

# Warrant and Objectivity

Jon Barton

Department of Philosophy  
King's College London



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For BRB, *cum quam sum.*

# Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

J. J. Barton

# Abstract

Wright's *Truth and Objectivity* seeks to systematise a variety of anti-realist positions. I argue that many objections to the system are avoided by transposing its talk of truth into talk of warrant. However, a problem remains about debates involving 'direction-of-fit'.

Dummett introduced 'anti-realism' as a philosophical view informed by mathematical intuitionism. Subsequently, the term has been associated with many debates, ancient and modern. *Truth and Objectivity* proposes that truth admits of different characteristics; these various debates then concern which characteristics truth has, in a given area. This pluralism of truth is at odds with deflationism. I find fault with Wright's argument against deflationism. However, transmission of warrant across the Disquotational Schema suffices to ground Wright's proposal, which survives as a pluralism of classes of warrant.

The two main debates concern whether truths are always knowable (Epistemic Constraint) and whether disagreements in an area must be down to some fault of one of those involved (Cognitive Command). I introduce Assertoric Constraint, relating to Epistemic Constraint, where truths cannot outstrip the availability of warrant for their assertion. I solve a structural problem by a comparison with a constitutive analysis of Moore's Paradox. The relativism of blameless disagreement is problematic. Wright's response invokes a sort of ignorance which he calls 'Quandary'. I criticise this before proposing an alternative.

I agree with Wright that Dummett's original anti-realism does not belong among the positions which Wright seeks to systematise. However, two candidates show that the proposal suffers a weakness. Wright thinks Expressivism misguided, and implicitly rules out his earlier non-cognitivism about necessity. I argue that Expressivism has promise, and I endorse Wright's Cautious Man argument for non-cognitivism about necessity; both involve play with 'direction-of-fit'. I conclude that this sort of anti-realist debate needs to be accommodated by the proposal.

# Preface

When you are a Bear of Very Little Brain, and you Think of Things, you find sometimes that a Thing which seemed very Thingish inside you is quite different when it gets out into the open and has other people looking at it.

A. A. Milne

There is a venerable analogy drawn between philosophy and midwifery. First and foremost I should like to thank my supervisor, Keith Hossack, for his wisdom and understanding, and for being so patient whilst I brought my thesis to term.

During my work on the thesis I was fortunate to receive the stalwart support of Colin Johnston and David Levy. They undertook to read the entire thesis in draft, and gave generously of their time to provide many thoughtful comments. This helped to bring my ideas into better relief, and has issued in many improvements to produce a work which is much more legible than might otherwise have been the case. I am exceedingly grateful to them both.

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# Warrant and Objectivity

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

... [I] shall use instead the colourless term 'anti-realism'.

Michael Dummett<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Anti-Realism

What is anti-realism? The term is Dummett's; he introduces it to refer to a train of thoughts which stand opposed to positions which are called 'realism'.<sup>2</sup> He mentions at least two separate sorts of realism which are traditionally thought to be distinct. First, there is a sort of realist who maintains that there are universals. His opponent, the nominalist, argues that there are only particulars.<sup>3</sup> The second sort of realist claims that the world is made up independently of us. The natural opponent of this second realist is the idealist, who holds that the world is, in an important way, dependent on our own minds for its existence.

Despite these two sorts of realist traditionally being considered as distinct, it occurs to Dummett that nevertheless they have a common core. He then introduces 'anti-realism' as a neutral term to cover the line of thought which opposes itself to that common core. 'Anti-realism' is to include both nominalism and idealism. Dummett also makes clear from the start that there are to be different subject matters under discussion; so he allows himself to speak of 'a realism', being realism about a particular subject matter.

This is how he proceeds:

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Dummett, 'Realism' in: Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas*, 145.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>I follow the traditional English usage in which the masculine pronoun doubles up as the common one.

Realism I characterise as the belief that statements of the disputed class possess an objective truth-value, independently of our means of knowing it: they are true or false in virtue of a reality existing independently of us.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast the anti-realist holds that

statements of the disputed class are to be understood only by reference to the sort of thing which we count as evidence for a statement of that class.

...

[T]he meanings of these statements are tied directly to what we count as evidence for them, in such a way that a statement of the disputed class, if true at all, can be true only in virtue of something of which we could know and which we should count as evidence for its truth.<sup>5</sup>

Having provided the characterisations, he immediately warns us that he does not claim them to be wholly accurate.<sup>6</sup>

Given such beginnings, it is no great surprise that the term 'anti-realism' soon came to be attached to many varied positions, both ancient and modern. It came to mean many different things to different people, and ended up far from neutral and colourless; so far that as a term of art its very usefulness could be called into question.

Twenty years ago, Wright announced a programme which was to bring order to the mass of positions called 'anti-realist'.<sup>7</sup> It is this programme which is continued in his *Truth and Objectivity* (T&O). He holds, in effect, that Dummett's intuited single common core of anti-realism is in fact inchoate. Just as there are many different subject matters over which a dispute between an anti-realist and a realist might arise, there are also different types of anti-realism which might be asserted or denied. In what follows, I shall use 'anti-/realist' as a convenient abbreviation for 'anti-realist/realist'.

My thesis concerns Wright's attempt to systematise these various anti-/realist debates under a conceptual framework. I begin with an introduction to the system presented in T&O. The thesis then divides into two parts. In the first part I examine and criticise three aspects of the framework itself. I am broadly sympathetic to the programme. In the second part I consider positions which would

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<sup>4</sup>Dummett, 'Truth and Other Enigmas', 146.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Crispin Wright, 'Realism, Anti-Realism, Irrealism, Quasi-Realism. (1987 Gareth Evans Memorial Lecture)' in P. French, U. Uehling and H. Wettstein, editors, *Realism and Anti-realism, Midwest Studies in Philosophy* Volume XII, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).



commonly be recognised as anti-realist but which the framework disqualifies. This leads me to propose that the framework has a blind spot. Having diagnosed the blind spot, the question of how best to fix the framework is left as a matter for further research. However, I do offer some tentative initial remarks in the final chapter.

## 1.2 Truth and Objectivity

The aim of T&O is to provide a framework within which various sorts of views—travelling as a motley under the name ‘anti-/realism’ arguments—can be distinguished. Once they have been adequately distinguished, we shall be in a far better position to assess the true worth of each.

### 1.2.1 Inflating Deflationism

The proposal is distinctive in that it involves pluralism about truth; different subject matters may have truth predicates which have different characteristics. I shall investigate some consequences of such a pluralism shortly. But before I do, we should note that one philosophical position has been immediately disenfranchised. The traditional deflationist holds that use of the term ‘true’ is a mere grammatical convenience, encapsulated in the Disquotational Schema (DS):

$$\text{‘}P\text{’ is true iff } P \qquad \text{DS}$$

There is no room on the traditional deflationist view, then, for truth to admit of differences in character across different discourses. Wright’s reaction to this is to provide an argument for why the traditional deflationary notion of truth is inherently unstable. I call this argument the Argument for Inflation. The argument aims to show that traditional deflationism is incoherent. The conclusion is not that the Disquotational Schema is false, but rather that it stands in need of supplementation.

### 1.2.2 Minimal Truth

Suppose that Wright successfully argues that the traditional deflationist’s notion of truth does stand in need of inflating. If that is correct, then the least that we have to say about truth is going to be more than traditional deflationism. Wright proposes that the base-line should be the theory of truth which he calls Minimalism. He designates a set of platitudes to fix the notion of truth. This set of platitudes I refer to as the ‘Platitudes’. The Platitudes hold *a priori* and are

necessary conditions for a predicate to count as truth. Wright explicitly allows that further Platitudes may be forthcoming, but for the moment he considers that the list is complete. Therefore, as well as being necessary conditions, they are also jointly sufficient for any predicate to count as a truth predicate.

The door is then opened to pluralism. Any predicate which satisfies these Platitudes is to count as a truth predicate. Call a content ‘truth-apt’ if the content is up for being true or false. It is possible that there are contents which are not truth-apt. Some English expressions do not express truth-apt content. An example is the salutation ‘Good Morning’. Another set of examples is provided by the gerund. ‘The torturing of innocents’ arguably has a meaning, but in itself is not up for truth or falsity; it is not truth-apt.

With that terminology understood, I can now introduce Wright’s Minimalist proposal, which consists of the core Platitudes: Truth/Assertion, Significant Negation, Correspondence and Divergence:

**Truth/Assertion:** To assert is to present as true.

**Significant Negation:** Any truth-apt content has a significant negation which is likewise truth-apt.

**Correspondence Platitude:** To be true is to correspond to the facts.

**Divergence:** A statement may be justified without being true, and *vice versa*.

As mentioned, the list is not intended to be comprehensive; the claim is that these are necessary, in that they are platitudes to which a predicate must conform in order to qualify as a truth predicate. Furthermore, they are intended to be sufficient in that given an area of talk where the usage of expressions is regular enough then one will be able to define a predicate over that discourse which accords with the Platitudes.

This is how I understand the proposal. We can see the Platitudes as schemata which have a place-holder for ‘true’, say ‘ $\Theta$ ’. These are the Platitudes rewritten as Platitude schemata.

- To assert is to present as  $\Theta$ .
- Any content apt to be  $\Theta$  has a significant negation which is likewise apt to be  $\Theta$ .
- To be  $\Theta$  is to correspond to the facts.
- A statement may be justified without being  $\Theta$ , and *vice versa*.

Then any predicate which we can put in for ‘ $\Theta$ ’ is to count as a truth predicate.

The Platitudes are intended to be just that; platitudinous. Any right-minded person should be willing to endorse them as accurately reflecting fundamental facts about truth. However, here I make some initial comments.

Truth/Assertion links the notion of truth and that of assertion. If one agrees with the Platitude, one might still take it either to inform one about truth or about assertion. Wright employs a ‘Minimal’ notion of assertion. I explain this in more detail in §1.2.3 below. Roughly, where there is an agreed regular usage of sentences, and they are capable of acting as antecedents of conditionals, then they are up for being asserted. The condition is essentially syntactic. Someone who did not share the view that assertion is essentially syntactic might well agree that ‘to assert is to present as true’ without being at all enamoured of the emaciated ‘truth’ which the Platitude then engenders.

Significant Negation harbours a worry. Keeping in mind that the target is to characterise truth predicates, notice the other concepts of which the Platitudes make use: ASSERTION, PRESENTATION, NEGATION, CORRESPONDENCE, FACT, JUSTIFICATION, CONTENT. Whilst there may well be a plausible story to tell for the others, it is not clear that NEGATION, in particular, is going to be easy to explicate. The challenge is that negation and truth are intimately related, and the schemata are intended to leave it open as to exactly what fills the place of  $\Theta$ . How can we be sure that our common grasp of truth, involved as it is with our common grasp of negation, is not polluting the schematic nature of Significant Negation? The correct response, I think, is that either negation or some notion such as mutual exclusivity needs to be recognised as primitive. It is not therefore a just criticism of the Platitudes concerning truth that they involve such a notion.

The sense of ‘fact’ in the Correspondence Platitude is intended to be metaphysically lightweight. It is correspondence or representation in the sense that, for a proposition  $P$ , ‘matters stand as  $P$  says they stand’ or ‘things are as  $P$  says they are’. This should not be confused with endorsing the Correspondence Theory of Truth, where that is construed to involve an ontology of facts which serve to make propositions (or sentences) true. The Correspondence Platitude carries no such commitment to an ontology.

Divergence has an important role to play in the Argument for Inflation. The core intuition is that justification and truth are different things—one might be justified in asserting a proposition even though that proposition is not true, and of course *vice versa*. In the next chapter, which is on the Argument for Inflation, we shall see how that is derived from the Disquotational Schema itself, together with a minimal amount of logic concerning negation.

### The Disquotational and Equivalence Schemata

What is the relation between the Platitudes, the Disquotational Schema and the Equivalence Schema? The Disquotational Schema involves sentences:

*'P'* is true iff *P* DS

The Equivalence Schema concerns propositions:

*That P* is true iff *P* ES

The Disquotational Schema and the Equivalence Schema are inter-derivable, once it is assumed that, for each relevant instance of '*P*', the following holds good:

*'P'* says *that P*

With that in place then clearly

*'P'* is true iff *that P* is true

and in that case, the Disquotational Schema and Equivalence Schema are inter-derivable.

However, there is an interesting question as to whether the Disquotational (or Equivalence) Schema *follows from* the Platitudes. In T&O Wright claims that it does so follow.<sup>8</sup> This is how the thought runs. The Truth/Assertion Platitude has it that to assert a proposition is to claim that the proposition is true. This entails that the Equivalence Schema holds:

*That P* is true iff *P* ES

Suppose that this holds good:

*'P'* says *that P*

Then the Disquotational Schema follows directly from the Equivalence Schema:

*'P'* is true iff *P* DS

I agree with the reasoning that under the assumption about '*P*' saying *that P*, then the Disquotational Schema and the Equivalence Schema are inter-derivable. However, I fail to see how the Equivalence Schema follows from the Truth/-

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<sup>8</sup>Crispin Wright, *Truth and Objectivity* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 23–24.

Assertion Platitude in the intended fashion. What does follow from the Truth/-Assertion Platitude is that when one is in position to assert  $P$  then one is in position to assert that  $P$  is true. However the Equivalence Schema does not follow from there, since one's being in position to assert  $P$  and the obtaining of  $P$  are distinct. This is explicitly recognised in Wright's proposed Divergence of truth and justification.

I am not ascribing Wright that train of thought, since it paints a patently incoherent picture. I do note that I fail to see how the Equivalence Schema follows from the Truth/Assertion Platitude. Furthermore the claim that the Equivalence Schema (or Disquotational Schema) could be derived from the Platitudes is dropped in later presentations of Minimalism. In one place, Wright advocates deriving the Platitudes from the Equivalence Schema.<sup>9</sup> In another, Minimalism is presented as being built from the Disquotational Schema, together with the Platitudes.<sup>10</sup> This latter presentation is the one under which I shall proceed. In any case, what is in common is that traditional deflationism is untenable; the Disquotational Schema alone is not sufficient for a philosophical understanding of truth.

### 1.2.3 'Minimal' Assertion

On the Minimalist's view, in order to qualify as assertoric, an area of talk has to fulfil two conditions. First, within the area of talk, there may be more or less *discipline*. The discipline involves there being more or less rigid standards which are adhered to by the people who communicate within the area. The first condition for the area being assertoric is that

there are firmly acknowledged standards of proper and improper use of its ingredient sentences.<sup>11</sup>

The second requirement is that the talk must answer certain syntactic constraints. These are the

overt trappings of assertoric content (resources for—apparent—conditionalisation, negation, embedding in propositional attitudes . . .).<sup>12</sup>

If the area of talk is possessed of the requisite discipline and syntax, then that is all it takes in order to qualify as assertoric. There is no more to it than

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<sup>9</sup>Crispin Wright, 'Truth: A Traditional Debate Reviewed' in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary 24 (1999), 227 in the reprint.

<sup>10</sup>Bob Hale and Crispin Wright, editors, *The Blackwell Companion to the Philosophy of Language* (Blackwell, 1996), 672–3.

<sup>11</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 29.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

that. Because this notion of assertion is a lightweight notion, we might call it ‘minimal’. As Wright puts it, if the discourse is

in all these surface respects as if assertions are being made, then so they are.<sup>13</sup>

This is important; according to Wright we need to be disabused of the idea that

possession of genuine assertoric content is a relatively *deep* feature ... which [the] overt syntax can serve to mask, or merely to simulate.<sup>14</sup>

That may seem innocuous enough so far. But consider, for instance, the effect of adding in a separate, independently plausible, principle linking assertion and belief. The intuition is that there is a strong link between our sincere assertions and what is ‘going on in our heads’. I propose this rough formulation of that intuition, which I name ABL for ‘Assertion Belief Link’:

(ABL) If a clear-headed person sincerely asserts that *P*, then he believes that *P*.

The problem is generated since the lightweight notion of assertion, *via* this principle, is going to induce a correspondingly lightweight notion of belief. Alternatively, those who start with a heavier notion of belief are able to use the principle to contrapose, and dismiss the lightweight notion of assertion. This is, I propose, at the nub of the debate between the Wrightian Minimalist and the Expressivist. We shall see this in more detail in chapter 6 below, on Error Theory and Expressivism. I now turn to look at the different ways in which Minimal truth may be inflated, according to the framework of T&O.

#### 1.2.4 The Cruces

With the Disquotational Schema and the Platitudes in place we have a common starting-point for truth in an area; Minimal truth. Take any area, which has the appropriate discipline and syntax, and so counts as assertoric. Then we will always be able to come up with a notion which fulfils the Platitudes. Once we have the basis of Minimal truth we can build out from it in various directions. The directions in which we might build concern potential features of the truth predicate. Whether the truth predicate has one of these features or not is a *crux*, being a fulcrum, or central point, about which the debate turns. Collectively the debates are referred to as ‘*cruces*’, being the plural, in English, of ‘*crux*’. I shall use ‘*Cruces*’ where I am referring specifically to the *cruces* proposed in T&O.

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<sup>13</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 29.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 28, emphasis in the original.

As with the Platitudes, it is granted that the Cruces may not be complete; more may become apparent after further research. The ones introduced in T&O are Epistemic Constraint, the Euthyphro Contrast, Cognitive Command, and Width of Cosmological Role. I introduce these in turn.

### **Epistemic Constraint**

To introduce the idea of a Crux, let us begin with Epistemic Constraint. I might think, for instance, that truths about colours cannot outstrip our best attempts to get to know them. I might make a case that there is an essential tie between colours and specifically human vision which means that there can be no such thing as a colour which is inscrutable. And I might argue further that the facts about colours are either observed truths, or derivable from such observed truths. The concern here is not to settle that particular question, but simply to provide an example of one area where there might be a dispute of the sort which I wish to illustrate. In this debate, then, the anti-realist will hold that there are no facts about colours which we are unable to know. The realist, on the other hand, will argue that there are facts about colours which we do not, and never will, know. Perhaps, for instance, he is impressed by Kripke's killer yellow; a shade which, due to our neural wiring, is fatal for humans to view.<sup>15</sup> Or perhaps he is motivated by the real-life example of rotten eggs. The active ingredient in a rotten egg is hydrogen sulphide, a chemical which in very low concentration has a distinctively pungent aroma. In a high enough concentration it acts to disable the olfactory system such that one is unable to smell it. In a higher concentration still it is fast-acting and lethally poisonous. In any case, within the framework of T&O the realist and anti-realist both agree that the statements are Minimally truth-apt. That is: the statements admit of Minimal truth (and falsity). The substance of the debate is then whether or not truth about the talk is Epistemically Constrained. The anti-realist argues that it is; the realist that it is not. Thus this debate aims to determine a feature of the truth predicate appropriate to the area of talk in question. Epistemic Constraint is a *crux*; one possible dimension of debate concerning one putative characteristic of the truth predicate in question.

### **The Euthyphro Contrast**

If the matter is settled in favour of the person pressing for Epistemic Constraint in an area, then there is a further manner in which one might still claim to be a realist; there is a further Crux which can still be debated. This is special

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<sup>15</sup>'Killer yellow' is attributed to Kripke in David Lewis, 'Finkish Dispositions' in *Philosophical Quarterly*, 47 (1997), 145, fn 3.

in that it only becomes applicable when the area is antecedently agreed to be Epistemically Constrained. It is noted, then, that the Cruces are not intended to be fully independent.

The root of this Crux is the *Euthyphro*, where Socrates asks whether an act is pious because it is loved by the gods or whether the act is loved by the gods because it is pious.<sup>16</sup> The piety of the act and the love the gods have for the act march precisely in step. No act is pious without being loved by the gods. But there is still the question of which came first, at least in the explanatory order of things. Did the gods notice the piety and so love the act, or is the piety of the act, as Euthyphro held, somehow constituted by the gods' love? Piety and gods do not have the same cachet as they once did, so I shall look to a more down-to-earth case.

Here is an example from Sellars, which he holds to be a necessary truth:

$x$  is red iff  $x$  looks red to standard observers under standard conditions.<sup>17</sup>

To begin with, note that if colour-talk abides by such necessary truths then it does fit the bill in respect of being Epistemically Constrained. The facts as to whether  $x$  is or is not red cannot escape the standard observers in standard conditions. So this is a candidate area for consideration as to whether the Euthyphro Contrast applies. The pertinent question now is: does the opinion of the standard observers in standard conditions reflect the fact that  $x$  is red. Or is the fact that  $x$  is red constituted—somehow or other—by the judgement of the standard observers in standard conditions that it be so. Again, the purpose of this example is not to decide the matter, but to illustrate how the Crux operates.

The idea of a fact being constituted by someone's judgement might appear utterly alien. If so, then consider the case of a court of law. The issue of guilt in the eyes of the law is decided by the judge and jury. So we might hold to a biconditional of the form

$x$  is legally guilty iff  $x$  is judged guilty by judge and jury in the due process of law.

In this case it is plausible—perhaps even most natural—to say that the determination of the judge and jury go to constitute the fact of the matter, rather than the judge and jury in some sense *seeing*, or in any case responding to a pre-existing legal guilt. This needs to be separated from the simpler, and cruder

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<sup>16</sup>Plato, *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo* 2nd edition. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002).

<sup>17</sup>Wilfrid Sellars, 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind' in Herbert Feigl and Michael Scriven, editors, *The Foundations of Science and the Concepts of Psychology and Psychoanalysis*, *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* Volume I, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), §17.



question, of whether the defendant ‘did it’. The example is put forward as an area where one might be sympathetic to Euthyphro’s position. The example in itself is not meant to be suasive one way or the other.

### **Cognitive Command**

I have introduced two of the Cruces. These are two separate ways in which someone might claim to be mounting an argument for ‘realism’. In the first case he argues that the area admits of evidence-transcendent truths; that truth is not Epistemically Constrained. In the second case, someone who admits that an area is Epistemically Constrained can still mount an argument for ‘realism’ in that the facts in question are reflected in best opinion, rather than the best opinion going to constitute the facts. This is illustrative of the way in which Wright’s framework can disambiguate and disentangle various issues which go under the name ‘anti-/realist’ debate.

A separate Crux is that of Cognitive Command. This is a different direction in which an anti-/realist debate might proceed. The intuitive, and loose, direction is to use convergence of opinion as a touchstone for a type of independence of the truths of the subject area. The principle is rooted in two notions. The first notion is that of disagreement. The second notion is that of mechanical reproduction. If all is working well then several mechanical reproductions of the same source material will turn out the same. Wright uses the example of cameras and photography. To avoid irrelevant issues concerning the individual viewpoints of separate cameras, I shall use instead the example of the sculptural pantograph. This is a mechanical device used by sculptors to copy pieces of work in the round.

Suppose there is a class of sculpture students who have been set the task of using a pantograph to copy a particular work of art. They duly set about doing so, and return the next week with their copies. Assume some of the copies are different, or, as we might say, *disagree*. Then since they all started with the same piece of art to copy, something must have gone wrong with the copying process. Perhaps they were not competent at using the pantograph, or maybe the pantograph itself was misconfigured, or suffered some distorting mechanical failure. Perhaps a set of its wires were too elastic and stretched during the making of the copy, producing an irregular transformation.

The key thought now is to suppose we can rule out all of these mechanical failures, and issues of competence. And suppose that there are still disagreements—differences—amongst the students’ copies. Then the correct conclusion is that the form of the original piece of artwork did not remain constant; it was changing over time. Perhaps the original was made of a plastic material like clay, and

the day was unusually warm, such that the very process of copying it altered it.

The intended parallel with an area of talk can now be spelt out. Suppose that each of us is like a mechanical reproductive device, with sensory input, a cognitive psychology, and a linguistic capability. Suppose there are disagreements over the observations of people in a subject matter. If, after we have ruled out all the sensory, cognitive, and linguistic competency issues, the disagreements are dispelled, then we can conclude that subject matter is robust. The discourse admits of Cognitive Command. On the other hand if disagreements in the area are possible even when the potential sources of ‘mechanical’ and competency failure can be ruled out, then the subject matter is not robust, and it fails of Cognitive Command.

It is important to emphasise that this means that where Cognitive Command fails, the disagreements need not be due to any fault of either party; the area admits of *blameless disagreements*. Thus we can see Cognitive Command (or rather, the lack of it) as making space for a species of relativism.

I have introduced the driving thought behind the principle; I shall go into more detail in chapter 4 below. At this point it is enough to have the sense that we have added another, separate dimension, along which an anti-/realist debate might proceed.

### **Width of Cosmological Role**

Cognitive Command holds where disagreements in a discourse must be down to a some lack of data or cognitive shortcoming on the part of (at least one of) the disputants. In contrast, what Wright calls ‘Width Of Cosmological Role’ concentrates on states of affairs, and how useful they are in explaining other sorts of states of affairs. The important *caveat* is that we should also discount attitudinal states—our beliefs and desires—where those are directed at the states of affairs in question.

The mark of realism here is Wide Cosmological Role. Areas of talk which have this feature describe states of affairs which are capable of being used to explain other sorts of types of situation. One example is that states of affairs with causal powers are capable of featuring in explanations of a wide range of other sorts of discourse. But Wright is explicit that Wide Cosmological Role is not the sole preserve of the causally-empowered state.

The anti-realist here is arguing for a narrower Cosmological Role. The anti-realist, for instance, might have it that moral facts do feature in our thoughts, but arguably, are not useful in themselves for explaining the way things stand with other (that is: non-moral) sorts of area.

It might be worth noting that Width of Cosmological Role is not a binary

distinction—it admits of greater or lesser degree. But in any case, it is the last of the Cruces that were introduced in T&O, and it is not covered in any more detail in this thesis.

### 1.3 Pluralism about Truth

T&O proposes a pluralism about truth. This immediately raises three questions which Wright addresses. First, is not a pluralism about truth a commitment to ambiguity? Second, what stops there being more than one truth predicate in an area? Third, how does logic operate between areas? As well as those three, a fourth question arises which is commonly overlooked, and has not (to my knowledge) been addressed by Wright; does not pluralism about truth require a plurality of discourses? and if so, what sense can we make of that latter notion? I now briefly address each of these questions.

#### 1.3.1 Ambiguity

Does pluralism make truth ambiguous many times over? There are four Cruces, three of which are independent of each other, with one (the Euthyphro Contrast) only becoming apposite if one of those three (Epistemic Constraint) goes one way. And there is no principled bar on the discovery of others. So we have at least twelve separate permutations of the characteristics of truth. Does that not mean that we have (at least) twelve separate truth predicates? And does that not make truth (at least) twelve-fold ambiguous?

In order to deal with this concern, Wright compares his pluralism about truth with the notion of identity.<sup>18</sup> We start with an *a priori* understanding of the notion of identity. This can be instantiated in different ways according to what sort of thing is being identified. So the sort of consideration which applies to whether *a* is the same person as *b* will be different from the considerations as to whether *n* is the same number as *n'*. This does not entail that there are many different concepts of identity in circulation, and so this does not imply that the notion is ambiguous. Rather, Wright says, identity is *realised* differently in the different cases.

Wright uses this as an analogy for the notion of truth. On the pluralist picture, there is one single notion of truth, of which we have an *a priori* grasp, *via* the Platitudes. Nevertheless there may be different ways in which the truth predicate behaves in different discourses. Provided we keep a grip on what is being said we may, as a *façon de parler*, talk in terms of more than one truth predicate. But it is only a way of talking—we must remember that the notion

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<sup>18</sup>See *inter alia* Crispin Wright, 'Truth in Ethics' in *Ratio*, 8 (1995).

of truth involved is not ambiguous. There is no ambiguity in the notion of truth any more than the separate fulfilment conditions for identity across separate sortals entails an ambiguity in the notion of identity.

The parallel Wright is drawing is this. Investigations into the criteria of identity for a particular subject lead to a better understanding of what it is that is under discussion. In the same way the investigation of how the truth predicate behaves in a particular area can illuminate what sort of talk is involved in that discourse. In that way, discourses can be sorted one from another into broad classes according as the proposed Cruces hold or not.

### 1.3.2 There Can Be Only One

The second concern is related to the first, and is also worth forestalling. Even if the notion of truth is not ambiguous, what is there to prevent more than one truth predicate applying to any particular discourse? Any predicate which obeys the Disquotational Schema and the Platitudes will qualify as a truth predicate. Why should there not be more than one predicate which fulfils these criteria? Suppose we have two predicates,  $\Pi$  and  $\Psi$ , which are both candidates for being truth predicates in a discourse. Since they are both candidates, the Disquotational Schema applies to them both. That means that we have both that

‘ $P$ ’ is  $\Pi$  iff  $P$

and

‘ $P$ ’ is  $\Psi$  iff  $P$

and thus that  $\Pi$  and  $\Psi$  are logically equivalent:

‘ $P$ ’ is  $\Pi$  iff ‘ $P$ ’ is  $\Psi$

Moreover these are *a priori* considerations, so there is no room for the added concern that the two predicates may only happen to match in extension. That is enough to allay the concern that there is more than one truth predicate available.

### 1.3.3 Truth Across Discourses

The lack of ambiguity provides an answer to the third question, concerning truth across discourses. Williamson writes

[S]uppose that the discourses  $D_1$  and  $D_2$  are both conducted in English, and meet Wright’s conditions for the applicability of a notion

of truth. Let 'A<sub>1</sub>' and 'A<sub>2</sub>' be declarative sentences in D<sub>1</sub> and D<sub>2</sub> respectively. Thus 'Either A<sub>1</sub> or A<sub>2</sub>' is also a declarative sentence of English. Some notion of truth is applicable to both the disjunction and its disjuncts, for otherwise the platitude that 'Either A<sub>1</sub> or A<sub>2</sub>' is true if and only if either 'A<sub>1</sub>' is true or 'A<sub>2</sub>' is true would be vitiated by equivocation.<sup>19</sup>

As we have seen above, Wright's proposal is not for an ambiguous notion of truth. There is a single notion of truth whose characteristics may alter from discourse to discourse. It may be Epistemically Constrained, and Euthyphronic (projective) in some discourses. In others it might be as realist as possible: not Epistemically Constrained, with Cognitive Command in play and with the maximum Width of Cosmological Role. The problem Williamson is broaching is that in order to maintain the platitude of distributing truth over the disjunction in the familiar fashion, then there must at least be a notion of truth applicable to the disjunction and its disjuncts at the same time. Suppose D<sub>1</sub> and D<sub>2</sub> had truth predicates of differing characters. Logic is concerned with truth-preserving inferences. Since there is only one notion of truth, there is nothing to prevent cross-discourse logical compounds from being treated as we should expect on a standard truth-functional approach. Indeed it is arguably an substantial advantage of Wright's approach that this is the case. Wright's approach solves these cross-discourse issues, and ones like them, in a single fell swoop.

### 1.3.4 A Plurality of Discourses

A discourse is an area of talk. Given that the aim of the project is to disentangle a complex web of anti-/realist considerations, the examples given by Wright are the familiar areas of dispute; statements about the past; statements of mathematics; moral statements; modal statements; statements about science. This raises a question which I believe is often overlooked. Can discourses be individuated? Is DISCOURSE actually a sortal concept?

The idea of a discourse is not investigated in T&O. To be clear: pluralism about truth does not *entail* pluralism about discourses. However, if there are only zero or one areas of talk, then advancing a pluralism of truth would be something of a white elephant. The programmatic assumption of T&O is that there is a plurality of discourses. Then the notion of a discourse must itself be robust enough to admit of pluralisation.

If we are to distinguish between discourses in the fashion required, the concept needs to be a sortal concept. It needs to admit of two distinctions. First,

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<sup>19</sup>Timothy Williamson, 'Critical Notice of *Truth and Objectivity*' in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 2:1 (1994), 141.

we need to be able to tell what is a discourse and what is not. Second, amongst those things which are discourses, we need to be able to tell one from another. If we cannot fulfil those two conditions, then DISCOURSE does not admit of pluralisation; ‘a plurality of discourses’ is a solecism. Since the project of T&O requires a plurality of discourses, it had better not turn out to be a nonsense.

We might start by laying out an intuitive notion using an analogy with the classroom. One intuitive idea of a discourse derives from school. Roughly, the curriculum divides into various subjects which *prima facie* are distinct—taught by different teachers in separate classrooms using differing apparatus. It seems clear to me that my Biology teacher did not need to be able to teach French in order to do her job properly. So there is some grounding for the thought that these subjects are independent. Things begin to blur quite soon, however. In the science subjects, mathematics soon becomes a pre-requisite. And the prospects of attempting English Literature without any English Language seem slim.

It appears that we cannot rely on that simple thought to tell the discourses apart. Is there in fact going to be any one set of criteria which can be used to tell discourse from discourse? There is good reason to suspect not. The reason is that the idea of discourse is strongly associated with the notion of a game—in this case a game played with language, where the assertions are considered as moves in the game. As is familiar from Wittgenstein, there is no one single thing that games have in common which makes them all games.<sup>20</sup> The Wittgensteinian analogy is with a rope made of many individual strands woven together. There is no one individual strand which links the ship to the shore. But the rope as a whole does just that.

A second suggestion is that perhaps we might proceed in terms of ‘areas of talk’. This suggests a parallel with geography. It might be just as difficult to pick out discourses as it is to count how many mountains there are in a mountain-range. We can count the number of peaks without too much trouble. But is there always one mountain for each peak and *vice-versa*? There are two separate issues here. First, telling which peak is which, in order to focus on one of them. Second, determining where one mountain ends and another begins. This suggests an approach to the problem. First we could pin down the distinctive vocabulary of the target discourse, which could get us the peak. Second we could indicate the boundary of the area of talk that we are interested in.

A third, final, suggestion is to define a discourse formally, and more or less arbitrarily. Consider utterances as tokens of types of utterance. Then we can think of discourses as classes of those types. We can say that an utterance *U* of type *T* is a member of discourse *D* just when that type *T* is a member of *D*'s

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<sup>20</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* 2nd edition. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), e.g. §§66, 67.

class of types *C*. An utterance might be of more than one type, which will mean that it is type-ambiguous. Also, and separately, a type of utterance may appear in more than one class of types, which would make it discourse-ambiguous. On this suggestion, the class *C* of a discourse's utterance-types is to be stipulated arbitrarily.

The third suggestion could be used as a formal attempt to pin down the intuitive second suggestion. Even taken together, the suggestions are not satisfactory; there is clearly more work to be done. However, for the purposes of this thesis I concur with the programmatic assumption of T&O that the work is indeed tractable, and so 'a plurality of discourses' is not a nonsense.

## 1.4 Thesis Structure

In this first chapter, I have introduced the project of T&O and dealt with some preliminary concerns. The thesis now divides into two parts. In the first part, three chapters focus on the framework of T&O itself. In the second part, three chapters deal with anti-realist paradigms which the framework disqualifies. The final chapter is a summary conclusion.

### Chapter 2: The Argument for Inflation

This chapter is my detailed examination of the Argument for Inflation. I examine the argument thoroughly to see how it is meant to work. I conclude that the detail of the Argument fails; it does not force a traditional deflationism to 'inflate'. However, I discover one driving principle behind the Argument to be the idea that justification for assertion transmits across the Disquotational Schema. If this principle holds, and the deflationist holds firm, then what Wright proposes as characteristics of truth still need to be reckoned with as broad characteristics of justifiable assertion, which vary from discourse to discourse. Thus although the detail of the Argument fails, the broad intention succeeds.

### Chapter 3: Epistemic Constraint and Justification

Picking up on the idea that justification for assertion transmits across the Disquotational Schema, I propose a new Crux which I call Assertoric Constraint. This is the principle that where a proposition is true, then justification for the assertion of the proposition will be available. I claim that debate about this should be acceptable to all parties, as a Crux, and does indeed mark an interesting division amongst areas of talk. I make the case that Assertoric Constraint does hold of some areas of talk.

Assertoric Constraint suffers from a potential structural issue. In order to solve this issue, I offer a constitutive analysis of Moore's Paradox. The analysis of the paradox is sufficiently structurally similar to suggest a solution for the problem facing Assertoric Constraint.

The consideration of Assertoric Constraint shows the need for states of information to be appropriately indexed. This naturally leads to Wright's notion of Superassertibility, which is a potential candidate for a truth predicate in an Epistemically Constrained area. In readiness for the next chapter, I show how it might be of service, in purely formal terms, to a relativist about truth.

Building on Assertoric Constraint, I argue that Epistemic Constraint is also plausible, at least for the majority of internalists and externalists. The ones who will most readily resist the extension from Assertoric Constraint to Epistemic Constraint are those who are internalist about justification and externalist about knowledge, or *vice versa*.

#### **Chapter 4: Cognitive Command**

Cognitive Command has perhaps generated the most interest of all of Wright's proposed Cruces. Some of this criticism has been very negative and the principle faces what appears to be a very sharp and simple logical refutation; in brief that a blameless disagreement is not logically possible.

I examine the purported refutation and Wright's response to it. Wright abandons the idea of Cognitive Command as based in disagreements where no party is to blame. I argue that Wright need not retreat so far. I flesh out the formal ideas around Superassertibility which were presented in the previous chapter with a what I call the Dossier Model of states of information. I then use that theory to underwrite a relativism which supports blameless disagreements.

This chapter concludes my view of the framework of T&O itself.

#### **Chapter 5: Three Dummettian Anti-realisms**

To begin the second part, I argue that there are (at least) three sorts of Dummettian anti-realist, which I distinguish as 'Stances'. The First Stance is motivated to drop the Law of Excluded Middle by a complex of theoretical considerations from the theory of language. The Second Stance is to maintain the principle that where a proposition is true, there must be something in virtue of which it is so. The Third Stance denies the rigidity of demonstratives in order to counter a line of thought from Kripke which supports an Essentialism.

Once the Stances have each been introduced, I then discuss how far these three sorts of anti-realist can be accommodated on the framework of T&O.



## **Chapter 6: Error Theory and Expressivism**

Mackie's Error Theory is introduced and criticised independently of Wright's framework. I agree with Wright that the motivations which drive the Error Theorist can be reconstructed on the framework.

A related anti-realist tradition, Expressivism, also gets short shrift on the framework. I introduce a traditional Expressivism and relate it to Blackburn's Quasi-Realist project, which is rightly seen as an heir to that tradition.

Whilst I agree with Wright that the Quasi-Realist can be assimilated, I argue that there are distinctive motivations behind traditional Expressivism which cannot be represented on the framework. The Expressivists, then, are correct to feel aggrieved at their disqualification.

## **Chapter 7: Caution and Convention**

The roots of Cognitive Command can be traced to an earlier argumentative strategy which Wright created, involving the Cautious Man. I call this the Cautious Strategy. It was originally used by Wright to argue in favour of a Conventionalism about necessity. Interestingly, this position is no longer available on the framework of T&O.

The Cautious Man attracted an antagonist in Peacocke's *Being Known*. I deploy the Cautious Strategy against Peacocke's proposal for a semantic way with metaphysical necessity. The success of this deployment leads me to claim that, independently of the fate of Cognitive Command, there is something worth salvaging in the original Cautious line of thought. I then examine why Conventionalism cannot adequately be represented on the framework.

This chapter concludes the part which deals with the anti-realist paradigms disqualified by the framework.

## **Chapter 8: Summary Conclusion**

The final chapter provides a summary conclusion of the thesis as a whole. I conclude with some tentative remarks on how the framework of T&O might be augmented to allow for proper account to be taken of the Expressivist and Conventionalist.

# Introduction to Part I

In this first part of my thesis, I examine three key aspects of the framework of T&O.

In chapter two I examine Wright's argument against traditional deflationism. I call this the Argument For Inflation. I show that the letter of the Argument fails. However, the driving idea which I uncover behind the Argument is still to be reckoned with.

In the third chapter I mount an argument that there are areas of talk which are Epistemically Constrained. To do this I first establish that a second principle, which I call Assertoric Constraint, is plausible. I then show that most (though not all) types of internalists and externalists should accept Epistemic Constraint where they accept Assertoric Constraint. Wright's Superassertibility is introduced, and I give a formal sketch of how it might be of service to a relativist.

The fourth chapter looks at Cognitive Command. This Crux was intended at first to pick out areas which lend themselves to relativism; where people may disagree about an issue without either of them being mistaken. I chart Wright's reasons for giving up on this initial motivation, and find them wanting. Returning to the initial thought, I flesh out the formal sketch of Superassertibility from chapter three with a theory of states of information. This shows how Superassertibility can be of use to the relativist, and thus how Cognitive Command can be kept.

That will conclude my survey of the framework of T&O. I shall then proceed in Part II to look at anti-realist paradigms which the framework seeks to disqualify.

## Chapter 2

# The Argument for Inflation

*Or: Does Truth and Objectivity pp. 15–21 Suggest a Cogent Argument Against Deflationary Truth?*

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the detail of the Argument for Inflation. The project of T&O is to provide a common starting point from which further debates about realism can be constructed. The various debates turn about the Cruces mentioned in the previous chapter. They aim to establish or deny that particular ‘realism-relevant’ features hold within in an area of talk. One theory which presents itself as a candidate starting point is the deflationary theory of truth. However, if the deflationary theory is correct there will be no room for the pluralism about truth which makes up the framework of T&O, into which the various anti-/realist debates are to be slotted.

It is therefore important to Wright that the deflationist’s view be removed from the running. Wright reckons the Argument for Inflation in T&O is ‘a fundamental and decisive objection to deflationism as classically conceived.’<sup>1</sup> The Argument for Inflation is an argument against the coherence of deflationary truth. I begin by introducing my understanding of deflationism. I then provide a close reading of the Argument as presented in T&O. This is followed by clarification and response. I then examine Wright’s restatement of the Argument, which again I clarify before responding.

