to do with content, then we likewise fail
to determine anything which functionally depends on matters to do
with content —including the detail of the distinction between the
factual and the non–factual itself.

More simply: reflect that, with "true" and its cognates restricted
to realist interpretation, statements of the form, "S has the truth–
condition that P", serve simultaneously both to make a semantic
claim and to classify their subjects as factual. So to attempt to hold
simultaneously that ascriptions of factuality are themselves factual
while ascriptions of content are not, would be —when possession
of *truth*–conditions is taken as a hallmark of factuality,— a direct
commitment to contradictory claims about the factuality of such
statements.

7

Before we can move on, we must confront what may seem to be an
evident lacuna: essentially, that to treat the foregoing argument as
establishing Lemma (2) is illicitly to generalise a conclusion demon-
strated only for the *metalinguistic* classification of discourses. We
may grant that claims about the factuality, or non–factuality of dis-
courses, construed as ranges of *sentences*, cannot themselves be fac-
tual if claims about linguistic content are not. But surely nothing
follows about the factuality of the distinction between the factual
and the non–factual when it is drawn at the level of the *contents*
—propositions, or Fregean thoughts— themselves. It may be a non-
factual question whether S is a non–factual sentence only and pre-
cisely because it is a non–factual question what S means. But there
simply is no question, factual or otherwise, about what the proposi-
tion that P means: P is an entity already individuated as a content,
and nothing that has been said bears on the question whether there

is not a factual distinction among such entities between those which are apt to represent real facts and those which are not.

There is a similar objection in the case of Lemma (1): that too only concerns the metalinguistic case: it asserts the commitment of the psychological anti–realist to the non–factuality of *semantics*. No parallel commitment has been disclosed to the non–factuality of the properties and relations of propositions. Neither of the considerations adduced —viz. the supervenience of linguistic content upon psychology, and its dependence upon convention— has any evident transposition to discourse not of the semantics of sentences but of propositional contents themselves.

These objections are technically correct. But they are also, obviously, to no particular purpose unless some form of realism about the contrast between the factual and the non–factual, drawn at the level of propositions, is a serious possibility. One immediate reaction is to wonder how such a realism could avoid what is effectively an (objectionably) *Platonist* conception of propositions and their properties. For if the classification of propositions as factual and non–factual answers directly to real states of affairs, then presumably the entities so classified must themselves be real in a correspondingly robust sense.

It would not do to suggest that the credibility of any view which implied a Platonist conception of propositions is hopelessly compromised just on that account. There has been much respectable philosophy which, beyond being prepared to countenance talk of propositions as useful and legitimate, has involved a kind of realism about them of the sort to which Frege was drawn, whereby propositions are conceived as objective, mind–independent entities and successful communication is viewed as achieved by dint of our shared cognitive relations to them. I myself would foresee no objections of principle to an attempted application here at least of the kind of moderate platonism, reliant on Frege's Context Principle as a principle about reference, which the provision of satisfactory explanations of the meanings of statements about propositions, grounded in discourse of a different, presumed relatively unproblematic sort, might contrive to justify.[24] The question, however, is not primarily whether some form of platonism about propositions —that is, realism about content–entities and their (essential) characteristics— might be acceptable; or even whether some acceptable form could effectively defend against

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[24]For detailed discussion of this deflationary form of platonism, see my *Frege's Conception of Numbers as Objects*, Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press 1983; and Bob Hale, *Abstract Objects*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1987.

the suggestion that the factual/non–factual distinction, even at the level of propositions, is a non–factual one.   Rather it is whether platonism of this kind is an option *in the context of psychological non–factualism.* Certainly the marriage would be an extremely tense one if the motivation for the latter were of either the second —physicalist— or third —content–sceptical— kinds earlier distinguished. But is the combination so much as coherent in any case?

One clear corollary of the combination would be that any psychological state which 'embeds' a proposition, including most basically the state of *grasping* it, cannot consist in a real relation between the human subject and the proposition in question. Since there is no doubt about the reality of the terms, —propositions would be real by hypothesis, and human subjects are presumably no less real for the psychological anti–realist than for anyone else— the source of the unreality must lie in the type of relation concerned. So in particular there are no real facts about subjects' grasping —let alone believing in, or hoping for, or intending to affirm the truth of, etc.,— particular propositions. Since our conception of a proposition is initially arrived at as precisely the conception of something which may be affirmed or grasped or believed, etc., it will come across as extremely odd metaphysics to be told that none of these canonical forms of relationship, as it were, can be reckoned as part of the real furniture of the world, although their object terms —the propositions— are real enough.