I find that the detail of the Argument fails to refute deflationism. However, one core thought of the Argument is that warrant transmits across the Disquotational Schema. I argue that the deflationist should therefore allow that the

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<sup>1</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 21, fn 15.

framework of T&O can be transposed from talk of truth having varying characteristics in various areas, into terms of broad types of warranted assertion operating in those areas.

## 2.2 Deflationism

Frege is not a deflationist. However, he does broach the driving notion of deflationism in the middle of this passage:

All the same it is something worth thinking about that we cannot recognise a property of a thing without at the same time finding the thought *this thing has this property* to be true. So with every property of a thing there is tied up a property of a thought, namely truth. It is also worth noticing that the sentence ‘I smell the scent of violets’ has just the same content as the sentence ‘It is true that I smell the scent of violets.’ So it seems, then that nothing is added to the thought by my ascribing to it the property of truth.<sup>2</sup>

The sentence ‘I smell the scent of violets’, says Frege, has the same content as ‘It is true that I smell the scent of violets.’ Frege also agrees with the deflationist that there is something unhappy about classing ‘true’ as a property—he goes on in this passage to question whether it is a property ‘in the ordinary sense at all’. He does part company from the deflationist, however, since he also holds that ‘it seems likely that the content of the word ‘true’ is *sui generis* and indefinable.’<sup>3</sup> Frege, then, is not a deflationist. However, I take his observation that ‘true’ does not add to the content of the sentence as a starting point for understanding deflationism. ‘True’ does not add to the content of the sentence; a sentence suffixed with ‘. . . is true’ tells us no more and no less than the sentence without the suffix. Therefore, with Frege, the deflationist questions whether it marks a property in the ordinary sense. Instead of marking a property, the deflationist takes it to be no more than a grammatical device. For example, abbreviation is a grammatical device. We can write ‘N.B.’ for ‘*nota bene*’, ‘etc.’ abbreviates ‘*et cetera*’ and ‘sc.’ stands for ‘*scilicet*’. The use of an abbreviation changes the sentence typographically, but does not change the meaning of the sentence. Abbreviations are a convenience, but an inessential one; they could all be replaced with what they abbreviate without the sentence changing meaning. The traditional deflationist argues that ‘true’ is a grammatical device in the same way; that it can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence.

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<sup>2</sup>Gottlob Frege, ‘Der Gedanke’ in *Beiträge zur Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, 1 (1918), 60, trans Geach and Stoothoff.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 61.

Ramsey, who is perhaps the first person to pursue a distinctively deflationist line, writes

‘It is true that Caesar was murdered’ means no more than that Caesar was murdered, and ‘It is false that Caesar was murdered’ means that Caesar was not murdered.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the deflationist holds that, in the main, ‘true’ and ‘false’ can be eliminated from the language. The *proviso* involves cases where the proposition involved is not explicit. There are several ways in which this might occur. One might refer to a proposition that someone else has asserted, and mark one’s concurrence by saying

What the captain told us at half-time is true.

Simply removing the occurrence of ‘is true’ produces the malformed sentence:

What the captain told us at half-time.

I call this type of case ‘Indirect’. What this type of case requires is a substitution for the proposition which the captain actually enunciated. But suppose the captain passed more than one observation during half-time. Then one might mark one’s concurrence by saying

Everything the captain told us at half-time is true.

Again simply removing the ‘is true’ does not, in this case, produce a well-formed sentence. I call this sort of case ‘Compendious’. As Ramsey suggests, this can be treated as a quantification: for every proposition *P* uttered by the captain at half-time, *P* is true. Following that, for each case of ‘*P* is true’ the phrase ‘is true’ can be removed without loss of meaning. A further example of indirect reference is provided by the naming of theories, as in ‘Newtonian Mechanics is true.’ Here the deflationist can propose a similar technique to that just suggested, and first replace the reference to ‘Newtonian Mechanics’ with the laws which go to make up that theory. For instance, ‘Newton’s First Law of Motion is true, Newton’s Second Law of Motion is true, Newton’s Third Law of Motion is true’. The reference by name to each law can then be removed by inserting the content of the law mentioned. In the case of the second law: ‘It is true that the rate of change of momentum of a body is proportional to the resultant force that acts on it.’<sup>5</sup> From this we can then straightforwardly remove the prefixed ‘it is true that’.

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<sup>4</sup>Frank Ramsey, ‘On Facts and Propositions’ in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume VII (1927), 106. Page reference to the reprint in Simon Blackburn and Keith Simmons, editors, *Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>5</sup>This wording of the law is from P. M. Whelan and M. J. Hodgson, *Essential Principles of Physics* (London: John Murray, 1978), 34.

The deflationist suggests that in general ‘true’ can be harmlessly removed. They then provide further techniques for systematic deletions of the predicate which preserve the meaning, in other cases, such as the Indirect and Compendious cases just considered, where the removal of the predicate is not straightforward. To the extent that these techniques do not convince, then to that extent it will appear that we could not (even in principle) dispense with ‘true’; it will be more than a grammatical convenience.

I should also note that, as the name implies, a deflationist holds that there is no further mystery behind ‘true’—truth itself is not a weighty topic deserving of deep discussion. The most that needs to be done to explain the notion concerns the workings of the lightweight, grammatical, techniques for eliminating occurrences of the word in a meaning-preserving fashion.

I am now in position to present Wright’s analysis of deflationism as consisting of two theses—one positive and one negative. The positive thesis is that the ascription of truth is governed by the Disquotational Schema:

‘*P*’ is true iff *P* DS

Using this, together with the lightweight machinery to cope with implicitly referenced propositions, and compendious statements, talk of ‘true’ is to be systematically eliminated. The negative thesis of deflationism is that the positive thesis is all there is to truth. Talk of ‘true’ is all but a notational convenience, which could be eliminated without loss of meaning. So truth qualifies as grammatically convenient, but no more than that. It does not denote any further, metaphysical, property of propositions or sentences.

The deflationist holds that ‘true’ can be systematically removed from the language without loss of expressive power—notwithstanding the Indirect and Compendious cases—although perhaps at the forfeit of some convenience. A more modern, nuanced, view does not hold to the systematic removal of ‘true’, but instead insists that the Disquotational Schema contains all there is to be said about truth. On the more modern view, the Disquotational Schema encapsulates the entire conceptual resource needed to understand ‘truth’. It is plausible that the more traditional deflationist, as I have presented him, suffers from irreparable defects and so is something of a straw man. Horwich, for one, has presented several reasons why the traditional view should be replaced with the more modern one.<sup>6</sup>

I am not going to rehearse those further arguments here. I shall follow Wright’s original presentation, whose target is the traditional deflationist as

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<sup>6</sup>Paul Horwich, *Truth* 2nd edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 37–40.

given by the positive and negative theses above.<sup>7</sup> This is aimed specifically at traditional deflationism; the thrust is that the positive and the negative theses are inconsistent. He holds that the Disquotational Schema is correct; that truth is indeed disquotational. But he argues it is a *consequence* of the Disquotational Schema that truth is not merely (all but) a notationally useful device. The positive thesis holds at the expense of the negative thesis; there must be more to say about truth than the Disquotational Schema alone allows of. Wright expresses this by saying that the deflationist's truth must *inflate*. This is the conclusion of the Argument for Inflation. I hold that the Argument fails to force the inflation of traditional deflationism. However, if I have correctly diagnosed the driving thought of the Argument, then both the traditional and the modern deflationist are still left with something to reckon with.

## 2.3 The Original Argument for Inflation

There are two presentations of the Argument for Inflation. The first is in T&O. A few years later, Wright produced another presentation of the Argument, in response to calls for clarification from critics.<sup>8</sup> I turn first to the presentation in T&O. This takes the form of a close-reading and exegesis of pp. 15–21 of that work.

The two versions of the Argument for Inflation both use principles which Wright labels 'Normative Coincidence.' The principles, although they are given the same name, are different. The one in T&O is stronger than the one in later argument. They are logically related in that the strong version entails the weak version. I therefore distinguish them by calling them Strong Normative Coincidence and Weak Normative Coincidence respectively.

Below I shall show that there is a good objection to Strong Normative Coincidence. However, Weak Normative Coincidence is not vulnerable to the same objection. It is therefore apposite to keep the two separate principles tagged from the beginning. The close reading is exposition of Wright. I therefore insert '[strong]' or '[strongly]' in quotations from the text where the principle referred to is Strong Normative Coincidence.

### 2.3.1 Close Reading

Wright's intention is to bring out a tension in the deflationist's position. The tension is between two features. Both features are seen to come about because

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<sup>7</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 14.

<sup>8</sup>Crispin Wright, 'Responses to Commentators' in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 56:4 (1996).

of the adherence of truth to the Disquotational Schema.

To begin with, Wright introduces the idea of a *practice* which is made up of particular *moves*. A *practice* is to be any intentional activity and a *move* is to be an action performed in that practice.<sup>9</sup> Moves in the practice may have characteristics. There are two sorts of normativity which might attach to such characteristics of a move in the practice. These two sorts are *descriptive* and *prescriptive*. If a characteristic is descriptively normative, then that is to say that, as a matter of fact, the participants in the practice are inclined to make moves which have that characteristic. In contrast, if a characteristic is prescriptively normative, then reflecting on the fact that a move has the characteristic gives the participants a defeasible reason for making the move. These examples have been given for *positive* norms. There are negative versions of these norms as well. A negative descriptive norm is a characteristic such that, as a matter of fact, people avoid making the moves which possess that characteristic. A negative prescriptive norm is one which, if reflected on, lends a defeasible reason to avoid making the move which possesses it. The case in point is the practice of assertoric discourse.

Wright then notes that the argument should replace talk of characteristics with talk of predicates, thus remaining neutral on the question of whether a particular predicate expresses a substantial property or not.

This general talk of practice is applied to assertoric discourse. The moves in this practice are assertions. The norms which attach to the sentences are the predicates truth (*T*) and warranted assertibility (*WA*). What is assertoric or not is to be had by noting one syntactic feature of assertoric content:

it is distinctive of sentences with assertoric content, in the sense contrasting with, say, imperative, interrogative or optative content, that they can feature without syntactic incongruity as the antecedents of conditionals.<sup>10</sup>

Thus Wright holds that sentences which have assertoric content are up for featuring as the antecedents of conditionals, whereas sentences which express commands, questions or wishes cannot take that role. One such conditional, he notes, is (one half of) the Disquotational Schema itself:

If *P* then '*P*' is true DS<sub>1</sub>

This means that any assertoric sentence is suitable for being true. Since the deflationist has only the resource available from the Disquotational Schema, it

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<sup>9</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 15.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.



also follows that no other sort of sentence will be suitable for being true. Only those sentences which can feature as antecedents will be suitable to be in the range of the truth predicate.

Wright now introduces the notion of warranted assertibility. Sentences which are up for being true, do have content. But

to be determinate in content at all, there has to be a distinction, respected for the most part by participants in the practice, between proper and improper use of them ... and ... that will be a distinction between cases where their assertion is justified and cases where it is not.<sup>11</sup>

If there is no prevalent protocol concerning when it is justified or not to assert particular sentences, then the purpose of asserting those sentences will likewise lack clarity. The sentences would lack determinate content. This norm of warranted assertibility is a prescriptive norm, since

to have reason to think that a sentence is warrantably assertible is, trivially, to have (defeasible) reason to assert it.<sup>12</sup>

This norm is also descriptively normative over assertoric discourse. As argued above, if people did not, by and large, respect the standards of justification for assertion, then the very content of the sentences would be threatened.

Warranted assertibility, then, is both prescriptively and descriptively normative of assertoric discourse. The Disquotational Schema also ensures that the same is true of truth, first

‘*T*’ is prescriptively normative, because any reason to think that a sentence is *T* may be transferred, across the biconditional, into reason to make or allow the assertoric move which it expresses.<sup>13</sup>

And second

‘*T*’ is descriptively normative in the sense that the practices of those for whom warranted assertibility is a descriptive norm are exactly as they would be if they consciously selected the assertoric moves which they were prepared to make or allow in the light of whether or not the sentences involved were *T*.<sup>14</sup>

Wright now points out that the relationship between warranted assertibility and truth is in fact tighter; they *coincide* in normative force. Two predicates

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<sup>11</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 17.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

[strongly] coincide in normative force just when reason to think that the one obtains is reason to think the other obtains, and *vice versa*. This is the case for these two since

reason to regard a sentence as warrantably assertible is, naturally, reason to endorse the assertion which it may be used to effect, and conversely; and reason to endorse an assertion is, by the Disquotational Schema, reason to regard the sentence expressing it as *T*, and conversely.<sup>15</sup>

So far, then, Wright has shown that truth and warranted assertibility are both norms over assertoric discourse, and that they [strongly] coincide in normative force, in the sense which has just been explained.

And so far this is a finding wholly consonant with deflationism. Since the defining thesis of deflationism is that ‘true’ is merely a disquotational device . . . a deflationist must of course insist that the only substantial norms operating in assertoric practice are norms of warranted assertibility, and that the truth predicate can indeed mark no independent norm. For were it normatively independent, to predicate ‘true’ of a sentence would be to claim that sentence’s satisfaction of a norm distinct from warranted assertion. No room could then remain for the contention that ‘true’ is only grammatically a predicate, whose role is not to attribute a substantial characteristic.<sup>16</sup>

The second half of Wright’s argument is to show that truth and warranted assertibility might diverge in extension. Even though they are Strongly Normatively Coincident, the two norms may still differ, in that ‘success in the one aim need not be success in the other.’<sup>17</sup> It is endorsing the Disquotational Schema which brings this about. First, he notes that warranted assertibility is a *defeasible* reason. It is then a simple matter to show that truth and warranted assertibility may diverge in extension. The nub of the observation is that while truth commutes with negation, warranted assertibility does not. Wright cashes it out like this. ‘*P*’ in the Disquotational Schema represents assertoric content. Assertoric contents have Significant Negations, so ‘it is not the case that *P*’ must also be admitted as a valid substitution in the Disquotational Schema.

(i) ‘It is not the case that *P*’ is *T* if and only if it’s not the case that *P*.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 17.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>18</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 19.

Second, the Disquotational Schema can be contraposed

- (ii) It is not the case that  $P$  if and only if it is not the case that ' $P$ ' is  $T$ .<sup>19</sup>

Putting the two together, the conclusion is that truth and negation commute.

- (iii) 'It is not the case that  $P$ ' is  $T$  if and only if it is not the case that ' $P$ ' is  $T$ .<sup>20</sup>

Wright now considers the equivalent steps for warrant. In particular, he considers the case where the warrants in an area might be *neutral*, where that means that some warrants are such that, for some  $P$ , they do not allow us to assert  $P$ , and also do not allow us to assert 'it is not the case that  $P$ '.

[W]ith such a state of information, and such a statement  $P$ , it will be correct to report that it is not the case that  $P$  is warrantably assertible but incorrect to report that the negation of  $P$  is warrantably assertible.<sup>21</sup>

First, Wright establishes that truth and warranted assertibility are Strongly Normatively Coincident. Now he has shown that they are nevertheless distinct norms; satisfying one need not entail satisfaction of the other. And so for the *coup de grâce*. Deflationism holds that 'the truth predicate is merely a device of endorsement of assertions' and is therefore 'committed to the idea that warranted assertibility is the *only* norm operative over assertoric discourse.'<sup>22</sup> Wright has shown that the Disquotational Schema itself underwrites both halves of the argument; first that truth and warranted assertibility are Strongly Normatively Coincident, second that they are distinct, since they may diverge in extension. But Wright asserts that for the deflationist there can be only one norm in operation over assertoric discourse. And hence he holds that deflationism is shown to be 'an inherently unstable position.'<sup>23</sup>

### 2.3.2 Interpreting The Original Version

Wright spends a large amount of time developing the two parts of the argument. First is Strong Normative Coincidence; that reason to think that one norm holds is reason to think that other holds and *vice versa*. Second is what I shall follow Wright in calling Divergence. This is the fact that truth and warranted assertibility are not extensionally equivalent; they potentially diverge. After developing these two parts, it appears that for Wright the conclusion is all but immediate. He gives very little by way of explanation of the reasoning to the conclusion itself.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 21, emphasis in the original.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

### Substantiality: The Target of the Argument

First I should like to be clear about what the target of the argument is. In order to do this, I propose to clean up one of the terms used in a natural, and therefore loose, sense by Wright. The term is ‘substantial’, as applied to a predicate. I would like to get clear about exactly what Wright means by ‘substantial’ in the passage. I submit that Wright is not using it in a technical sense. But readers of T&O might mistakenly equate it with the usage defined later in the work where Wright says

I introduce the phrase ‘substantial truth’ merely for ease of discussion, to register the presence of realism-relevant features within a discourse.<sup>24</sup>

The realism-relevant features which are referred to are the subjects of the various debates—the Cruces—about which the realist and anti-realist might engage. They were introduced in the previous chapter, and included Epistemic Constraint, Cognitive Command and Wide Cosmological Role.<sup>25</sup> It is clear that this usage of ‘substantial truth’ does not apply here in the Argument for Inflation, for the following reason. The Argument for Inflation is making the case that truth is not insubstantial in the deflationist’s sense. If it succeeds then truth is shown to be substantial in the deflationist’s sense. But if it succeeds, there must still be room on the proposed framework of T&O for an area, which admits of truth, not to have any realism-relevant features. It is wrong, therefore to identify ‘substantial’ in the sense of possessing one or more realism-relevant features and ‘substantial’ in the sense, borrowed from the deflationist, employed in the Argument for Inflation.

What does ‘substantial’ mean? Wright explicitly leaves this term somewhat loose, in order to leave room for the refinement of the best formulation of deflationism.<sup>26</sup> It will help to give one example of how it might be filled, since that will enable a clearer understanding of the target of the Argument. My purpose is not to offer a conclusive proposal on behalf of the deflationist. Indeed, as I mentioned above, if Horwich is correct then the proposal is doomed. Nevertheless it helps to see what a deflationist is objecting to when they deny that truth is ‘substantial’. To that end, I begin by defining Syntactic Device as follows.

A linguistic expression is to be a *Syntactic Device* just when it is capable of being systematically removed from the language without loss of expressive power, other than notational convenience.

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<sup>24</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 90, fn 12.

<sup>25</sup>§1.2.4, 14.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

Wright makes a concession to the deflationist by supposing that the deflationist can produce convincing techniques for coping with the Compendious and Indirect cases mentioned above. The precise claim of the deflationist, then, is not that 'is true' is a Syntactic Device, but rather that it is *all but* a Syntactic Device; the difference is to allow for whatever techniques the deflationist proposes for coping with the Indirect and Compendious cases. I then propose the following as a definition of Insubstantiality:

An *Insubstantial* predicate is one whose linguistic expression is all but a Syntactic Device.

Then a *Substantial* predicate in this technical sense is precisely one which fails to be Insubstantial; *i.e.* one which is more than (all but) a Syntactic Device. This definition is general, and explicitly intended to be independent of whether a predicate is governed by instances of the Disquotational Schema. There may well be Insubstantial predicates which are not so governed. And this is as it should be. To hold from the beginning that any predicate governed by the Disquotational Schema *must* be Insubstantial would be to beg the question against Wright, since his intention is to provide for a truth predicate which is both governed by the Disquotational Schema and Substantial. Indeed, the Argument is to the conclusion that the Disquotational Schema itself enforces this Substantiality. So the Substantiality of a predicate and whether the Disquotational Schema is in play must be reckoned as independent issues, pending further argument.

Defining 'Substantial' in this fashion allows me to be clearer about what is in contention in the Argument. The deflationist holds that truth is governed by the Disquotational Schema, and that the predicate involved is Insubstantial. Wright agrees that truth is governed by the Disquotational Schema. But he argues that the Disquotational Schema itself enforces the fact that the predicate involved cannot be Insubstantial; (all but) a merely grammatical device. Since the matter of contention is precisely the Substantiality of truth, it behoves us to be clear, as I have been, about what that means.

I have clarified what the target of the Argument is: that truth is Substantial in the technical sense which I introduced above. This is that the predicate *T* is more than (all but) merely grammatical. And I suggested that it is necessary and sufficient for a predicate to be merely grammatical that there be a systematic procedure for eliminating the predicate without change of meaning.

### A Note on Notation

For ease of my exposition, I am going to use the following notation, which I note here to avoid confusion. ‘ $T[P]$ ’ is to mean ‘ $P$  is true’.<sup>27</sup> Similarly ‘ $WA[P]$ ’ means ‘ $P$  is warrantedly assertible’. The advantage of this notation is that iterations can be expressed in a less cumbersome fashion. I can write ‘ $WA[WA[P]]$ ’ instead of ‘“ $P$  is warrantedly assertible’ is warrantedly assertible’. There is a point of potential confusion which needs to be mentioned. The Disquotational Schema is a principle about disquoting sentences. In the proposed notation this becomes

$$T[P] \equiv P \quad \text{DS}$$

And that might be mistaken for the Equivalence Schema, which is a principle concerning propositions:

$$\text{That } P \text{ is true iff } P \quad \text{ES}$$

The confusion is natural because of the close relationship of the two; suppose it is granted that

$$\text{‘}P\text{’ says that } P$$

Then DS and ES are inter-derivable.<sup>28</sup> In any case, it is hoped that with this warning in place the confusion will not arise, and that I can safely make use of the notation with its attendant benefits.

### Strong Normative Coincidence

With the above notation in place, I begin my interpretation of Wright’s first presentation of the Argument for Inflation. The starting point of both main parts of the argument is the Disquotational Schema:

$$T[P] \equiv P \quad \text{DS}$$

If the practice lacks sufficient discipline, then the content will likewise suffer. So warranted assertibility must apply over assertoric discourse, on pain of losing the content of the assertions. This warrant transmits across the Disquotational Schema;

$$WA[P] \equiv WA[T[P]] \quad \text{DS}_{WA}$$

This shows that truth is a norm of assertoric discourse. This should anyway be granted on all sides, and especially by anyone who grants that to assert is to

<sup>27</sup>The corner quotes indicate Quine’s quasi-quotation; Willard Van Orman Quine, *Mathematical Logic* revised 1951 edition. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1940), 33–37.

<sup>28</sup>Compare Wright, *T&O*, 24. Wright derives ES from DS; it is clear that on the same assumption DS could be derived from ES instead. See also the previous chapter §1.2.2, 12ff.

assert as true.

Thus truth and warranted assertibility are both norms over assertoric discourse. They also Strongly Coincide in normative force. Wright's reasoning can be unpacked as follows. First, for warranted assertibility, reason to hold a sentence as warrantably assertible is reason to assert that sentence

$$WA[WA[P]] \rightarrow WA[P] \quad \text{NC}_{WA}(1)$$

Furthermore, Wright maintains, reason to hold a sentence as warranted is by itself reason to hold that the warrant is good:

$$WA[P] \rightarrow WA[WA[P]] \quad \text{NC}_{WA}(2)$$

Together these give

$$WA[P] \equiv WA[WA[P]] \quad \text{NC}_{WA}$$

We have just seen that reason transmits across the Disquotational Schema; this is what  $DS_{WA}$  states. Putting together  $DS_{WA}$  and  $NC_{WA}$ , by transitivity of the biconditional, we reach Strong Normative Coincidence of truth and warranted assertibility:

$$WA[WA[P]] \equiv WA[T[P]] \quad \text{NC}$$

This means that reason to think warranted assertibility holds is reason to think truth holds, and *vice versa*.

### Divergence of T and WA

However, despite the fact that truth and warranted assertibility Strongly Normatively Coincide, they might diverge in extension. Starting again with the Disquotational Schema

$$T[P] \equiv P \quad \text{DS}$$

then since any assertoric content has a negation, we can put  $\ulcorner \neg P \urcorner$  for  $P$ :

$$T[\neg P] \equiv \neg P$$

then contrapose the Disquotational Schema,

$$\neg P \equiv \neg T[P]$$

and put those two together:

$$T[\neg P] \equiv \neg T[P]$$

This shows that truth and negation commute. However, warranted assertibility and negation do not commute. Lack of a warrant for  $P$  does not, in general, allow one to conclude that  $\neg P$ . That is:

$$\neg P \neq \neg WA[P]$$

Since truth does, and warranted assertibility does not, commute with negation, we are forced to recognise that truth and warranted assertibility (potentially) differ in extension:

$$T[P] \neq WA[P]$$

### The Endgame

Once the two major parts of the Argument have been established, Wright's endgame is very short. The first major part of the Argument is that Strong Normative Coincidence holds for truth and warranted assertibility: that reason to think the one holds is reason to think the other holds, and *vice versa*.

$$WA[WA[P]] \equiv WA[T[P]]$$

The second major part is that truth and warranted assertibility diverge in extension.

$$T[P] \neq WA[P]$$

Assuming that those two parts have been established, how does Wright intend the endgame to go? From the reading above, my rough sketch is this. For the deflationist, truth is Insubstantial; it is merely a grammatical device. Therefore, asserts Wright, the deflationist must hold that 'warranted assertibility is the *only* norm operative over assertoric discourse.'<sup>29</sup> Yet we have seen that not only are truth and warranted assertibility Strongly Normatively Coincident, but they also diverge in extension. Therefore they are distinct norms, and they are both in force over assertoric discourse. But there can be only one norm in operation; *viz.* warranted assertibility. Hence the deflationist must give up the idea that truth is Insubstantial. That is a rough sketch. Suppose I grant the two main parts of the argument. Now I am concerned to see exactly how they work to bring about the inflation of deflationism. Can the precise moves be spelled out? To begin with, I venture two related attempts to make the moves of the argument more precise. These attempts involve imputing suppressed principles to the workings of the argument.

The first attempt I venture is to suggest that the argument uses a hidden

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<sup>29</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 21, emphasis in the original.



premiss. Perhaps the notion is that since there are two norms, they must both be Substantial. Why might that be? Since they are distinct, which is granted, then it might be supposed that both had better be Substantial in order that they can be held apart. But that is unhappy as an interpretation, since the fact that there are two norms in itself does not entail that either is Substantial. To begin with, it seems plausible that Insubstantial norms might be distinct. So it is not clear that just because there are *two* norms means that they are both Substantial. Of course, warranted assertibility is Substantial, and admitted as such on all sides. But Wright provides no reason why the difference between the two norms need not be that one is Insubstantial and the other not. This leaves it open to the deflationist to reply that truth and warranted assertibility are different norms *because* truth is Insubstantial while warranted assertibility is Substantial. On this interpretation of the argument the conclusion is that truth must be Substantial since admitting that there are *two* norms forces us to admit that *both* are Substantial. And the deflationist's reply to this is that this would be a *non sequitur*.  $\Phi$  and  $\Psi$  may be distinct norms, perhaps precisely because  $\Phi$  is Insubstantial where  $\Psi$  is not. The argument needs more than the simple numerical distinction of norms in order to force Substantiality on deflationary truth. It is not the *number* of norms in play which should disturb the deflationist, but rather just whether truth is Substantial or not.

The failure of this first attempt informs my second attempt to fill in the detail needed to explicate the completion of the argument. This attempt makes essential use of the idea that truth and warranted assertibility are Strongly Normatively Coincident. From an exegetical point of view, one expects this to play a central role, given the amount of time that Wright spends developing it. My first attempt failed since the fact that two norms are in operation does not entail that both be Substantial. But perhaps it is true that since warranted assertibility is Substantial and truth and warranted assertibility are Strongly Normatively Coincident, then *T* must be Substantial too. This suggests that the argument could be operating by a supporting, but uncredited principle; an enthymeme. One principle about norms which would do the job is as follows.

When two norms are Strongly Normatively Coincident, then the one is Substantial just when the other is.

This says that when norms Strongly Coincide then their Substantiality stands or falls together. This is more refined than my first approach since it allows that two or more distinct norms may be Insubstantial. The approach has the interpretative advantage of making sense of the stress in the text on Strong Normative Coincidence. It also makes the desired result readily forthcoming. No one holds that warranted assertibility is merely grammatical—so everyone

grants that it is Substantial. Then once we have proved that truth and warranted assertibility are normatively coincident, the principle just mooted shows that truth must be Substantial.

Is the suggested principle plausible? Certainly it does not seem *implausible*. But something stronger than that is needed. The deflationist's riposte to the first attempt was that truth and warranted assertibility are both in play in assertoric discourse, and they differ from each other in that one is Substantial where the other is not. The proposed principle needs to defend itself against the charge of being an *ad hoc* response to that riposte. Is there a case to be made for the principle which does not beg the question against the deflationist? There does not seem to be any way in which the principle could be supported, which is not vulnerable to flat denial from a recalcitrant deflationist. I therefore submit that the postulation of a missing principle, whilst it may secure the intended result, is not the correct interpretation of the Argument. My best understanding for the original Argument therefore does not rely on such principles, and is, as closely as possible, based in the text.

### 2.3.3 The Nub of the Original Argument

It is clear that Wright's Argument for Inflation aims to argue that truth cannot be Insubstantial. It is also clear that the other aspects of the argument involve normative coincidence and the distinctness of truth and warranted assertibility. So the major premisses and the conclusion are given. My proposal for the closest available argument which is valid, and which does not rely on missing principles is outlined as follows.

- (1) *T* and *WA* are related; they are Strongly Normatively Coincident.
- (2) But *T* and *WA* are distinct.
- (3) So *T* does mark a distinct norm.
- (4) But if *T* is Insubstantial then it cannot mark a distinct norm of its own.
- (5) So *T* cannot be Insubstantial.

### 2.3.4 Responding to the Original Argument

The Argument is a pincer movement. One pincer is that truth and warranted assertibility are Strongly Normatively Coincident. The other is that truth and warranted assertibility are distinct. Together these are intended to trap the deflationist, and force them afterward to inflate, by giving up the idea that truth is Insubstantial.

As noted above, the argument as just presented is valid. This means that the deflationist had better make trouble for one or more of the premisses involved.

There are issues concerning whether Strong Normative Coincidence holds or not. I shall take up those issues presently. I do not want to question whether the reasoning that truth and warranted assertibility diverge in extension is sound. I believe it is, and in any case the divergence of truth and justification is granted by both parties to this debate. Therefore, the other place for the deflationist to look is at the issue of Substance and distinctness of norms involved in the fourth premiss. I deal with that immediately after considering Strong Normative Coincidence.

### Strong Normative Coincidence

I wish to question whether Strong Normative Coincidence does indeed hold between truth and warranted assertibility; whether reason to think the one holds is reason to think the other holds, and *vice versa*. Wright gives a large amount of space over to showing that it does hold good. An analysis of the column-inches, so to speak, should rate it an important feature of the argument. What is less obvious is the role which the principle actually plays in the working of the argument. In the presentation just given, it plays no direct role itself. Rather, the considerations which lead us to conclude that it holds also lead us to conclude that truth is a norm of assertoric discourse. This latter—that truth is a norm of assertoric discourse—is not something that should, ordinarily, stand in need of investigation. But if that is not the point of bringing the principle to light, it is not clear what is. It is perhaps being posited as an interesting but superfluous fact. This stands in tension with the textual evidence that Wright spends so much time developing it. Then again, as I shall show below, the later presentation of the argument relies on the Weaker rather than the Stronger version of Normative Coincidence. So perhaps the Stronger version is indeed otiose.

I shall present good reason to doubt Strong Normative Coincidence, so the situation is as follows. Either Strong Normative Coincidence is an integral part of the Argument, in which case the Argument is not in good shape, or it is something which Wright points out along the way, as a consequence of the considerations involved. If Strong Normative Coincidence is false, then respectively, it either points directly to a structural flaw, or to a lurking problem in the considerations. I now turn to consider the claim that truth and warranted assertibility do not Strongly Normatively Coincide.

What then is the reason for doubting Strong Normative Coincidence? The support for the principle given above involves the principle that if it is warranted that it is warranted that  $P$  then it is warranted that  $P$  and *vice versa*:

$$WA[P] \text{ iff } WA[WA[P]]$$

Consider one half of this biconditional:  $\lceil WA[P] \rightarrow WA[WA[P]] \rceil$ . This is not going to be in good standing with anyone who has externalist sympathies about justification. It will simply be denied. One charitable interpretation, therefore, is to suggest that Wright is assuming an internalism about justification; that he uses ‘warrant’ in the sense of the justification one can give, when prompted, for the assertion one has made. That is a matter of interpretative charity, and in no way addresses the externalist’s concerns. But leaving those on one side for the moment, take the internalist view outlined.

I propose that the internalist should accept that as one’s grasp of the facts changes then what is warranted might change with that grasp. The internalist should therefore agree that warranting can properly be considered a two-place relation involving one’s grasp of the facts—or state of information—and propositions. I write ‘ $W_\sigma[P]$ ’ for ‘the assertion that  $P$  is warranted in the state of information  $\sigma$ ’. Under such a view, consider a particular state of information,  $k$ . The idea is plausible, for an internalist, that the warrant provided by  $k$  should iterate in this fashion:

$$W_k[P] \rightarrow W_k[W_k[P]]$$

States of information must be self-supporting, in the sense that if one warrants the assertion of  $P$ , then it also warrants the assertion that  $P$  is warranted. To suppose otherwise is to suppose that a warranting state of information could be self-gagging, and a self-gagging warrant—on the internalist picture—is no warrant at all.

But on this internalist picture of states of information and warrant, a separate problem arises. To see this, consider the other half of the biconditional. To begin with, it seems clear that we should subscribe to

$$W_k[W_k[P]] \rightarrow W_k[P]$$

But what should we say if the states of information differ? For instance, where  $j$  is another state of information, separate from  $k$ :

$$W_j[W_k[P]] \rightarrow W_j[P]$$

This, surely, should fail. It may well be the case that  $j$  warrants that  $k$  warrants  $P$ , but it does not follow that  $j$  itself warrants  $P$ . How so? It might be that  $j$  is richer than  $k$ , and so  $j$  has enough to warrant that  $k$  warrants  $P$ , but furthermore that  $P$  is nevertheless false. That is: it might be consistent to hold  $W_j[W_k[P]]$  and  $W_j[\neg P]$ .

In order to bring this out in more detail, consider the idea of *adding* states of information to each other. This involves pooling the information from each.

Suppose a state of information  $g$  supports a set of propositions  $\Gamma$  and a separate state  $h$  supports a set of propositions  $\Delta$ . One might think that the set of propositions supported by  $g + h$  is going to be the union of the propositions supported by  $g$  with the propositions supported by  $h$ ;  $\Gamma \cup \Delta$ . This might be true for some  $g$  and some  $h$ , but it is not true in general. The state created by adding two states of information will not, in general, warrant the union of the two sets of propositions which the states of information supported when considered individually. This is usually expressed by saying that the addition of states of information is, in general, not *monotonic* with respect to the preservation of warrant. This feature gives a reason to doubt one half of Strong Normative Coincidence:

$$WA[WA[P]] \text{ iff } WA[P]$$

Interpreted as holding the state of information is held constant, then it does seem plausible:

$$W_k[W_k[P]] \rightarrow W_k[P]$$

However, if the states of information are allowed to vary, then we have reason to reject it in its general form

$$W_j[W_k[P]] \rightarrow W_k[P]$$

This gives good reason to deny Strong Normative Coincidence, even on the more charitable internalist interpretation of warrant. And it is in any case unacceptable for anyone who entertains externalist ideas about justification.

This is the situation with Strong Normative Coincidence. It is best interpreted as ventured with internalist capital. With the other considerations on board, an internalist might propose Strong Normative Coincidence as a further insight worthy of note, although inessential in its own right to the progression of the Argument as a whole. But even in an internalist light, the venture seems doubtful. And it was a venture in which the externalist was never going to invest. It is curious how much time and care Wright spends developing it, but its failure is not damaging to the Argument, provided we can see how the Argument can work without it. I show below how the later presentation of the Argument relies on a weaker version of the same principle.

### Substance and Distinctness

The other potential point of weakness in the nub of the original argument which was identified was the fourth premiss, that if truth is Insubstantial then it cannot mark its own distinct norm. This needs some care. If a deflationist holds

first that truth is Insubstantial and second that truth is distinct from warranted assertibility, then this premiss is straightforwardly begging the question against the deflationist. It will mean that the argument is not well-aimed. What then is the driving thought behind the premiss?

Perhaps the line of thought behind it runs like this. Being a norm involves *doing some work*. But an Insubstantial predicate cannot do any work. At least, it cannot do work of its own; it could stand proxy for another, Substantial predicate which does do work. So an Insubstantial predicate cannot mark its own distinct norm. If truth is Insubstantial, it cannot do any work of its own. It is free to stand proxy for the Substantial warranted assertibility. But if it is Insubstantial it cannot mark a distinct norm.

The deflationist can hold that Wright has correctly identified truth as a norm over assertoric discourse. At the same time the deflationist can maintain that there is nothing more to this norm than the Insubstantial truth predicate. Perhaps surprisingly, this is something which is a consequence of Wright's own argument. Both truth and warranted assertibility transmit across the Disquotational Schema. Consider truth first. It transmits across the Disquotational Schema to give

$$T[T[P]] \text{ iff } T[P]$$

So there is no difference in the truth-conditions of  $P$  and the truth-conditions of  $T[P]$ . Precisely the same conditions make  $P$  true as make  $T[P]$  true. Now consider warranted assertibility. This also transmits across the Disquotational Schema. That fact was used by Wright in consideration of normative coincidence:

$$WA[T[P]] \text{ iff } WA[P]$$

This means that the justification for asserting  $P$  is just the same as the justification for asserting  $T[P]$ ; neither more nor less. Therefore Wright is just as committed as the deflationist to the view that whether meaning is based on truth-conditions, or assertibility-conditions, the predication '*... is true*' does not add or detract from the meaning. Thus there is no room for '*true*', in this sense, to be doing any work; it is—to use a different metaphor—semantically transparent. But it is a norm nevertheless.

I propose that the following is a stable position for the deflationist to hold in the face of Wright's Argument for Inflation. First, that truth is Insubstantial. Second, that truth is a norm; therefore norms (in general) do not have to '*do work*' in any sense which makes them Substantial. Third, that warranted assertibility is also a norm, and is Substantial. Fourth, that truth and warranted assertibility are indeed distinct; if only in that truth is Insubstantial where warranted assertibility is not. The deflationist duly notes that Wright's recommended pic-

ture introduces an interesting Substantial notion of warranted assertibility. But noticing the presence of that interesting notion does not force the intended inflation of truth to Substantiality.

The fourth premiss of the reconstructed nub of the original argument is that if truth is Insubstantial it cannot mark a distinct norm of its own. The premiss, if the reasoning above is correct, cannot, and should not be, accepted by the deflationist. This then constitutes a rebuttal of the original Argument for Inflation. I shall see below how well this stance fares given the different endgame which Wright proposes for the later version of the Argument.

## 2.4 The Later Argument for Inflation

The interpretation of the original Argument raised serious doubts about the role of Strong Normative Coincidence of truth and warranted assertibility. The amount of time spent developing this principle made it look as if it were important. But then it appeared that the principle itself did not do very much. Rather, the considerations which led Wright to propose Strong Normative Coincidence were used to issue in the claim that truth is a norm over assertoric talk. This is something which, I think, all sides should grant. Consent to that idea can be achieved by asking people to reflect on what the point of assertoric talk would be if it were not governed in an appropriate fashion by truth. It is circuitous to construct the Strong Normative Coincidence of truth and warranted assertibility in order to be able to show that truth is a norm. If not for the purposes of eliciting the fact that truth is a norm, then why invoke Strong Normative Coincidence at all? Perhaps it was indeed simply a superfluous aside which was intended to appeal to like-minded internalists about justification. But the value of the aside has been questioned in that such people have been given pause for thought in the form of considering the non-monotonicity of the addition of warrants.

The later version of the argument employs a weaker notion of normative coincidence (Weak Normative Coincidence) which does not suffer from these problems.<sup>30</sup> The later version also contains further expansion and explanation of the intended endgame. I now look at this version, which takes the logical form of a dilemma for the deflationist. The construction of the dilemma involves two lemmas.

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<sup>30</sup>The re-working is in Wright, 'Responses to Commentators'. Page references are to the reprint in Crispin Wright, *Saving the Differences: Essays on Themes from Truth and Objectivity* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003).

**Lemma 1**

The first [lemma] is about normativity. It is argued that any predicate which is explained by stipulating that it is to be subject to the Disquotational Schema will function normatively over assertion/acceptance of the range of sentences for which it is thereby defined, and will indeed coincide in normative force with warranted acceptance/assertibility for those sentences: that is, to have reason to think that the predicate applies to a sentence will be to have a warrant for accepting that sentence; and to have a warrant for accepting the sentence will be to have reason to think the predicate applies.<sup>31</sup>

In this version, then, Wright provides only part of the Strong Normative Coincidence from the original version. The passage just quoted means that where the Disquotational Schema

$$T[P] \text{ iff } P \qquad \text{DS}$$

applies to a predicate  $T$ , then that predicate will be normative over the discourse. It will also Weakly Coincide Normatively with warranted assertibility. This means ‘reason to think that the predicate applies’ is ‘warrant for accepting that sentence’;

$$WA[T[P]] \rightarrow WA[P]$$

and that ‘to have a warrant for accepting the sentence’ is ‘reason to think that the predicate applies’;

$$WA[P] \rightarrow WA[T[P]]$$

These can be combined to give

$$WA[T[P]] \text{ iff } WA[P] \qquad \text{Lemma 1}$$

which is Lemma 1 of the later version of the Argument. Admitting Lemma 1 is to admit no more and no less than that warrant transmits across the Disquotational Schema. Weak Normative Coincidence was an ingredient in the argument for Strong Normative Coincidence in the original argument. The original argument went on to show the contentious

$$WA[WA[P]] \text{ iff } WA[P]$$

I have said that this would not appeal at all to the externalist about justification, and how the internalist should be wary of issues of monotonicity in adding warrants together. But together with Weak Normative Coincidence, this principle

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<sup>31</sup>Wright, ‘Responses to Commentators’, 84.



gives Strong Normative Coincidence:

$$WA[WA[P]] \text{ iff } WA[T[P]]$$

Thus it is that the Strong version entails the Weak version. Provided the Disquotational Schema is granted, Weak Normative Coincidence should appeal to both the internalist and the externalist about justification. It does not depend on any dubious internalist notion of justification for its standing. Rather, it is based just on the idea that justification will transmit across the Disquotational Schema.

### Lemma 2

The second lemma states that where the warrants involved are defeasible and admit of neutral states of information, then warranted assertibility will not commute with negation. That is: as long as there are warrants which are silent on some proposition, then negation will not commute with that notion.

$$\neg WA[P] \neq WA[\neg P]$$

As shown above, where truth is subject to the Disquotational Schema, and granting elementary rules of negations, truth *does* commute with negation, so truth and warranted assertibility cannot coincide in extension. This is the second lemma:

$$T[P] \neq WA[P] \qquad \text{Lemma 2}$$

### The Dilemma

Wright then poses a dilemma for the deflationist. He asserts that there are just two, mutually exclusive possibilities, for a predicate such as *T*. Either it

serves to record a norm which is peculiar and distinctive to it

or it

is a device whereby one may indirectly signal moves' satisfaction of *other* norms.<sup>32</sup>

The second lemma acts to rule out the second horn of this dilemma. By Lemma 2 we know that the norms truth and warranted assertibility diverge in extension. In that case, asserts Wright, it cannot be that truth is just a grammatical shorthand for warranted assertibility. Therefore the deflationist is forced onto the first horn of the dilemma:

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<sup>32</sup>Wright, 'Responses to Commentators', 84, emphasis in the original.

the truth predicate has to be associated with a distinctive kind of critical or commendatory claim—there is a way in which a statement can be in, or out of order which is not the same as being warranted or not, and which it is the role of ‘true’ to mark.<sup>33</sup>

The main goal of the later Argument for Inflation is to show that *T* is *sui generis*. Once that goal is achieved, Wright believes, the main work of the Argument is over. He does, however, go on to provide more by way of explaining how this is unacceptable to the deflationist than he did in the original version. If truth is a *sui generis* norm, then, argues Wright, one thing it is not is simply grammatical. If it is *sui generis*, then ‘there is something in which a move’s compliance or non-compliance with that norm will consist.’<sup>34</sup> Furthermore ‘[i]t is mere word-spinning to deny’ that it will be ‘a real characteristic—property—of the move.’<sup>35</sup>

The deflationist cannot be happy with either horn of the dilemma. The dilemma captures the inherent tension which Wright wishes to bring out in the deflationist’s view.

### 2.4.1 The Nub of the Later Argument

I now present the nub of the later argument in a more regimented form.

- (I) *T* and *WA* are Weakly Coincident Norms:  $WA[T[P]] \equiv WA[P]$ .
- (II) And yet *T* and *WA* diverge in extension:  $WA[P] \neq T[P]$ .
- (III) If *T* and *WA* diverge in extension then *T* cannot be a marker for *WA*.
- (IV) *T* cannot be a marker for *WA*.
- (V) Either *T* is *sui generis* or a marker for *WA*.
- (VI) So *T* is *sui generis*.
- (VII) A *sui generis* norm cannot be Insubstantial.
- (VIII) *T* is Substantial.

The two lemmas are premisses; (I) and (II). Wright is explicit that Lemma 2 is intended to rule out one horn of the dilemma. I propose (III) and (IV) as the way to fill out this intention. The form of the dilemma is also explicit in the text; (V). (VI) is the stage at which for Wright the argument is all but over, but the overall intended conclusion is that truth is Substantial; (VIII). I submit that (VII) must be included in order to pass from the *sui generis* nature of truth to its Substantiality.

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<sup>33</sup>Wright, ‘Responses to Commentators’, 85.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

### 2.4.2 Responding to the Later Argument

The deflationist has no objection to the claim that justification transmits across the Disquotational Schema, and the extensional divergence of truth and warranted assertibility has never been in question. The deflationist can and should grant the lemmas from which Wright's argument is constructed. There remain two related points on which the deflationist can respond.

The first part of the response is that the divergence in extension of truth and warranted assertibility does not prevent truth from being Insubstantial; (all but) merely a grammatical marker for warranted assertibility. Asserting that  $P$  is true is no more or less than asserting that  $P$ . This is a consequence of the observation that warranted assertibility transmits across the Disquotational Schema. The transmission is something that Wright signs up to—it is the first lemma, which I have been calling Weak Normative Coincidence. To hold this stance is not 'mere word-spinning', but rather a consequence of adhering to that principle.

The first part of the response denies that there is a legitimate dilemma to be constructed from the two acknowledged lemmas that truth and warranted assertibility are Weakly Normatively Coincident and that they diverge in extension. But suppose for the moment that the first part fails, and that truth cannot be a mere grammatical marker for warranted assertibility. Then the dilemma holds good, and the deflationist must accept that truth is *sui generis*. What is the problem with that admission? It seems to me that they can respond that *sui generis* norms can be Insubstantial; for there is, on their view, at least one case of precisely that. The example is the case in point: truth. First, truth is Insubstantial, since it is governed by the Disquotational Schema. This means that regardless of whether meanings are given in truth conditions or assertibility conditions, 'That  $P$  is true' and  $P$  have the same sense. There is no room for the content to differ. Second, truth is *sui generis*, again, as a consequence of the Disquotational Schema. I used this consequence in the previous chapter to show that there could only be a single truth predicate operating in any one discourse.<sup>36</sup> There, I supposed that there are two predicates,  $\Pi$  and  $\Psi$ , which are both candidates for 'true'. Since they are both candidates, the Disquotational Schema applies to them both. That means that we have

' $P$ ' is  $\Pi$  iff  $P$

and

' $P$ ' is  $\Psi$  iff  $P$

and thus that  $\Pi$  and  $\Psi$  must be logically equivalent:

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<sup>36</sup>§1.3.2, 20.

$P$  iff 'P' is  $\Pi$  iff 'P' is  $\Psi$

These considerations hold *a priori*; so there is no room for the predicates simply happening to be logically equivalent. This means that there can be only one truth predicate governed by the Disquotational Schema. Hence it is *sui generis*. The first point was that truth was Insubstantial, and now we have that it is *sui generis*. Hence it is false that a *sui generis* norm cannot be Insubstantial, since there is at least one norm which is both.

These two points amount to saying that the dilemma posed by Wright to the deflationist is a false dilemma. The deflationist is not faced with two mutually exclusive and equally untenable consequences of their position. I propose then, that on inspection, the dilemma dissolves. The stable position I am advocating for a deflationist does not involve mere word-spinning, but adherence to the principles and results which Wright has adduced—excepting, of course, his favoured conclusion.

The stable position is that it is true that truth and warranted assertibility are Weakly Normatively Coincident, and this is just to admit that warranted assertibility transmits across the Disquotational Schema. It is also true that truth and warranted assertibility diverge, potentially, in extension. Despite that, truth is a marker for warranted assertibility; asserting that it is true that  $P$  is doing no more and no less than asserting that  $P$ . Furthermore, truth is *sui generis* in being the *only* Insubstantial norm governed by the Disquotational Schema. It is therefore itself an example of a *sui generis* norm which is Insubstantial. From that stable position, the deflationist can hold that the dilemma posed by Wright is false.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Wright is surely correct to insist that truth and justification are separate, and that truth and warranted assertibility diverge. And I suggest that the disagreeable Strong Normative Coincidence should be dropped in favour of its Weaker relation. The two versions of the Argument are then very similar; it is plausible to read the endgame of the later argument as a more detailed rendering of the original one. It is therefore acceptable to speak of *the* Argument for Inflation, as opposed to two separate arguments. There is still the question of whether the Argument captures a more modern deflationist such as Horwich in its scope. I now consider that question.

### 2.5.1 Note on Horwich

Horwich's modern brand of deflationism, which he calls 'minimalism' is distinct from the traditional version.<sup>37</sup> Horwich's minimalist takes the Equivalence Schema and holds that the theory generated by its instances is sufficient for explaining 'true' and its cognates. The Equivalence Schema encapsulates all the conceptual resource necessary for that task:

in order for the truth predicate to fulfil its function we must acknowledge that

(MT) The proposition *that quarks really exist* is true if and only if quarks really exist, the proposition *that lying is bad* is true if and only if lying is bad, . . . and so on,

*but nothing more about truth need be assumed.* The entire conceptual and theoretical role of truth may be explained on this basis.<sup>38</sup>

Horwich's minimalist allows that truth is a property.<sup>39</sup> This is one clear distinction between himself and the traditional deflationist.

Wright is adamant that the Argument captures Horwich in its scope:

the issue is *not* whether the truth predicate's possession of this role can be fully accounted for just by appeal to the Disquotational Schema.<sup>40</sup>

Wright mentions the Disquotational Schema. But on both Wright's terms, and on Horwich's terms, the Equivalence Schema and the Disquotational Schema are very closely tied. We saw above how this is true for Wright.<sup>41</sup> Horwich asserts that one may start either from the Equivalence Schema or from the Disquotational Schema, to reach the other.<sup>42</sup> And Wright might just as well have complained that the issue is not whether appeal to the Equivalence Schema alone is enough to explain the role of the truth predicate. To press that agenda, according to Wright, is to miss the point of the Argument for Inflation. As I said above, this is the very core of Horwich's minimalist's project. Has he, then, missed the point of the Argument?

If my analysis above is correct, then the best interpretation of the Argument has it that Substantiality of truth is the target. In that case the Argument misses Horwich's minimalist, rather than the other way around. Horwich's minimalist

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<sup>37</sup>Horwich.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 5, emphases and ellipsis in the original.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>40</sup>Wright, 'Responses to Commentators', 85.

<sup>41</sup>See the previous chapter §1.2.2, 12ff., and §2.3.2, 38 above.

<sup>42</sup>Horwich, 133–5.

is happy to grant that ‘true’ is more than a convenient short-hand. And in any case, the letter of the Argument fails.

### 2.5.2 The Aftermath

I maintain that despite the failure of the Argument, neither Horwich’s minimalist nor the deflationist should rest easy. They both still owe a response to Wright’s other considerations which go to make up the framework of T&O. I propose that the driving insight is that warrant transmits across the Disquotational Schema:

$$WA[T[P]] \text{ iff } WA[P]$$

This forces us to recognise that the conditions under which it is correct to assert  $P$  are the same as those under which it is correct to assert that  $P$  is true.

Suppose we grant that there is a variety of assertoric discourses. Suppose we grant further that in each of these discourses there is indeed a norm of warranted assertibility in play: that is, a set of standards to which the participants by and large adhere, and which dictate when it is right and wrong to make or avoid making the assertions. Then Wright’s framework can be taken to group those discourses together for which the warrant operates in certain broad fashions. For instance, the group of discourses for which Cognitive Command holds have in common the feature that the warranted assertibility of assertions is governed by the fact that disagreements about assertions are down to some mechanical malfunction in the parties which disagree. Or again, those discourses for which Epistemic Constraint holds have in common the feature that the truth of the assertions never outstrips the warranted assertibility of the matter.

We can then see Wright as holding that these broad features of the warranted assertibility operating in an area of talk will transfer across the Disquotational Schema to be reflected in the truth predicate. And here we have exposed the root of Wright’s pluralism about truth. Wright treats the differences that he brings to light in the operation of warranted assertibility as variations, *via* the Disquotational Schema, in the quality of truth predicate in operation over the various discourses. Since the Disquotational Schema is central to deflationism, Wright maintains the deflationist must be incoherent to maintain at the same time that the Disquotational Schema is (all but) what there is to be said about truth.

The deflationist should recognise that truth is tied to warranted assertibility *via* the Disquotational Schema, such that where warranted assertibility possesses the broad characteristics outlined, then these are imputed to truth. This renders it a Substantial notion. There is, the deflationist must admit, more on the table than some short-hand notation. And even though Horwich readily

## 2. The Argument for Inflation

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admits that truth is not simply (all but) a short-hand notation, the Disquotational Schema and the Equivalence Schema are so closely tied, that this train of thought also encompasses his minimalist, even if the detail of the Argument does not.

The defence of the detail of deflationism developed above is that the broad characteristics of warranted assertibility can equally—perhaps, even, more readily—be seen as variations in the quality of the warranted assertibility, without that Substance attaching to truth. Truth on this view is, as it were, an Insubstantial reflection of the Substantial warranted assertibility. As such it will *appear* to have Substance just as the warranted assertibility which it is reflecting does. But that Substance does not attach to truth itself. The traditional deflationist escapes the letter of the Argument, but together with a Horwichian minimalist, is yet to answer the spirit of the proposal. If I have correctly diagnosed the driving thought, then I should have to agree with both were they to claim that *Truth and Objectivity* is better named *Warrant and Objectivity*.

## Chapter 3

# Epistemic Constraint and Justification

I know there is truth opposite to falsehood that it may be found if people will and is worth the seeking.

Memorial to John Locke<sup>1</sup>

'I *didn't* sneeze.'

'Yes, you did, Owl.'

'Excuse me, Pooh, I didn't. You can't sneeze without knowing it.'

'Well, you can't know it without something having been sneezed.'

A. A. Milne<sup>2</sup>

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I work up to introducing Epistemic Constraint. This is the principle that where a proposition is true, then it is knowable that it is true. Even where we do not know them yet, the facts are nevertheless in principle knowable by us—there is an ingredient of modality in the principle. Writing 'KW[ $\phi$ ]' for 'proposition  $\phi$  is knowable', the principle is:

$$P \rightarrow KW[P] \quad \text{EC}$$

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<sup>1</sup>Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford.

<sup>2</sup>A. A. Milne, *Winnie-The-Pooh* (London: Methuen, 1926).



To introduce Epistemic Constraint, and make it plausible, I first develop a notion which I call Assertoric Constraint. This is the principle that where a proposition in an area is true, then the justification for asserting it to be so will, in principle, be available. For a proposition  $\phi$ , I write ' $W[\phi]$ ' to mean 'it is justifiably assertible that  $\phi$ .' The principle of Assertoric Constraint can then be written as follows:

$$P \rightarrow W[P] \qquad \text{AC}$$

What is it for a justification to be available in principle? And to whom is it available? The claim is not that the justification for *any* proposition is available to *everyone*. The claim is, rather, that the justification will be unearthed by anyone who sets off earnestly to find it; there is no principled bar on the success of his search.

I introduce the principle AC as arising from the thought with which the previous chapter ended; that warrant transmits across the Disquotational Schema. I argue that there are some areas of talk for which it is plausible that Assertoric Constraint holds. There is a structural issue with these discourses, which I introduce and examine by comparing it to a similar structural issue which arises due to Moore's Paradox. I propose a constitutive analysis of Moore's Paradox and a solution to the problem raised for Assertorically Constrained discourses.

I use the warrant involved in my discussion of Assertoric Constraint to develop Wright's candidate truth predicate, Superassertibility. I show how this latter notion admits of an interpretation congenial to relativism, which will feature in the following chapter on Cognitive Command.

Finally I argue from the plausibility of Assertoric Constraint to that of Epistemic Constraint. The argument appeals especially to the internalist, but I show it should also be reckoned with by some stripes of externalist.

## 3.2 Assertoric Constraint

To hold that an area of talk is not Assertorically Constrained is to hold that there are propositions such that one could never have a justification to assert them. The core thought behind Assertoric Constraint is: could there be a proposition which is true but unassertible? The motivation for asking such a question derives from the Disquotational Schema. In the previous chapter I proposed that the chief driver behind the Argument for Inflation was the insight that warranted assertibility transmits across the Disquotational Schema.<sup>3</sup>

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$$W[T[P]] \text{ iff } W[P]$$

<sup>3</sup>§2.5.2, 54.

This immediately raises the question of whether there are assertions which are not warranted either way. That is: are there assertions which are neither warrantably assertible nor warrantably deniable? This is not to deny that the schema holds for those assertions. But it is to note that the schema holds in those cases for the special reason that it is trivially true—where  $P$  is such that it cannot be assertible, then the schema (at least as interpreted with classical implication) will be true. Thus an alternative expression of the principle of Assertoric Constraint is that where every proposition of an area of talk falls non-trivially under the schema, then that area is Assertorically Constrained. And that expression neatly follows from the key consideration in my reconstruction of the Argument for Inflation that warranted assertibility transmits across the Disquotational Schema.

Three important notes need to be made. The first thing I should like to highlight is that the notion of warrant involved in Assertoric Constraint is defeasible and not factive. Suppose a state of information  $g$  underwrites the assertion of a set of propositions  $\Gamma$ . If the warrants are defeasible, then the addition of more information to  $g$  might change which propositions are supported. This is in contrast to the case of *e.g.* arithmetic. There the warrants are *a priori*, and the formulation of new proofs does not disrupt the results obtained by previous proofs. Because the notion of warrant involved in Assertoric Constraint is defeasible, it is not factive. It is, therefore, quite distinct from the principle of Epistemic Constraint which applies when all the truths in an area are *knowable*. I shall win through to discuss Epistemic Constraint below.

The second note is that the notion of negation is playing a role here. Strictly, instead of simply involving the content of  $P$ , the principle also needs to take account of the negation of that content. This is because assertoric content has a significant negation. It might be that  $P$  is never assertible precisely because warrant for  $\neg P$  is always available. To that extent we must consider  $P$  and  $\neg P$  as a pair. It is also plausible that someone might want to allow that there be content which itself may not be assertible, but whose negation is. That might happen in cases where the coherence of content involving singular terms is held to depend on the existence of the object (putatively) involved. In that case, in the absence of the object, the content would be meaningless, but we nevertheless might want to countenance its negation.<sup>4</sup> In any case, the idea should involve the clause ‘neither  $P$  nor its negation are ever assertible.’ (The question of whether, for  $P$  and  $\neg P$ , one of them is always *assertible* has been denied in the Argument for Inflation, in the postulation of the neutral state of information. The question of whether, for  $P$  and  $\neg P$ , one of them must be *true*

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<sup>4</sup>This would have implications for Wright’s principle that any assertoric content has a significant negation.

is precisely the principle of bivalence. These issues will be discussed in the next chapter, and recur in the chapter following that.)

The third note concerns the modality involved in ‘assertible.’ What does the expression ‘never assertible’ cover? Does it mean ‘when all the data is in’, at the end of days? I leave the notion loose, but hold that it is consistent with the following thoughts. ‘Assertible’ means that warrant to assert the proposition is obtainable, or within our reach. It is not tied to a particular person, but includes our collective efforts, such that an erstwhile search will yield success.

How does Assertoric Constraint fit into the interpretation of T&O which I am advancing? To answer that question it will help to review the broader set-up. Investigating the conditions under which it is correct to describe a statement as true tells us something about the conditions under which the statement is true. Study of the correctness of assertion therefore tells us something about truth. This much is guaranteed by the fact that the justification for asserting a statement transmits across the Disquotational Schema. Thus if various areas of talk can be grouped together as falling under broad principles (the Cruces), then those principles can properly be seen as delineating something interesting about the notion of truth.

The method will not disclose everything that can be said about truth; for instance ineffable truths will have no assertion conditions. But nevertheless it is an avenue which is worth pursuing, and not just worth pursuing, but indeed must be reckoned with; it is very plausible that justification—whether conceived of as internalist or externalist—will transmit over known *a priori* entailments such as the Disquotational Schema.

### 3.2.1 Essential Apparency

There is, I hold, a class of concepts which are essentially linked to how we experience the world; *how things are for us*. The link is such that the justification for asserting that they are instantiated (when they are) cannot be in principle unavailable to us. I shall call such concepts *Essentially Apparent*. Wright makes a similar assumption, which he labels ‘transparency’, about colour concepts in his paper on Quandary:

It is a feature of the ordinary concept of colour that colours are *transparent* under suitable conditions of observation: that if a surface is red, it . . . will appear as such when observed under suitable conditions; *mutatis mutandis* if it is not red.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Crispin Wright, ‘On Being in a Quandary: Relativism, Vagueness, Logical Revisionism’ in *Mind*, 110 (2001), 478–9, emphasis in the original.

Similarly, I am not going to provide a fully-fledged argument that there are such things as Essentially Apparent concepts. However, I shall deal with two potential sources of resistance to them.

The first source is Williamson who has produced argument against what he terms *luminosity*:

A condition C is defined to be *luminous* if and only if (L) holds:

(L) For every case  $\alpha$ , if in  $\alpha$  C obtains, then in  $\alpha$  one is in position to know that C obtains.<sup>6</sup>

It might seem that Essentially Apparent concepts are going to fall foul of Williamson's anti-luminosity arguments, if, that is, those arguments are successful.<sup>7</sup> It is relevant that Essential Apparency involves *concepts* and *evidence*, whilst Williamson's luminosity involves *conditions* and *knowledge*. So it is not clear that the argument against luminosity is inconsistent with accepting Essentially Apparent concepts. Things become more difficult if we grant another of Williamson's contentions; that knowledge and evidence are to be identified.<sup>8</sup> This claim is controversial and must be left as a matter for further study.

Another, more general, reason why someone might object to the Essential Apparency of certain concepts is the use to which they are subsequently put. They might be used, for instance, in an attempt to ground a foundationalist epistemology. I am not concerned with such a project here. To show that this is the case, I call Sellars as witness. He was concerned to argue against reliance on sense-data as a sceptic-proof foundation of knowledge. And yet he himself would agree that colour concepts are Essentially Apparent. 'What then', he asks,

are we to make of the necessary truth—and it is, of course, a necessary truth—that

x is red iff x would *look* red to standard observers under standard conditions?<sup>9</sup>

Sellars is admitting that there is an essential link between the colour an object is and the colour the object appears to be to standard observers under standard conditions. That is enough in my terms to make it Essentially Apparent. It is no part of Sellars's stance that this feature of the colour concepts means that they are somehow sceptic-proof. So there is at least one philosopher who holds that

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<sup>6</sup>Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 95.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., ch 4.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., ch 9.

<sup>9</sup>Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), §12, 36, emphases in the original.

colour concepts are Essentially Apparent but who does not attempt to exploit that feature in favour of foundationalism.

Examples of such concepts can be found on a trip to the beach: the lapping of the sea over your feet as you paddle; the distinctive smell of the sea-air; the sound of the waves breaking; the piquancy of the pickled onion in your packed lunch. Without providing substantive argument, then, I proceed on the following basis. It is part of what it is to be a colour that it is up for being detected by humans. There is an essential link between the concept and *how things are for us*. This is a claim about the make-up of the concept. I hold that the same applies to the other sense-modalities; sounds, tastes, smells, and touches. The concepts involved in these modalities are essentially linked to the manner in which we, as embodied subjects, experience the world. The justification for making an assertion in an area of talk for which these concepts are central will therefore always, in principle, be available. Therefore all such areas will be Assertorically Constrained.

### 3.2.2 Further Plausibility of Assertoric Constraint

It is plausible that there are areas which are not based on how things are for us, but which are nevertheless also Assertorically Constrained. The point here is not to argue over whether each of the following individual examples is or is not Assertorically Constrained. The point is to make the case that there are areas of talk which plausibly might be considered to be Assertorically Constrained. This point is a logical precursor to any debate about the status of an individual discourse. In what follows, then, the standards of justification need to be adjusted accordingly. I am going to present three cases of areas of talk for which, I claim, it is *plausible* to regard Assertoric Constraint in action. The argument is one for plausibility. So the argument will be successful even if the reader is unmoved in each individual case, provided that overall it is shown to be plausible that Assertoric Constraint might apply in *some* area.

### 3.2.3 The Law

One type of talk of criminality is Assertorically Constrained. Note first that criminality is determined relative to a jurisdiction. Jurisdictions differ in their approach. I shall take it that we are within the jurisdiction of the English Courts, under English Law. One important characteristic of the way in which cases are determined is that the lawyers involved appeal to precedent; a body of previous rulings. By arguing that those rulings involved relevantly similar factors, the lawyers hope to persuade the judge and jury to decide the case one way or the

other.

Therefore one way in which we might seek to argue that the truth of the matter has escaped the pool of justification available to the courts is that a set of casebooks has gone missing. Perhaps this involves some philosophical fantasy of several thousand lawyers' offices, and libraries, being simultaneously burgled, with one particular volume of the recorded precedents going missing. For good measure, it would have to be supposed further that enough memories of the contents of the casebooks were wiped, such that a lawyer could not persuade a judge based on what they both remembered of the cases. Under such assumptions, one might suppose that there be some case which is in fact criminal under English Law, even though there is no extant justification for ruling it to be so. So the truth of the matter would have escaped our best available justification.

Another important aspect of a trial is the evidence which is presented for and against the case. It must surely be conceded that investigators are human and so fallible. Even if the investigators are very good, evidence can be destroyed, making their job impossible. With incomplete, wrong, or just plain absent evidence, will not the court be making the wrong decision? That is: might not a court find someone innocent under English Law when the person did commit an offence, or guilty when he did not?

The answer to both of these is that the matter of criminality under English Law is a matter of due process. We might speculate that so-and-so *would* be found guilty were such and such evidence to come to light. But that does not make the individual a criminal under English Law. A person is a criminal if so determined by due process. Mistakes can happen; for instance, if subsequent to a trial, it is proven that the evidence was obtained by illegal means, then the conviction may well be over-turned.

This highlights another important aspect. If judgements can be overturned, does that not show that statements of criminality are not Assertorically Constrained? The short answer is that Assertoric Constraint does not entail infallibility. There is room to be wrongly convicted, and there is due process for appealing in such cases.

The area of criminality under English Law is an area in which the facts cannot outstrip our being in position to be able to assert those facts. I submit that this is precisely because those facts are *determined* or *constituted* by the processes involved. The process might be affected by lack of evidence or lost books of precedence, in that we might wonder counterfactually what might have happened if the evidence had not been gathered illegally, or if the books had not been stolen. But such counterfactual musings do not overturn the fact of the ruling of the court.

The locution “I find the defendant guilty” might be misleading in that it might encourage the notion that there was a pre-existing fact to be found. If there were such a pre-existing fact, perhaps it could obtain without leaving any trace, so to speak. Then there would be a fact with no evidence, and no possible hope for a justification for an assertion of the fact. But there is no such pre-existing fact; the judge in making such an assertion is creating the defendant guilty under English Law. To be sure: there are facts about the defendant’s conduct which have been brought to light; these facts are not created by the judge. But the guilt or innocence under English Law is determined by due process. Every aspect of this process is amenable to human scrutiny. Thus it is plausible that facts about criminality under English Law are Assertorically Constrained.

### 3.2.4 Art History

Statements which make up the talk characteristic of art history are Assertorically Constrained. For example: Cézanne was the father of modern art. The truth of such a statement cannot outrun the evidence for it. Naturally, one might take issue with the statement; it is not that statements of art history are *a priori* truths, as one might hold about the truths of *e.g.* arithmetic.

As in the legal case, there is evidence involved in the process which issues in the truth of whether Cézanne was the father of modern art. Biographical facts are a good example; for instance that he came from Aix-en-Provence, that he was born in 1839 and died in 1906. These facts may well affect the case to be made for the exertion of his artistic influence over particular people. To make the most obvious case, artists who died before Cézanne was born could not have been influenced.

The truth of whether Cézanne was or was not the father of modern art is determined by the experts in the field of art history. The investigators who gather the evidence are not infallible, and further evidence might come to light, and be considered through due debate.

We might also have to cope with further philosophical fantasy. Suppose Paul Cézanne had a brother, Pierre, of whom there is no record, who actually did all the painting. Paul took all the credit for Pierre’s work. In this fantasy, it might be argued that it is false to say that Paul Cézanne is the father of modern art; that accolade belongs to Pierre instead. It is granted the case is far-fetched, but notwithstanding that, what is our evidence that Paul did not have a brother in the attic who did all the work? And if Paul was careful and left no clues, then we must concede that there might be a truth which we will never be in position warrantably to assert.

One way in which the discipline would side-step that issue is by re-thinking the reference of 'Cézanne'. An artist, with respect to his influence in the continuum of art history is essentially linked to his *oeuvre*. In the best case, an artist thus picked out matches up with other criteria which we use to distinguish people. But the best case does not always obtain. Compare the similar concerns about Shakespeare's identity, whether the work we attribute to him was actually penned by Francis Bacon or Christopher Marlowe, or whether indeed all the works currently attributed to Shakespeare were in fact by one single author at all. All these debates have their own merits. But they do not stop the general debate about the impact of Shakespeare on the literary canon.

Similarly in the light of the revelation that it was Pierre and not Paul who painted *e.g. Mont Saint-Victoire* the discipline could maintain, without change of meaning, that it is nevertheless true that 'Cézanne is the father of modern art', since what counts in such matters is the essential link to the paintings which went on to influence so many future painters. To respond to this that it is false, since it was Pierre and not Paul who did the work, is to miss an essential (if not the whole) point of the discipline. I might suggest the following summary of this feature: a painter by any other name would be just as influential.

If the above is correct, then there is good reason to think it plausible that the key statements of art history are Assertorically Constrained; that they cannot outstrip our best evidence for them.

### 3.2.5 The Tennis Match

Statements of fact in some sporting environments are Assertorically Constrained. For instance, take the statements of an umpire in a tennis match. The decision of the umpire in matters concerning the rules is final; a particular case might concern whether, when the ball landed, it was 'in' or 'out'. It is true that there is a rule to which the umpire is trying to adhere; the ball is *in* if it landed inside the court, and the court extends to the outer edge of the lines which mark the boundaries. So a ball which misses the line, on the outside, is *out*. The issue of whether the ball is in or out is crucial to the game. And the game need not just be amongst friends; the outcome of a game can make a very substantial difference to the reputation and income of an individual. So it should not be thought that the issue of whether a ball is in or out is of secondary importance. In recognition of this, the umpire has specialist linesmen who are particularly well-placed to get a good view on each line. It is their job specifically to look for whether the ball is in or out. However, these linesmen can be (and on occasion are) overridden by the umpire.

As in the legal case, there is a due process about whether a ball fell in or out.



And human input goes to constitute the fact as to whether the ball was in or out. Because of this, the fact of the matter can never outstrip our evidence for it. We might argue that some technological reconstruction shows that the ball actually did (or did not) touch the outer edge of the line. But that is irrelevant to the fact of whether or not the ball is in or out with respect to the game. All that matters for the game is which way the umpire calls it. If the umpire calls it out then that is the fact of the matter. One might complain that it was a bad call—but that does not affect the fact after the determination by the umpire, and the determination of the umpire is all the evidence one needs.

This, then, is the third example of an area which it is plausible to consider as being such that the facts cannot outrun our ability to be in position to assert them. If it is true that the ball was in, then there is evidence for the fact.

### 3.2.6 The Euthyphro Contrast

In each of the three cases argued for above, there are restrictions on the relationship between what can and cannot be correctly asserted, and the fact of the matter. In all three cases this springs from the way in which due process is involved in the way the facts are constituted. Where the law is involved, the verdict is a consequence of due legal process. The process is at all stages scrutible. Thus the fact of criminality according to the law cannot fall outside our capability to get into position justifiably to assert it. In the case of the father of modern art, the fact of the matter is governed by the standards of warrant in play in art history, such that there could be no art historical fact which was unassertible by the lights of art historical discourse. For the tennis case, the rules are configured such as to determine the availability of the justification of the fact of a ball being in or out. They are designed precisely to be amenable to human inspection; and crucially they involve a human arbiter (the umpire) whose decision is final. Therefore whenever a ball is in or out we are guaranteed that someone be in position to be able to assert the fact.

There is some sense, then, in which those cases are *made true* by the appropriately placed experts or judges. And then we might ask, could it be the case that even though the area is Assertorically Constrained, the judges are nevertheless properly deemed to be responding to the facts rather than in some sense creating them? Even allowing, then, that both sorts of case are Assertorically Constrained, there is a further distinction available within that category of discourses.

This distinction is explored in the appendix to chapter 3 of T&O, and labelled the Euthyphro Contrast. The distinction is venerable, beginning with a debate between Socrates and Euthyphro, concerning the following statement.

An act is pious iff that act is loved by the gods.

The biconditional admits of two readings. On one, the act is pious because it is loved by the gods. So what makes a pious act pious is that the gods love it. This is called the Euthyphronic view since it is the position for which Euthyphro argued. On the other reading, which by contrast is called ‘Socratic’, the act is loved by the gods because it is pious. The piety is there anyway, so to speak, and the gods love the act since it is in the nature of gods so to do.

Using the observation that the biconditional admits of two interpretations, we can generalise the thought, and bring it down to earth, so that it no longer involves supernatural entities. First, the gods can be replaced by people who are appropriately placed. Second, instead of love being involved, we may substitute any appropriate reaction. We can express this far more general statement as follows.

For any person  $S$ , and any proposition  $P$  from a suitable class of judgements,  $P$  is true just when, if  $S$  is in appropriate conditions  $C$ , then  $S$ ’s reaction will be  $R$ .

To avoid ambiguity of scope, it is useful to express the statement slightly more formally:

$$(\forall S)(\forall P)( P \text{ iff (if } C(S) \text{ then } R(S)) ).$$

To see how the distinction is meant to work, consider two examples, one for the shape concept SQUARE and one for the colour concept RED. These are chosen such that the distinction shows itself; that is: the intuition is meant to be that SQUARE and RED will turn out on different sides of the divide. Here the conditions ( $C$ ) are such that the people involved ( $S$ ) are standard observers under normal conditions. The relation ( $R$ ) is how the object involved appears to these people. The propositions are either that the object is square, or red, respectively:

$x$  is square iff  $x$  would look square to standard observers under standard conditions;

$x$  is red iff  $x$  would look red to standard observers under standard conditions.

These are called Basic Equations, which is Johnston’s term.<sup>10</sup> The intention is that SQUARE will turn out to be Socratic; *i.e.* that the object appears square to

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<sup>10</sup>The appendix to chapter 3 of T&O is closely based on Wright’s manuscript ‘Notes on Basic Equations’. Johnston’s take on the relation between Wright’s and Johnston’s development of these ideas is discussed at Mark Johnston, ‘Objectivity Refigured: Pragmatism without Verificationism’ in: Haldane and Wright, *Reality, Representation and Projection*, 121–126.

standard observers, *because* it is square. On the other hand RED is intended to turn out to be Euthyphronic—the object is red *because* that is how it appears to standard observers (in normal conditions). This contrast has been marked by various terminologies. If one goes into the detail the different terminologies may well reveal separate motivations, and ultimately different distinctions. However, figure 3.1 may be taken as a rough guide to how the distinctions are intended to line up. The distinction, then, provides one way in which we might

Shape	Colour
Socratic	Euthyphronic
Detectivist	Projectivist
Extension-reflecting	Extension-determining
L-R	R-L

Figure 3.1: A Rough Guide to the Socratic/Euthyphronic Distinction

hope to distinguish between primary and secondary qualities. The thought is that whilst both biconditionals are true, the order of explanation flows in different directions. In the Socratic, detectivist, case the explanation can be seen to flow from left to right;  $x$  is square, and so the normal observers judge it to be so. In the Euthyphronic, or projectivist, case it goes the other way, from right to left;  $x$  is judged to be red by normal observers in normal conditions, and so it is red.

Wright begins his discussion by proposing that the appropriate response in the role of  $R$  is that of *judgement*. The Euthyphronist's claim is then that the best opinion of these normal observers grounds the truth of the proposition, rather than the other way around. At the moment the contrast has been gestured at—can we do more to say in what the distinction consists? One suggestion is that the difference can be brought out by considering the modal status of the biconditionals. If Euthyphro is correct, this thought runs, the biconditional will turn out necessarily true. If the Socratic reading is correct, then the biconditionals will only be contingently true. The thought in that case is that the standard observers *might* have got it wrong, whereas the observers in the Euthyphronic case cannot get it wrong, since their opinion in some fashion goes to make the truth.

Wright then proceeds to develop the Basic Equations through a number of steps which I shall not rehearse here. I shall limit myself to commenting on one common misunderstanding of Wright's proposal for the Euthyphronic Contrast.<sup>11</sup> Wright's proposal involves two major changes; first he switches from the distinction between necessary and contingent to that between the *a priori* and a

<sup>11</sup>I have encountered the misunderstanding frequently in conversation, if not in print.

*posteriori*. Second, he proposes moving from a biconditional with a conditional consequent, to a conditional with a biconditional consequent. This new form of equation is dubbed a Provisional Equation. In general, it looks like this:

If  $C(S)$  then: it would be the case that  $P$  iff  $S$  would judge that  $P$ .

And the question is whether or not that holds *a priori*; if it does the target concept is Euthyphronic, if not then it is Socratic. This introduces a structural issue with Wright's proposal; that it does not deal with the cases where the conditions do not obtain. The effect of that structural feature is that the Provisional Equation is at best partially governing the content of the target concept. This is clearly a hindrance if the task were a specification of the constitution of the target concept. It is not, however, a hindrance to the task of providing a litmus test for whether the concept involved is Euthyphronic or not. It is a litmus test which Wright is aiming to provide, and so the criticism that the full constitution of the target concept is not provided by his analysis is misguided; technically *ignoratio elenchi*.

Wright's idea of Provisional Equations is a way of distinguishing between concepts for which best opinion (partially) determines the extension, and those for which best opinion is, instead, a reflection of the extension.

### 3.2.7 Assertoric Constraint and the Euthyphro Contrast

A case was made above for there being areas of talk in which there are no ineffable truths, and furthermore, for any truth in such an area, the truths must admit of justified assertion. That is: for any truth, one must be able to get into position to be able justifiably to assert it. Consider those areas of talk as a group. The point of the Euthyphro Contrast is that there is a further division amongst that group, between Socratic and Euthyphronic areas. The test of the Provisional Equation is most readily seen as applying to concepts rather than areas of talk. It would need a little work to go from there to extend the distinction to an area of talk. Suppose areas of talk are picked out by the key concepts involved. Failing that, regardless of how the areas are distinguished, suppose that there be a set of concepts which is essentially associated with each area. Then we can regard an area as Euthyphronic or not according as those concepts are found to be Euthyphronic or not.

I propose that the situation can be understood in broad strokes, like this. Where the Provisional Equation is found to hold *a priori*, then there is an intrinsic link between the judges' correctness in asserting that  $P$  and the fact that  $P$ . In contrast, where the Equation holds only *a posteriori*, then the link between justification and truth is extrinsic. There is a sense in common between the intrinsic and extrinsic cases in which there is a link between the correctness of the

assertion and the truth of the matter. There is also a sense in which the cases differ, in that in the intrinsic, *a priori*, case the judges' opinion in part constitutes the fact.

### 3.3 Moore's Paradox

The idea of Assertoric Constraint is that the truth cannot outstrip our evidence for it; there cannot be a truth we would never be justified in asserting. However, the sort of warrant with which Assertoric Constraint has been expressed is defeasible. And this causes the following problem. Since we are neither omniscient nor infallible we need to be able to account for cases of ignorance and fallibility. A case of ignorance is where  $P$  but I am not warranted in asserting that  $P$ . Fallibility is where I am warranted in asserting that  $P$  but in fact  $\neg P$ . Given AC

$$P \rightarrow W[P] \qquad \text{AC}$$

these two states, Ignorance  $\lceil P \ \& \ \neg W[P] \rceil$  and Fallibility  $\lceil \neg P \ \& \ W[P] \rceil$ , threaten to reduce to incoherence; we shall see below exactly how that comes about.

The collapse to incoherence needs to be avoided. To take this further, I shall draw a parallel between this problem for Assertoric Constraint and Moore's Paradox. Such a parallel is hinted at, but not explored, by Wright.<sup>12</sup> In doing so I am not suggesting that the problem for Assertoric Constraint arises because of Moore's Paradox. Rather the point is that what we learn from a structural analysis of the Paradox can be applied to help an understanding of Assertoric Constraint, enabling me to advance a refinement which can deal with ignorance and fallibility.

#### 3.3.1 A Constitutive Analysis of Moore's Paradox

It is well-known that Moore's paradox comes in two versions; the error of commission (Fallibility) and the error of omission (Ignorance).<sup>13</sup> The first is exemplified by 'I believe the earth is flat, but it is spherical.' The second is represented by 'I do not believe the earth is spherical, but it is.' Naturally, this latter case has to be distinguished from the incredulity expressed in 'I do not believe it—a Briton won Wimbledon' which is properly to be understood as a counterpoint to an unexpected outcome rather than a *bona fide* assertion that the speaker does not believe that outcome to be a fact.

<sup>12</sup>Crispin Wright, 'Realism, Pure and Simple?' in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 30:2 (1994), 68, fn 11. Page reference to the reprint in Wright, *Saving the Differences*.

<sup>13</sup>See, for instance, Roy Sorenson, 'Moore's Paradox' in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa, editors, *The Blackwell Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

I hold that cases of Moore's Paradox can be held to be a consequence of five principles. They are jointly necessary and sufficient for an utterance to be an instance of Moore's Paradox. The five principles that constitute my analysis are as follows.