Let me try to be more specific about the difficulty which that suggests. Discourse of propositions, like all discourse of abstract entities, raises certain initial epistemological problems which can be assuaged only by an attempt to explain how it is properly understood: to explain, specifically, how it may be so understood that the appraisal and justification of its characteristic statements comes to be within human epistemological compass. Now the use of singular terms —par excellence, that–clauses— which refer to propositions originates in talk about sentence–meanings and the propositional attitudes, and it therefore seems certain that any attempt to address systematically the question of the meaning of proposition–discourse would have to assign a key role to psychological and semantic contexts in its *explanantia.* Yet the present context is one in which —by hypothesis and by Lemma (1) respectively— *both* the latter types of discourse are conceived as non–factual. How could explanations constructed out of such materials possibly provide the means to legitimate the idea that propositions are robustly real entities, or that any contexts concerning them and their properties —in particular contexts serving to classify the factual and the non–factual cases— deal in robustly real states of affairs?

To fix ideas, consider the familiar though controversial form of explanation of statements about certain species of abstract object which I adverted to above: that given by Frege's *Grundlagen* method of *abstraction*[25] whereby contexts of identity for a new kind of object —say, directions— are explained by reference to the holding of some equivalence relation —parallelism— on items of some antecedently understood kind —straight lines— and predications on the former are explained in terms of the possession of certain antecedently understood properties by the latter. In certain cases, the result may be a system of rigorous contextual definitions whereby all overt reference to and quantification over the new kind of objects may be eliminated; in other cases —crucially that of cardinal numbers, which was Frege's primary concern— the most that can be claimed is that the content of reference to and quantification over the new kind of objects is *non-eliminatively* explained by the relevant abstraction and other associated principles.[26] But what is utterly unclear in all cases is how the *explananda* —statements about the new kind of object— could finish up as factual unless their *explanantia* were factual in the first place. How, for instance, could discourse of directions and their properties deserve realist construal unless discourse of lines deserved it already?

Admittedly, if, as I have suggested, it is a grounding in intentional-psychological and semantic discourse which provides the route into the concept of a proposition, then it would seem that the explanation is structurally quite different to that involved in a Fregean abstraction: the concept of proposition will be given by explaining the use of, and then giving a certain cast to the resultant understanding of the explanatory contexts, rather than by exploiting them in the explicit introduction of a novel vocabulary. But the difficulty remains no less impressive: how can entities our initial understanding of reference to which is acquired by a mastery of certain non-factual contexts comprise the subject matter of contexts of a different, factual kind? The suggestion seems merely incoherent unless the explanation of propositions as the objects of the attitudes and the contents of sentences is importantly incomplete. But then, what is

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[25] Discussed at § 62 and following; see pp. 73-80 of J.L. Austin, tr., Gottlob Frege: *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1950.

[26] This is a consequence of the fact that the abstraction for cardinal numbers mooted at Grundlagen § 63 —often called Hume's Principle— is formulated in terms of a *second order* equivalence relation: an equivalence relation on concepts, whose relata may include numbers among their possible instances and whose expression may itself involve arithmetical vocabulary.

the omitted extra whose inclusion in the explanation might somehow allow propositions to be robust?[27]

I shall not try to take the issue further here. While acknowledging that a defence of the factuality of the distinction between the factual and the non–factual might yet be mounted on the back of a realist conception of propositions, I think that enough has been said to justify scepticism about the prospects when they are constrained by non–factualism about the intentional and the semantic. So while accepting that Lemma (2) has not been proved for the case where the factual/non–factual distinction is applied not to discourses but directly at the level of contents, we may justifiably proceed on the assumption that the ontological materials needed by factualism about the factual/non–factual distinction at that level are denied to the non–factualist about psychology. Granted that Lemma (2) has been made good for the metalinguistic case, the upshot is accordingly that the thesis of psychological anti–realism —in its best form— is a commitment to its own non–factuality, and that any argument for it is consequently an argument for a non–factual conclusion.

8

If this is right, the situation in which our anti–realist finds herself is apt to impress as very uncomfortable. For what possible rationale can realist/anti–realist debates have unless we think of them as answerable to *real* distinctions? Doesn't one have to be a meta–realist, as it were, about the realism/anti–realism distinction —to believe that protagonists in such debates are disputing a factual matter—

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[27]Someone of reductionist leanings might query with what right I have assumed that any factualist construal of claims concerning the factuality of particular propositions must entrain a realist view of propositions. Might not some reduction of proposition–discourse be effected which both allowed it to be construed as factual and, at the same time, showed that its apparent ontological commitments need not be taken seriously?