**Distribution of Assertion over Conjunction (DIST)**

The first is the principle that assertion distributes over conjunction. If someone asserts  $\lceil P \ \& \ Q \rceil$ , then *ipso facto* he asserts  $P$  and asserts  $Q$ . I use ' $A\sigma[\phi]$ ' to mean 'subject  $\sigma$  asserts proposition  $\phi$ .'

$$Ax[P \ \& \ Q] \rightarrow Ax[P] \ \& \ Ax[Q] \qquad \text{DIST}$$

The point at hand is not whether this principle is unrestrictedly true, although it does have a good plausible basis in intuition. The point is that the paradoxical nature of a putative utterance of the Moorean sort requires the principle to hold. Or in other words, if one examines a candidate utterance, and the circumstances are such that one concludes that in this case, assertion does not distribute over conjunction, then the utterance will fail to be paradoxical.

**Commutativity of Conjunction and Belief (COMM)**

The second principle does not have such a solid ground of plausibility. It concerns the conjunction of beliefs. Where one believes that  $P$  and one believes  $Q$ , does one also believe that  $\lceil P \ \& \ Q \rceil$ ? The principle says that in this case, one does indeed believe the conjunction. ' $B\sigma[\phi]$ ' is to mean 'subject  $\sigma$  believes proposition  $\phi$ .'

$$Bx[P] \ \& \ Bx[Q] \rightarrow Bx[P \ \& \ Q] \qquad \text{COMM}$$

It is not too hard to construct counterexamples to this principle. A rich vein of them is opened up by considering the ways in which one's beliefs might be compartmentalised, so to speak. One way that might be cashed out is by countenancing the possibility of implicit beliefs—perhaps involving the unconscious mind. Whatever the considerations are, the claim here is that in order for an utterance to be a Moorean paradox, the principle must be in play. If the utterer's mind is compartmentalised such that the utterer is unable, or simply fails, to conjoin their beliefs then the utterances may be bizarre but they will not count as paradoxical. Part of the interest of the paradigm Moore cases is that they seem to be ones which are custom-designed to avoid such compartmentalisation.

### Assertion and Belief (ABL)

The third principle embodies the idea that an assertion by a speaker may be taken as grounds for inferring that the utterer believes the content of that statement.

$$Ax[P] \rightarrow Bx[P] \quad \text{ABL}$$

Remember, the claim is not that this principle holds *tout court*, but rather that in situations where it does not hold, then the candidate utterance will fail to be paradoxical.

### Avowals (AVO)

The fourth principle governs avowals, to the effect that if one asserts that one believes that  $P$ , then one believes that  $P$ . This is grounded in the idea that one knows one's own mind.

$$Ax[Bx[P]] \rightarrow Bx[P] \quad \text{AVO}_1$$

It is also taken to apply to self-denials of belief thus:

$$Ax[\neg Bx[P]] \rightarrow \neg Bx[P] \quad \text{AVO}_2$$

The same point applies to this principle as to the others above. In cases where we have reason to doubt an utterer's avowals as veridical, then in those cases, and for that very reason, the utterance will fail of paradox. Of course for someone whose view has no truck at all with a principle like AVO, then it is proposed that those people will not find candidate instances of Moore's Paradox in the least plausible or interesting. In that case, the benefit of the analysis is that it shows us *why* those people find the candidate utterances unimpressive.

### Rational Coherence (RCP)

The final principle is intended to capture the idea that we are somehow constrained to have consistent beliefs. The implication of this is by no means that everyone *has* consistent beliefs, but rather that upon being confronted with a pair of contradictory ones, the subject is responsible, on pain of irrationality, for resolving that contradiction. I call this the Rational Coherence Principle (RCP).

$$Bx[P \ \& \ \neg P] \rightarrow Bx[\perp] \quad \text{RCP}$$

For this analysis RCP is taken to apply to items in mind *after* any breaking down of compartments is effected. That is: it is not a well-conceived counterexample to the principle that involves a subject who may never consider the beliefs in

question at once. The principle is intended to capture what one is rationally compelled to do on finding, or being presented with, an inconsistent pair of beliefs. It is also not concerned with due diligence; the extent to which one should go to uncover new inconsistencies.

### 3.3.2 Applying the Principles

With those principles in play, I can now introduce a logical analysis of how Moore's Paradox is paradoxical. I start with the simpler of the two cases, which is that of Ignorance.

1	(1)	$Ax[\neg Bx[P] \ \& \ P]$	Ass
1	(2)	$Ax[\neg Bx[P]]$	DIST, 1
1	(3)	$Ax[P]$	DIST, 1
1	(4)	$\neg Bx[P]$	AVO <sub>2</sub> , 2
1	(5)	$Bx[P]$	ABL, 3
1	(6)	$\perp$	$\neg E$ , 4, 5

This involves the three least contentious principles outlined above. The reasoning ends in outright contradiction, which shows that this is the most direct instance of the paradox.

The more complicated version is that of Fallibility. Here there is more play with the contents of beliefs and how they interact. This brings the need for the other two, more contentious, principles. A formal layout of the Fallibility version of Moore's paradox is as follows.

1	(1)	$Ax[Bx[P] \ \& \ \neg P]$	Ass
1	(2)	$Ax[Bx[P]]$	DIST, 1
1	(3)	$Ax[\neg P]$	DIST, 1
1	(4)	$Bx[P]$	AVO <sub>1</sub> , 2
1	(5)	$Bx[\neg P]$	ABL, 3
1	(6)	$Bx[P \ \& \ \neg P]$	COMM, 4, 5
1	(7)	$Bx[\perp]$	RCP, 6

Line seven lays bare the contradiction to the subject who is then confronted with his own irrationality, face to face, as it were. That is, of course, provided the principles hold in the case in question.

### 3.3.3 Comment on the Analysis

One quick response to the Moorean Paradox is to hold that one cannot actually assert it. This is to deny the very first assumption. Alternatively, one could



hold that it is assertible, but it does not follow that one believes it—this is to turn the attention to the link between assertion and belief (ABL). Both these approaches are open to the same objection that although we have stopped the reasoning going through, we are left with no principled way of identifying which propositions we may not assert, or may not believe, other than the circular characterisation of being instances of Moorean paradox.

The thought is to elicit a structural analysis of the putative paradoxical utterances. If it turns out that one of the principles involved has been violated, then the utterance will not be paradoxical. For instance one might deny that asserting that one believes  $P$  entails that one believes  $P$ . One might do that globally, or argue for it in a particular case. The contention is that if such argument is successful, then the utterance is not Moore-paradoxical. Furthermore the analysis allows us to say *why* it is not Moore-paradoxical, even though it appears on the surface to be so. The reason in this case would be precisely that the introspection principle (AVO) has been violated. Suppose the principle has been violated, would it still not be *odd* to hear someone say ' $P$  and I don't believe that  $P$ '? It may well be odd; but the oddity in that case is just an illusion of paradox. Once it is explained that the person involved is appropriately afflicted by lack of introspective clarity, then the utterance is seen to be no longer paradoxical. In order to dispel the air of paradox it is enough to point out that one of the principles involved has been flouted. It is only when the principles are all in play that we are reckoning with Moore's Paradox proper.

The analysis also explains why other propositional attitudes such as hoping or desiring do not give rise to Moorean Paradox. There is nothing irrational about sincerely asserting that  $P$  whilst failing to hope that  $P$ . Similarly, there is no fault to be found with someone who hopes that  $P$ , whilst sincerely asserting  $\neg P$ . These are surely very common cases. Expressions of hope are not prone to the paradox, and the analysis shows us why; it shows us what their relation would need to be for the issue to arise.

Importantly, the analysis shows why the paradox is essentially related to first-person assertions. What drives the paradox is the intuitive plausibility of the avowal principle (AVO). So it locates the distinctive nature of Moore's Paradox where we should expect to find it—in the first person assertion.

### 3.3.4 The Solution for Assertoric Constraint

The problem raised for Assertoric Constraint is for the cases which are parallel to the Moorean cases of Ignorance and Fallibility. Grant the strongly plausible

thought that warrant distributes over conjunction, formalised as follows:

$$W[P \ \& \ Q] \rightarrow W[P] \ \& \ W[Q] \quad \text{DIST}_W$$

The analogue of the Ignorance version of Moore's Paradox can be written as follows.

- |   |     |                         |                       |
|---|-----|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | (1) | $\neg W[P] \ \& \ P$    | Ass                   |
| 1 | (2) | $W[\neg W[P] \ \& \ P]$ | AC, 1                 |
| 1 | (3) | $W[P]$                  | DIST <sub>W</sub> , 2 |
| 1 | (4) | $\neg W[P]$             | &E, 1                 |
| 1 | (5) | $\perp$                 | $\neg E$ , 3, 4       |

The Fallibility version of Moore also has its parallel.

- |   |     |                         |                          |
|---|-----|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | (1) | $W[P] \ \& \ \neg P$    | Ass                      |
| 1 | (2) | $W[W[P] \ \& \ \neg P]$ | AC, 1                    |
| 1 | (3) | $W[\neg P]$             | DIST <sub>W</sub> , 2    |
| 1 | (4) | $W[P]$                  | &E, 1                    |
| 1 | (5) | $W[P \ \& \ \neg P]$    | DIST <sub>W</sub> , 3, 4 |

This last offends against the Warrant Coherence Principle (WCP). This is the analogue of the Rational Coherence Principle, and states that contradictions cannot be justifiably asserted.

In the previous chapter I introduced the idea that warrants can be considered as operating relative to a state of information.<sup>14</sup> The idea can also be applied here. We should index the states of information, and re-express the crude AC in a more refined fashion. As before, where  $\sigma$  ranges over states of information, I write ' $W_\sigma[\phi]$ ' to mean that the state of information  $\sigma$  warrants the assertion of the proposition that  $\phi$ . The more sophisticated version can then be written as follows.

$$P \rightarrow (\exists k)W_k[P] \quad \text{AC}^*$$

This helps in the following way. Where  $j$  and  $k$  range over states of information, the case of Ignorance runs like this:

- |   |     |  |                       |
|---|-----|--|-----------------------|
| 1 | (1) | $\neg W_j[P] \ \& \ P$                 | Ass                   |
| 1 | (2) | $(\exists k)W_k[\neg W_j[P] \ \& \ P]$ | AC*, 1                |
| 1 | (3) | $(\exists k)W_k[P]$                    | DIST <sub>W</sub> , 2 |
| 1 | (4) | $\neg W_j[P]$                          | &E, 1                 |

This only forces a contradiction if the would-be trouble-maker can produce ar-

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<sup>14</sup>§2.3.4, 43ff.

gument for the fact that the state of information  $j$  is the same as that which makes the existential claim true.

Can this approach also deal with the Fallibility-type version? Re-interpreted with the more sophisticated principle  $AC^*$ , this becomes:

- |   |     |  |             |
|---|-----|--|-------------|
| 1 | (1) | $W_j[P] \ \& \ \neg P$                 | Ass         |
| 1 | (2) | $(\exists k)W_k[W_j[P] \ \& \ \neg P]$ | $AC^*, 1$   |
| 1 | (3) | $(\exists k)W_k[\neg P]$               | $DIST_W, 2$ |
| 1 | (4) | $W_j[P]$                               | $\&E, 1$    |

From this we can conclude that state  $j$  supports  $P$  and that there is some other state, call it  $k$ , which supports  $\neg P$ . We cannot conclude that  $j$  is  $k$ ; in fact quite the reverse. In this situation logic dictates that we must proceed on the basis that  $j$  is not the same as  $k$ . The formal contradiction is thereby avoided. We are closer, then, to being able to model the situation where although I am in a state which warrants the assertion of a proposition, nevertheless the proposition is false, and indeed that there is a different state of information which will support that (correct) claim.

The structural parallel with Moore's Paradox has helped to develop the notion of warrant. Warrant should support the parallel possibilities, and we now have the apparatus to express these two concerns without becoming incoherent, thus:

$$W_j[P] \ \& \ (\exists k)W_k[\neg P]$$

and

$$\neg W_j[P] \ \& \ (\exists k)W_k[P]$$

This thought prompts questions around the conjoining of states of information. I broach these in the next section, and then develop them in more detail in the next chapter, on Cognitive Command.

### 3.4 Superassertibility

In T&O Wright offers us a candidate truth predicate for areas which are Epistemically Constrained. I shall look at Epistemic Constraint in more detail in the next section. In the meantime, I shall examine Superassertibility using the notion of warrant which was being mooted at the end of the previous section.

As the name suggests, Superassertibility is founded on the notion of warrant, and substantially strengthens it. The central idea is to take a warrant, and reinforce it such that nothing could overturn it. This is how Wright characterises it:

A statement is [S]uperassertible ... if and only if it is, or can be, warranted and some warrant for it would survive arbitrarily close scrutiny of its pedigree and arbitrarily extensive increments to or other forms of improvement of our information.<sup>15</sup>

The idea is that once we have amassed enough information, we might reach a state such that no further improvement on the information will change the fact that the state of information we have attained warrants the assertion of a proposition. In that case, the proposition is Superassertible.

It is important to notice that the distinction between truth (as Superassertibility) and justification is still being maintained. Superassertibility does not entail infallibility: one might be mistaken in one's belief that a proposition is Superassertible. The idea is captured well in Wright's statement of a sufficiency condition for claiming that a proposition is Superassertible:

It will certainly suffice to justify the claim that  $P$  is [S]uperassertible if I may warrantably claim that *any* improvement,  $I^*$ , of my present state of information,  $I$ , will justify  $P$ .<sup>16</sup>

The principle of Epistemic Constraint may fare better or worse, but either way, I propose that Superassertibility can be seen as a truth predicate for Assertorically Constrained discourse.

### 3.4.1 Developing Superassertibility

Even considering Wright's sparse formal statement in T&O of how Superassertibility is intended to be constituted, there is an important issue in the offing. Suppose we start with the quoted notion of Superassertibility:

A statement is [S]uperassertible ... if and only if it is, or can be, warranted and some warrant for it would survive arbitrarily close scrutiny of its pedigree and arbitrarily extensive increments to or other forms of improvement of our information.<sup>17</sup>

Wright is explicitly using 'improvement' and 'state of information' as formal notions. I shall write ' $\geq$ ' for 'improvement' and use lower case letters (' $i$ ', ' $j$ ', ' $k$ ', ' $l$ ') to range over states of information. For a proposition  $\phi$ , I write '*That*  $\phi$  is Superassertible' as ' $SA[\phi]$ '. Then the notion of Superassertibility can be rendered as follows.

$$SA[P] =_{df} (\exists k)(W_k[P] \ \& \ (\forall i)(i \geq k \rightarrow W_i[P]))$$

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<sup>15</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 48.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

Since Superassertibility is a candidate truth predicate, the Equivalence Schema must apply to it:

*That P is Superassertible iff P*

Writing in my proposed formalisation of Superassertibility we have

$$(\exists k)(W_k[P] \ \& \ (\forall i)(i \geq k \rightarrow W_i[P])) \text{ iff } P$$

To see the issue, suppose that the current state of information is  $c$ . The Equivalence Schema is a known *a priori* entailment, and so the warrant provided by  $c$  transmits across it. Then we have the following.

$$W_c[SA[P]] \text{ iff } W_c[P]$$

That is:

$$W_c[(\exists k)(W_k[P] \ \& \ (\forall i)(i \geq k \rightarrow W_i[P]))] \text{ iff } W_c[P]$$

Consider this biconditional from right to left:

$$W_c[P] \rightarrow W_c[(\exists k)(W_k[P] \ \& \ (\forall i)(i \geq k \rightarrow W_i[P]))]$$

This seems good, since it is plausible that for  $c$  to warrant an assertion of  $P$ , then  $c$  should support the assertion that there is a state of information which supports  $P$ , and all of whose improvements also support  $P$ .

However, as I noted in the previous chapter states of information in general are not monotonic with respect to the preservation of warrant.<sup>18</sup> This is to say that the warrant provided by a state of information for the proposition  $P$  is (in general) *defeasible*: and so there is no guarantee that there is not some improvement of the state of information which grounds that warrant, which will show  $P$  false. This means that the other half of the biconditional

$$W_c[(\exists k)(W_k[P] \ \& \ (\forall i)(i \geq k \rightarrow W_i[P]))] \rightarrow W_c[P]$$

is problematic. My state of information ( $c$ ) may warrant that there is another state of information ( $k$ ) such that every improvement ( $i$ ) to that state ( $k$ ) supports  $P$ . The question is whether my current state  $c$  itself warrants  $P$ . The concern is that it need not; the worry being that given the proposed formulation of Superassertibility, then  $\lceil W_c[SA[P]] \rceil$  might be consistent with  $\lceil \neg W_c[P] \rceil$ .

It is clear that the warrant for the claim of Superassertibility of a proposition *should* also warrant the proposition; that is the intention. To maintain this view, however, we should need to argue somehow or other that  $\lceil W_c[SA[P]] \rceil$  entails

<sup>18</sup>§2.3.4, 43ff.

$\lceil W_c[P] \rceil$ . If that argument cannot be made, then it seems there is a dilemma for Wright; either give up on this notion of Superassertibility, or admit that warrant does not transmit over the biconditional.

One thought which aims to support the entailment from  $\lceil W_c[SA[P]] \rceil$  to  $\lceil W_c[P] \rceil$  is this. Where we have one state of information which supports the fact that another state of information warrants a proposition, then the first state of information itself warrants the proposition. That is, for any states of information  $j$  and  $k$ ,

$$W_j[W_k[P]] \rightarrow W_j[P]$$

The trouble with this principle is that it is false. It is possible that the state of information I was in yesterday warrants  $P$ , but that today I have new information which itself does not support  $P$ , and which explains why yesterday's state did warrant  $P$ . That does not quite capture what is going on in the case of Superassertibility, since that is not dealing with a particular state of information, but with the *existence* of such a state. Then the relevant principle is

$$W_j[(\exists k)W_k[P]] \rightarrow W_j[P]$$

But that is no more plausible than the previous principle, and for the same reason.

However, there is still more involved in a claim of Superassertibility. The claim is not just that there is a state which supports the proposition, but also that any improvements on that state also support the proposition. So the required principle is precisely the half of the biconditional which threw up the question in the first place:

$$W_c[(\exists k)(W_k[P] \ \& \ (\forall i)(i \geq k \rightarrow W_i[P]))] \rightarrow W_c[P]$$

The problem is to see how the principle is true.  $c$  warrants something about another state of information ( $k$ ); but for all that has been said it might be silent on  $P$ . So as it stands, the principle seems false. We might be able to get the needed result by noticing a relation between  $k$  and  $c$ . Suppose we added that  $k$  was itself an improvement of  $c$ . So we are considering whether, when a state of information  $c$  warrants that there is another state of information  $k$ , such that

- (i)  $k$  warrants  $P$ , and
- (ii) all improvements of  $k$  warrant  $P$ , and
- (iii)  $k$  is an improvement on  $c$

then  $c$  warrants  $P$ .

A first point to note about this is that there is no guarantee that  $k$  is an improvement on  $c$ . That is true. However it is a natural assumption that pooling information is always going to be an improvement—at this point it just a formal notion—on both original states. If we make that assumption, then we can always find a  $j = k + c$  which is an improvement on both  $c$  and  $k$ . In that case,  $j$  is an improvement on  $k$ , and so supports  $P$ . Furthermore  $j$  is an improvement on  $c$ . But what is involved in that natural assumption?

### 3.4.2 All Roads Lead to Rome

Given any two states of information, is there always a third which is the addition of the two, such that it is an improvement on them both? The thought here is that as our states of information increase, as more and more data are added, the warranted propositions will converge on the truth. The metaphysical assumption here is that there is a stable objective truth on which the propositions converge. And that provides the reason why they converge; the information derives from a stable state of affairs, and so continued investigation will, eventually, uncover the truth. I call this the view that All Roads Lead to Rome (ARLTR), since according to the view, regardless of which state of information you start with, provided you travel far enough, you will arrive in the same place. It is a consequence of holding ARLTR that any two paths will converge. In terms of states of information, this is what I shall call Convergence; that for any two states, there will be a third which is an improvement on both:

$$(\forall j)(\forall k)(\exists l)(l \geq j \ \& \ l \geq k) \quad \text{Convergence}$$

ARLTR entails Convergence. Therefore someone who wanted to deny ARLTR could do so by denying Convergence. For this dissenter, it is not the case that given any two states of information, there will be a third which is an improvement on both.

Such dissent will involve a qualification on the transmission of warrant across the Disquotational Schema, albeit a principled one. It will fail where the state of information ( $k$ ), all of whose improvements support a proposition ( $P$ ), need not itself be an improvement of the current state ( $c$ ). The principled restriction, then, is that warrant provided by a state of information can only transmit to states of information which are improvements of that state. Where the states of information are such that for any two there is a third which is an improvement on both, then the restriction will not come to bear.

The development so far has been in terms of the purely formal concepts IMPROVEMENT and STATE OF INFORMATION. The structure is nevertheless of in-

terest, since it pre-figures a potential route for a would-be relativist. In the next chapter (§4.5) I offer a substantiation of the nature of the central concepts, and develop a relativist position in more detail.

### 3.5 Epistemic Constraint

For any particular area there are, surely, things which we shall never know. To suppose otherwise might seem supremely over-confident in our own abilities to get to grips with the facts. The notion of Epistemic Constraint is, in a way, an expression of that confidence. Admitting that there are facts which, as yet, are not known, Epistemic Constraint means that these facts are nevertheless in principle knowable by us.

The difference between Assertoric Constraint and Epistemic Constraint is as follows: Assertoric Constraint concerns the availability of justification for assertion; Epistemic Constraint concerns the availability of knowledge. They are clearly different principles. However, I hold that for an internalist about justification the two are going to turn out substantially similar. I explain what I mean by an internalist about justification in more detail below. My claim is that for an internalist, it is easier to see how being in position to be justified in asserting a proposition, and being in possession of knowledge of the truth of a proposition, might be held to march in step. I am not accusing Wright of confusing the two principles, but I do hold that for an internalist such as he the difference between the two principles might be less stark than it is for an externalist. I think it is telling that in the paper on Quandary, the key principle governing feasible knowability (which is written '*FK*')

$$P \rightarrow FK[P]$$

is labelled 'Evidential Constraint'.<sup>19</sup>

#### 3.5.1 Scepticism

Why should we think that there are *any* areas of talk to which Epistemic Constraint might be said to apply? Is not this level of confidence in our own capacities to get to the truth over-confident to the point of arrogance?

The issue of scepticism should not be underestimated. It threatens to make Epistemic Constraint a redundant principle. If sceptical considerations are allowed into play, then there will always be the threat of the possibility that there be a truth which we cannot get to know. Given that we can assume sceptics

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<sup>19</sup>Wright, 'On Being in a Quandary', 461.



to be suitably well equipped and ingenious, Epistemic Constraint will fail everywhere. It then loses its interest. One response to this threat is to disallow sceptical challenges on the grounds that they are merely of theoretical interest. No-one, this line of thought runs, is *actually* a sceptic, and so provided we can reliably spot sceptical challenges, then we can be happy to exclude them in a principled fashion. Scepticism also threatens Assertoric Constraint. There is no reason why there should not be a sceptic about justification such that whilst we are led to believe we are justified, in fact we never are. So Assertoric Constraint does not avoid the issue either. Scepticism is an issue for both, and will have to be dealt with one way or another.

### 3.5.2 Internalism and Externalism

What do I mean by internalism and externalism about justification? The distinction hinges on whether or not the subject is aware that they are justified. On an externalist view the justification can hold without the subject being aware of it. The externalist would have it, for instance, that being justified is a matter of being appropriately causally placed. The internalist about justification has it that this is very implausible; justification must be such that when one has it, one is aware that one has it, one can produce it, advert to it.

But there is more than one issue about which one may be an internalist or externalist. Classically, knowledge is decomposed into justified, true belief. This was introduced and criticised by Plato.<sup>20</sup> More recently Gettier has become famous for producing counterexamples to the classical definition.<sup>21</sup> The search is for the missing ingredient to add to the definition such that justified true belief is then also guaranteed to be knowledge.

There are therefore two separate issues on which one might choose to be internalist or externalist. The first is the issue of the justification involved in the belief. The second is the status of the missing ingredient. Will it be such that when one knows something, one knows that one knows it? This is sometimes called the KK principle:

$$K[P] \rightarrow K[K[P]] \quad \text{KK}$$

The internalist holds that KK does apply to knowledge. The externalist will (typically) deny it.<sup>22</sup> With those distinctions in mind, I now examine two arguments which together purport to show that Epistemic Constraint is equivalent to As-

<sup>20</sup>Plato; John McDowell, editor, *Theaetetus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 201c–210d.

<sup>21</sup>E. L. Gettier, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?' in *Analysis*, 23 (1963).

<sup>22</sup>For instance Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, *passim*, especially ch 4. But note that Williamson seeks to reject the idea that knowledge is justified, true, belief plus some further yet-to-be-found factor. Instead he proposes that knowledge is primitive. His two-word summary is 'knowledge first'.

sertoric Constraint, by arguing that where the first applies, so will the second and *vice versa*.

### 3.5.3 From Epistemic to Assertoric Constraint

Begin with Epistemic Constraint.

- (a) If  $P$  then it is knowable that  $P$ .

It holds for an internalist about knowledge that:

- (b) If I know that  $P$ , then I am justified in asserting that  $P$ .

The internalist thought here is that if you know that  $P$ , then you will know that you know, and if you know that you know  $P$ , what more justification do you need to assert it? If that is correct, then to admit that  $P$  is knowable is to admit that it will be justifiably assertible.

- (c) If  $P$  is knowable it is justifiably assertible.

So from (a) and (c) by transitivity of the conditional, we have that

- (d) If  $P$  then  $P$  is justifiably assertible.

And that just is for Assertoric Constraint to hold.

In fact, even on the internalist picture that is not quite right. It is plausible that there be ineffable truths in an area which is Epistemically Constrained. That is: it is plausible that there are truths which cannot be uttered, but nevertheless when they are true they are knowable.<sup>23</sup> It is obvious in this case that the area in question will not abide by Assertoric Constraint, since those ineffable truths will not (and cannot) be warrantably assertible. Premiss (b), therefore, should be properly scoped to effable truths.

An externalist about knowledge who was an internalist about justification would not support even this amended (b). If you can know something without being aware of that fact, and yet you must be able to produce, or be aware of, the justification for your assertions, then (b) will fail. However, an externalist on both fronts, knowledge and justification, may find the workings of the argument appealing. They may still need some persuading of the idea of Epistemic Constraint in the first place. I offer the following as part of that case.

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<sup>23</sup>For instance, some interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, 1922) have Wittgenstein presenting truths which can be shown but not said.

### 3.5.4 From Assertoric to Epistemic Constraint

The argument also runs the other way. Begin with Assertoric Constraint.

( $\alpha$ ) If  $P$  then  $P$  is justifiably assertible.

For the internalist about justification and knowledge it will be plausible that:

( $\beta$ ) If  $P$  is justifiably assertible, then knowledge of whether  $P$  is true is tractable.

This is because of the connection between the availability of evidence and the fact of the matter. Thus we can conclude, again by transitivity of the conditional that:

( $\gamma$ ) If  $P$  then  $P$  is knowable.

This is for Epistemic Constraint to hold.

The externalist about justification may well be happy with ( $\alpha$ ) being an interesting principle which applies to some areas of talk and not others. But an externalist about justification who is an internalist about knowledge will not support ( $\beta$ ). However, an externalist about justification who is also an externalist about knowledge may well be happy with that premiss.

## 3.6 Summary

The sketch in the previous section shows that the equivalence of Assertoric and Epistemic Constraint is likely to appeal to thorough-going internalists. It may well also appeal to thorough-going externalists. However, it will not be attractive for people who mix internalism and externalism about justification and knowledge.

This is how I propose to support Epistemic Constraint as one of the Cruces of T&O, to an externalist. I argue above that Assertoric Constraint is plausible as an interesting principle which holds of some areas of talk and not of others. Furthermore Assertoric and Epistemic Constraint are very closely related, if not equivalent.

But suppose that the support is not suasive and that Epistemic Constraint has to be given up, as not holding in any area of talk, and so being a superfluous Crux. Then, in line with the suggestion at the end of the previous chapter, the focus of the framework of T&O should be transposed from truth to warrant. Then the sentiment behind Epistemic Constraint is better expressed as Assertoric Constraint. Regardless of the fate of Epistemic Constraint, Assertoric Constraint should appeal to internalists and externalists alike. As such, it is more faithful to the stated aim of T&O to stay neutral on as many issues as possible,

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in order to provide a level playing field for this particular sort of anti-/realist debate.

## Chapter 4

# Cognitive Command

*De gustibus disputandum!*

### 4.1 Introduction

Suppose that two people are both in possession of all the relevant, available facts, understand the same language and are not suffering any impairments. But suppose further that they still disagree on a particular topic, whilst neither of them is mistaken. Where this is possible, Cognitive Command fails, and where this type of disagreement is not possible, it holds. Cognitive Command is another of the Cruces of T&O; it marks another ‘realism-relevant’ feature of the area of talk.

Latterly, Wright himself has disavowed the original motivation of the possibility of blameless disagreement.<sup>1</sup> There is a short deduction which threatens to collapse the structure of the framework of T&O such that wherever Epistemic Constraint is in place, then the area will also be governed by Cognitive Command. Worse still, a very similar deduction promises to show that Cognitive Command cannot fail to hold. This would be very bad news for the project of T&O, since it was always a part of Wright’s intention to support the idea that Epistemic Constraint could hold where Cognitive Command failed. It is in response to this threat that Wright disowns the conception of Cognitive Command as being founded on the idea of disagreement.

I begin by introducing Cognitive Command in more detail. I then present the logical problem which it faces. Wright’s own response to this problem is contained in his paper on Quandary.<sup>2</sup> I present the thread of this argument and

<sup>1</sup>Wright, ‘On Being in a Quandary’, 497.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

offer criticism of the approach. I then present an alternative response to the logical problem which respects Wright's original motivation. If I am correct, then Cognitive Command survives as originally intended, as a Crux of the framework of T&O.

## 4.2 Introducing Cognitive Command

In order to introduce Cognitive Command, a good place to start is with a criterion proposed by Wright in his argument in favour of Conventionalism about necessity which he develops in *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics*. There he suggests a criterion for *genuine* assertion. To keep this notion distinct as a technical term I capitalise it 'Genuine Assertion'. The idea is the Conventionalist will hold that statements of necessity are not up for Genuine Assertion. The intuition is that where talk is responsive to states of affairs, then the right and wrong of assertions is neither optional, nor up to the individual:

A declarative sentence expresses a [G]enuine [A]ssertion if it is associated with communally acknowledged conditions of acceptability in such a way that a sincere unwillingness to assent to it when such conditions are realised, and the agent is in a position to recognise as much, convicts him either of a misapprehension about the nature of the circumstances presented to him or of a misunderstanding of the sentence.<sup>3</sup>

It is useful to think of Cognitive Command as taking this original train of thought, which aims to clarify what is to count as a Genuine Assertion, and developing it to be a realism-relevant mark of the truth predicate, one of the Cruces of T&O.

In order to continue my explanation of Wright's idea, imagine a scene which is concrete and stable. Take two observers who have unobstructed access to view the scene. Make sure that both observers understand the language fluently. Then ask them questions about the scene. Their answers should match across the board. If their answers do not match, then one of them must have missed something in the scene, or misunderstood the question, or misused the language in their response.

Now suppose that when two such observers disagree about the scene, we do not know whether or not the discrepancy *must* be down to some misunderstanding of the language or the result of inattention. Of course a discrepancy *might* be down to these causes, but *must* it? If it need not, if the source of the

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<sup>3</sup>Crispin Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics* (London: Duckworth, 1980), 448–9.

discrepancy can be placed elsewhere, then there is a possibility of difference which is not there in the more robust case.

When we have an *a priori* guarantee that any disagreement between the two observers will be down to some lack of attention, or misunderstanding of the language, then the area is dignified as ‘Cognitive’ or as having ‘Cognitive Command’. It is to do with cognition, since it involves how we get to know about the world. It adds the further idea that there is a common agreed hymn-sheet concerning how the states of affairs are to be described.

Suppose on the other hand that we do not have the *a priori* guarantee that a disagreement between the two observers is always to be down to some malfunction or other. Then the conclusion is that the subject matter is not up for reliable, reproducible, representation.

It might seem an easy step from here to start to cast aspersions on the stability or robustness of what is being represented. However, that is not in line with Wright’s intention in considering Cognitive Command. His focus for these considerations is the idea of agreement in representation. On the one hand, we have states of affairs which the observers cognise, and to which their assertions answer. Whether an assertion is right or wrong in this case is dictated by the state of affairs which they are addressing and the terms which they use to describe them. This is the case described by Wright elsewhere as where

the truth-values are, so to speak, ground out at the interface between language and reality.<sup>4</sup>

However, on the other hand, where we do not know in advance whether a disagreement will be down to some malfunction or other, then an assertion being right or wrong does not depend solely on the proper function of the observers’ cognition and language accurately reflecting the facts. Where the sole determinant is no longer the proper cognitive and linguistic function of the observers, then the opportunity is open for the observers themselves to influence the process; perhaps, for instance, some element of choice or decision is in play.

To complete my introduction to the notion, this is how Wright officially defines Cognitive Command in T&O.

A discourse exhibits [C]ognitive [C]ommand if and only if it is *a priori* that differences of opinion arising within it can be satisfactorily explained only in terms of ‘divergent input’, that is, the disputants’ working on the basis of different information (and hence guilty of ignorance or error, depending on the status of that information), or ‘unsuitable conditions’ (resulting in inattention or distraction and

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<sup>4</sup>Wright, ‘Realism, Anti-Realism, Irrealism, Quasi-Realism’, 28.

so in inferential error, or oversight of data and so on), or ‘malfunction’ (for example, prejudicial assessment of data, upwards or downwards, or dogma, or failings in other categories already listed).<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.2.1 An Example Consideration

Wright’s stock example of an area where Cognitive Command is held to fail is that of comedy. It is indeed plausible that two people might be fully engaged with uninterrupted view to a vignette, and be fluent speakers and yet disagree about whether the scene is or is not humorous. The fact that one person finds funny what the other person does not, fails to entail that one of them must be mistaken. In order to provide more variety, I shall draw on and develop one of the areas which, in the previous chapter, I held was plausibly Assertorically Constrained.<sup>6</sup>

Consider the jury at a criminal trial. They have heard all the evidence offered by the prosecution and defence, and have been issued with legal direction by the judge. They have now retired to consider their verdict. The question they have to decide upon is whether, according to the law of the land, the defendant is guilty or innocent of the alleged offence.

There are many reasons why the jurors might dispute with each other over the verdict. Here are examples of three sorts. First, some of them may have nodded off during the evidence, and so they disagree with their more conscientious colleagues because they are ignorant of some clinching consideration. Second, one of them may misunderstand the legal terminology, and so they are not sure about how to take the judge’s direction that to return a guilty verdict, they need to assure themselves that *malice aforethought* was involved on the part of the defendant. Third, a juror may be exercising a prejudicial view which the others do not share.

It is not hard to imagine these sources of disagreement affecting the deliberation. It is also not hard to imagine that these sources could be eliminated. The other jurors can re-iterate the clinching consideration, and the judge (or a legal dictionary) might be explicit about what is involved in *malice aforethought*. Furthermore using their right to remove suspect jurors, suppose the defence has managed to remove all prejudice from the jury.

Suppose that all sources like that have been eliminated. It is still plausible that, even where everyone is apprised of all the evidence, that everyone understands all the jargon involved, and that prejudice has been removed, that the jurors still disagree over the verdict. In that case, we do not know ahead of time

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<sup>5</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 92-3.

<sup>6</sup>§3.2.3, 61ff.



that a dispute amongst jurors must be down to one of those sorts of source. Thus disagreements within the jury concerning the verdict will fail of Cognitive Command.

### 4.2.2 The True Purpose Revealed

Wright's unspoken intention behind Cognitive Command in T&O was revealed by him later. In T&O Wright nowhere mentions 'relativism'. However, in a later paper he does claim that the principle is intended to make room for what he then calls 'true relativism.'<sup>7</sup> The name for this view may give pause for thought, because of its use of 'true.' It seems clear to me that it is intended to convey the sense of 'genuine.' However, it may appear a little tendentious to mark one's own view as 'genuine' in contrast to other views about relativism which are, by implication, only *ersatz*. Naturally, this is not simply assumed by Wright; he does provide argument for the genuine nature of his position; I shall consider the issue shortly. But secondly, some may find the name 'true relativism' distracting, since they have to disambiguate 'true' on each occurrence, and find this particularly irksome since the overall area involves so much mention of truth. It would be tempting to talk in terms of 'genuine relativism', but unfortunately that is the name given by Kölbel, in closely related literature, to quite a separate position.<sup>8</sup> My answer to these problems is simply to capitalise the position as 'True Relativism'.

### 4.2.3 Ersatz Relativism

What is the relativism which Wright compares unfavourably with his proposed genuine or 'True' relativism? The view in question is indexical relativism. One common way of dealing with disagreements is to find an indexical at work. Imagine a telephone conversation in which one person says that 'it is raining here' while the person at the other end of the line says just the opposite. At first glance this may appear to be a disagreement; but of course it is no such thing; the speakers are picking out different places in their assertions. In this case 'here' is an indexical which acts to relativise the proposition to the location of the speaker. Whilst someone might be happy to interpret them as disagreeing over the same *utterance*, most would deny that the people on the call are disagreeing over the same *proposition*.

The equivalent manoeuvre for the legal example would be to relativise the verdict not only to the jurisdiction, which needs to be granted to begin with, but also to the jury which was involved in the deliberation. So a guilty verdict is

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<sup>7</sup>Wright, 'On Being in a Quandary', 453.

<sup>8</sup>Max Kölbel, 'Faultless Disagreement' in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, CIV (2003), 57.

not guilty *simpliciter*, but should be interpreted as guilty-by-that-jury. This may or may not be an attractive idea for this particular case. But the point is that notwithstanding whatever other considerations we might have about relativism as applied to criminal verdicts, there is one in particular which comes from this application of indexicals. The verdict, as interpreted as indexed to a jury, will not admit of being overturned—except perhaps by reconvening that very jury. This would falsify any appeal process; another jury coming to a different verdict does not thereby contest the original verdict, any more than one caller’s assertions about what is going on ‘here’ will contest the other caller’s assertions about what is going on ‘here.’

Disagreements may be down to one or both parties not realising the indexical manner of the subject matter. However, once the parties to a dispute have both realised that there is an indexical in play, then that is to realise they are not disagreeing over the same proposition. The reason why this is unsatisfactory is that we have to give up on the notion of there being a real disagreement at all. If the parties initially, and mistakenly, thought there was a disagreement to be had, they now realise that it was an illusion. The relativisation has dissolved the dispute; they are no longer making contradictory assertions. The sense in which Wright claims to be proposing True Relativism is precisely that with a genuine (or ‘true’) proposal, the disputes do not dissolve even when properly understood.

### 4.3 A Logical Problem for Cognitive Command

In his paper on Quandary, Wright deals directly with a serious logical problem which faces the principle of Cognitive Command as a useful Crux in the framework of T&O. The threat is that Cognitive Command cannot help but apply. I shall follow Wright’s treatment of the problem, which comes in two related parts. First there is the problem based on what Wright terms ‘Bare Mistakes’. He has a quick response to this first problem which leads naturally to the second version of the problem involving his more refined notion of ‘Cognitive Mistake’. Having introduced the two versions of the problem, I shall then present Wright’s own more considered response, which involves giving up on (failure of) Cognitive Command signalling True Relativism.

Wright’s notion of a Bare Mistake is the natural one; one is Barely Mistaken if one asserts  $P$ , when it is case that  $\neg P$ , or if one asserts  $\neg P$  when it is the case that  $P$ . I shall write ‘ $A\sigma[\phi]$ ’ for ‘subject  $\sigma$  asserts proposition  $\phi$ ’, and ‘ $M\sigma$ ’ for ‘subject  $\sigma$  is Barely Mistaken.’ I propose the two rules in figure 4.1 to govern the introduction of the formal notion of a Bare Mistake.

$$\frac{\phi \quad A\sigma[\neg\phi]}{M\sigma} M_1 \qquad \frac{\neg\phi \quad A\sigma[\phi]}{M\sigma} M_2$$

Figure 4.1: Introduction Rules for ‘Bare Mistake’

Suppose, as failure of Cognitive Command allows, that there are two people  $x$  and  $y$ , who assert  $P$  and  $\neg P$  respectively, whilst neither is Barely Mistaken. Figure 4.2 is the simple natural deduction which shows this situation to be contradictory. This is how the reasoning goes. Assume  $P$  is true; then when  $y$

$$\frac{P \vee \neg P \quad \frac{\neg My \quad \frac{\bar{P}^1 \quad Ay[\neg P]}{My} M_1}{\perp} \neg E}{\perp} \vee E (1) \quad \frac{\neg Px \quad \frac{\bar{P}^1 \quad Ax[P]}{Px} M_2}{\perp} \neg E}{\perp} \vee E (1)$$

Figure 4.2: Bare Mistake Deduction with LEM

asserts  $\neg P$ ,  $y$  is Barely Mistaken. Assume  $P$  is false; then when  $x$  asserts  $P$ ,  $x$  is Barely Mistaken.  $P$  is either true or false. Either way, one of  $x$  or  $y$  is mistaken, hence it is incoherent to suppose that they assert contradictory propositions whilst maintaining that neither be Barely Mistaken. They cannot both be free of error. This reasoning relies on the Law of Excluded Middle, and so cannot claim universal appeal. Indeed, part of Wright’s project in the later work is to argue precisely that the Law of Excluded Middle does not apply in all areas. However, Wright is well aware that this is not a good defence, since there is an even simpler line of reasoning which does not rely on the contended principle. Using the same notation, this simpler reasoning can be seen in figure 4.3.<sup>9</sup> This

$$\frac{\frac{\frac{\bar{P}^1 \quad Ay[\neg P]}{My} M_1}{\neg My} \neg E}{\perp} \neg I (1) \quad \frac{\frac{\perp \quad Ax[P]}{Px} M_2}{\perp} \neg E}{\perp} \neg E$$

Figure 4.3: Bare Mistake Deduction without LEM

reasoning shows that the assumptions that  $x$  asserts  $P$ , while  $y$  asserts  $\neg P$ ,

<sup>9</sup>This line of reasoning differs from Wright’s own presentation. He relies on *reductio*; see Wright, ‘On Being in a Quandary’, 457. However, the point is the same—and the pair of rules involved here ( $\neg I$  and  $\neg E$ ) are both intuitionistically valid.

together with the idea that neither is Barely Mistaken, are jointly incoherent. That entails that it is logically impossible to have an area of talk for which Cognitive Command fails. In that case, the principle fails to mark an interesting distinction at all. Given that it is a central plank in the framework of T&O, this is a very serious threat.

### 4.3.1 Bare Mistakes?

In response to this acute problem, Wright aims to finesse the notion of mistake involved. He invokes a distinction between the notion of a Cognitive Mistake used in setting up the principle of Cognitive Command and the sort of formal mistake used to set up the logical problem we have just seen. The formal notion of a mistake, which he labelled a 'Bare Mistake' is the natural and straightforward notion. One makes a Bare Mistake just when one asserts something which is false, or denies something which is true. What more can there be to being mistaken? The notion is 'Bare' in the sense that there is no further justification involved which would serve to explain *why* the assertion is false.

Wright proposes to extend the idea of mistake beyond the Bare Mistake to include some of this background explanation. The relevant notion of mistake is not simply a brute disagreement, but a disagreement where, in addition, there is no evident problem with how the opposing assertions were arrived at. What matters, as well as the brute disagreement, is that there be nothing wrong with how the assertions were arrived at; their provenance, or pedigree, is required to be spotless.

If Wright can make good on this extension to the idea of a Cognitive Mistake, then it follows that one can make a Bare Mistake without making a Cognitive Mistake, which has a richer sense. Then the argument of the logical problem falls short of its target. It does show that two people cannot disagree on a topic and yet both be innocent of making a Bare Mistake. And that result still stands. However, the same does not follow for the richer notion of Cognitive Mistake. Thus where Cognitive Command is couched in terms of the richer notion, Wright has side-stepped this first logical problem.

### 4.3.2 A Further Problem

Wright grants that even if he is allowed his favoured interpretation favoured interpretation of mistakes in this context being Cognitive Mistakes, as opposed to Bare Mistakes, there is still a larger problem to face. This is due to Shapiro and Tascheck.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Stewart Shapiro and William Tascheck, 'Intuitionism, Pluralism, and Cognitive Command' in *Journal of Philosophy*, 93 (1996).

The first threat was that Cognitive Command will hold in every area. This second threat is that wherever Epistemic Constraint is in play, then Cognitive Command is entailed. Why would that be so serious? It is areas which are Epistemically Constrained which are most plausible as the candidates to be areas where Cognitive Command fails. If it holds, then there is no room for the cases which Wright would have liked to allow, where Cognitive Command fails. It is precisely these areas in which a mistake will *per force* be of the stronger kind which Wright himself admits concerns the stronger notion of Cognitive Mistake.

The second deduction is derived from the deduction above in figure 4.3, by adding two applications of the principle of Epistemic Constraint. To present the deduction, as in the previous chapter, I write ‘ $KW[\phi]$ ’ for ‘proposition  $\phi$  is knowable.’<sup>11</sup> I also introduce the new notation of ‘ $CM\sigma$ ’ for ‘subject  $\sigma$  is Cognitively Mistaken.’ The idea we are trying to capture is that where an area involves facts which when true are knowable, then the subject really has no excuse for making false (sincere) assertions. It follows in such cases that they are guilty not just of a Bare Mistake, but of a Cognitive Mistake in the stronger sense. I propose that one natural way to express this is using the rules for Cognitive Mistakes in figure 4.4. The deduction which forms the second threat is shown

$$\frac{KW[\phi] \quad A\sigma[\neg\phi]}{CM\sigma} \text{ CM}_1 \qquad \frac{KW[\neg\phi] \quad A\sigma[\phi]}{CM\sigma} \text{ CM}_2$$

Figure 4.4: Introduction Rules for ‘Cognitive Mistake’

in figure 4.5.<sup>12</sup> There are therefore two threats to the project of T&O which are

$$\frac{\frac{\frac{\bar{P}^1}{KW[P]} \text{ EC} \quad Ay[\neg P]}{CM_y} \text{ CM}_1}{\neg CM_y} \quad \frac{\frac{\perp}{\neg P} \text{ -I (1)} \quad \frac{KW[\neg P]}{CM_x} \text{ EC} \quad Ax[P]}{CM_x} \text{ CM}_2}{\perp} \text{ -E}$$

Figure 4.5: Cognitive Mistake Deduction without LEM

both very serious. First, if the Bare Mistake Deduction (figure 4.3) is allowed,

<sup>11</sup>§3.1, 56.

<sup>12</sup>Again, Wright uses *reductio* in his consideration of this problem. See Wright, ‘On Being in a Quandary’, 462.

then Cognitive Command cannot fail to apply. That is clearly disastrous for an attempt to identify a Crux which anti-/realists can debate. Second, suppose that Wright's preferred refinement of mistake is permitted, so that Cognitive Mistake is the proper notion to invoke. Then the deduction above (figure 4.5) shows that Cognitive Command holds over any Epistemically Constrained area of talk. This is a threat since Wright's hope was that it would be Epistemically Constrained areas from which he would draw the most likely candidates for True Relativism. True Relativism was to be picked out by a failure of Cognitive Command. Noting that the stakes are that high, I now turn to Wright's response.

## 4.4 Wright's Response

Wright's response is to argue that classical logic is not the correct logic for the mooted situation. That this is his intention is clear from his statement near the end of the Quandary paper that

the contrast between [M]inimal truth-aptitude and [C]ognitive  
[C]ommand . . . is unstable in the setting of classical logic.<sup>13</sup>

I shall consider this conclusion carefully, since as we saw, there were versions of both the first and second forms of threat which did not explicitly rely on any principle which would be objectionable to an intuitionist.

I shall present Wright's argument before I give my consideration of his conclusion. After that I shall propose my own alternative which, I argue, allows us to keep True Relativism in play.

### 4.4.1 The Argument from Quandary

The basic intuitionistic thought is that in order to ascribe a property to an individual, one must be able to locate that individual as a witness.<sup>14</sup> One is not in position to assert the existence of an  $x$  which is  $\phi$  unless one can produce the  $x$  which is the witness to that fact. Similarly, one is disbarred from asserting disjunctions unless one can identify which of the disjuncts is true. In this case, in order legitimately to ascribe a mistake, one must be able to locate the mistake. And that is something which, in the nature of the case, one is unable to do. The deduction above (figure 4.5) shows that  $x$  asserting  $P$  and  $y$  asserting  $\neg P$ , together with the fact that they both fail to make a mistake, results in a contradiction. However, for the intuitionist it is a *non sequitur* to go on to conclude

<sup>13</sup>Wright, 'On Being in a Quandary', 507.

<sup>14</sup>See Michael Dummett, *Elements of Intuitionism* 2nd edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6–17

further that one or other is therefore guilty of a Cognitive Mistake. The intuitionist is happy with the reasoning as far as is shown in figure 4.6. However,

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \frac{\frac{\frac{\overline{\neg CM_y}^2}{\frac{\frac{\overline{\overline{P}}^1}{KW[P]}^{EC} \quad Ay[\neg P]}{CM_y}^{CM_1}}{-E}}{\perp \quad \neg I (1)}}{\overline{\neg P}^{EC}}}{\frac{\overline{\neg CM_x}^2}{\frac{\frac{\overline{\neg P}^{EC}}{KW[\neg P]}^{EC} \quad Ax[P]}{CM_x}^{CM_2}}{-E}}{-I (2)}}
 \end{array}$$

Figure 4.6: The Intuitionist Sticking Point

the intuitionist is unable to pass from there to assign a cognitive shortcoming to one of  $x$  or  $y$ ; this is because no particular shortcoming has been brought to light. That is: we are not entitled to make the further move, since that involves being able to locate *where* the shortcoming lies. Intuitionistic logic does not license the required instance of one of De Morgan's Laws. Since we are unable to guarantee which of the two disjuncts is true, and must stop short and hold that it is not the case that neither is false. Figure 4.7 shows the inference which is a classically valid instance of De Morgan's Law, but which does not hold for the intuitionist. But why, asks Wright, should we think that classical logic is

$$\frac{\neg(\neg CM_x \ \& \ \neg CM_y)}{CM_x \ \vee \ CM_y}$$

Figure 4.7: A Classical Instance of De Morgan's Law

inadequate when it comes to ascriptions of Cognitive Mistakes?

One obstacle to my exposition here is that Wright's paper on Quandary attempts to engage with three difficult issues at once. There is the issue of True Relativism, under threat if Cognitive Command turns out nugatory; there is an argument for suspending classical logic generally; and there is an argument for an intuitionistic theory of vagueness. The moves concerning each of the three issues are interwoven, such that it is difficult to pick out the part which addresses the mending of Cognitive Command without also dealing with the other arguments. The reason for the threefold presentation is that Wright holds that the very same driving insight is involved in all three issues. Despite the difficulties,

I shall attempt to extract the thread relevant to Cognitive Command.<sup>15</sup>

This is how the Argument from Quandary proceeds. It begins by showing that three principles are jointly inconsistent. It then proceeds to support two of the principles at the expense of the third. The support involves an investigation of a separate principle concerning the circumstances under which we should properly be agnostic about a proposition. Wright improves on that principle, and it is this improvement which involves the notion of a Quandary.

Wright's conclusion from these considerations is that Cognitive Command must be taken as an epistemic principle. This has the consequence that True Relativism has to be given up. Once I have taken the measure of Wright's conclusion, I go on to present an approach based on the consideration of Superassertibility in the last chapter.<sup>16</sup> I shall propose that this approach can maintain the idea of the genuine nature of blameless disputes, and so supports True Relativism.

#### An Inconsistent Triad

Wright is interested in the interaction between three separate principles; the Law of Excluded Middle, Epistemic Constraint, and the principle of whether it is known that every proposition in a discourse is knowably decidable (NKD). His interest is in arguing for Revisionism—the thesis that classical logic should be revised in favour of intuitionistic logic—at least for areas where Epistemic Constraint holds.

The three principles can be spelled out as follows. The Law of Excluded Middle (LEM) is the familiar logical law:

$$P \vee \neg P \qquad \text{LEM}$$

In the previous chapter I discussed the principle of Epistemic Constraint. It states that where a proposition is true, then that truth is knowable. In the presentation of the Argument from Quandary, Wright names the principle 'Evidential Constraint'; I shall refer to it as 'Epistemic Constraint' throughout. Wright expresses it in terms of *feasibility*.<sup>17</sup> He intends that what it is 'feasible to know' depends only on the actual world:

The proposition that, as I write this, I am in Australia is one which is merely (logically or conceptually) possible to know—the possible

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<sup>15</sup>Wright's arguments concerning an intuitionistic theory of vagueness, whilst possibly the most important of the three strands, is unfortunately out of the scope of this thesis. An assessment of whether it is the very same insight in all three cases is likewise out of scope.

<sup>16</sup>§3.4, 75ff.

<sup>17</sup>Wright, 'On Being in a Quandary', 461.



world in question is one in which the proposition in question is true, and someone is appropriately placed to recognise its being so.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand,

the range of what it is feasible for us to know goes no further than what is actually the case: we are talking about those propositions whose actual truth value could be recognised by the implementation of some humanly feasible process.<sup>19</sup>

Wright therefore explains ‘feasibly knowable’ in terms of ‘humanly feasible’ processes. The re-use of ‘feasible’ is a hindrance to understanding exactly what Wright intends by the term. I am not going to attempt to make good on the notion. However, for clarity, I use ‘Feasible’ when I am using it in Wright’s sense. Writing ‘ $KW[\phi]$ ’ for ‘the proposition *that*  $\phi$  is Feasibly knowable’, the principle is as follows.

$$P \rightarrow KW[P] \quad \text{EC}$$

The new principle concerns whether or not we know, across a discourse, that either each truth or its contrary is Feasibly knowable. I write ‘ $K[\phi]$ ’ for ‘it is known that  $\phi$ ’.

$$\neg K[(\forall P)(KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P])] \quad \text{NKD}$$

LEM, EC and NKD can be shown to be an inconsistent triad very simply. First we assume with Wright that any propositional content has a negation. So from EC we get not just

$$P \rightarrow KW[P]$$

but also

$$\neg P \rightarrow KW[\neg P]$$

Bearing this in mind, the deduction in figure 4.8 is clearly valid.

$$\frac{P \vee \neg P \quad \frac{\overline{P} \ 1}{KW[P]} \text{EC} \quad \frac{\overline{\neg P} \ 1}{KW[\neg P]} \text{EC}}{\frac{KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P]}{KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P]} \vee I} \vee E (1)$$

Figure 4.8: Knowability Deduction with LEM

<sup>18</sup>Wright, ‘On Being in a Quandary’, 462, fn 18.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

Nothing in particular is assumed about the proposition, so we may universalise the conclusion:

$$(\forall P)(KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P])$$

Then, since this reasoning is *a priori*, we know contrary to NKD that for each proposition, it is Feasible to know either its truth or its falsity.

How is this relevant to the current concern? Wright's strategy is as follows. NKD, EC and LEM are an inconsistent triad. If the case can be made that NKD and EC can consistently hold good, then, since they form two parts of an inconsistent triad, that would put pressure on the third part—the Law of Excluded Middle.

In order to examine NKD further, Wright introduces a principle of agnosticism. He then investigates the idea of agnosticism, and proposes that we should countenance the possibility of Quandary. This leads to a revision of the principle governing agnosticism. That in turn supports NKD independently of any presupposed logical principles. Wright supports Epistemic Constraint by adverting to what I termed 'Essentially Apparent' concepts in the last chapter.<sup>20</sup> His claim is that where Epistemic Constraint is in play and Quandary is possible, then in those cases, the Law of Excluded Middle must be dropped. The relevance for the case against Cognitive Command is that without the Law of Excluded Middle the deductions as presented above do not license as much as one might at first think. And that applies even to the versions which do not explicitly rely on LEM in their working.

### NKD

NKD concerns whether or not we know whether a particular situation holds for an area of talk. The particular situation is that for each proposition in that area, either its truth or its falsity is Feasibly knowable:

$$(\forall P)(KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P])$$

NKD is the claim that it is not known whether that situation obtains.

$$\neg K[(\forall P)(KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P])] \quad \text{NKD}$$

NKD, then, is a claim whose character is one of agnosticism. What, in general, is such a character?

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<sup>20</sup>§3.2.1, 59ff.

### Agnosticism

This is the principle which Wright proposes to govern agnosticism.

(AG)  $P$  should be regarded as unknown just in case there is a  $Q$ , such that  $Q$  ensures  $\lceil \neg P \rceil$ , and we are not in position to exclude  $Q$ .

NKD is a claim of agnostic character. It therefore falls in the scope of this principle. Then NKD should hold just when there be some  $Q$  which guarantees that

$$\neg(\forall P)(KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P])$$

and we are not in position to exclude  $Q$ . However, if that were the case, then there is some proposition such that neither it nor its negation is Feasibly knowable. And that is ruled out by Epistemic Constraint. Thus NKD, as founded on AG, is incompatible with Epistemic Constraint. Wright acknowledges that this is bad news for his strategy; he would have it that Epistemic Constraint and NKD together force a denial of the Law of Excluded Middle. If Epistemic Constraint rules out NKD, then no progress is made toward his goal of Revisionism.

Is there something that can be done to make Epistemic Constraint compatible with NKD? At first Wright notes that the argument does rely on a transition of this form:

$$\frac{\neg(\forall x)\phi(x)}{(\exists x)\neg\phi(x)}$$

And it is exactly this sort of transition which is not valid in intuitionistic logic. This, however, is an inadequate response if the goal is to argue for Revisionism. One had better not assume in arguing for intuitionistic logic that the correct logic involved be intuitionistic to begin with. However, it must surely be allowable to draw on the philosophical motivations of the intuitionists to make the case. It is this latter course which Wright takes. Wright notes that he needs a case for ignorance about a proposition which fits two criteria. First, the case needs to hold even when the subject can exclude the negation of the proposition. Second, it must not presuppose intuitionistic logic.

### Quandary

The question, then, can be seen as asking under what circumstances AG might fail. That is: does AG adequately capture the notion of agnosticism? And if there is an improved formulation of the notion of agnosticism, will it be the case that someone who is in position to exclude the negation of a proposition can really be held to be ignorant of the proposition?

Wright maintains that EC rules out any  $Q$  which would act to justify NKD, *via* AG. That is: EC means that there is no  $Q$  which we are not in position to

rule out and which would ensure that

$$\neg(\forall P)(KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P])$$

Wright recognises that he must, therefore, provide a separate account of agnosticism which enables him to maintain NKD even in the light of Epistemic Constraint. The alternative proposal, then, is to consider a type of case which is a sort of ‘compound ignorance’, or Quandary:

- (i) It is not known whether  $P$  or  $\neg P$ .
- (ii) It is not known how we might come to know whether  $P$  or  $\neg P$ .
- (iii) There is no reason to think that there is even a way of getting to know whether  $P$  or  $\neg P$ .

The idea is to support the notion that there are cases where one can be ignorant without fulfilling the conditions as laid out in AG. Take a proposition  $P$ , and consider whether I am ignorant with respect to that proposition. Suppose there is a  $Q$  which entails  $\neg P$ , and suppose that I am not in position to exclude  $Q$ . Then by AG, I should be held ignorant of  $P$ . However, suppose I am guilty of the proposed type of compound ignorance; I do not know whether  $P$  or  $\neg P$ , I do not know how we might to know whether or not  $P$ , and furthermore I have no reason to suppose that there is a way of getting to know whether  $P$  or  $\neg P$ . It seems we can indeed class that as being ignorant of  $P$ . Furthermore it is consistent with it failing to be the case that: there be a  $Q$  which entails  $\neg P$  which I am not in position to rule out. So we have a case of ignorance which the first principle AG fails to capture. We should expect, then, to have a new principle which covers these cases. Before the improved principle is introduced, I recall the positive case in favour of Epistemic Constraint.

### Epistemic Constraint

As well as arguing for NKD to hold consistently with Epistemic Constraint, Wright also provides independent support for the plausibility of Epistemic Constraint obtaining in the first place. The plausibility of Epistemic Constraint was treated in the previous chapter. We saw how Wright assumed that our ordinary colour concepts were what I called ‘Essentially Apparent’.<sup>21</sup> This means that they are essentially tied to how we experience the world in such a way that when they are instantiated, the grounds for asserting such cannot be in principle unavailable to us. That is, as I have it, Assertoric Constraint would hold sway. In the last section of that chapter I then argued further that for

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<sup>21</sup>§3.2.1, 59ff.

both the thorough-going internalist and for the thorough-going externalist, Epistemic Constraint would follow hot on its heels.<sup>22</sup> (The argument did not extend to ‘mixed up’ individuals who were internalist about justification but externalist about knowledge, or *vice versa*.) In any case, Wright proceeds on the basis that Epistemic Constraint has been shown to be plausible.

### Improving on AG

Wright is attempting to show that it is not known that (meaning: that we should be agnostic about whether)

$$(\forall P)(KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P])$$

To be agnostic about this, according to AG, is for there to be some other proposition (call it ‘*Q*’) which we are not in position to rule out, and which entails the contrary claim, *viz.*

$$\neg(\forall P)(KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P])$$

But there is no such proposition as *Q*. It was shown above how that is enforced by Epistemic Constraint.

However, Wright continues, AG is not the best principle for agnosticism. It captures a sufficient condition for agnosticism, but it is not a necessary condition. There is another source of agnosticism which concerns the special sort of compound ignorance, or Quandary. In order to cope with the cases of agnosticism due to Quandary, Wright proposes an enhanced principle AG+. This is to be a principle which is restricted to compound statements which are constructed from attributions or denials of Essentially Apparent concepts. For example: ‘ $\lceil P \vee \neg P \rceil$ ’, where the proposition *P* primarily involves the attribution of a colour concept. Wright proposes that the requirement for being agnostic about such compounds concerning Essentially Apparent concepts is that the statement should be considered not known if there is no assurance that the evidence for (or against) the components of the statement be Feasibly available.

He proposes the following first approximation to the improved principle. It involves a compound statement *A*, which is made up of statements (its constituents) which are Epistemically Constrained.

(AG+) *A* is known only if there is an assurance that a suitably matching distribution of evidence for (or against) its (relevant) constituents may [F]easibly be acquired.

Suppose we accept this as a potential source of agnosticism for cases of Essen-

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<sup>22</sup> §§3.5.3, 3.5.4, 82ff.

tially Apparent concepts. Then, for statements involving those cases, there is room to deny that one knows

$$(\forall P)(KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P])$$

but *not* on the basis provided by AG, that there is some other proposition ( $Q$ ) which entails the contrary and which cannot be ruled out. Instead, you might venture that you do not know it because you are in a Quandary. The concepts involved are Essentially Apparent, and so essentially tied to the evidence we have for them being instantiated (when they are). But being in a Quandary, you have no assurance that the evidence will be forthcoming to decide the matter. Therefore you remain agnostic, despite admitting that there is no  $Q$  which would guarantee the contrary of what you want to remain agnostic about. AG+ and Quandary offer a different manner in which to be agnostic.

### Conclusion

My presentation of Wright's Argument from Quandary is almost complete. The final move is to note that, as we saw above in figure 4.8, in the presence of Epistemic Constraint this inference holds good:

$$\frac{P \vee \neg P}{KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P]}$$

Since knowledge transmits across this inference, it follows that:

$$K[P \vee \neg P] \rightarrow K[KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P]]$$

Thus where we can deny that it is known that

$$KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P]$$

then that doubt puts us in position to doubt whether the Law of Excluded Middle applies in the area in question. As we have seen, we can deny that we know  $\lceil KW[P] \vee KW[\neg P] \rceil$  in cases where we are in a Quandary over an attribution of an Essentially Apparent concept.

To summarise, the principle NKD is a case of an agnostic claim. It appears to clash directly with Epistemic Constraint, when agnostic claims are understood according to AG. However, Wright claims, there is a way to be agnostic which is not captured by AG. This is the special compound ignorance called Quandary. Thus where there is the possibility of Quandary, then NKD and Epistemic Constraint are consistent. And that consistency forms the principled motivation for

doubting the Law of Excluded Middle.

#### 4.4.2 How Wright Thinks the Argument Helps

I have followed Wright's argument against the Law of Excluded Middle, and so classical logic, and shown how it is intended to work. What are the consequences if the argument is correct? Wright draws the moral that Cognitive Command is an epistemic principle:

Failures of Cognitive Command ... must be viewed as situations where we *have no warrant for* a certain claim, not ones where—for all we know—its negation may be true. We *do* know—the two Deductions precisely teach—that the negation will not be true. But that's not sufficient for Cognitive Command ... one may, in contexts of [Epistemic Constraint] and potential [Q]uandary, fall short of knowledge of a claim whose negation one is in position to exclude.<sup>23</sup>

Wright himself would prefer not to trade in terms such as 'no fact of the matter.' He would prefer to do away with such talk altogether as 'simply inconsistent with the most basic constitutive principles concerning truth and negation.'<sup>24</sup> Bearing that in mind, he tentatively ventures that the subtle point on which the matter hinges might nevertheless be expressed thus:

It is a matter ... of lack of warrant to believe in a fact of the matter, rather than a reason to deny one.<sup>25</sup>

Which, I take it, means that denying that Cognitive Command holds in an area is not denying that there is a 'fact of the matter'. Instead where Cognitive Command fails we have no guarantee that there will be sufficient warrant to believe that there is a 'fact of the matter'. This makes explicit Wright's recognition that Cognitive Command is an epistemic principle. It is not a realism-relevant mark of truth in an area of talk, but primarily a mark of a rule governing the warrant of assertions in that area.

#### 4.4.3 True Relativism?

I have extracted Wright's train of thought concerning Cognitive Command as best I can from the other two threads in his paper on Quandary. I now consider the fact that by his own admission, he has failed to save True Relativism:

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<sup>23</sup>Wright, 'On Being in a Quandary', 497, emphases in the original.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 498.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

[W]e do not ... quite recover the materials for a coherent *[T]rue [R]elativism* as earlier characterised—which involved essential play with the possibility of fault-free disagreement.<sup>26</sup>

So True Relativism is a casualty of Wright's considered approach to the logical threats to Cognitive Command. What are we left with in its stead? Suppose we grant Wright the correctness of his subtle intuitionistic insight. We should bear in mind that the cases are limited to those where Epistemic Constraint is in play and where there are potential Quandaries. In those cases, there are occasions where each of the two parties to a dispute is equally entitled to his own view, even though the views are diametrically opposed. Where these are Quandaries, so that we have no way of knowing if there is even a way of coming to know which is correct, then both of their positions remain unimpugned. We are allowed to get as far as ruling out the scenario where *neither* of them is mistaken. But we cannot advance from there to the further step of concluding that therefore *one* of them *is* mistaken.

I have reason to be doubtful even of this somewhat muted victory. I note two points. First, the target of the argument is not the Law of Excluded Middle itself, but the *knowledge* of whether that law applies. Second, the argument can only go through where there are Quandaries involved with Essentially Apparent concepts; that is a prerequisite for the application of the strategy. If the area of dispute is such that it concerns an Essentially Apparent concept, and that area is subject to Quandaries, then the argument has it that we do not know that the Law of Excluded Middle applies. Then we cannot conclude that it is true that one of the disputants is mistaken, although we can conclude that it is not the case that neither is mistaken.

This is unsatisfactory since it appears to mislocate the logic of the threat. Suppose it is granted that endorsement of the Law of Excluded Middle is suspended for areas where Epistemic Constraint is in play and there are Quandaries. Such a dispute is about whether  $P$  or  $\lceil \neg P \rceil$ , where  $P$  involves the attribution of some Essentially Apparent concept. We are granting that LEM is not known to range over such propositions. So we should not rely on it when the arguments involved concern those propositions. This means that the arguments which assumed the Law of Excluded Middle from the beginning can no longer be relied upon. Thus we must give up the deduction in figure 4.2.

However, there were other versions of the argument which did not assume that LEM applied to the target propositions. The deductions shown in figures 4.3 and 4.5 are examples. These deductions end in contradiction. Wright would have us give up classical logic for these deductions as well. Otherwise, from the

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<sup>26</sup>Wright, 'On Being in a Quandary', 507, emphasis in the original.



contradiction, we can still deduce

$$\neg(\neg CMx \ \& \ \neg CMy)$$

and then use the instance of De Morgan in figure 4.7 to conclude that one of the disputants is Cognitively Mistaken. This inference does not concern the target propositions, which we have granted are such that LEM does not apply. This inference concerns propositions involving the concept COGNITIVE MISTAKE. By the argument, classical logic should only be suspended for propositions concerning COGNITIVE MISTAKE if *that* concept is Essentially Apparent and Quandaries apply.

It is not clear that the concept COGNITIVE MISTAKE is going to be Essentially Apparent. But even granting that it is, it is even less clear that we should be happy that the question of being Cognitively Mistaken or not lands us in a Quandary. And note we need both that COGNITIVE MISTAKE be Essentially Apparent and that Quandaries about the instantiation of the concept occur, in order for the strategy to be applicable. Unless both are true, then for all Wright's arguments, there is no doubt about the Law of Excluded Middle. And in that case the intended conclusion of the logical problem cannot be prevented; we are in position to assert that one or the other disputant is Cognitively Mistaken.

There is therefore good reason to doubt that Wright's own considered proposal for dealing with the two logical threats posed to Cognitive Command will work. In the next section I present my own solution which is an attempt to improve on this situation.

## 4.5 A Separate Response

It was shown in the previous chapter that the formal characterisation of Superassertibility could be of service to a relativist, provided it employed a notion of information which fulfilled a certain criterion.<sup>27</sup> The criterion was that the states of information need to be such as to abrogate the principle of Convergence.

$$(\forall j)(\forall k)(\exists l)(l \geq j \ \& \ l \geq k) \qquad \text{Convergence}$$

The idea was that one sort of realist will hold that all states of information, when improved upon enough, will converge on the same state. That is the view I dubbed (the principle that) All Roads Lead To Rome (ARLTR). Convergence is necessary for ARLTR; and Convergence is precisely what the relativist is going to deny.

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<sup>27</sup>§3.4.2, 79.

In the previous chapter I dealt only with formal notions. In order to understand what is involved in denying Convergence I need to present something of a theory of information. This will put some flesh on the central concepts; STATE OF INFORMATION and IMPROVEMENT. The theory of information which I propose is an example of one such theory, which is intended to support the denial of Convergence. Naturally there may be issues with this particular theory. However, for the realist to win the day, he should have to argue that no such theory is available: that the idea of information simply does not support the denial of Convergence. The relativist is trying to show that some conception of information is available, which makes the denial of Convergence coherent.

First I give a model of information which will fill out the formal notions. Then I go on to consider how, on the proposed theory, for matters of taste, or 'how things are for us', it is indeed plausible to deny Convergence.

#### 4.5.1 How Does Denying Convergence Help?

How and why does the issue turn on whether Convergence holds? A proposition  $P$  is Superassertible just when the current state of information supports the assertion of  $P$ , and any improvement on the current state of information also supports that assertion.<sup>28</sup> Suppose that truth is (in some area) Superassertibility, and that there is a dispute in that area of the sort mooted above between  $x$  who asserts  $P$  and  $y$  who asserts  $\neg P$ . Character  $x$  is correct in maintaining that  $P$  is Superassertible just if his state of information, and all improvements to that state of information, support  $P$ . Similarly  $y$  is correct in maintaining that  $\neg P$  is Superassertible just if his state of information, and all improvements to that state of information, support  $\neg P$ . Suppose Convergence, so that any two states of information admit of a third state of information which is an improvement on them both. Then, according to that principle, there is a state of information which supports both  $P$  and  $\neg P$ . But that is contradictory; a state of information which supports both  $P$  and  $\neg P$  supports neither. So at least one of either  $x$ 's or  $y$ 's states of information does not support their assertion under arbitrary improvement. Hence one of them is mistaken. That is the nub of the sharp logical deduction as applied where truth is understood as Superassertibility.

Now consider what happens if Convergence is denied. It is no longer guaranteed that there be a state of information which is an improvement both of  $x$ 's and of  $y$ 's states of information. In that case  $x$  and  $y$  might both warrantably assert their contrary propositions without one of them being mistaken. Both of their states of information might admit of arbitrary improvement whilst supporting

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<sup>28</sup>§3.4, 75ff.

contrary propositions. I am proposing that this is a plausible way to characterise relativism as opposed to areas where Cognitive Command holds sway, using the apparatus of Superassertibility. The formal notions will need some explanation; but the prospect of a relativism which is separate from Wright's own Quandary-based response is in the offing.

#### 4.5.2 First Concerns

What is involved in denying Convergence? What is at stake here is whether or not, given any two states of information we can always construct a third which is an improvement on both. This introduces the idea of pooling states of information, or alternatively, of adding one state of information to another.

It seems that on a minimal construal of states of information, improvement, and addition, that Convergence is assured. To begin with, consider the idea of information. Information is a mass noun like 'sugar'. How do we tell one state of information from another? What differentiates one from the other? A first response is that the pieces of information which make up the state go to individuate that state; one state of information is different from another just when it has different constituents. But then what is a *piece* of information? How do we tell one of those from another?

I do not propose to provide a constitutive analysis of what a piece of information is, and thereby an account of what a state of information is. Instead I propose an notion of information based on the model of an intelligence report or dossier. One piece of intelligence might be, for instance, an informant's assertion of the time, place and method of a predicted gangland murder. This piece of information could be added to a larger intelligence report or dossier associated with the relevant gang; and could probably usefully be cross-referenced under various other headings.

The individual piece of information may well need to be fitted into the larger picture in order for it to make sense. The conclusions to be drawn from such dossiers would most likely be subject to re-interpretation according to context. Scraps of information which on their own are quite meaningless might become meaningful when added to the report.<sup>29</sup>

Working with the notion of a state of information as a dossier of intelligence, we reach the following conclusions. First, a state of information is not distin-

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<sup>29</sup>To avoid confusion, I note that the phrase 'dossier of information' occurs in *The Varieties of Reference*. Evans borrows the term 'dossier' from Grice. See Gareth Evans; John McDowell, editor, *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 276, fn 13 and 306, fn 2. Whilst I am employing the same phraseology, the notion I have in mind is different from Evans's. As I read Evans, his notion of information (at least as introduced in chapter 5) has content which is not yet conceptualised, but is somehow more primitive. My notion does not involve non-conceptual content.

guished solely by the propositions which it supports. This is because different states of information might support the very same set of propositions. There is more to a state of information than the set of propositions which it supports. Two sides involved in espionage might reach the very same conclusions about a third party, but based on very different field reports.

Second, there is no principled bar on the information in one state of information being added to the information in another. The effect of the addition may yield an increase or a decrease in the warranting 'power' of the resulting state, as compared to the 'powers' of the ingredient states. It should be noted that it would be misguided to attempt to compare the relative power of states of information by counting the number of warranted propositions in each case. If we allow that a state of information warrants its logical consequences, then any state of information will yield an infinite number of propositions, which renders the criterion nugatory.

Third, there is a natural sense in which states of information can be improved. It simply involves adding more field reports. This sort of improvement need not guarantee that the very same conclusions which were warranted before are also warranted after the addition.

Under these terms it seems that an addition of any two states of information will always be available; simply by conjoining the dossiers. Moreover the result has to be an improvement on both, since the result contains all pieces of information from both originals. It makes up a bigger pool of information, which can be taken to mean it is an improvement on both. If, given any two states of information we can always construct a third, by adding them together, which is an improvement on them both, then Convergence will always hold. If the relativist is to make a case then he will need a more sophisticated notion of a state of information.

### **4.5.3 The Dossier Model of States of Information**

I now consider the dossier model of information in more detail. It is useful to bear in mind the overall dialectic. The relativist is committed to holding the following theory, or at least a relevantly similar theory, if he is to stand up to the deductions which threaten to collapse the distinction between Epistemic Constraint and Cognitive Command.

If a dossier is the correct conception of a state of information, then it might seem natural at first that any two dossiers could be pooled. The opposing thought, however, is that the dossiers might themselves be somehow fundamentally incompatible, such that one had to choose between one or the other. This need not be conceived as an all-or-nothing decision; it need not be a choice

between the whole of one dossier and the whole of the other. Instead, two dossiers might be pooled by sifting through each, and selecting which pieces of information to keep. If any information needs to be discarded or discounted in order to pool one state of information with another then there is a good sense in which the resulting state of information is not the addition of the two original states. That is because, in that case, the states of information have been changed during the operation.

What of discarded information? It should not be considered lost altogether. Rather, it has been discounted in the sense of not being taken into account in the consideration of what conclusions the state of information will uphold. We might ask whether the discarded information goes to distinguish the state of information? It certainly does not go towards counting what is and what is not warranted; it has been withdrawn from that process. But the discarded information can still be considered part of the state of information, as inessential baggage.

There is, therefore, a sense in which any two dossiers can be merged. When they are merged, the result may not jointly support all the conclusions which they underwrote when taken separately. In the most extreme case, merging two dossiers would remove all support for any conclusions. This more refined line of thought is that any two dossiers can indeed be pooled, but that might involve a change in which pieces of information are counted and which discounted. That change in turn may well affect which conclusions are supported. The original states of information—as identified by the pieces of information within them that are considered as opposed to discounted—have not survived intact.

On this view, what is essential to a state of information is the information which is counted as contributing to the consideration of what that state of information supports. It is then plausible that there are cases in which there is no state of information which is the addition of two other states of information, which preserves those two states. This does not preclude other inessential information being associated with a particular state.

### **Superassertibility**

The would-be relativist can hold that the improvements mentioned in the definition of Superassertibility mean improvements in a stronger sense than simply a pooling of information. The stronger sense is that the information which counts in the first state also counts in the improvement. In the sense in which any two dossiers can be pooled, there is no guarantee that the result will be an improvement in this stronger sense. There is no guarantee that all the information in the two states which was counted as contributing to which propositions

are warranted will still be so counted; so there is no guarantee that the (call it *weak*) addition of the states (the existence of which is guaranteed) will be a *strong improvement* on both. Which means there is no guarantee that there be, so to speak, a *strong addition* of the two states of information at all.

For the relativist, then, a *strong addition* is one where all information which counts in each of the states still counts in the result. A strong addition results in *strong improvement*. A *weak addition*, by contrast, is one where all information, whether it counts or not, survives into the result, where it may count or not. A weak addition results in *weak improvement*. The relativist can grant that weak addition is always available; it results in weak improvements on both states. However, he holds that strong addition is not always available. So there need be no state of information resulting from the attempted strong addition of any two states of information.

The relativist holds that the definition of Superassertibility is best interpreted with the strong notions in mind. If we agree with the relativist on this point, then we can see that in the sense in which the definition of Superassertibility employs 'improvement' there is no guarantee that any two states will have a strong addition which yields a strong improvement on both.

### **Wine Tasting**

How does this work in the case of taste? Suppose we are tasting wines, and come across a young Chardonnay from New Zealand. One taster finds the acidity refreshing. Another taster finds the acidity tart and reminiscent of rotting fruit. They disagree starkly over whether the liquid is palatable. It seems natural to say that their states of information are incompatible. This is to say that there is no strong addition of the information; counting one set of information (refreshing) rules out the other (tart) and *vice versa*. The unavailability of the common improvement is not because the information involved is somehow logically private. Information on this view is conceptualised information; it is not invoking or dealing with non-conceptual content, sense-data, or *qualia*.

If it is correct to deny (in some circumstances, and under the correct reading) that there is always an addition of two states of information which is an improvement on both, then a claim of Superassertibility must be made relative to a starting state of information. Where the matter of warrant is concerned, whether a person is correct in asserting that *P* depends on their current state of information and its improvements. If states of information can be incommensurable in the fashion outlined, then there may arise a dispute between two parties such that each is warranted in asserting the contrary of the other's claim, and yet there be no fault on either side. This is because there is no state of in-

formation which is an improvement on both of their positions, and which they are failing to grasp.

#### 4.5.4 Three Worries With the Approach

I now raise three worries about this approach. The first is that in the case outlined the two parties to the dispute are not really disagreeing over the same proposition. If that were the case then we would not have a genuine dispute. It seems, however, that there is no good reason to suppose that the proposition in question is different for each party to the dispute. The proposition in the example is ‘This wine is palatable’, where *PALATABLE* does not possess a hidden indexical so that it really means ‘palatable-for-me’ and ‘palatable-for-you’. The fact that there is a different state of information involved in the justification for each assertion does not preclude the same proposition being considered.

This raises the second concern. If there are two separate states of information involved, then do we really have a dispute of the required sort? The required sort is a dispute where each party is equally well informed, and yet they still disagree. Is there not, in the case as outlined, some information which the one has and the other lacks, and *vice versa*? There is indeed information which one has and the other does not and *vice versa*; this is to admit that they are in different states of information, which is granted. There is also an opinion which the one has reached and the other has not. However, that is not enough to conclude that the two disputants cannot be considered equally well informed on the subject. They both had equal access to the wine, and ample time to sample it. To suppose that they cannot be equally well informed simply on the grounds that they disagree is precisely to beg the question against the relativist’s position; it does not make an argument against it.

The third worry concerns a theorist and his reaction to the Deductions. Suppose it is granted that two people are involved in asserting and denying the same proposition; how can a theorist make sense of the situation? Does the theorist hold that the wine is palatable or not? There are a number of options.

The first option he has is to turn to indexical relativism at the level of truth. In this case, he might introduce the notions ‘Superassertible-for-*x*’ and ‘Superassertible-for-*y*’. This seems unsatisfactory in the first instance since it betrays the True Relativist agenda. And in any case, it is not clear that indexical relativism at the level of Superassertibility can be prevented from leaking downwards, so to speak, into the concepts themselves.

Second, he might invoke paraconsistent logic to help him theorise about the dispute. This is perhaps a much more obvious move to make, as opposed to turning to intuitionism, when faced with the task of dealing with contradictory

propositions. The disputants themselves need not be paraconsistent in their approach. Although, to the extent that they have made an erstwhile attempt to get to grips with the dispute they may well have become theorists over time, thus requiring paraconsistency.

A third option is available for someone who is unhappy with the truth-value gaps and gluts which are a definitive mark of a paraconsistent logic. It is perfectly consonant with the Law of Non-Contradiction and also with maintaining a True Relativism that the theorist join the wine tasting and take sides.

## 4.6 Review

The brief review of this chapter is as follows. The idea of Cognitive Command has been introduced as denying the possibility of blameless disagreement. Wright himself has given up that characterisation as being an unfortunate way of talking. In response to the acute logical problem, as presented above in figure 4.5, he produces a theory of Quandary which introduces a new sort of agnosticism. In the light of that, the acute logical problem highlights that Cognitive Command is to do with the ascription of epistemological blame.

In contrast to Wright's own response, the proposal which I have made is intended to support the True Relativism which Wright himself forsook. It starts from the idea of denying that where states of information are concerned, All Roads Lead to Rome. Convergence is a consequence of that principle; Convergence says that for any two states of information, there will be a third which is an improvement on them both.