This line of thought does not really broach new ground. Such a reduction would —for one in sympathy with the moderate, Context Principle–based form of platonism mooted above— effect not a way of avoiding a commitment to propositions but rather precisely the —presently missing— additional explanation which would justify regarding them realistically. Note moreover that the reduction base could in any case not be provided by discourse of any non–factual kind if it was to deliver the desired result. So the obvious place to try —viz. discourse of sentences and their semantic properties and relations— is excluded in the present context.

before any interest can attach to the question on which half of the distinction ordinary psychology falls?

We can envisage the short answer that it is no more a precondition of the interest of philosophical debate about realism that one take a realist view of the discourse of such debate than it is a precondition of the interest of ethics, or mathematics, or indeed ordinary psychology that one takes a realist view of the discourse of those disciplines. I think that answer is a little *too* short: there is something deeply disorientating about the thought that although there is an intelligible distinction to be drawn between factual and non–factual discourses, there are no real facts about the classification of discourses under the aegis of that distinction. For one thing, non–factualism about a discourse standardly implies some form of unflattering comparison with factual cases —how can that implication be coherent if the comparison itself is similarly disadvantaged? For another, the stability of the non–factualist line about ethics, or mathematics, etc., depends on providing an account of a legitimate role and purpose for such discourses dissociated from the project of representing the world. But what role and purpose might *metaphysics* have if not the attainment of insight and understanding into how things *really* are? —how can those goods be the product of *non–factual* enquiry?

The principal question, however, concerns the status of our leading issue: the possibility of rationally compelling argument for psychological anti–realism..   And a very simple thought is immediately salient: that debates about *non–factual* matters are *eo ipso* never susceptible to rationally compelling resolution —that to characterise a question as non–factual, if it means anything at all, must carry the implication that opinions about it are at bottom rationally unconstrained— that competent interlocutors must be willing, if need be, to agree to differ without the imputation to each other of errors of reasoning or cognition.

I think this simple thought is very likely correct, though I will not argue for it directly now.[28] What is certain is that a commitment to non–factualism about *all* realist/anti–realist taxonomy leaves the psychological anti–realist with a lot of explaining to do if she wants to insist that her views about psychology are rationally mandatory. I shall conclude by outlining one aspect of her dialectical predicament.

The terms: "factual" and "cognitive" are, as Wittgenstein said of "rule" and "same", made for each other: roughly, factual matters are

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[28]It is right if, as suggested in *Truth and Objectivity*, Cognitive Command represents the first substantial realism–relevant hurdle which minimally truth–apt discourses may fail to clear.

those which may be appraised just by cognitive capacities; cognitive capacities are those which enable the appraisal of factual matters. More precisely, one inclined to take the distinction between factual and non–factual discourses seriously is likely to see it as mirrored in the respective ranges of abilities which competent practitioners of such discourses will draw upon: *cognitive* abilities should be those belonging to a smallest psychological endowment sufficient to enable a competent view on any particular (appraisable) *factual* matter; and any matter should count as *factual* which can be competently determined just by the exercise of *cognitive* abilities.

It follows that rejecting the factuality of a claim is a commitment either to the contention that non–cognitive abilities are essentially involved in its appraisal or to maintaining that the case is one of indeterminacy —that no particular verdict on it is mandated by the appropriate standards. Since the latter option —the claim of indeterminacy— is not available to a *proponent* of the (non–factual) claim that intentional psychology is not factual, her contention will have to be that whatever mandates that view of psychology, it is something beyond appreciation purely by the exercise of cognitive capacities.

Obvious next question: how should the ability to *reason* rate when the question is which matters are factual and which abilities cognitive? Are the judgements of reason —claims of logical consequence, for instance, or of the soundness of a philosophical argument— apt for realist truth and falsity? Should the reason count as a purely cognitive ability?

Assume so. Then a conclusion to our title question seems immediate. For if the reason is a purely cognitive ability, and the mandate, whatever it is, for the claim that intentional psychology is non–factual cannot be appreciated by the exercise purely of cognitive abilities but demands something else, then, whatever sort of cogency it possesses, that mandate cannot be *rationally* compelling, cannot be cogent for a subject who merely acknowledges all relevant facts and reasons correctly.