I have presented a theory for modelling states of information which puts some flesh on the formal bones of the notions in play in Superassertibility. This theory supports the denial of Convergence, and this puts Superassertibility, under those circumstances, in the service of the True Relativist. If these considerations are correct then Cognitive Command remains in good standing as one topic for anti-/realist debate; where it fails, then we have True Relativism.



## Introduction to Part II

The framework of T&O disqualifies various anti-realist paradigms. Wright makes explicit mention of Expressivism, Error Theory and semantic anti-realism. There are other paradigms which are arguably worthy of the name ‘anti-realist’ which go unmentioned. Wright’s own non-cognitivism about necessity is an example of one of these. Another example is the broadly Wittgensteinian notion that metaphysics can be explained away as a product of our bewitchment by our own language.

This second part of my thesis explores the paradigms which have been disqualified either explicitly or implicitly by the proposal in T&O. The aim in each case is to examine the motivation for each anti-realism, and then see how far that motivation can be given due justice within the framework. The investigation shows that the framework has a blind spot. The question of how best to fix the framework is left for future research.

The next chapter examines three separate anti-realisms which I find in Dummett’s writings, with mixed results. Then chapter six covers Error Theory and Expressivism, and finds that the Expressivists have a justifiable grievance against their short shrift. The final chapter in this part aims to resurrect Wright’s own non-cognitivism about necessity.

## Chapter 5

# Three Dummettian Anti-Realisms

I do not think anyone should interpret everything that a philosopher writes as if it was just one chapter in a book he is writing throughout his life. On the contrary, for me every article and essay is a separate attempt to arrive at the truth, to be judged on its own.

Michael Dummett<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1 Introduction

There are at least three stances that one can find Dummett taking which could reasonably be called anti-realisms.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps there are others, but I shall concentrate on three. I refer to these three positions as different ‘Stances’, since they embody distinctive attitudes. First, there is the attitude, or Stance, of the anti-realist motivated by considerations of a particular sort of Theory of Meaning. (What a Theory of Meaning is will be explained in §5.2.1.) This sort of anti-realist seeks to deny the Law of Excluded Middle. Second, there is an anti-realist Stance rooted in consideration of what Dummett calls *Bare Truths* (what a Bare Truth is will be explained in §5.3). This anti-realist also seeks to deny the Law of Excluded Middle, but is motivated by what are at root metaphysical

<sup>1</sup>Michael Dummett, *Truth and the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), x.

<sup>2</sup>I draw chiefly on Michael Dummett, ‘Truth’ in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, LIX (1959) (page references to the reprint in Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas*), Michael Dummett, ‘What is a Theory of Meaning? (I)’ in Samuel Guttenplan, editor, *Mind and Language: Wolfson College Lectures 1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), Michael Dummett, ‘What is a Theory of Meaning? (II)’ in Gareth Evans and John McDowell, editors, *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), Michael Dummett, *The Interpretation of Frege’s Philosophy* (London: Duckworth, 1981) and Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (London: Duckworth, 1991).

considerations rather than a particular sort of Theory of Meaning. This attitude is labelled as ‘anti-realist’ by Dummett, in spite of the distinct motivation. The third Stance which can be extracted from Dummett is what I shall call Anti-Essentialism. This springs from considerations of Ingredient Sense (*vide infra*), and I direct it against a Kripkean intuition about Essentialism. It does not involve the denial of the Law of Excluded Middle. Nevertheless, this Stance has a claim to the title ‘anti-realist’, since it seeks to deny the reality of essential properties. This third type of anti-realism involves discussion of Kripke, and the waters here run very deep. The debate involves an Essentialist and an Anti-Essentialist, and sails very close to the topic of possible worlds. However, the two are distinct topics. To be clear from the beginning: the third anti-realist Stance which I consider is not engaging with arguments for or against the reality of possible worlds.

### 5.1.1 Bivalence and the Law of Excluded Middle

Dummett distinguishes between the Law of Excluded Middle (LEM) and Bivalence.<sup>3</sup> The Law of Excluded Middle is a logical law, to the effect that every instance of the schema  $\lceil P \vee \neg P \rceil$  is true. Bivalence is a semantic principle, as opposed to a logical law. It states that every statement is determinately either true or false. The logical law and the semantic principle are certainly closely related. To see the conditions under which they could come apart, we can reason as follows. I shall write ‘ $T[P]$ ’ for ‘It is true that  $P$ ’, and ‘ $F[P]$ ’ for ‘It is false that  $P$ ’. First, grant that a statement is false if, and only if, it is not true:

$$F[P] \text{ iff } \neg T[P]$$

The second assumption is that truth and negation commute:

$$\neg T[P] \text{ iff } T[\neg P]$$

The third assumption is that truth will commute with disjunction:

$$T[P \vee Q] \text{ iff } T[P] \vee T[Q]$$

Given those three assumptions, then LEM will entail that Bivalence holds and *vice versa*. Suppose LEM:

$$P \vee \neg P$$

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<sup>3</sup>See Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas*, xix, Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*, 74–5 and Dummett, ‘Truth’, 7.

This is true iff

$$T[P \vee \neg P]$$

which, since truth commutes with disjunction, is true iff

$$T[P] \vee T[\neg P]$$

which, since truth and negation commute, is true iff

$$T[P] \vee \neg T[P]$$

which by the definition of falsehood, is true iff

$$T[P] \vee F[P]$$

which is the principle of Bivalence.

We see, then, that LEM and Bivalence might come apart, where one of those three assumptions does not hold. However, in this chapter, none of those assumptions will be called into question. Therefore, for the purposes of this chapter LEM and Bivalence are taken to be equivalent.

## 5.2 The First Stance: Theory of Meaning

This is perhaps the Stance with which Dummett is most associated; it is probably the Stance most people mean if they refer to Dummettian anti-realism. Its aim is to press for the denial of the Law of Excluded Middle. It aims to do so by bringing to bear theoretical considerations about Theories of Meaning. I therefore turn first to expand that idea.

### 5.2.1 Theories of Meaning

A Theory of Meaning is a systematic attempt to lay down what is involved in our understanding of language. The aim of such a theory is to characterise what it is that a person knows when they understand a particular language. This raises an immediate question; must we aim immediately for an understanding of a language as a whole, or will the project allow us to characterise the understanding on a sentence-by-sentence basis? This is the content of the holism *versus* molecularism debate which much of Dummett's 'What is a Theory of Meaning? (I)' is concerned to address. Dummett is in favour of a theory whose granularity is sufficient for characterising the knowledge involved at the level of sentences, and he is critical of the Davidsonian for being holistic. However, his argument at

times is based on methodological reasons; e.g. a molecular Theory of Meaning would be more satisfying than a holistic one.<sup>4</sup> That particular debate need not concern us further; I mention it to note Dummett's own position.

Dummett's considerations are not aimed at the actual task of building a Theory of Meaning. Rather, his considerations are aimed at which principles and constraints are legitimate for such an enterprise. Discussion of those, he holds, will shed light on the area with which the actual Theory would engage; what is it to understand a language?

Dummett has at least two conceptions for this understanding. The first is that what is involved in understanding a language is essentially an ability, a practical skill. The second is that the understanding is taken to be implicit knowledge; the theory is a specification of what the linguist implicitly knows. He notes that language does not fit neatly on one side or the other of the practical *versus* theoretical distinction.<sup>5</sup> He champions the practical ability conception in 'What is a Theory of Meaning? (I)' and the implicit knowledge conception in 'What is a Theory of Meaning? (II)'.

The Theory of Meaning as applied to a particular language was probably first introduced by Davidson.<sup>6</sup> Davidson proposes that such a theory could be built based on Tarski's truth theory.<sup>7</sup> It proceeds in terms of truth-conditions. The theory is a set of axioms which generate the truth-conditions of a given sentence. To begin with, some singular terms are given their assignments.

(D1) 'Bob Dylan' refers to Bob Dylan.

Then some axioms concerning those singular terms can be put down.

(D2) '... is a protest singer' is true-in-English of  $x$  iff  $x$  is a protest singer.

In general the form for a single-place predicate is as follows.

(D3) ' $\phi(\dots)$ ' is true-in-English of  $x$  iff  $x$  is  $\phi$ .

This is a fragment of the Theory of Meaning which aims to show what is grasped by an English speaker when they understand the sentence:

Bob Dylan is a protest singer.

This fragment belongs to a part of the Theory of Meaning which Dummett calls the Theory of Reference. As Dummett conceives the Theory of Meaning, the Theory of Reference specifies what it is that makes the target sentences true, based on the primitive axioms and the axioms governing combinatory rules.

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<sup>4</sup>Dummett, 'WIATOM I', 121.

<sup>5</sup>Michael Dummett, *The Seas of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), x–xi.

<sup>6</sup>But see *ibid.*, ix.

<sup>7</sup>See Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), especially Donald Davidson, 'Truth and Meaning' in *Synthese*, 17 (1967).

The fragment above is very small and is just an indication of the intended direction. Dummett is well aware that the Theory of Reference will need much more detailed work to cash it out. Even with such a small fragment, however, as Dummett notes, it is already clear that the Theory of Reference will need to be supplemented. This is because knowledge of meaning may involve referential opacity. Suppose I know what it is for 'Bob Dylan is a protest singer' to be true. I might still not know what it is for 'Robert Zimmerman is a protest singer' to be true, despite the fact that 'Bob Dylan' and 'Robert Zimmerman' co-refer. The two names have different sense, but pick out the same person.

The Theory of Reference and Theory of Sense together do not give the whole picture, however. Given the knowledge of who Bob Dylan is, and what it is to be a protest singer, I might deploy that knowledge to various linguistic ends. I might use it to make a declaration 'Bob Dylan is a protest singer'; I might ask a question 'Is Bob Dylan a protest singer?'; or express a hope 'I hope Bob Dylan is a protest singer'. These different linguistic acts (declarative, interrogative and optative respectively) clearly have a core in common. The understanding of the difference between them is accounted for in the Theory of Force.

For Dummett, then, the Theory of Meaning is made up of a core of the Theory of Reference and a Theory of Sense, with an outer shell of the Theory of Force. The aim of the whole is to explain object-language expressions in meta-linguistic terms, in order to characterise our understanding of the object language. But then what is it to understand the meta-language? If we answer by proposing meta-meta-linguistic sentences, we are on the edge of a vicious regress. We may reply that to understand D1 is to know that 'Bob Dylan' refers to Bob Dylan. This can be taken in two ways. The first way is to treat the answer as simple disquotation. In that case any term which happens to refer to Bob Dylan may be substituted for 'Bob Dylan', and the theory will remain true. But in that case it should be granted that the resulting theory will no longer capture what the English speaker means by 'Bob Dylan'. It is to remedy this that the Theory of Sense is introduced. The second way to take the answer is to hold that to know D1 is to know, in the sense of be acquainted with, Bob Dylan as 'Bob Dylan'. That is to say that to grasp D1 is to grasp D1, and for all that the theory as a whole is true, it provides no explanation of *what it is* to grasp D1.

Dummett labels a theory which provides no further explanation *Modest*. For someone who antecedently understands English, then it will serve as a characterisation of what it is to grasp a sentence in terms of the truth of its constituent parts. However, it would be of no use in helping a non-English speaker to come to grips with the language. A theory which fulfils this condition is termed *Full-Blooded*. It possesses a deeper explanatory power, since it shows how the parts determine the meaning of the complex, in a way which does not presuppose an

understanding of the language. Whether a Full-Blooded Theory of Meaning is possible has been questioned by McDowell.<sup>8</sup> He holds that a Modest Theory is the best that we can hope for, and the quest for a Full-Blooded Theory is fundamentally misguided. Dummett maintains that in contrast to a Modest Theory we can and should aim for the Full-Blooded Theory which would be good for this further task of explaining what it is that we know when we can understand a sentence, even to someone who did not have the language in the first place. Again, I introduce the distinction in order to note Dummett's position. I do not hope to resolve the debate here.

There are two features of this general approach which I should like to note. First, actual instances of natural language are *regimented* in order to be considered for the Theory of Meaning. This regimentation is typically expressed in semi-formal language, using some terms from logic which may well not appear in natural language. Second, the approach operates under the assumption that such regimentation can be carried through systematically. Dummett's investigation of Theories of Meaning proceeds under these two methodological assumptions.

### 5.2.2 The Argument Against LEM

What is Dummett's argument against the Law of Excluded Middle? Suppose we assume a truth-based Theory of Meaning. Then the argument seeks to show that we do not know what it is to understand  $\lceil P \vee \neg P \rceil$ , at least in general. The recommended course of action is to give up a truth-based theory of meaning in favour of a verification-based Theory of Meaning. The Law of Excluded Middle will then be a casualty of that move.

How does the argument proceed? One might think that the axioms of the truth-based Theory of Reference give us all we need to understand any instance of the expression  $\lceil P \vee \neg P \rceil$ . The axiom in question might look like this:

$$\lceil P \vee \neg P \rceil \text{ is true iff } P \text{ is true or } \lceil \neg P \rceil \text{ is true.}$$

For Dummett, the problem with this axiom is that it is trivially true. It would be of no help, he points out, to someone who does not understand the meaning of the connective 'or' in the first place. By itself it does not characterise our understanding of the meaning of the disjunction deeply enough. It belongs to a Modest Theory of Meaning.

The proponent of the truth-based Theory of Meaning might argue that they can appeal to the truth-table to provide the meaning of the connective; what it

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<sup>8</sup>John McDowell, 'In Defence of Modesty' in Barry Taylor, editor, *Michael Dummett: Contributions to Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987).

is to understand 'or'. Dummett agrees that this might work, but holds that it is only a good enough explanation on the assumption of Bivalence. Without the assumption that every sentence is determinately either true or false, then we do not have any guarantee of the adequacy of the lines of the truth table. It is not that the truth-table is incomplete in that there is some truth-value which one of the propositional variables  $P$  or  $Q$  might have but which is not listed. Rather what is missing is the option that the truth-value of one (or both) of  $P$  or  $Q$  might be indeterminate. To make the truth-table comprehensive one must interpret it classically; that is one must assume that the truth-values of the constituents are determinate. If the explanation is Full-Blooded on the assumption of Bivalence, then the explanation nevertheless remains circular. This is because assuming Bivalence is assuming that every statement is determinately true or false, and that is, as we saw above, to assume that each instance of  $\lceil P \vee \neg P \rceil$  be true.<sup>9</sup>

I have two points to make about Dummett's argument at this stage. The first is that a Full-Blooded Theory may be for some other reason unobtainable. Then a Modest Theory of Meaning may be the best that one could hope for. In that case, the considerations are not going to force one to take a view either way on Bivalence or LEM. Second, suppose, on the other hand, we agree that a Full-Blooded Theory is possible or at least worth the chase. This is where Dummett brings further consideration to bear.

The person who is after a truth-based Full-Blooded Theory of Meaning needs to provide an adequate characterisation of the understanding of the general disjunction. The Theory of Sense needs to give the understanding of the axiom from the Theory of Reference. Where the axiom is trivial (as in this case) then all the work needs to be done by the Theory of Sense. What goes to make up that understanding? Taken as a practical ability, our capacity to understand language, Dummett maintains, needs to be manifestable. We need to be able to show that we have the understanding that we do (when we do). So the question that needs to be answered by the Theory of Sense is: what counts as the ability to recognise that the truth-conditions are fulfilled?

Dummett allows that there is a small class of sentences whose truth conditions cannot obtain without them being recognisable. What it is to understand these can very well be characterised in terms of the ability to recognise the obtaining of the truth conditions.<sup>10</sup>

We can expand the list by introducing the idea of an *effectively decidable* sentence. This is a sentence for which one has a procedure which, given the truth-conditions, will determine the truth of the sentence in a finite time. An issue arises for the Theory of Sense when one tries to account for the many

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<sup>9</sup>§5.1.1, 115ff.

<sup>10</sup>Dummett, 'WIATOM II', 80–81.



remaining sentences that are not effectively decidable. That is: those for which there is no procedure which, in a finite time, will yield recognition of the truth (or falsity) of the sentence. The problem comes from sentences whose truth-conditions might obtain, without that fact being recognisable. The datum is that we have an ability to deploy those sentences correctly; then the problem posed by Dummett is how the Theory of Sense can characterise that ability. How is it that we can be seen to manifest the correct usage of a sentence whose truth-conditions are such that we are unable to recognise the fulfilment of those truth-conditions?

The easiest way to pass beyond our human ability to recognise these conditions is to posit a superhuman. What the Theory of Sense then outlines is our understanding of truth-conditions in terms of the extra abilities that the proposed superhuman has. If the best Theory of Sense available for the class of non-effectively decidable sentences must be given in terms of superhuman ability, then this is clearly not a practical ability which we can have. If we need to extrapolate beyond human ability in order to frame the Theory of Sense then the upshot is that we are involved in a systematic misunderstanding of our own language.<sup>11</sup> This is an unacceptable consequence of the project; which, recall, was to characterise what it is that we understand when we understand a language. By hypothesis none of us is superhuman. It seems then that these non-effectively decidable statements mean that a truth-based Full-Blooded Theory of Meaning is not possible.

Dummett's positive proposal is to look to the mathematical intuitionists for inspiration. For the mathematical intuitionists an assertion is not a claim of truth but a claim of provability.<sup>12</sup> The notion of proof is one which is effectively recognisable. Then the thought is that the logical connectives have their meaning in terms of provability. Asserting  $\ulcorner A \ \& \ B \urcorner$  is to assert that it is provable that  $A$  is provable and that  $B$  is provable. Asserting  $\ulcorner A \ \vee \ B \urcorner$  is to assert that it is provable that either  $A$  is provable or  $B$  is provable. In particular asserting  $\ulcorner A \ \vee \ \neg A \urcorner$  is to say that either  $A$  is provable or  $\ulcorner \neg A \urcorner$  is provable. Since there may be cases of undecidable mathematical statements such as Goldbach's Conjecture—that every even number greater than two is the sum of two primes—we can see that this logical law will not, in general, hold. The Law of Excluded Middle *will* hold, for instance, over finite domains, since the effective procedure or proof can simply enumerate the cases in order to come to a determination. (We do not know if there is a finite domain over which Goldbach's Conjecture does not hold—if we did then that knowledge would be a disproof of the conjecture.)

The parallel for a Theory of Meaning is to move from characterising our

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<sup>11</sup>Dummett, 'WIATOM II', 100–101.

<sup>12</sup>Dummett, *Elements of Intuitionism*, 13.

understanding of statements in terms of what makes them *true* into using terms of what counts as *verifying* them. Once that move is made, it is clear that the Law of Excluded Middle will also, in general, fail under the verification-based Theory of Meaning being mooted.

That is my explanation of the first of Dummett's anti-realist Stances. It is based, as I have shown, on consideration of how a Theory of Meaning must be in order to fulfil its intended purpose.

### 5.3 The Second Stance: Bare Truth

Dummett proposes the following principle which I dub 'TIV' for 'true-in-virtue'.<sup>13</sup>

(TIV) Where a statement is true it is true in virtue of something.

Bare Truths are those which violate this principle; they are true despite there being nothing in virtue of which they are so. The most obvious way to interpret the principle is to see it as intended to link the statement to the world. The declarative sentence 'Bob Dylan is a protest singer' is true (if it is) in virtue of there being a person, Bob Dylan, who is a protest singer. However, we also need to note that logical compounds can be true in virtue of their constituents and the Theory of Reference which links them.<sup>14</sup> *E.g.*

$\lceil P \vee \neg P \rceil$  is true iff either  $P$  is true or  $\lceil \neg P \rceil$  is true.

It seems then that the principle TIV might be fulfilled in two separate ways. First, there may be a state of affairs which obtains, which the statement describes, and which therefore serves to make the statement true. Second, there may be a theoretical articulation available which allows the statement to be true in virtue of its composite parts, together with the relevant part of the theory.<sup>15</sup>

The opponent of a Dummettian anti-realist in the Second Stance denies the principle TIV. Equivalently, the opponent is someone who accepts that there can be Bare Truths; truths which do not admit of anything in virtue of which they are such.

The famous example from Dummett's early paper is that of Jones. The central thought experiment runs that Jones, who is long deceased, was never in a situation which would have enabled him to display any brave behaviour.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Dummett, 'WIATOM II', 89–90.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>15</sup>For instance, Dummett is quite clear in his opinion that counterfactuals are not going to be Barely True, for the reason there is no direct recognition of counterfactual reality (*Ibid.*, 98–99). David Lewis would agree that they are not Barely True, but for a different reason; he offers a *theory* for what makes them true, albeit one which postulates causally distinct concrete possible worlds (David Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973)).

<sup>16</sup>Dummett, 'Truth', 15–16.

The experiment proceeds by asking one to consider the statement ‘Either Jones was brave or he was not.’ We are prompted to ask: was there something in the past which made it true of Jones that he was brave (or not), despite the fact that—perhaps through no fault (or good fortune) of his own—he never had the opportunity to display his bravery? And if not, is it really true that either Jones was brave or not? This approach is, therefore, metaphysical, in this case *via* the nature of bravery, and does not involve complex theoretical restrictions on an enterprise such as building a Theory of Meaning.

Nevertheless, this is one of the places where the first two Dummettian anti-realisms which I am outlining might cross. Suppose we were convinced by the argument of the First Stance above, and have duly replaced truth in our Theory of Meaning with verification. Then it is in the very nature of this case that we do not have the evidence to assert either that Jones was brave or that he was not. Nor can we verify the disjunction, since to verify a disjunction is to be able to verify one of the disjuncts, and *ex hypothesi* that is something we are unable to do. So it would be incorrect to assert ‘Either Jones was brave or he was not.’ That is one route that we might take. However, this Second Stance that I am outlining can be seen to be independent of the First Stance, since it does not rely on the considerations of the Theory of Meaning. There is, of course, a difference between some fact obtaining, or not, and whether we are in position to assert or deny that the fact obtains. I hold that the Second Stance is best seen as addressing the (putative) fact of the matter in the first instance, and the assertibility (or otherwise) of the proposition only later.

Consider the putative fact of the matter; the fact that would make it determinate that Jones was brave, in the absence of any event which might enable it to show. This is a matter of dispositions. Being fragile is a dispositional property—to assert something as fragile is at least to say that (*e.g.*) it will break easily if dropped. In this case, many would be happy to ascribe a reason for the fragility, in terms of the physical microstructure of the item. In that case it would be precisely that microstructure which would underwrite the fact of the matter. It is determinate whether the item is fragile (or not), according as the appropriate microstructure obtains (or not). And that is so without us having to drop the item in order to discover the matter. Suppose we have not dropped the item. Then we do not know either way whether it is fragile or not. We might think at this point that we should give up the Law of Excluded Middle. But we need not. We do not know which disjunct is true, but we may assert that the item is either fragile or not, precisely because we do have a story to tell about the determinacy of the fragility. There is, we can say, something in virtue of which the object is fragile, regardless of whether the item is presented with the appropriate opportunity to shatter.

Bravery might be regarded as similar to fragility in that it is only elicited in certain circumstances. But we now need to consider whether there is the equivalent of the physical microstructure to underwrite the use of the Law of Excluded Middle. There are therefore two responses to the Second Stance of Dummettian anti-realism. The first is to argue that for bravery there is some equivalent to the physical microstructure in the case of fragility; that the nature (or metaphysics) of the case does entitle us to Excluded Middle. For instance, a hard-line physical reductionist about the mental may reason as follows:

Bravery is a property of the mind. All mental properties can be re-described, without residue, as physical properties. There is therefore no difference in kind between the dispositional substrate of fragility and that of bravery.

The same sort of response might invoke a deity, instead of physical reductionism, to do the work:

Although we cannot, and never will be able to, tell, nevertheless, God has made it that case that each person is either brave or not.

In response to this, the anti-realist will hold that there is no such underlying physical microstructure, nor God-like mechanism. There is nothing in virtue of which Jones was brave (or not); nothing which makes it true (or false).

But there is a second, more hard-nosed, response to the Second Stance. This denies the principle TIV outright. That is: they agree that there is no equivalent to the microstructure, and that God has not made each person determinately brave or not. Nevertheless one of 'Jones was brave' and 'Jones was not brave' is true, despite there being nothing in virtue of which either is true.

I maintain the Second Stance of Dummettian anti-realism has a distinctive motivation, since it makes essential play with metaphysics, which the First Stance does not.

## 5.4 The Third Stance: Ingredient Sense

Kripke is widely credited with having discovered a feature of language; *viz.* that names are rigid designators. Kripke himself is slightly more guarded, and uses the basis of strong linguistic intuition to advance the thesis that names are rigid. His intuition and thesis extend naturally from names to demonstratives. I hold that it is this intuition which lends plausibility to a passage of Kripke's which stands in support of Essentialism.

The Third Stance of Dummettian anti-realism presents an alternative explanation to the linguistic intuition on which Kripke's thesis is based. It can

therefore be used to neutralise the support for Essentialism which, I claim, relies on that thesis. On this Stance, the Essentialist, or realist, holds that some of the properties which belong to an object do so essentially. The Anti-Essentialist, or anti-realist, in contrast, holds that there is an alternative explanation for the linguistic data which lead Kripke to postulate rigidity, and therefore remains unconvinced by the support put forward by Kripke for Essentialism. This is an anti-/realist debate in that one party, the Essentialist (or realist), is arguing that there are essential properties. The Anti-Essentialist (or anti-realist in the Third Stance) denies that there are such properties.

### 5.4.1 Kripkean Support for Essentialism

This is one of Kripke's passages about Essentialism.

In the case of this table [pointing to a table], we may not know what block of wood the table came from. Now could *this table* have been made from a completely *different* block of wood, or even of water cleverly hardened into ice—water taken from the Thames River? We could conceivably discover that, contrary to what we now think, this table is indeed made of ice from the river. But let us suppose that it is not. Then, though we can imagine making a table out of another block of wood or even from ice, identical in appearance with this one, and though we could have put it in this very position in the room, it seems to me that this is *not* to imagine *this* table as made of wood or ice, but rather it is to imagine another table, *resembling* this one in external details, made of another block of wood, or even of ice.<sup>17</sup>

The passage strikes me as presenting a line of thought which can be presented as supporting Essentialism, in the following way. *This* table is made of wood. Or so we now believe. It might transpire that in fact, *this* table is made from some other material, such as cleverly hardened ice. Our current belief might be false; Kripke is not invoking some sort of infallible faculty. Suppose we find our belief to be false. The subsequent discovery that the table was all along made of ice would not stand against the claim that the table has an essence. It is simply that we were mistaken about that essence. In that case, the rest of the argument goes through with the newly-discovered original substance instead of the wood. It makes no difference to the argument, then, if the table turns out to be made of ice in the first place. It is therefore safe to assume, for the purposes of the argument and without loss of generality, that our belief is not false.

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<sup>17</sup>Emphases in the original. Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 113–4.

We continue with the supposition that *this* table is made of wood. We then try to imagine what it would be for *this* table not to be made of wood. We can go quite a way towards this. We can imagine a table fashioned to precisely the same specification, and placed in the room exactly where *this* table is placed. But we cannot go the whole distance; we cannot imagine that it is *this* table. It may be a very good, perhaps indistinguishable, simulacrum. But the principle of Indiscernibility of Identicals should not be confused with the Identity of Indiscernibles. The simulacrum is not *this* table. This shows that if the table is made of wood, then it is so of necessity. That is to show that it is essential to *this* table that it be made of wood.

#### 5.4.2 Responding to the Thought

The line of thought rehearsed above seems to employ the (lack of) imaginability of a situation as a guide to necessity. For sure, we may be able to imagine *this* table being other than it is. For instance, a bored pupil might have gouged his name into its top. Or it might have been put in a different part of the room. But in respect of varying the origin from which *this* table hails, our imagination fails us. We cannot imagine *this* table being made from ice, at least on the supposition that it is, in fact, made of wood. And we cannot imagine it being hewn from a different piece of wood if, in fact, it was crafted from *this* piece of wood.

#### Visualisability

We should wonder here if there is some play to be made with imagination *qua* visualisability and imagination *qua* conceivability. The intended difference is this. We may not be able to visualise a four-dimensional figure such as a hypercube. But we surely can conceive of one. The limits of conceivability seem to be more to do with coherent and cogent extensions to our thought rather than our ability to imagine seeing such a figure. We can conceive of the four-dimensional figure and project it from one aspect down into two dimensions to make a sketch of it. In this way we can gain a conception of it without being able ever to visualise it.

The application in our current case is this. We may not be able to visualise *this* table as made of something else, particularly if that thought has to work *via* visualising *this* table ‘next to’ the candidate, in order, as it were, to check the identity claim. That could never work, since as soon as we begin comparing the two, it is *per force* that we are comparing two tables. And two separate tables are not one and the same table. An identity claim cannot be supported in such a way. Indeed, it amounts to a propaedeutic refutation of such a claim.

However, what if the claim does not rely on the visualisability, but rather the conceivability, of *this* table being made of ice. What is to stop us conceiving of *this* table as being made of ice? What more does the Essentialist have to offer?

### Persistence

Leaving the issue of conceivability on one side, there is another front on which the Essentialist needs to engage. Someone might claim to be perfectly capable of imagining, even in the sense of visualising, *this* table as made of ice. The key thought would be that were a remarkable technician to remove a sliver from the table, and replace it with the cleverly hardened ice, then this table would still be the same table. And that remains true regardless of how many times the technician repeats the procedure. So after a suitably long period of time, the table which is now entirely wooden would be entirely made of ice. It is open to the imagination, then, that this table could be made of ice in a few years' time. But then it is also presumably within the grasp of the imagination that the process had begun a few years ago, so that the table is *now* made of ice. Does that not show that *this* table could be made of ice?

This direction of questioning is mentioned by Kripke in a footnote.<sup>18</sup> He points out that thought is meant to make play with the origin of the object, not its substance. The conditions governing the table's persistence over time are irrelevant for the current considerations. The table might have been processed in such a way, over a long period of time, as now to be made of ice. And the process may well have respected all conditions on the maintenance of the table's identity, so that we are happy it is the same table throughout. In that sense, the table could be made of ice. But then the table would not now be made of wood. The argument, as presented, assumes that the table, now, is actually made of wood. So whatever table you are imagining which is now made of ice, it certainly is not this one, since this one *ex hypothesi* is now made of wood.

Perhaps that is enough to defend the Essentialist from that difficulty. We are still left with the question as to whether there is a principle behind the Essentialist's intuition. I hold that there is a separate thesis of Kripke's which makes the Essentialist's intuition plausible. This is the thesis that demonstratives, along with proper names, are rigid. How does that thesis come to bear in the present case? Suppose that demonstratives are not rigid. Then we have been given no good reason to think that *this* table could not have been fashioned from water from the River Thames. Dummett presents an alternative to the thesis that proper names are rigid. I shall introduce that first, before applying it to the case of demonstratives.

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<sup>18</sup>Kripke, 114–5, fn 57.

### 5.4.3 A Question of Scope?

On the rigidity of proper names, Kripke states:

My main remark, then, is that we have a direct intuition of the rigidity of names, exhibited in our understanding of the truth conditions of particular sentences.<sup>19</sup>

There is a natural link between the case of proper names and that of demonstratives. What is operative in both is the rigidity of the referring term, and Kripke readily says that it was indeed part of his view that the demonstratives such as ‘this’, ‘I’, and ‘you’ are all rigid.<sup>20</sup> So I shall first look to the Kripkean intuition about the rigidity of proper names before re-considering the demonstrative in the case of the table.

Kripke’s intuition is based on the observation that proper names and descriptions act differently in natural language. On the face of it, that may be no surprise. However, Kripke specifically brings it to bear upon the description theory names. There are many different sorts of description theory. In short, what they share is that the meaning of the proper name is given by a description. One might hold that the name is simply an abbreviation for the description. For instance, to use a well-known example from Frege, Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great.<sup>21</sup> So the description theorist might hold that ‘Aristotle’ is just short for ‘the teacher of Alexander the Great’. But now Kripke points out that

Aristotle might not have been Aristotle

must be read as straightforwardly false. On the other hand

Aristotle might not have been the teacher of Alexander

is true—Alexander might have gone elsewhere for his tuition, in which case the famous philosopher, Aristotle, would not have been his teacher. This goes to show that whatever the semantic import of ‘Aristotle’, it cannot be equated with that of the description ‘the teacher of Alexander the Great’.

We treat the proper name, says Kripke, as *rigid*. This means that the name picks out the same object in all possible worlds (with the *caveat* that the object exist in those worlds). The description, on the other hand, picks out whatever it is at a world which answers to the description at that world. If Alexander had gone to Xenocrates instead, then ‘the teacher of Alexander’ would have referred to the latter, and not to Aristotle.

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<sup>19</sup>Kripke, 14.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 10, fn 12.

<sup>21</sup>Gottlob Frege, ‘On Concept and Object’ in *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie*, 16 (1892), 27.



Kripke holds that proper names are rigid. But there is an alternative explanation for the phenomenon on which Kripke bases this thesis. This has been pressed by Dummett. He proposes scope as a device which enables us to remain faithful to the original linguistic phenomenon, and as an alternative to postulating the rigidity of the proper name. In order to understand how this works, we need briefly to consider ambiguities in natural language and how formal semantics might help.

### Formal Semantics and Ambiguities

Natural language admits of ambiguities. It was part of Frege's ambition for his *Begriffsschrift* that it would iron the ambiguities out of natural language; such a script would be more fitting to the purpose of conceptual investigation.<sup>22</sup> A good example involving scope is the English

Everyone loves someone.

This sentence is ambiguous between two interpretations. The first is that given any person, there is someone whom that person loves. The second is that there is a person of whom it is true that he is loved by everyone. Writing ' $L\alpha\beta$ ' for 'person  $\alpha$  loves person  $\beta$ ' the former might be formalised  $(\forall x)(\exists y)Lxy$ , the latter  $(\exists y)(\forall x)Lxy$ . The switch is known as a quantifier shift, since the quantifiers change places. The fallacy of muddling the two interpretations mid-way through an argument is the Quantifier Shift Fallacy. Regimenting the natural language argument into a more formal language helps to bring this into the open.

The original sentence is ambiguous; it is capable of expressing both meanings. It is true that the speaker may have one particular meaning in mind, and the audience might be used to hearing the one meaning more than the other. If both of those line up, then despite the ambiguity, there will be no harm done since the meaning which the speaker intends to convey will be the one the audience understands by the sentence. A predisposition to hear the phrase one way rather than the other does not render the sentence itself unambiguous. Rather, the audience in that case is happening to agree with the speaker about which of the two interpretations is intended. In this example, a public audience might find it very strange to hear that there is a single person who is loved by everyone. It might be such a strange proposition that the audience does not interpret the sentence as being ambiguous. Further prompting might be needed before they 'saw' the other meaning. Or again, they may hear both meanings perfectly

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<sup>22</sup>Gottlob Frege, *Begriffsschrift, eine der arithmetischen nachgebildete Formelsprache des reinen Denkens* (Halle: L. Nebert, 1879), preface.

well, but conclude that the speaker could not mean *that*, and settle on the safer bet as to what was intended.

None of that alters the fact that the sentence is ambiguous, and so where we need to be clear about what is being said, we should immediately seek to disambiguate. English can be a clumsy tool for that; the formalism helps to keep the precise interpretation sharp and clear.

### Russell On Denoting

Russell introduced a formal short-hand for the definite article, where he reduced it to first order logical concepts, using the existential and universal quantifiers.<sup>23</sup> This is a contextually defined variable-binding term operator, marked by an upside-down iota, which can be used to replace predications about *e.g.* the teacher of Alexander, for instance ‘The teacher of Alexander was Greek’. The analysis is as follows, with ‘*G*’ for ‘... is Greek’ and ‘*T*’ for ‘... is a teacher’:

$$\begin{aligned} G(\iota x:Tx) &=_{\text{def}} (\exists x)Tx \\ &\& (\forall x)(\forall y)(Tx \rightarrow y = x) \\ &\& (\forall x)(Tx \rightarrow Gx) \end{aligned}$$

One important feature of this contextual definition is how it unfolds when it is embedded in other formalism. Take a context of negation, for instance. There are two ways in which the sentence may fail to be true. The first is that the teacher of Alexander was in fact (say) Egyptian and so not Greek. The second is that Alexander had no teacher, so there was, if you will, nobody to fail to be Greek in the first place. The formalised sentence ‘ $\neg G(\iota x:Tx)$ ’ is thus exposed as ambiguous. It may be negating the Greek nature of the teacher:

$$\begin{aligned} \neg G(\iota x:Tx) &= (\exists x)Tx \\ &\& (\forall x)(\forall y)(Tx \rightarrow y = x) \\ &\& (\forall x)(Tx \rightarrow \neg Gx) \end{aligned}$$

Or it may be negating the existence of a teacher who answers to that description in the first place:

$$\begin{aligned} \neg G(\iota x:Tx) &= \neg [ (\exists x)Tx \\ &\& (\forall x)(\forall y)(Tx \rightarrow y = x) \\ &\& (\forall x)(Tx \rightarrow Gx) ] \end{aligned}$$

Russell himself was, of course, aware of this and introduced a notation of prefixing a copy of the contextually defined term to indicate the scope of the definite

<sup>23</sup>Bertrand Russell, ‘On Denoting’ in *Mind*, 14 (1905).

description. Hence

$$[\iota x:Tx]\neg G(\iota x:Tx)$$

means the definite description has wide scope; in this case denying that the teacher was Greek. While

$$\neg[\iota x:Tx]G(\iota x:Tx)$$

means the description has narrow scope; in this case meaning that there was no such teacher in the first place. Note that in discussion of scope it behoves us to be clear about which operator is in mind. In these examples, where the definite description has wide scope, the negation has narrow scope, and *vice versa*.

### Scoping and Necessity

We are now in position to express the Dummettian counterproposal to Kripke's intuition about the rigidity of names. The fact that necessarily, Aristotle was Aristotle, can be formalised ' $\Box a = a$ '. The fact that Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander was Aristotle can be rendered ' $a = \iota x:Tx$ '. Then we can modalise the latter to reach the statement that Aristotle might not have been the teacher of Alexander:

$$\Diamond\neg(a = \iota x:Tx)$$

This is ambiguous—should the definite description take narrow or wide scope? Where it has wide scope we have

$$[\iota x:Tx]\Diamond\neg(a = \iota x:Tx)$$

That is to say of the teacher of Alexander that he might not have been Aristotle. With narrow scope we have

$$\Diamond\neg[\iota x:Tx](a = \iota x:Tx)$$

This says that it might not have been the case that Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander.

We can explain the difference between a proper name and a description in the following way. The definite description interpreted with wide scope acts like the proper name; it is absurd to assert of the teacher of Alexander, being Aristotle, that he might not be Aristotle. On the other hand the narrow scope also shows us an acceptable way to express the proposition that Alexander might have been taught by someone other than Aristotle.

The linguistic data driving Kripke's 'discovery' could be explained by the thesis that proper names take wide scope. Is this equivalent to his thesis that proper

$P$	$TP$
1	1
$\frac{1}{2}$	0
0	0

Figure 5.1: Table for Three-valued  $T$  Connective

names are rigid? Kripke replies that his thesis is that the name is rigid even in sentences which lack the modal operators. Consider his example ‘Aristotle was fond of dogs’. There are no modal operators in the sentence. So patently his thesis cannot be equivalent to a thesis which involves manipulating the scope as we saw above. That is surely correct. But we then need to ask whether the original data—the semantic behaviour of names and definite descriptions—back up Kripke’s avowed intuition. That question will be clearer in the light of what Dummett terms Ingredient Sense.

#### 5.4.4 Ingredient Sense

One of the clearest expositions of Dummett’s notion of Ingredient Sense is to be found in the first two chapters of *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*. In brief, the semantic value of a sentence is determined by the semantic values of the expressions which go to make it up. The thought is that the semantic value of an expression may not be exhausted by its contribution to a single sentence. Consider what happens when that sentence itself occurs in more complex sentences. The contribution of an expression may then change depending on the context in which it finds itself, so to speak. Łukasiewicz’s three-valued semantics is used as an example to illustrate what is meant by this. A single place connective ‘ $T$ ’ is introduced, which yields the value 1 just when its argument has the value 1. The table for this one-place connective is given in figure 5.1.

We can now consider the proposition  $P$  and the proposition  $\ulcorner TP \urcorner$ . They have precisely the same truth-conditions; which is to say that one is true just when the other is. Thus what is conveyed in asserting either sentence—which Dummett calls the *Assertoric Content*—is identical. They may still differ, however, in Ingredient Sense.<sup>24</sup> This is because the contribution they make in complex sentences may not be the same. Compare  $\ulcorner P \rightarrow Q \urcorner$  and  $\ulcorner TP \rightarrow Q \urcorner$ , as interpreted under a three-valued logic. The matrix for ‘ $\rightarrow$ ’ in such a system is given in figure 5.2.

The difference occurs where  $P$  takes the value  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $Q$  is assigned 0. Then

<sup>24</sup>Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*, 48.

$\rightarrow$	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	0
1	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	0
$\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	0
0	1	1	1

Figure 5.2: Matrix for Three-valued  $\rightarrow$

$\lceil P \rightarrow Q \rceil$  turns out to be false. However,  $P$ , having the value  $\frac{1}{2}$  is neither true nor false and hence  $\lceil TP \rceil$  is false. Then  $\lceil TP \rightarrow Q \rceil$  is a conditional with a false antecedent, and so turns out true. That is, we have a case where  $\lceil P \rightarrow Q \rceil$  is false, but  $\lceil TP \rightarrow Q \rceil$  is true. They differ only in their antecedents, and the antecedents are acknowledged to have the very same truth conditions. The contribution which  $\lceil P \rceil$  makes to the truth of the compound must be different from the contribution of  $\lceil TP \rceil$ . But the difference in contribution cannot be accounted for by their truth conditions alone, since those are the same. Hence these two expressions differ in their Ingredient Sense.

These considerations support the suggestion that there may be more to the semantic value of an expression than its contribution to the truth (or falsity) of an atomic sentence. It may also vary its contribution when that atomic sentence is embedded in more complex sentences; this added contribution is due to the Ingredient Sense.

### 5.4.5 The Objection to Kripke

The objection to Kripke’s thesis about names is this. Suppose we explicitly introduce a name to refer to the person who fits a particular description. Then the description and the name have the same Assertoric Content, but differ in Ingredient Sense. Take two atomic sentences which ascribe a property to the person, and differ only in that one uses the name where the other uses the description. Asserting either atomic sentence amounts to the same. It is only when these sentences are combined into larger complexes—in this case modal ones—that the difference shows itself. The contention is that this is the *only* difference between them. The difference would not show up at all if they were never used in modal contexts.

It is part of the Dummett’s position that we be able to respect the motivation behind Kripke’s thesis about the rigidity of names, without accepting that the names are indeed rigid. All parties must accept the ‘raw data’, so to speak; that is: the fact that descriptions and names do behave differently in modal contexts. The Dummettian thought is that the content of sentences can be divided into Assertoric Content and Ingredient Sense. The effect of the Ingredient Sense only

becomes apparent when the whole sentence is embedded in a modal context.

The substance of this debate so far has treated proper names. We have seen how we might avail ourselves of Dummett's approach of scope manipulation and the notion of Ingredient Sense. We now need to see if it can be applied to the original case of the demonstrative which was involved in the case of the table.<sup>25</sup>

### One Regimentation For Demonstratives

I can now come back to the Kripkean Essentialism concerning *this* table with which I began. I claimed that the thought gained plausibility from the rigidity of the demonstrative, since if the demonstrative were not rigid then there was no good reason to think that *this* table could not have been made from cleverly hardened ice.

Can someone wishing to resist the Kripkean thought about Essentialism legitimately take the demonstrative to be regimented, or formalised, such that

<sup>25</sup>There is an issue which is strictly tangential, but is so closely related and of such philosophical interest that to avoid mentioning it might appear perverse. Kripke discusses (Kripke, 54–58) the view that we know this sentence to be true *a priori*:

The standard metre in Paris is a metre long.

In fact 'the standard metre in Paris' no longer refers. The metre is no longer defined by a physical standard kept in Paris (although the kilogram is still defined by example in this way). The current convention for the metre was adopted in 1960 by the International Bureau of Weights and Measures. This defines a metre to be the distance covered by a number of wavelengths (1,650,763.73) of a particular radiation (of a krypton-86 atom) in a vacuum (Whelan and Hodgson, 9). Arguably, then, since 1960 it has been an *a posteriori* and contingent—albeit non-trivial—matter as to whether any particular piece of metal is a metre long.

But suppose the length of the metre were fixed by example, as it used to be. Then, the thought runs, we know *a priori* that the standard metre is a metre long; that is we know it without having to check, without having to measure it. The standard metre is made of metal, which expands somewhat when heated. Suppose then, that the standard metre is heated up. In that circumstance it would be slightly longer than a metre. Then it is only contingently true that the standard metre be a metre long. This is one of Kripke's reasons for proposing that there be *a priori* contingencies. This stands against received wisdom that the *a priori* and the necessary are co-ordinate; they cannot be co-ordinate if there are *a priori* truths which are not necessary.

The line of thought expressed so far provides a response to this issue. The following four points outline the alternative view to the putative *a priori* contingencies.

- (1) 'The standard metre is a metre long' is not ambiguous. With '*M*' for '... measures one metre long' and '*S*' for '... is a standard metre', this can be rendered ' $M(\lambda x: Sx)$ '.
- (2) 'Necessarily: the standard metre is a metre long' is ambiguous. To disambiguate it, attention needs to be paid to the scope of the definite description.
- (3) With wide scope ( $\Box[\lambda x: Sx]M(\lambda x: Sx)$ ), we are saying of the standard metre that necessarily, it is a metre long. Which is false, since it could be heated up, and in that case would expand.
- (4) With narrow scope ( $\Box[\lambda x: Sx]M(\lambda x: Sx)$ ), we are saying that necessarily, whatever piece of metal we use to fix the length of a metre, that piece will be a metre long. Which is true, by definition.

This view maintains that Kripke's example of an *a priori* contingency issues from an equivocation between these two disambiguations. Interpreted with narrow scope, we do know it *a priori* and indeed it is necessary. Whereas, taken with wide scope, we do not know it *a priori* and it is contingent. Respecting the appropriate disambiguation in this fashion, the *a priori* and the necessary remain co-ordinate. That, then, is how someone might employ the notion of Ingredient Sense to avoid the putative Kripkean *a priori* contingencies.

issues of scope can be seen? Dummett hints that wherever a definite description is involved, we can make use of Russell's analysis to yield a scope distinction.<sup>26</sup> Recent work by Lepore and Ludwig in formal semantics provides one such a case for the demonstrative.<sup>27</sup> The latter work suggests the following as a translation into formalese (the halfway house to regimentation) of the target 'this table is made of wood':

[The  $x$ :  $x$  is this and  $x$  is a table]( $x$  is made of wood).

Given the suggested regimentation and the standard Russellian analysis of the definite description, I introduce a contextually defined term for 'this  $F$  is  $G$ ',  $G(\theta x:Fx)$ , involving a variable-binding term operator, with the following definition. I call it the Demonstrative Description Operator and I mark it with an upside-down theta ( $\theta$ ).

$$\begin{aligned} G(\theta x:Fx) \quad =_{\text{def}} \quad & (\exists x)Fx \\ & \& (\forall x)(\forall y)(Fx \rightarrow y = x) \\ & \& (\forall x)(Fx \rightarrow (x = \text{this} \& Gx)) \end{aligned}$$

We can then regiment the target sentence quite simply as

$$W(\theta x:T x)$$

As with the definite description, an issue of scope arises as soon as this combines into a larger logical context. The same stipulation will be used as before; a copy of the Demonstrative Description Operator will be used to mark the scope. The sentence

This table is necessarily made of wood

is then seen as ambiguous. The two separate thoughts might be characterised in English as follows: (a) of this table, I am asserting that it is necessarily made of wood; (b) this table is made of wood, and that is a necessary fact. The thoughts can be hard to pry apart. The formalism makes it clear which is intended.

$$\begin{aligned} [\theta x:T x] \Box W(\theta x:T x) \quad = \quad & (\exists x)T x \\ & \& (\forall x)(\forall y)(T x \rightarrow y = x) \\ & \& (\forall x)(T x \rightarrow (x = \text{this} \& \Box Wx)) \end{aligned}$$

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<sup>26</sup>Dummett, *IFP*, 575.

<sup>27</sup>Ernest Lepore and Kurt Ludwig, 'The semantics and pragmatics of complex demonstratives' in *Mind*, 109. Issue 434 (2000).

$$\begin{aligned} \Box[\theta x:Tx]W(\theta x:Tx) &= \Box[ (\exists x)Tx \\ &\quad \& (\forall x)(\forall y)(Tx \rightarrow y = x) \\ &\quad \& (\forall x)(Tx \rightarrow (x = \textit{this} \& Wx))] \end{aligned}$$

#### 5.4.6 The Anti-Essentialist Response

As the passage from Kripke struck me, the line of thought gains plausibility from the rigidity of the demonstrative. Suppose ‘this’ is rigid. Then where ‘this’ refers to *this* wooden table, there can be no accessible world relative to which ‘this’ does not refer to *this* table. Hence it is not possible that *this* table is not wooden. This follows provided we grant the usual relation between possibility and truth with respect to possible worlds, *viz.* that a statement is possibly true just when there is an accessible world relative to which the statement is true.

Now assume that instead of being rigid, the demonstrative is treated as a demonstrative description in the fashion developed above. Then the thought runs as follows. ‘This’ refers to *this* wooden table. But that is ambiguous; the demonstrative description could take wide scope

$$[\theta x:Tx] \Diamond \neg W(\theta x:Tx)$$

or narrow scope

$$\Diamond \neg [\theta x:Tx] W(\theta x:Tx)$$

I claim that Kripke’s thought about the essence of origin is supported by his thesis that demonstratives are rigid. In terms of scope, the demonstrative description takes wide scope; of *this* table I am asserting that it is possible that it is not wooden. Which, the thought runs, given that it is wooden, is false. This is different from the thought expressed when the demonstrative description takes wide scope. Then the thought is that there is a possible world where the table ostended by ‘this’ is not wooden.

As an interpretation of Kripke, this might seem very uncharitable for the following reason. If Kripke is held to be relying on the rigidity of the demonstrative in order to maintain that this table is essentially wooden, then there is nothing to stop the line of thought ramifying to every other property which the table has. Kripke is not an essentialist about every property. Rather, he is best interpreted as expressing an intuition that some properties of objects are essential, and some are not. In this case the intuition concerns the origin of the object; that the origin and the object are essentially linked.

We can use the notation of scope to characterise the distinction expressed in



Kripke's intuition more precisely. For property  $P$ , where

$$[\theta x:Tx] \Box P(\theta x:Tx)$$

holds then that property is essential. And where

$$[\theta x:Tx] \Diamond \neg P(\theta x:Tx)$$

holds then  $P$  is accidental. Then Kripke is understood as claiming that the origin of an object is essential in that sense. He is best taken as expressing an intuition about that claim, rather than presenting an argument for it. We may or may not share his intuition on this topic, and he has not presented any principled distinction between the essential and the accidental.

It is the disambiguation of the expression of Kripke's line of thought which allows us to be clear about exactly what is at stake. The Anti-Essentialist is now free to deny that the origin is an essential property of the table. What is being denied is just a matter of intuition, and that is too slim a basis to support any metaphysical conclusions about essential properties. The metaphysical features which are purportedly intuited may simply be shadows cast by the conventions of our language.

## 5.5 The Three Stances and the Cruces

I now turn to the issue of how the three different Stances of the Dummettian anti-realist which I have discerned compare with the available options within the framework of T&O.

### 5.5.1 Theories of Meaning

The First Stance that I have distinguished is the only one to be considered explicitly by Wright.<sup>28</sup> He points out that if this is the way to distinguish between realist and anti-realist, then we should have a problem coping with one of our prior intuitions about where the anti/-realist division is meant to be drawn. The hard-line physicalist who reduces mental talk to the physical may well, Wright argues, as a consequence of the reduction, hold that mental talk admits of Bivalence. On Wright's understanding of Dummett's anti-realism, this would make such a reductionist a realist; and that stands counter to our intuition. Someone arguing against the mental in this sense is surely not a realist.

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<sup>28</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 4.

Care is needed here. Wright might be taken as claiming that the reductionist is not a realist, whilst still maintaining that they do not qualify as an anti-realist either. The text is not clear on this point. However, the driving thought of T&O is that the going notion of 'anti-realist' is inchoate; there are many ways to be an anti-realist. At the same time it should also be recognised that there is more than one way to be a realist. The two sorts of position (realist and anti-realist) need not pair up neatly in practice. However, given a position which we find natural to call 'realist' it is likewise natural to call a line of thought which opposes that position 'anti-realist'. I should therefore argue that the reductionist about the mental, if admitted as being opposed to a realism, qualifies for the title 'anti-realist'.

What of the relation between anti-realism and Bivalence? I think it is clear that we should reject Bivalence as a definitive characteristic of anti-realism. To be sure: on my reading of the First Stance of the Dummettian anti-realist, Revisionism is a consequence of that view, in some circumstances, *viz.* where the sentences involved are not effectively recognisable. However, the mooted physicalist reduction of the mental is silent on whether the sentences involved are effectively recognisable or not. So it is still open for the reductionist in question to take the Dummettian anti-realist's First Stance, maintain that the sentences involved are effectively recognisable, and so still endorse Bivalence. That is: one might be a Dummettian anti-realist (in the sense of the First Stance) and yet still endorse Bivalence. Rejection of Bivalence is not an essential characteristic of this type of Dummettian anti-realist.

Can the First Stance of Dummettian anti-realism be assimilated to whether or not truth in an area is Epistemically Constrained? Wright's Crux has it that for an anti-realist, truth is so constrained, but not for a realist. However, from the point of view of the First Stance, where truth is Epistemically Constrained, then the truth of all the sentences is effectively recognisable, and then Bivalence will hold. That is: to hold that truth is Epistemically Constrained in an area will entail being a Dummettian realist, according to this First Stance.

So the First Stance does not fit into the Cruces as they stand. Perhaps the Stance could form a new crux of its own. However, that seems a little *ad hoc*. There are three main oppositions which make up the overall Stance: whether regimentation can be systematic or not; whether to be molecularist or holist; whether the Theory will be Full-Blooded or Modest. Why should these three oppositions not each have their own crux? The answer is that taken severally they do not chime with any intuition which would class them as realist or anti-realist. They are independent, interesting, issues about Theories of Meaning, but individually they do not count as what we might want to call 'anti-realism'. It is only when the answers all line up in Dummett's preferred fashion that we

reach what he was happy to call anti-realism.

What does survive from this First Dummettian Stance into the project of T&O is the idea that assertion is primary, in two separate fashions. First, in that justification and truth are closely tied and yet remain separate. Second, assertion is also primary in the sense that it is the sentences with declarative force which are central; the other forces such as the interrogatives and imperatives are considered secondary. The consequences of this will be tested further in the next chapter on Expressivism.

### 5.5.2 Bare Truths

The Second Stance of a Dummettian anti-realist which I identified concerned Bare Truths. This seems to invert the intuitive classification of realist and anti-realist. The Dummettian anti-realist in this Second Stance denies that something can be true without there being something which makes it so; it requires a truth-maker of some variety, whether a state of affairs obtaining or a theoretical articulation. The puzzle is that this anti-realist seems to be aligning himself more with a platonist view. It is the *realist*, on this Stance, who stands in need of something akin to a blind faith, or to be more kind, a type of idealism.

But whether driven by a blind faith or by idealism, can a place be found for this realist's Stance in the Cruces of T&O? This realist is, for all that has been said, neutral on whether sentences in their target discourse are or are not Epistemically Constrained; Cognitive Command may or may not hold sway; the terms involved may or may not admit of Width of Cosmological Role. It may be, then, that the consideration, if it is to be incorporated within the framework, should form a new crux. This would not be damaging to Wright; he freely admits that the Cruces he has suggested need not to be exhaustive.<sup>29</sup>

However, that is premature. The position of the realist on the Dummettian Second Stance is that there are truths even though there is nothing in virtue of which they are so. And this can be represented on the framework of T&O as a person who holds that a discourse is Minimally true, but no more. Such statements are true; but there is nothing in virtue of which that is the case. Perhaps this position lends itself better to the title 'anti-realist'. But nevertheless the position is possible; an example will be presented in the next chapter, in the discussion of Mackie's Error Theory.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>See, *inter alia*, Wright, *T&O*, 142.

<sup>30</sup>See §6.2, 143ff. below.

### 5.5.3 **Ingredient Sense**

There may be some doubt as to whether the Third Stance which I discern in Dummett is due the title 'anti-realist'. However, as I argued above, I hold that the physical reductionist about the mental is due such a title on the grounds that they oppose a thesis about the mental which deserves to be called 'realism'. The Kripkean Essentialist is likewise due the 'realist' sobriquet. This is because they maintain a metaphysical realism about essence. Since this Third Stance opposes itself to that Kripkean Essentialist, I hold that it does count as a candidate anti-realism which needs to be reckoned with. The anti-realist Stance here is to attempt to explain away supposed metaphysical features as being no more than illusions created by the way our language works. To that extent it could be considered consonant with the approach of the later Wittgenstein.

There is one way in which this Stance might be placed within the Cruces of T&O. Assume we are able to take the discourse under discussion to be metaphysics; so assume that there be such a discourse. If the Third Stance of the Dummettian anti-realist is correct, then there is hope that he may be able to explain away apparently metaphysical features about essence. (The argument I gave above does not secure that conclusion, but it does go some way toward it.) If we are mistaking features of our language for metaphysical features then the root cause of these is actually within our language. It seems safe to assume that these features of our language cannot obtain without us noticing. In that case, this Third Stance can be seen as mounting an argument for the features being Epistemically Constrained, and so as fitting within the framework of T&O.

This is a somewhat forced attempt to line up the Stance with one of the Cruces. It would be more accurate to say that if this stripe of anti-realist is successful, the illusion of the metaphysical discourse of Essentialism is dispelled. There are two routes to take from there. First, it might form the basis for an Error Theory; that we may go on talking about the metaphysical features as though they were there even though they are just a product of the structure of our language. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, Error Theories are explicitly dismissed, and have no place.

The second route is to propose that we give up on such metaphysical talk as misguided. This is similar to the position of the person who would be a physical reductionist about the mental. This route is not so much determining the place of a discourse within a map of anti-/realist dimensions, but rather of dissolving the discourse completely. This does not place the area of talk in the framework of T&O directly. It is to argue instead that one discourse has the very same characteristics as another. Taken in that light, the Third Stance does not, and should not, make up a Crux of its own. Therefore it does not highlight any

shortcoming of the framework.

## Chapter 6

# Error Theory and Expressivism

Where there's no truth, no one's a liar.

Greg Brown<sup>1</sup>

There was a young man who said 'Ayer  
Has answered the atheist's prayer;  
For a Hell you can't verify  
Surely can't terrify—  
At least till you know you are there.'

Anonymous<sup>2</sup>

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at two separate anti-realist paradigms which Wright's T&O explicitly aims to disqualify.<sup>3</sup> The first is that of the Error Theorist, due to Mackie.<sup>4</sup> Motivated by arguments from Queerness and Relativity, Mackie claims

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<sup>1</sup>In 'My New Book', from *The Poet Game*.

<sup>2</sup>To whom I reply:

Said Satan, 'I'm all for that prayer  
They should chant it as long as they care;  
In all that confusion  
Of wordy contusion  
They're prone to forget that I'm here!'

<sup>3</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 9–11.

<sup>4</sup>John Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

that moral statements are up for truth and falsity, but that the world fails to provide the collateral to support those statements. I agree with Wright that Error Theory does not fit well in the existing framework of T&O, even though its motivations can be respected. I claim that Error Theory can usefully be compared with the position of the Dummettian realist from the previous chapter, in the Second Stance, who is willing to countenance Bare Truths.

The second paradigm is that of the Expressivist. It has two distinct motivations; the metaphysical concerns of the Vienna Circle and the Humean belief/desire model in philosophy of mind. One proponent of Expressivism was Ayer, following the Logical Positivist's lead.<sup>5</sup> In more recent times the cause has been taken up by Blackburn and Smith.<sup>6</sup> I look at Hale's appraisal of Blackburn in my investigation of whether Blackburn's Quasi-Realism can be assimilated to the framework of T&O. I hold that the traditional Expressivist cannot be assimilated to the framework whilst respecting his various philosophical motivations. Nor, so far as his motivations are the same as the Expressivist, can Blackburn's Quasi-realist. This indicates where there is a shortcoming in the framework of T&O.

## 6.2 Error Theory

There are two essential components to an Error Theory. First, that the talk involved is genuinely assertoric; in engaging in the discourse, we really are making assertions. Second, that there is no truthmaker in the world to make those assertions correct, so the assertions are all, strictly speaking, false. The key notion at the root of an Error Theory is, therefore distinctive; it does not, for instance, play with whether the truth in an area transcends such evidence as is available. Nor does it rely on intricate considerations about Theories of Meaning, and it does not seek to argue one way or the other on the issue of whether the every statement in the discourse in question is determinately either true or false.

Take the truth of an assertion to be determined by two factors; what has been asserted and what there is in the world. If what there is in the world matches what has been asserted, then the assertion is true, and if not, not. In those terms, an Error Theory holds that the words we utter do amount to assertions, but that the world fails on all counts to provide for us; it consistently and comprehensively lets us down.

The creator of Error Theory was Mackie, who proposed a distinctive meta-

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<sup>5</sup>A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936).

<sup>6</sup>Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word: Groundings in the Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) and Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994)

ethical stance.<sup>7</sup> For him, statements of morality are asserted and denied; the statements are up for truth or falsity. However, the world is such that there are no moral properties to make these statements true (or false). He gives two arguments for why there are no moral properties. First, he invokes an Argument from Relativity; that the variety of moral codes in the world counts against the idea that there are moral properties.<sup>8</sup> If such objective properties existed, this line of thought runs, there would be more consensus on where and when they obtained. Second, the Argument from Queerness; in brief if there were moral properties they would be metaphysically odd.<sup>9</sup>

What then of the assertions? Mackie is no nihilist; just because there are no such moral properties which our moral assertions seem to invoke, it does not mean that we should stop making our moral assertions. According to Mackie, making these (inevitably) false assertions does manage to serve a purpose of social regulation. Exactly how this is to come about is something of a mystery and leads us to the major problem for Error Theory in general. Why should we continue to pay attention to these statements, once we know that they are false? It is possible that Mackie might be advocating something of an elitist, two-tier system. The average person who pre-theoretically embraces moral discourse keeps it up, unknowingly uttering falsehoods. The elite (class of philosopher-kings?) knows that the common people are trading falsehoods, but does nothing to disabuse them of their practice because of the beneficial effect that moral discourse has on society in general. This two-tier system is really proposed to avoid a difficult question for the Error Theorist; why would anyone keep asserting the moral statements once they are aware that they are false? One answer that the two-tier response provides is that the majority of people fail to realise that the statements are false. In that fashion, at least they are not all painted as liars. But the move is not satisfactory. What of the elite themselves? They are fully aware that moral statements are false. So if they continue to assert them, are they not lying? Not quite, since there is no intentional deception involved; indeed there cannot be, since they all know that the statements are false. So what is the *point* of asserting these statements? Mackie holds that we should keep asserting them in order to aid social cohesion. If that is a good motivation, then it should hold for the elite and the masses equally; whether they know that the statements are false or not.

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<sup>7</sup>Mackie.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 36–38.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 38–42.



### 6.2.1 Field on Arithmetic

It is useful at this point to compare Mackie's position with Field's position on arithmetic.<sup>10</sup> Field argues that ordinary arithmetical statements such as  $12 + 13 = 25$  are, strictly speaking, false. They are false because in reality there are no such things as numbers; so no such thing as the number 12, the number 13 nor the number 25. To assert that  $12 + 13 = 25$  is to assert something about, *inter alia*, the number 12. But since there is no such object, the statement is false. The world lets the arithmetician down. Since that is consistently the case, then why should we pay attention to the arithmetician's results? Field's answer is that arithmetic is *useful*. According to Field arithmetic is a body of useful short-cuts for the scientist—useful, truth-preserving, fictions. To see how, I need to introduce the central pillar of Field's position, which is the notion of 'Conservative Extension'. Let us call the set of all the propositions of our best current scientific theory  $S$ . Now take a codification of arithmetic, such as the Peano axioms,  $A$ . The question is whether, when we add  $A$  to  $S$  we can infer more than we could before the arithmetic was added. Of course in one sense we can infer more, because we can now infer things about the numbers which were previously unavailable. That is not the intended sense. Rather, we need to consider the set of scientific statements about the world, and whether adding arithmetic to our scientific theory allows us to make a larger number of those claims than we could otherwise. If we cannot, then arithmetic is a Conservative Extension to the scientific theory. If arithmetic is such a Conservative Extension, then it may provide useful short-cuts in inferences amongst scientific propositions, but it will not bring out any new propositions (which are not purely about the numbers themselves). Field argues that arithmetic is indeed a Conservative Extension and that therefore the numbers are a useful but unnecessary fiction. That is how ordinary statements such as ' $12 + 13 = 25$ ' end up strictly false, but nevertheless useful.

Field's strategy would be a failure if it turned out that the science could not do what we expect of it, were the number-theory removed. There must be a way in which science ( $S$ ) is *adequate* without the numbers ( $A$ ). It is true that  $A$  contains some useful short-cuts which are no doubt great time-saving devices. But there needs to be a clear sense in which the science without number could still reach its customary results. Suppose that we can attach a sense to the adequacy of science without number; then we could find ourselves in position to grant that all the assertions of arithmetic are (strictly) false, whilst still recognising that they be important as a useful tool for science.

Field, then, actually owes us a reason for thinking that we can do without

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<sup>10</sup>Hartry Field, *Science Without Numbers: A Defense of Nominalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

numbers; that they are dispensible. The success of his position depends on being able to provide such an argument. He then makes the case that these false statements about natural numbers are still useful, in so far as they help us to further our scientific endeavour.

### 6.2.2 Mackie and Field Compared

The dialectical situation for Mackie's Error Theorist is different from Field's. Mackie is not a reductionist; he is not proposing that moral statements are reducible to statements of another sort, for instance, talk of Millian utility. If they were, then, provided we buy the Millian picture, some of them would wind up being true. Field is not a reductionist either, but he does argue for the dispensibility of arithmetic. For Field the statements about number are expedient. But morality, we might think, is more than a matter of expediency. In contrast to Field, Mackie does not want to provide an argument for dispensibility. He needs to provide a reason why, on his Error Theory, we should—and do—pay special attention to moral statements. And this is particularly acute since according to the theory, they are all false.

One might attempt to explain the on-going usage of moral statements in terms of engendering social regulation or cohesion. If one bought into the idea of social cohesion, and one recognised that moral statements were a useful falsehood which would help to that end, then one might be tempted to (pretend to) exchange them with others. What is not clear is whether the idea of social cohesion or regulation can be put forward without reference to the mooted moral properties.

The challenge being made here is adequately to ground the notion and working of social cohesion without appealing to moral properties. We saw that science needs to be shown adequate without numbers, so that we can assure ourselves that arithmetic is simply Conservatively Extending science. Likewise we need to see that a theory of social cohesion is adequate *without* mention of moral properties. Only in that case could moral talk be seen as a useful, harmless, 'Conservative Extension'. However, in that case we still need to explain the special attraction.

This amounts to a dilemma for Mackie. If the moral statements reduce to statements of a different sort, then some of them will end up being true. If the moral statements do not reduce, then there is something peculiarly *moral* about them. But then, since they are all false, how do we explain this special appeal? Where Field operates under the cloak of imagination, Mackie has no such protection and seeks to engage directly. The question is: what is Mackie engaging with?

### 6.2.3 What is Wrong with Error Theory?

Compare Mackie's Error Theory with a separate view, of similar ilk. Instead of having moral assertions as wholesale false, one might invert the view and count them as wholesale *true*. Such assertions are still duplicitous in that they purport to refer to properties which do not exist. But they are, simply, or we might say, barely, true. Surely such a theory is just as *wrong* as Mackie's, and so just as deserving of the title 'Error Theory'. The mooted position aligns with the Dummettian realist from the previous chapter who believes in Bare Truths. And it brings to the fore the question that Dummett presses; what is the *point* of labelling these statements 'true' or 'false'?

[T]he question is not whether ['true' or 'false'] are in practice applied to ethical statements, but whether, if they were so applied, the point of doing so would be the same as the point of applying them to statements of other kinds, and, if not, in what ways it would be different.<sup>11</sup>

This question becomes all the more pertinent if the proposal is that the statements are wholesale false.

If an Error Theory were correct for an area of talk, and the participants were aware of that fact, then they should by rights desist from making claims in that area, since those claims are false. The participants may or may not be aware that they are trading falsehoods; on the elitist model discussed above they are deliberately kept in the dark by the *cognoscenti*. Either way, assertions aim at the truth, so to propose an Error Theory is to propose that we interpret users of the discourse as consistently (and perhaps knowingly) failing.

The first of the essential components of an Error Theory mentioned above is that the discourse in question is indeed assertoric. The second component is the characteristic lack of material to make any of the assertions true. This means that speakers of such a discourse are condemned perpetually to err. Unavoidable, perpetual, error leads one to question how the warrant for such assertions is governed. I argued in previous chapters that justification for assertion transmits across the Equivalence Schema. As before, I write ' $W[\phi]$ ' for 'proposition  $\phi$  is warrantably assertible' and ' $T[\psi]$ ' for 'proposition  $\psi$  is true':

$$W[P] \text{ iff } W[T[P]]$$

This bites in two ways. First, under the Error Theory we know *a priori* that none of the statements of the target area ever express propositions which are true. It

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<sup>11</sup>Dummett, 'Truth', 3.

is then not clear under which conditions we would ever be justified in asserting one of them.

One might think that too strong a conclusion; if no *positive* statement is assertible, then surely its negation would be. That is to misunderstand the role of negation in such talk. If I assert

It is wrong to torture suspected terrorists

then on the Error Theory I have asserted a falsehood. So surely, this line of thought runs, I am warranted in asserting

It is not the case that: it is wrong to torture suspected terrorists.

That is correct; but care is needed. I may have spoken truly but I have not said anything moral. In particular it does not follow from the correctness of the assertion of that negative case that I am also entitled to assert

It is right to torture suspected terrorists

since that moral assertion is just as false as the first.

There is a second way that the transmission of justification for assertion across the Equivalence Schema bites. Suppose the Error Theory, and also that we do go on asserting moral statements. Then the assertion of the statements will admit of correctness; a right and wrong of the assertion. Then that will transmit across the Equivalence Schema to allow us to affirm the truth of those statements. It is hard to see how the Error Theorist will resist this move. If he admits that there is no standard of justification involved in the assertion of moral statements then he is admitting that moral talk is radically incoherent; meaningless. And Mackie does not hold that moral statements are meaningless; he holds that they are meaningful but false.

It is worth noting one last epistemological concern. Truth is a necessary condition for knowledge. According to the Error Theory no moral statement is true. Therefore, according to the Error Theory, there is no such thing as moral knowledge.

#### 6.2.4 Reconstructing Error Theory

The question which now presents itself is how much of an Error Theory can be recovered within the framework of T&O; a reconstructed Error Theory, if you will. Provided there is sufficient syntax and discipline in the use of the terms in moral discourse (which there is) then according to the framework, there is nothing to prevent us from constructing a truth predicate which applies. This does not bring in train a set of queer properties to which these assertions answer.

The Correspondence Platitude is metaphysically lightweight: things are as a true assertion says they are. Partially inverting Mackie's view such that the assertions of moral discourse are (Minimally) true, we might deploy his Argument from Queerness in support of the idea that there is no associated heavy metaphysics making the assertions true or false.

What then might be involved in asserting a moral statement, if not asserting the obtaining of a moral state of affairs? There need be no more going on than the adherence to a norm governing the assertions. Crucially, the norm need not be driven by the need to reflect faithfully some state of affairs. This is not yet to say that there is nothing in which the truth of the statements consists. The statements may be true or not depending on whether they accord with the best opinion of a panel of experts; perhaps the elders of the community. Then people engaging in moral debate are governed by the norm that what they nominate as (morally) good and bad should coincide with what the elders pronounce. Their assertions are true when they do coincide, and false when they do not. This model lends itself well to the Relativity which Mackie also uses alongside the Queer nature of alleged moral properties, to drive his Error Theory. The diversity of separate morality systems, in this case, could be explained by different communities having separate groups of elders, with varying opinions.

There is a more radical option. This is that the practice and discipline might exist without there being *anything* in which the truth of the statements consists. In order to get the sufficient discipline there would still need to be standards of warrant. This option is much like the Dummettian realist who believes in Bare Truths. We saw in the previous chapter how this could be accommodated on the framework of T&O by considering it as an area of talk which was only Minimally true.

Such a theorist still has the problem of motivating the special appeal of moral talk. Consider talk about fashion, for instance. It may be Barely True in the following way. There is nothing deep, it might be argued, which makes facts about fashion true. Fashion talk is adequately disciplined to admit of truth and falsity. But there is no underlying metaphysical picture; the talk simply reflects what people happen to agree on about whether, for instance, flared trousers are in vogue or not. The reconstructed Error Theorist then has to deal with resistance to the idea that moral talk is comparable to talk about fashion, in that way.

The intention here is not to make the case that such a Reconstructed Error Theory is the correct meta-ethical stance to hold. It is intended only as an example to show how the motivations driving an Error Theory might receive expression within Wright's framework. The wholesale failure of assertion which is distinctive of Error Theory is not recoverable. However, if the reasoning above

is correct, then that is for the best. The twin motivations for Error Theory, Queerness and Relativity, can both be preserved. I now turn to the paradigm of Expressivism which is not as fortunate.

### 6.3 Expressivism

Somewhat like the Error Theorist, Expressivists hold that there is nothing in the world which makes moral statements true. Unlike the Error Theorist, however, the Expressivist denies that the moral statements are really assertions at all. They look like assertions, which are up for truth and falsity, but what they *really* do is express an attitude. This requires a distinction between surface syntax and deep syntax. On the surface they appear to be assertions; but digging deeper we find that they are not. For this reason the Expressivist is clearly disqualified by the framework of T&O. On the framework, as soon as there is enough discipline and surface syntax, then the statements are at least Minimally true.

This is how Ayer describes his Expressivism in *Language, Truth and Logic*:

If now I generalise . . . and say ‘Stealing money is wrong’, I produce a sentence which has no factual meaning—that is, expresses no proposition which can be either true or false. It is as if I had written ‘Stealing money!!’—where the shape and thickness of the exclamation marks show, by a suitable convention, that a special sort of moral disapproval is the feeling which is being expressed. It is clear that there is nothing said here which can be true or false.<sup>12</sup>

On the Expressivist view moral statements do not serve to state facts. Rather they are treated as expressing approbation and disapprobation. The motivation for Ayer to hold such a view was Logical Positivism. The Logical Positivists put forward the thought that it was a condition on meaning that assertoric content had better be empirically verifiable. That induces a divide in the language. On the one hand there are statements which are reducible one way or another to empirical observation. On the other hand there are the rules of logic, which are conceived of as rules for manipulating language. The partition is intended to be exhaustive. The problem for moral statements is that they fail to fit into either category. They are normative in a fashion which empirical observations are not. But they are clearly not adequately accounted for by treating them as rules of logic. So if moral statements are to be accounted for then some other story must be told. Hence the idea that although they *look* like statements of fact, they are not. Then they do not need to fit into either category, since they are not up for being true or false in the first place.

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<sup>12</sup>Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 110.

There is another reason for being Expressivist which does not rely explicitly on a philosophical principle about meaning. This is Humean folk psychology. Moral statements, when things are going well, are apt to motivate people to action. Hume famously held that reason alone cannot motivate; one also needs what he termed passion:

Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.<sup>13</sup>

Following Hume, the folk psychological model has it that beliefs alone do not result in actions; one also needs to have the appropriate desires to couple with the beliefs to prompt action. Beliefs and desires are distinct psychological states. One common way of explaining the difference is with the metaphor of direction of fit. Beliefs represent the world, and are up for being true or false depending on whether the world is as the belief represents it. So the direction of fit is from the world to the belief. On the other hand, desires express how we should like the world to be. The direction of fit runs from the desire to the world. Moral statements are apt to motivate people to action. Thus they cannot simply be expressions of belief, since on this model they would not be capable of moving people to action. They are better seen, therefore, as expressions of desire. As expressions of desire, they are not in the business of representing the way the world is. Therefore they are not up for truth or falsity in the way that beliefs are. For a traditional Expressivist, whether motivated by Logical Positivism, or by a Humean folk psychology, moral statements are not assertions, and are not up for truth or falsity.

Simon Blackburn is a modern proponent who starts in this tradition, but seeks to update it.<sup>14</sup> Instead of moral statements remaining as expressions of approbation and disapprobation, Blackburn proposes that we can, as philosophical theorists, use that beginning as a basis to reconstruct the notion of the truth of moral statements. This involves two things. First it requires the explanation of how moral statements work in the first case, where they are not assertions. So to start with, Blackburn proposes, following Ayer, that 'telling lies is wrong' means 'Boo to telling lies'. Second it requires the explanation of how moral truth can be constructed on that basis. These two tasks make up the project of Blackburn's Quasi-Realism. If the Quasi-Realist is successful then moral statements will maintain their motivational appeal because of the manner in which they became true, so to speak. And we shall have recovered the right to treat moral statements as up for truth and falsity and so for being asserted and believed.

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<sup>13</sup>David Hume; Ernest C. Mossner, editor, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), II.iii.3.

<sup>14</sup>Blackburn, *Spreading the Word*, particularly ch 6.

### 6.3.1 Expressivism and Moral Debate

Expressivists owe an account of how moral debate proceeds on their theory. It appears, at first sight, that the logic of moral debate is in jeopardy. Where an utterance of moral disapprobation is no more than someone saying ‘Boo!’ the rational bite is lacking. It appears that moral debate on this picture is to be likened to the antics of opposing football fans. The challenge to the Expressivist is to recover enough logical clout to underwrite moral debate.

The requirement to provide logical clout in moral debate is most focussed in the accusation that the Expressivist is unable to recover even the simplest example of inference, such as *modus ponens*.<sup>15</sup> This is the Frege-Geach point.<sup>16</sup> Consider a very simple piece of moral reasoning.

- (i) Torturing suspected terrorists is wrong.
- (ii) If torturing suspected terrorists is wrong, having another country torture suspected terrorists is wrong.

So:

- (iii) Having another country torture suspected terrorists is wrong.

This is meant to be a simple instance of *modus ponens* in the moral sphere. The Frege-Geach point is that the argument is not valid, since it equivocates on the meaning of ‘torturing suspected terrorists is wrong’. On the Expressivist view, the first premiss means ‘Boo to torturing suspected terrorists’. The second occurrence of ‘torturing suspected terrorists’, is in the antecedent of the conditional. But as an antecedent of a conditional, it remains hypothetical, and so it does not in that place express the moral disapproval ‘Boo to torturing suspected terrorists’. Thus the phrase means two separate things on the two occurrences, and so, the objection runs, the argument is not valid. A comparison can be made with this seemingly valid argument:

- (i) I regularly draw the bath.
- (ii) If I regularly draw the bath, I shall be a better artist.

So:

- (iii) I shall be a better artist.

<sup>15</sup>There are two sorts of *modus ponens* inference; *modus ponendo ponens*:

$$\frac{P \rightarrow Q \quad P}{Q} \text{ MPP}$$

and *modus tollendo ponens*:

$$\frac{P \vee Q \quad \neg P}{Q} \text{ MTP}$$

Only *modus ponendo ponens* features in this chapter, and so I abbreviate it harmlessly to ‘*modus ponens*’.

<sup>16</sup>Introduced by Geach in Peter Geach, ‘Assertion’ in *Philosophical Review*, 74 (1965).



One reason for this to fail of validity is that the word ‘draw’ is ambiguous. It might be true that you regularly *fill the bath with water*, and it might be true that if you regularly *sketched the bath* then you would become a better artist. It would not follow in that case that therefore we should expect your artistic skills to improve.

Formal validity can only be ascertained of an argument once the ambiguities have been resolved. In this case, ‘draw’ needs to be interpreted consistently for the argument to be formally valid. If ‘draw’ is taken to in the sense of ‘sketch’ then the argument is both valid and sound. If ‘draw’ is taken as ‘fill with water’ throughout then the argument is still formally valid, but the dubious second premiss would make it unsound.

The Frege-Geach objection is that for the Expressivist, the premiss does not mean the same on each occurrence in the argument. He is therefore guilty of equivocating in his efforts to pass off a valid moral *modus ponens*.

### 6.3.2 Blackburn’s First Response

Hale says that the Frege-Geach point is over-rated. It makes use of the fact that the antecedent of a conditional is an unasserted context in order to bring the charge of equivocation.<sup>17</sup> The illocutionary act involved in moral debate, according to the Expressivist—and Hale is happy to grant this—is something other than assertion; suppose we term it ‘endorsement’. If their picture is coherent, then we can interpret a premiss in an argument as endorsed, whilst allowing that the premiss as an antecedent of a conditional is not endorsed. What is endorsed is the conditional as a whole. Parallel to the unasserted context of a truth-functional conditional, there is an unendorsed context of a moral conditional. That is not yet fatal to the Expressivist’s picture. But it does lead us to ask after the positive Expressivist view of the case of the moral *modus ponens*.

This is Blackburn’s first attempt to reconstruct the moral *modus ponens*. He introduces  $E_{ex}$ , which is an Expressive fragment of English.<sup>18</sup> It contains two expression operators, H! and B!, which stand for approval and disapproval respectively. These take gerunds and produce sentences which express approbation and disapprobation. The statement

Torturing suspected terrorists is wrong

looks like an assertion, but according to the Expressivist really means

Boo to the torturing of suspected terrorists!

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<sup>17</sup>Bob Hale, ‘Can There Be a Logic of Attitudes?’ in: Haldane and Wright, *Reality, Representation and Projection*.

<sup>18</sup>Blackburn, *Spreading the Word*, 189-196.

which we can now write in  $E_{ex}$  as

B!(the torturing of suspected terrorists).

The H! and B! operators cannot be iterated directly since the operators take gerunds and not sentences. Blackburn therefore introduces the vertical bar operator, which produces gerunds from sentences. We can then express the approbation of the disapprobation of a gerund:

H!|B!(the torturing of suspected terrorists)|

This expresses the approval of the disapproval of the use of torture on suspected terrorists.

Blackburn also introduces the idea of the ‘coupling’ of attitudes. This is the ‘involvement’ (as Blackburn has it) of activities, marked by ‘;’. Using this, we might express disapprobation of drink driving:

B!(the drinking ; the driving)

Loosely put this expresses: ‘Boo to the drinking and then driving’.

We now have all the pieces to attempt a reconstructed moral *modus ponens*.