Strictly, that goes too fast. The conclusion is, so far, only one for the anti–realist to draw —it is conditional on an acceptance that psychology *is* non–factual. What has been argued, that is, is that *if* psychology is non–factual, then all claims about what is or is not non–factual are non–factual and hence —on the assumption that the reason is cognitive— psychological anti–realism is beyond rationally compelling argument. To be sure, if we only add the assumption that whatever is amenable to rationally compelling argument is true, then we can directly advance to the conditional that

> If anti–realism about psychology is capable of rationally com-
> pelling argument, then (it is true and hence) is not capable of
> rationally compelling argument,

and hence to its consequent as an unconditional conclusion. Still,
the assumption needs to be made.

Even without that assumption, however, there is surely a Moore–
style incoherence in the position. For —in contrast with the situation
of comedy, or the revolting, e.g. where we already self–consciously
conceive of warrant for an opinion as never purely a rational matter
and an intuitive anti–realism is our existing predisposition— philo-
sophical claims of this kind *are warranted a priori, by pure reason,
or by nothing at all.* So, on the assumption of the cognitive charac-
ter of reason, the psychological anti–realist appears constrained to
concede both that her position admits of no rationally compelling
support and that it is a view which, if warranted at all, can be so
only by the adduction of rationally compelling considerations.

The prospects, then, on the assumption of the cognitive character
of our powers of reason, look to be murky. What if the assumption
is discharged —if the anti–realist is prepared to regard the reason
itself as non–cognitive?[29]

Whether such a stance would allow of coherent explanation and
defence must be regarded as very moot. But two consequences are
worth highlighting immediately. First, the minimum cost would have
to be a severance of questions of factuality from those of *objectivity.*
For to propose that a question might be rationally decidable and
yet not be fully objective would be merely to surrender all grip on
the latter concept. So the dialectical situation would be potentially
totally transformed. The classification of ordinary psychology as
non–factual provokes opposition not just because of certain pejora-
tive overtones: an association with bad company (claims about the
comic and the revolting, and so on) and with a certain optionality
(as evinced in the Dennettian notion of a "stance"), but because it
seems to threaten the objectivity of our self–conception, of our most
distinctively human way of thinking about human beings However
if statements whose acceptability is normally thought of as being an
entirely rational matter, statements which we conceive as fully ob-
jective —statements of logic and arithmetic, for instance— get to be
fellow travellers, no stigma of this sort can attach to non–factuality

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[29] As she must in any case do if she is to reject the simple idea, bruited
above, that to characterise a question as non–factual, if it means anything at
all, must carry the implication that opinions about it are ultimately rationally
unconstrained.

per se, and the friend of ordinary psychology, rather than feeling obliged to argue for its factuality, may take comfort in the reflection that a region of discourse could be "non–factual" even though the appraisal of its statements demands nothing but the exercise of cognitive abilities and (non–cognitive —as it is now viewed—) reasoning. Of course, even that might not be true of psychology. But the important debate would no longer be about non–factualism.

Second, it follows from the characterisation of the relations between "cognitive" and "factual" outlined above that no subject matter can count as factual whose appraisal draws essentially on non–cognitive abilities (since the latter are to suffice for the appraisal of any factual matter.) So if our non–cognitive abilities are to embrace not merely the usual suspects —the sense of humour, maybe our aesthetic sensibilities, etc.,— but also the reason itself, then the domain of the non–factual must correspondingly embrace everything which can only be known by exercise of the reason. And that will include not merely all that can be known purely by the exercise of reason —by pure, rational thought— so all of logic and mathematics and —I suppose— philosophy: every claim in whose assessment reason has some indispensable part to play will be dragged in as well.

It has, of course, long been controversial how inclusive a class of claims that should be reckoned to be. Classical epistemological foundationalism would regard the most immediate reports of observation as exceptions. But the now prevalent view would be that —to the extent that background beliefs condition the acceptability of even the most basic observational statements— reason and inference are literally ubiquitous in the appraisal of scientific evidence; and their role in determining the acceptability of theories and hypotheses is, of course, not up for question. If the prevalent view is right, the startling upshot is therefore that to attempt to maintain that non–factualism might yet be open to rationally compelling support by denying the cognitive status of reason would be a commitment to denying the factuality either of absolutely everything or at least of *all of empirical science.* Since —one would imagine— all actual psychological anti–realists have been inclined to regard non–intentional physical science as the place where the hardest real facts are, that would be an irony indeed.[30]