- (i) B!(the torturing of suspected terrorists)
- (ii) H!(|B!(the torturing of suspected terrorists)| ; | B!(the having of another country torture suspected terrorists)|)

So:

- (iii) B!(the having of another country torture suspected terrorists)

This treats the moral gerundival conditional as a second-order attitude. It consists in approving of the involvement of disapproval of permitting torture in one’s own country with disapproval of having another country torture on one’s behalf. As Blackburn puts it, there is an ‘attitude clash’ if both premisses are endorsed, whilst the conclusion is not.

Hale has a helpful suggestion for Blackburn at this point. He points out that the coupling operator ‘;’ is used in the place of a conditional, which is asymmetrical. A more natural interpretation would be to have ‘;’ as a conjunction of attitudes, admitting of symmetry. Then, suggests Hale, following the classical equivalence ( $P \rightarrow Q \equiv \neg(P \ \& \ \neg Q)$ ), the conditional can be recovered in terms of negation and conjunction. (ii) would become:

- (ii) B!(|B!(the torturing of suspected terrorists)| ; | not-B!(the having of another country torture suspected terrorists)|)

Suppose we take Hale’s advice. We still need to understand the central part of this second-order construal of the conditional, which is the notion of an

'attitude clash'. There is a sense in which if I approve of the disapproval of an action, but fail myself to disapprove of the action then I am being in some sense inconsistent. The problem is that the inconsistency involved on this construal is not *logical*. There is nothing irrational, for instance, about approving of the disapproval of smoking, whilst not disapproving of smoking. The problem with this construal of the conditional, then, is that there is no logical bite. And for that reason, this attempt has failed to reconstruct an adequate moral *modus ponens*.

### 6.3.3 A Better Solution?

There is a formal response to the problem of the moral *modus ponens* which improves on Blackburn's first attempt at an Expressivist logic. I shall now briefly rehearse a logic which is of service to an Expressivist, which I have given elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> The core thought is to provide a construal of a gerundival conditional which does not rely on higher-order attitudes.

To begin with, the logic, which I call MK, will not deal in truth or falsity but in *pro* and *con* attitudes. Likewise it will not deal with truth-apt sentences; as for Blackburn's first stab, it will deal with gerunds which do not admit of truth or falsity. I use the letters '*J*', '*K*', '*L*' ... to stand for gerunds. Instead of True and False, the new system will deal with Hooray (H) and Boo (B), which I call attitude-values.

The regular operators ('&', '∨', '¬', '→') are no longer interpreted as truth-functional sentential operators, since they are no longer functions from truth-values to truth-values. They are to be interpreted instead as attitude-functional gerundival operators. They are functions from attitudes to attitudes and form new gerunds.

For ease of introducing the system, I base it on two classical principles. It may well be desirable to create non-classical alternatives at a later stage. The principles are:

(K1) H and B exhaust the list of attitude values

(K2) Each gerund is determinately either H or B

Once those principles are in place we may proceed to provide the attitude-tables which are to specify the meaning of the logical constants in question, as shown in figure 6.1.

An interpretation, *I*, consists of an arbitrary assignment of H or B to the gerundival letters of the argument schema. Where  $\alpha$  is a well-formed formula,

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<sup>19</sup>Jon Barton, *Endorsing Expressivism* (University of St. Andrews: M. Litt. thesis, 1998).

$\neg$		$\&$	H	B	$\vee$	H	B	$\rightarrow$	H	B
H	B	H	H	B	H	H	H	H	H	B
B	H	B	B	B	B	H	B	B	H	H

Figure 6.1: Attitude-tables of Gerundival Logic, MK

then if  $I(\alpha) = H$  then  $\alpha$  is endorsed, and if  $I(\alpha) = B$  then  $\alpha$  is disapproved of. Due to the classical assumptions K1 and K2, where  $I(\alpha) \neq H$  then  $I(\alpha) = B$  and *vice versa*.

The approval of *all* gerunds is one way of capturing amorality within a system of moral reasoning. So we might introduce a zero-place logical constant ' $\perp$ ' which could be defined second order as  $(\forall J)J$ . Alternatively we might define it to be equivalent to approving of and disapproving of the very same gerund, which would represent the sort of moral inconsistency which the logic will help us to avoid.

The part of the semantic theory which determines the attitude value (that is, H or B) of a complex given the attitude value (H or B) of its constituent parts will include clauses such as these:

$$(ST\&) I(\alpha \& \beta) = H \text{ if } I(\alpha) = H \text{ and } I(\beta) = H, \text{ else } I(\alpha \& \beta) = B$$

$$(ST\rightarrow) I(\alpha \rightarrow \beta) = H \text{ if, if } I(\alpha) = H \text{ then } I(\beta) = H, \text{ else } I(\alpha \rightarrow \beta) = B$$

Classical logic governs the meta-language, and since we have K1 and K2 in place, then *e.g.*  $ST\rightarrow$  yields the attitude-table above for ' $\rightarrow$ ' since  $I(\alpha) = H$  means that  $\alpha$  is endorsed, and  $I(\alpha) = B$  means that  $\alpha$  is disapproved of.

Semantic entailment can now be defined for a set of gerunds  $\Gamma$ :

$$(SE) \Gamma \models \alpha \text{ if there is no interpretation under which each member of } \Gamma \text{ is endorsed but } \alpha \text{ is not.}$$

This is a brief sketch to outline the idea. How does it help with the moral *modus ponens*? The aim of logic is to secure consistency. In this case what concerns us is consistency amongst attitudes, rather than amongst propositional formulae.

We saw above that Blackburn's first reconstruction of the moral *modus ponens* made one who failed to endorse the conclusion at most *morally* reprehensible. It seems to me that a system such as MK would provide an answer to this challenge. In order to avail oneself of the conclusion of a logical system, one must endorse the system itself; one must be happy that it is sound. If you agree a system is sound, and you endorse the premisses then the conclusion must also be endorsed. And that is not a matter simply of morality, but of rationality.

The immediate issue here, then, is whether MK is sound or not. There may well be good reasons not to endorse MK as a logic which is adequate to our attitudes as they stand. It is based on classical principles, so we have the equivalents of the paradoxes of material implication as valid sequents, for instance:

$$K \vdash J \rightarrow K$$

But this in itself is no good reason to abandon the project of attitudinal logic. It is not immediate that we abandon classical logic itself on the basis of the paradoxes of material implication. Of course there are people who do so. And they produce logics in which the paradoxes do not appear. My point is that those non-classical logics might themselves be used as analogues for a fresh proposal for an attitudinal logic.

There may be a further objection: that the attitude-tables do not capture how our attitudes operate. I might well endorse drinking, and separately endorse driving, without endorsing the conjunctive drinking and driving. This questions the soundness of a general &I rule:

$$\frac{J \quad K}{J \& K}$$

And the doubts are surely correct. I submit that the issue will be a complicated context-dependent matter. So it does highlight an area for more work.

One might attempt object that for all that has been said, there is no good meaning to attach to ‘ $\rightarrow$ ’ in MK. We might well be able to understand what it is to conjoin two gerunds, even when governed by complex context-dependent rules. But what is it to have an attitude conditional on another attitude: how can a conditional be attitude-functional?

The hard-nosed answer to this is that the meaning is given in the attitude-table. It yields disapproval (B) just when the first argument is approval (H) and the second disapproval (B). This is equivalent to the explanation for the meaning of classical material implication. But there is a further objection; that the conditional is inferentially useless. This is due to Wright:

We should have, in general, no use for conditional or disjunctive compounds of such judgements unless it was sometimes possible to appraise the truth-value of the compounds independently of any knowledge of those of their constituents.<sup>20</sup>

Making the appropriate changes for an attitudinal logic, Wright’s question becomes whether one can know whether one endorses a conditional indepen-

<sup>20</sup>Wright, ‘Realism, Anti-Realism, Irrealism, Quasi-Realism’, 36.

dently of knowing one's attitude toward the antecedent and consequent. From the semantic basis of the attitudinal conditional it might seem that one could not, since one can only determine one's attitude toward the conditional from the attitude table. But that seems confused. It is plain I might endorse 'If smoking cannabis is wrong, then supplying cannabis is wrong' whilst at the same time being undecided as to the appropriate attitude to the antecedent.

So much by way of a defence of the idea of an attitudinal logic. How does it actually help in the case in hand? The target is to produce a logic of attitudes; a rationally compelling model that treats of attitudinal content. Here is how *modus ponens* can be seen to be valid. Let *J* be 'the torturing of suspected terrorists' and *K* be 'the having of another country torture suspected terrorists'. Then the following is a valid sequent of MK:

$$\neg J, \neg J \rightarrow \neg K \vdash \neg K$$

There is, then, a formal response on behalf of the Expressivist to the problem of whether there can be a moral *modus ponens*.

### 6.3.4 The Problem of Mixed Conditionals

Perhaps the formal response just given is enough to lend hope to the Expressivist in respect of moral debate. There is, however, a thornier issue raised by Hale.<sup>21</sup> This is the problem of mixed conditionals. They are intended to have a descriptive antecedent and an evaluative consequent. The example given is

If Bill stole the money, he should be punished.

Hale asserts that conditionals such as these will certainly have to be handled. And that will be problematic for the Expressivist. Certainly the attitudinal logic MK cannot treat of them, at least if we read the antecedent as truth-apt, which is how it is intended to be read.

I do not think that the matter of mixed conditionals is as plain as might first be thought. The example given is certainly the sort of sentence one can readily imagine featuring in moral debate. However, it is not clear that it is a sentence of the intended kind, *viz.* one with a descriptive antecedent and an evaluative consequent. In fact, to the extent that we treat the antecedent purely descriptively, to that extent it may well not be so plausible as a part of a moral debate. It could be replied that before the putatively mixed conditional can play a role in a *moral* debate, we should need to take an attitude (presumably disapproval) to Bill's stealing. The point is that 'stealing' is a morally loaded

<sup>21</sup>Bob Hale, 'The Compleat Projectivist' in *Philosophical Quarterly*, 36 (1986), 75.

term. So perhaps this is not a good example of a mixed conditional. We might remove the moral loading. Consider

If Bill walked into the room, found a wallet which was not his, picked it up and walked out with it, then he should be punished.

As it stands this is not yet going to be suasive. There may be nothing wrong with Bill finding a wallet which was not his, if, for instance, he has been asked by a friend to fetch it. Or perhaps he is conscientious and intends to hand it to the appropriate authorities. It seems that whatever we add to the antecedent it will only become morally applicable when we also apply a moral attitude to it. However richly we describe the situation we shall need to add the attitude that the description is of a *wrong* situation—that we disapprove of the situation so described. Only when we have done that, the Expressivist can contend, will the conditional be able to feature in moral debate.

This response has the Expressivist following the Humean thought that we should be wary of a system which purports to derive an ‘ought’ from an ‘is’.<sup>22</sup> That is exactly what a mixed conditional purports to do. It can also be seen as an application of Moore’s Naturalistic Fallacy; that no natural description of the morally good will do justice to the concept.

But do not facts matter to moral debate? Surely the claim that a particular apparatus is capable of refining uranium to be weapons-grade material is empirically based. If there were a worry that ‘weapons-grade’ may be morally loaded, then replace it with the empirical test of the uranium being refined enough to sustain uncontrollable fission. Then we might have a moral debate concerning whether countries which develop the ability to refine uranium which could give rise to uncontrollable fission reactions should be punished. This debate may well involve a conditional with a descriptive, empirically verifiable antecedent. The Expressivist response is that it is only we take a moral stance on the possession of certain sorts of fissile material that the debate becomes moral.

If this line can be sustained, then there are no such things as a mixed conditionals in moral debates. In that case there is no onus on the Expressivist about morality to produce a theory which explains them.

The defence of the moral Expressivist being presented is that moral statements express attitudes; distinctively moral attitudes; and that there is no such thing as a mixed conditional within moral debate. How do facts get to feature in moral debate on this Expressivist picture? They do feature: the factual difference between stealing a single penny-chew and a milliard penny-chews is morally relevant.<sup>23</sup> But that is to say it affects the attitude we take to the act.

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<sup>22</sup>Hume, III.i.1.

<sup>23</sup>‘Milliard’ is English for an American billion, being a thousand million.

For the Expressivist, facts feature in moral debate as the objects of our moral attitudes.

### 6.3.5 Blackburn's Quasi-Realism

Blackburn is interested in Expressivism as a stepping stone. The intention is that the Quasi-Realist will win through to constructing moral truth from the Expressivist theory. He presents one illustrative, relatively simple, way in which this might go.<sup>24</sup> The logic above has given us a guide to consistency amongst a set of attitudes. Suppose we set out to produce the best possible set of attitudes ( $M^*$ ); then the idea is that we could dignify an attitude as morally true if it is in the set. Where ' $E$ ' is an expression endorsing an attitude ' $A$ ', then we can say that  $E$  is true if and only if  $A$  is a member of  $M^*$ . Why should we think that we are able to construct a best possible set of attitudes? This is very similar to the question I introduced in the chapter above on Epistemic Constraint, and then fleshed out in the chapter on Cognitive Command.<sup>25</sup> I called the equivalent principle for states of information the principle of Convergence. In the current case, the principle is that for any two sets of attitudes there be a third which is an improvement on them both.

What happens where we reach a case where two sets of attitudes have been developed such that they are incompatible? Blackburn considers the case from Hume's essay 'On the Standard of Taste', about literary taste. Suppose the literary sensibilities of a younger, more passionate, man lead him to hold that Ovid is to be preferred over Tacitus. And suppose that the sensibilities of an older moderate man, who prefers philosophic reflection, lead him to hold quite the reverse. Each set of sensibilities is subjected to refinement, but without them becoming compatible.

Now, asks Blackburn, who is in position to hold that each set of sensibilities points to a different choice about Tacitus and Ovid, and yet that neither set can be improved upon? Are the two protagonists aware of their differences? If not, then it would surely improve their positions if they were.

In fact, holds Blackburn, the existence of a difference of this nature signals that there is more work to be done. In this case, we might conclude that the question of a simple comparison between authors is simply putting the issue too crudely. When we consider it further, it may well turn out that there are relative merits of each author with respect to particular metrics.

For the case of morality and attitudes, consider two distinct value-systems. Suppose under one system it is obligatory to  $\phi$ , whilst under the other it is

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<sup>24</sup>Blackburn, *Spreading the Word*, 197–202.

<sup>25</sup>See §3.4, 75ff., and §4.5, 105ff.



permissible not to  $\phi$ . Blackburn suggests that the outcome of clashes of this sort should favour the permission not to  $\phi$ . To resolve clashes between value-systems one should weaken in favour of toleration. Obligation and permission are asymmetrical in this regard. The discovery of a system which permits one not to  $\phi$  is taken as evidence that it should be permissible not to  $\phi$ . But the discovery of a system which brings the obligation to  $\phi$  is not taken as evidence for the fact that it is obligatory to  $\phi$ . In this fashion, Blackburn hopes to establish that there will be a single set of acceptable moral attitudes. The correctness of an attitude can then be dignified as *true* if it is a member of that set.

### 6.3.6 Wright's Dilemma For Quasi-Realism

Central to the Expressivist view is the distinction between surface and deep grammar. Moral statements appear on the surface to be assertions. But deep down, they are not. The project of Blackburn's Quasi-Realist is to begin from that stance, and then use it to re-construct a notion of truth applicable to moral statements. This, as Wright points out, leads to an obvious problem.<sup>26</sup> The summary of the dilemma is as follows. If the Quasi-Realists succeed in recovering all the characteristics of moral discourse they are after, then they will recover assertion as well. But in doing so they will show that the supposedly mutually exclusive expressive/assertoric distinction which they insisted upon to begin with does not hold for moral discourse. That distinction was the very basis for the programme. On the other hand, if they fail to recover all the required characteristics, then to that extent the project is a failure by its own lights.

Blackburn is unperturbed by such a dilemma. He maintains that the *way* one arrives at a position is of prime importance.<sup>27</sup> How the truths come to be true is relevant. That said, impressed by the problems of the moral *modus ponens* and the mixed conditional, he gives up on the Expressivist  $E_{ex}$ , and presents a new logic inspired in the first instance by Hintikka's work.<sup>28</sup>

### 6.3.7 Blackburn's AC

Blackburn's system AC is based on Hintikka's work in deontic logic. Where  $E_{ex}$  dealt with gerunds, this new logic will deal with sentences.  $H!$  and  $T!$  are introduced as sentential operators, and stand for insistence and tolerance. The core idea from Hintikka is that a set of obligations and permissions is consistent

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<sup>26</sup>Wright, 'Realism, Anti-Realism, Irrealism, Quasi-Realism', 35.

<sup>27</sup>For instance, on modal matters: "it is not what you end up saying but how you get to say it, that defines your 'ism'". Simon Blackburn, *Essays in Quasi-Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), Introduction, 7.

<sup>28</sup>The criticisms are in George Schueler, 'Modus Ponens and Moral Realism' in *Ethics*, 98 (1988). Blackburn responds in the same issue.

if there is a set of ‘deontically perfect’ possible worlds. A set of ‘deontically perfect’ possible worlds is defined to be one where each world in the set fulfils the obligations, and each permission is fulfilled at some world. Blackburn’s aim is to provide a workable notion of consistency for the Expressivist, based on a parallel with that central idea.

To define a notion of consistency amongst sentences and attitudes, we begin with a set of sentences  $L$  which we wish to investigate. The notion of ‘next approximation to the ideal’ is defined by a set of rules. We apply these rules to the original set, producing the next step towards the ideal. The application of the rules may include creating more than one next approximation, so a tree of sets may be produced by the process. A node of the tree will be a ‘final ideal’ when the application of the rules produces no new sentences. In a fashion similar to the semantic tableau method for first order logic, the original set of sentences  $L$  is inconsistent or ‘unsatisfiable’ just if all the final ideals terminate with a set containing both  $P$  and  $\neg P$ , for some sentence ‘ $P$ ’.

The insistence and tolerance operators commute with negation as one would expect. Not being tolerant of  $P$  is equivalent to insistence on  $\neg P$ :  $\neg T!P \equiv H!\neg P$ . Failing to insist on  $P$  is equivalent to tolerating  $\neg P$ :  $\neg H!P \equiv T!\neg P$ .

What is distinctive of this presentation of Blackburn’s characterisation of disjunctive commitments as ‘being tied to a tree’. This is to mean that in accepting a disjunctive commitment, one is tied to accepting one or other disjunct. If the first disjunct proves untenable, then one is committed to the second. The classical equivalence of material implication ( $P \rightarrow Q \equiv \neg P \vee Q$ ) is used to interpret the conditional in terms of negation and disjunction. Endorsing ‘if using chemical weapons is wrong, then developing them is wrong’ is interpreted as tying oneself to the tree of either not insisting on ‘using chemical weapons’ or of endorsing ‘developing chemical weapons’.

These, then, are the rules for creating the next approximation to the ideal,  $L^*$ , from an original set of sentences,  $L$ .

- (1) If  $H!P \in L$  then  $H!P \in L^*$
- (2) If  $H!P \in L$  then  $P \in L^*$
- (3) If  $T!P \in L$  then the set  $L^*$  containing  $P$  is added to the set of next approximations for  $L$ .
- (4) If  $L^*$  is the next approximation to the ideal for  $L$ , then if  $P \in L^*$ ,  $P \in L^{**}$ ,  $P \in L^{***}$ , etc.

An example will help to show how these rules are to be applied. In this example, we shall investigate whether  $(H!P \ \& \ (P \rightarrow H!Q)) \rightarrow H!Q$  is a theorem of AC. To do this, we look at whether the set containing the antecedent and the negation of the consequent is consistent. If it turns out unsatisfiable,

then the antecedent cannot hold without the consequent holding, and so the candidate is indeed a theorem of AC. Blackburn writes ‘ $=0=>$ ’ to indicate a next approximation to the ideal. The example is shown in figure 6.2. The right-hand

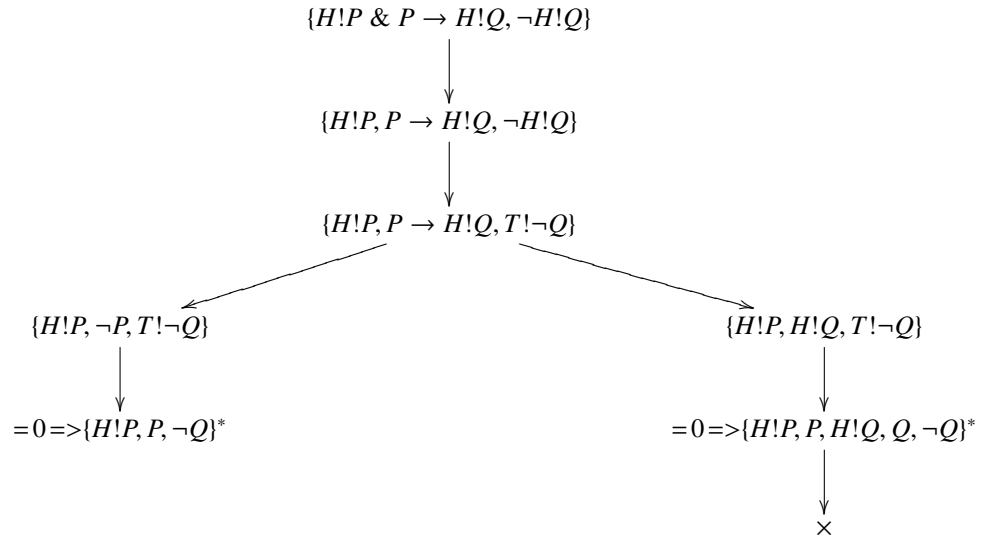


Figure 6.2: Investigation of  $(H!P \& (P \rightarrow H!Q)) \rightarrow H!Q$

branch closes with a contradiction. The left-hand branch remains open, and it is clear that none of the rules will change that. This means that the original set is satisfiable, and so  $(H!P \& (P \rightarrow H!Q)) \rightarrow H!Q$  is not a theorem of AC.

One important theorem which AC does contain is  $H!(H!P \rightarrow P)$ . It is instructive to see how this reduces to inconsistency. The first approximation to the ideal  $L^* = \{-(H!P \rightarrow P)\}^*$  is generated by rule (3). The conditional is treated using negation and conjunction, as outlined above. Then the next approximation  $L^{**} = \{H!P, P, \neg P\}^{**}$  contains three elements. First  $H!P$ , by rule (1), since  $H!P \in L^*$ . Second  $P$ , by rule (2), since  $H!P \in L^*$ . Finally  $\neg P$ , by rule (4), since  $L^*$  is the next approximation for  $L$ , and  $\neg P \in L^*$ , and so should be in  $L^{**}$ . This set is the only node on the tree, and is a final ideal. Since it is inconsistent, we have shown that  $H!(H!P \rightarrow P)$  is a theorem of AC.

There is an issue for AC, however. Hale shows according to the system, insistence on toleration of  $P$  will result in insistence on  $P$ :  $H!T!P \rightarrow H!P$ .<sup>29</sup> This means that one cannot insist on toleration of  $P$  and at the same time be tolerant of  $\neg P$ . In order to avoid this, Hale suggests that rule (4) be altered:  $P$  should only be iterated into the next approximations if  $P$  did not derive from a

<sup>29</sup>Hale, ‘Can There Be a Logic of Attitudes?’, 348–9.

$T!$  formula. The proposal could be fleshed out as follows.

(4') If  $L^*$  is the next approximation to the ideal for  $L$ , then if

(a)  $A \in L^*$ , and

(b)  $A$  is not in  $L^*$  solely on account of rule (3)

then  $A \in L^{**}$ ,  $A \in L^{***}$ , etc.

This proposal has an undesirable consequence, however. Under the old rules  $H!(H!P \rightarrow P)$  was a theorem. But with (4') in place,  $T!\neg(H!P \rightarrow P)$  will not reduce to inconsistency. The first approximation to the ideal will contain  $\neg(H!P \rightarrow P)$ , but since that derives from rule (3), no further approximations will be generated; the tree will remain open.

In order to find a happy balance between the old rule and the new rule, Hale looks back to Hintikka's original, and suggests that this might be more appropriate:

(4'') For any  $L^*$  from  $L$ , if  $H!A \in L^*$  then  $A \in L^*$ .

With (4'') in place, we have two desirable outcomes. First we have recovered  $H!(H!P \rightarrow P)$ . And second  $H!T!P \rightarrow H!P$  is still no longer a theorem.<sup>30</sup>

Hale re-considers the purpose of the rules. He points out that we should not confuse the constructions of AC with a central feature of the Quasi-Realist project. The project is eventually to construct a notion of truth which will be applicable to evaluations. An evaluation will be true, in this Quasi-Realist sense, if it is a part of some limiting set of attitudes. This limiting set is arrived at only after every available opportunity of improvement has been taken. This presupposes that there be a single best set of attitudes, a single maximum, so to speak. It supposes that any set of attitudes can always be improved towards this maximum; that is to presuppose that there are no local maxima.

It is misleading, holds Hale, to think of the ideals involved in AC as the ideal set of attitudes sought after by the Quasi-Realist in order to ground moral truth. There is a difference, he points out, between being an ideal set of attitudes in that sense, and an ideal set in the sense of being consistent. The rules for AC constitute a proposal for determining whether particular sets of attitudes are consistent or not. That should not be confused with producing a single maximally consistent set of attitudes which can be put in the service of the Quasi-Realist programme of re-building a notion of truth for moral statements.

<sup>30</sup>Blackburn subsequently proposes his own version:

(4''') If  $L^*$  is a next approximation relative to some set of sequences  $L$ , then if  $L^*$  contains  $H!(P)$ , then a subsequent approximation  $L^{**}$  contains  $P$  and all the other sentences of  $L^*$ .

which Hale agrees is equivalent. See Simon Blackburn, 'Realism, Quasi or Queasy?' in: Haldane and Wright, *Reality, Representation and Projection*, 381 and Bob Hale, 'Postscript' in: Haldane and Wright, *Reality, Representation and Projection*, 388.

This bears on the philosophical motivation for the rules. Rule (1) is not justified if the intention is to aim for the maximally consistent set of attitudes, simply because it is plausible that a set of attitudes might be improved by dropping an insistence. However, it is a sensible proposal if the intention is to produce a procedure for checking whether a set of attitudes is internally consistent.

So, with that warning in place, there seems to be no bar (as yet) on Blackburn using the patched-up AC as a method for determining consistency amongst facts and attitudes and wrapping it inside a larger theory to yield his target limiting set of attitudes. Hale himself is impressed by Wright's dilemma that if the Quasi-Realist succeeds in their aim of reconstructing the moral truth from an Expressivist starting point then they have cut away the distinctive branch on which they were sitting. Therefore Hale recommends that the Quasi-Realist contents himself with stopping short with straightforward attitudes, and labels this position 'modest' Quasi-Realism. This is Expressivism without the Quasi-Realist reconstruction of moral truth. This would bring with it the problem of coping with mixed conditionals. We saw above how an Expressivist might argue against having to deal with those.<sup>31</sup> But supposing that they must be dealt with, the patched-up AC does provide one route forward. Hale asks: Can there be a Logic of Attitudes? The answer appears to be: yes.

### 6.3.8 Expressivism and Folk Psychology

The Expressivist makes crucial play with the idea of syntax; moral statements appear to be, but are not, assertoric. The framework of T&O has it that as soon as there is an appropriate level of syntax and discipline, then that is enough to make the talk assertoric. I now look at the criticism this has drawn from Smith, who draws on considerations of a Humean folk psychology.<sup>32</sup>

Smith agrees that a truth-apt sentence uttered sincerely is asserted. He also endorses the analytic link between assertion and belief, expressed by Wright, that

if someone makes an assertion, and is supposed sincere, it follows that she has a belief whose content can be captured by means of the sentence used.<sup>33</sup>

The basis for Smith's challenge to Wright's framework of T&O is the Humean distinction between belief and desire. To start with,

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<sup>31</sup>§6.3.4, 158ff.

<sup>32</sup>Michael Smith, 'Why Expressivists about Value should Love Minimalism about Truth' in *Analysis*, 54 (1994), Michael Smith, 'Minimalism, Truth-aptitude and Belief' in *Analysis*, 54 (1994)

<sup>33</sup>Wright, *T&O*, 14.

[i]t is in the nature of beliefs that they purport to represent the way things are.<sup>34</sup>

This means that the content of beliefs is restricted to those contents which can be expressed using truth-apt sentences. The standard Humean model has the desire-belief-action triad at its core. Hume famously held that reasons alone are not enough to motivate one to action. Desires are required to provide that motivational force. I may believe various things about the world, but it is only when coupled with my desires that actions result. Desires and beliefs on this model are fundamentally different. Beliefs are apt to represent how things are. In contrast to beliefs, desires are ‘representations of how things are to be’.<sup>35</sup> This distinction can be made clearer using the metaphor of directions of fit. A belief that proposition *P* is true is a psychological state produced—under appropriate circumstances—by the fact that *P*. A desire that *P*, on the other hand, is a psychological state aimed at making it the case—again under appropriate circumstances—that *P*. The characteristic claim of Expressivism is that moral statements do not reveal the content of the utterer’s moral beliefs. If the utterance were an assertion, then it would express a belief. However, on the Humean picture, no belief is a desire, and so there is no moral belief to be asserted.

The Expressivist agrees that truth-apt sentences capture the content of beliefs, and that assertions express beliefs, but also holds that evaluative sentences speak of the utterer’s desires. The leading question is whether there is a construal on which ‘It is (morally) right to  $\phi$ ’ can both express a moral belief and still speak of the utterer’s moral desires. The heart of the Expressivist view, according to Smith, is that the answer is ‘no’.

Can this Expressivist position be adequately represented on Wright’s framework? The official line of Wright’s Minimalism is that any objection raised by such an Expressivist is purely terminological; once all parties have agreed on the various varieties of truth, assertion and belief, the illusion of disagreement will be dispelled.<sup>36</sup> If that is correct then no genuine philosophical dispute is being obscured by the framework. The question, then, is precisely whether or not the dispute between Smith and Wright’s Minimalist is purely terminological, to be dissolved by paying due attention to the disambiguation of various terms. If it is not so dissolved, then on that account, the Expressivist is right to feel aggrieved at the treatment they receive.

In order to disambiguate where necessary, I shall need the following distinctions. A ‘Minimal’ belief is a belief in a content whose truth-predicate is (only)

<sup>34</sup>Smith, ‘Why Expressivists about Value should Love Minimalism about Truth’, 3.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>36</sup>This is in Crispin Wright, ‘Response to Jackson’ in *Philosophical Books*, 35 (1994) and followed up by John Divers and Alexander Miller, ‘Why Expressivists about Value should not Love Minimalism about Truth’ in *Analysis*, 54 (1994).

Minimal. A 'Robust' belief on the other hand is a belief in a content whose truth is more robust, or metaphysically weighty. In the same fashion, 'Minimal' assertion involves content which is (only) Minimally true, and contrasts with 'Robust' assertion which involves content whose truth is more than Minimal.

What all parties to this debate agree is that the assertion/belief link holds true. This gives an analysis of the *a priori* link between the concepts involved.

(ABL) A sincere assertion that *P* expresses a belief that *P* is true.

According to Wright's Minimalist, moral statements are up for Minimal assertion because of the syntax and discipline of the deployment of moral terms. There is no preventing this Minimalist from calling the associated mental state Minimal belief if they so choose. We can thus take the Minimalist to be arguing from the Minimal assertion, *via* ABL, interpreted with Minimal notions throughout, to the involvement of a Minimal belief.

### Smith's Expressivist

Smith's Expressivist holds that moral statements express desires. Such content is not truth-apt; it is not representational since the direction of fit is wrong. So moral statements cannot express beliefs; at least where 'belief' is understood to be a psychological state with a content which has a particular sort of direction of fit. Because the content of moral statements is not representational, they are not up for being asserted. Thus if morality involves Minimal belief then that psychological state cannot be purely representational, but must be some sort of hybrid state which can be a belief from one point of view (to be asserted) but a desire from another (in order to motivate). According to received folk psychology, there is no such psychological state.

### The Moral Problem

To highlight why the Minimalist stance is not so innocent, Smith introduces what he calls the Moral Problem.<sup>37</sup> This is represented by a seemingly inconsistent triad:

- (T1) Moral judgements express beliefs.
- (T2) Moral judgements have some sort of connection with the will.
- (T3) Motivation is a matter of having, *inter alia*, suitable desires.

One way to resolve the purported inconsistency is to keep T1 and T3 and conclude that T2 must be false. This opens up the possibility that one may make a

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<sup>37</sup>Smith, *The Moral Problem*.

moral judgement and yet be unmoved by it. The Expressivist line is to hold on to T2 and T3 and so deny T1.<sup>38</sup>

Smith does not accept the distinction between Minimal belief and Robust belief; at least not where both remain *belief* proper. He is happy to countenance a psychological state, called 'Minimal belief' which is not only representational, but also motivational. But that is a substantial move in coping with the Moral Problem. It means holding T1 and T2 at the expense of T3. This is a tenable position, but does involve a revamping of folk psychology. That is not an innocent consequence.

The Minimalist response to this is to claim that of course there is *some* psychological theory to which the Minimalist is committed, but that does not entail that there is a *particular* theory in the offing. The commitment only runs as far as is necessary to support the platitude involving the connection between belief and assertion.

It seems that the Minimalist is suggesting a Minimalist folk psychology, built on the same principle as Minimalism about truth, *viz.* an attempt to delineate the common ground between two (or more) opposing factions. But such a strategy does not seem possible in this case of folk psychology. Postulating hybrid psychological states is not a neutral stand-point. That there are hybrid states—'beliefs-that-are-desires'—is precisely what is denied by the Humean. It is no common ground to suggest that all psychological states are best treated as potentially beliefs or desires, or both. From Smith's point of view then, the Minimalist proposal has a significant ramification in the issue of folk psychology, in that it entertains the idea that there can be psychological states which are both beliefs and desires. Right or wrong, that is a non-trivial contribution; it is not an agreed common ground from which one may proceed in various directions. If that is correct, then the proposed Minimalism about folk psychology is not obtainable. And then Smith is correct to object that the purportedly harmless change of terminology is not as harmless as advertised.

### 6.3.9 Expressivism and T&O

I have introduced three sorts of Expressivist during the course of the chapter. First, was Ayer's Expressivism, motivated by Logical Positivism. Second was Blackburn's Expressivism which is used as a stepping-stone in his Quasi-Realist project to reconstruct a notion of moral truth. Third, there was an Expressivist motivated by Humean folk psychology. How do these fare on the framework of T&O?

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<sup>38</sup>Smith himself has advocated that the triad is not contradictory after all; that T1 is true and yet consistent. See Smith, *The Moral Problem*.



Each of these Expressivists will be ruled out immediately by the framework of T&O. As soon as the appropriate syntax and discipline exist, then at least Minimal truth is in evidence. This is not mourned by Wright since he thinks Expressivism essentially hopeless. But Expressivism is not as hopeless as Wright thinks. I showed above how the Expressivist's view produces an issue for the logic of moral debate. I then argued that they need not deal with mixed conditionals. And even if they do need to do so, they can begin with Blackburn's AC, as modified under Hale's suggestion. So it is open as to whether they could continue to develop a logic for moral debate.

Blackburn's Quasi-Realism admits that moral talk is truth-apt, and so does not clash with the framework on that count. However, the Quasi-Realist is keen to emphasise that the manner in which the moral statements are made true matters. The special fashion in which moral statements are to be considered true under Quasi-Realism lines up with the motivations of traditional Expressivists; that moral statements should transpire to be appropriately normative. If the disputes surrounding Expressivism were simply terminological then there would be no harm done by translating the positions into the framework. However it is clear that transposition into the framework obscures this important distinction.

What do we lose if we give up on Expressivism? Moral statements, when all is going well, have a distinctive, action-guiding appeal. The Expressivist has some resource to explain this special appeal. But there is no dimension within the framework of T&O which will allow its expression.

## Chapter 7

# Caution and Convention

Over the great nakedness of truth, the diaphanous cloak of imagination.

José Saramago<sup>1</sup>

### 7.1 Introduction

Wright's Cautious Strategy was developed to argue for a type of Conventionalism about necessity. In this chapter I examine the strategy. The issue between a Conventionalist and his opponent is whether necessity is there to be discovered, or whether statements of necessity are—in some way or other—constructed, or invented, by us. This is a candidate anti-/realist debate, which is of interest since the Conventionalist approach to necessity which Caution was developed to support is not, strictly speaking, available on the framework of T&O.

There are three separate topics which feature in my discussion of Conventionalism; mathematics, logic and metaphysics. First I consider a Conventionalist about logic and mathematics. I treat these together since they involve Conventionalism about whether the conclusions of the familiar constructions are necessary or not, which is to say whether or not the constructions constitute *proofs*. I shall then discuss metaphysical necessity when I deal with Peacocke's proposal for that area.<sup>2</sup>

The Cautious Strategy employs a criterion which is a direct ancestor of Cognitive Command.<sup>3</sup> This relation is of interest. We saw in chapter 4 above that there are doubts about Cognitive Command. I put forward a defence of the

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<sup>1</sup>José Saramago, *O Ano Da Morte de Ricardo Reis* (Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 1984).

<sup>2</sup>Christopher Peacocke, *Being Known* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), ch 4.

<sup>3</sup>Wright, *WOTFM*, chapter XXIII.

principle in terms of Superassertibility. However, supposing the defence fails, then I hold that the Cautious Strategy would still be sound, despite its usage of a criterion which has an ill-fated descendant. To show that it is still fit and hale, I deploy the Cautious Strategy against Peacocke's way with metaphysical necessity. I then discuss whether Conventionalism can be found a place on the framework of T&O.

## 7.2 Conventionalism

The conclusion of a proof is not simply another assertion; the successful proof exerts a 'pull' or normative force upon us, which leads us inexorably to the conclusion. A proof is more than a list of assertions. It renders the conclusion undeniable; the 'pull' of the proof is special. We mark the inexorable nature of (successful) proofs and the normativity of their conclusions by saying the conclusion *necessarily* follows, given the preceding parts of the construction. This is true both for proofs in logic and proofs in mathematics.

The datum is that we have an interesting feature—the necessity—of particular statements. Then the philosophical challenge of necessity, summed up memorably by Dummett is, 'two-fold: what is its source and how do we recognise it?'<sup>4</sup> Dummett here is discussing Wittgenstein's approach to mathematical necessities. One response to Dummett's double-barrelled question is that there is a set of independently obtaining states of affairs, over and above the quotidian, which make it true that necessary statements are necessary (when they are). We can then postulate a separate faculty which is responsive to these features (the necessities), and which prompts us to affirm or deny the necessity of the putative proof in front of us. The special faculty would explain why the normativity is distinctive, and where the special attraction arises.

The Conventionalist, on the other hand, has an alternative explanation. This extra faculty, he claims, is otiose. Necessities are dignified as such by ourselves; and this is why they have a special attraction for us. We do not employ some extra faculty in order to make discoveries about an independent realm of facts about necessities. Rather, we are responsible for *inventing* or *projecting* the necessity onto the facts which all parties agree about. The source of the necessity is within ourselves. This means that necessity is not *recognised* so much as *conferred*. As Wright puts it:

So invention, it appears, is the mother of necessity.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Michael Dummett, 'Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mathematics' in *The Philosophical Review*, LXVIII (1959), 169.

<sup>5</sup>Wright, *WOTFM*, 392.

The idea that invention is at the root of necessity can be found in Wittgenstein. At one point, he says that the empirical scientist is an explorer, who sets out to discover the truths of science;

[b]ut the mathematician is not a discoverer: he is an inventor.<sup>6</sup>

This remark of Wittgenstein is drawn from a set of notebooks which were published by his estate after his death. The broad thought has been attributed to Wittgenstein by philosophers contemporary with him.<sup>7</sup> It was part of Wright's project in *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics* to come to an understanding of Wittgenstein's various, sometimes contrary, thoughts on this matter. It is not part of my project here to examine whether or not Wright's exegesis is really Wittgensteinian.<sup>8</sup>

Conventionalism can be seen as being made up of a positive and a negative thesis. The negative thesis is the denial that mathematical facts are made true by independently obtaining states of affairs, a distinctive terrain which we explore and discover using mathematical techniques. It thus runs counter to what may rightly be assumed as the very common view of mathematics that it is objective, and the most certain of subjects. For the Conventionalist, there is an element of choice on the part of the mathematician. Mathematical necessities do not obtain on account of some external source, such as the Platonic Forms. Rather—in some fashion or other—we, the mathematicians, contribute to their make-up. If the negative campaign is successful, the Conventionalist still owes the positive part of the account. This will need to explain how and why the necessities come to be called such.

There are many separate motivations which are consonant with a Conventionalist stance. These depend on one's view of the three distinctions; *a priori/a posteriori*, necessary/contingent, analytic/synthetic; and their permissible permutations. The Conventionalist need not be seeking to collapse the distinction between contingency and necessity. Whilst contingent truths may also be said to exert normativity, the Conventionalist holds that the attraction which necessary statements exert is distinctive.

Wright's Cautious Strategy is a strategy for arguing in favour of Conventionalism. It provides argument against the idea that necessities are made true by independent states of affairs, access to which is made available *via* a special faculty. It does not seek to provide the positive part of the Conventionalist picture

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<sup>6</sup>Ludwig Wittgenstein; G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees and G. E. M. Anscombe, editors, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* 3rd edition. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), Appendix II, §2, 111.

<sup>7</sup>See Friedrich Waismann, *Introduction to Mathematical Thinking: The Formation of Concepts in Modern Mathematics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), especially ch 16. Wittgenstein is credited at 245.

<sup>8</sup>It is worth noting in this regard that Wright admits straightforwardly that drawing out Wittgenstein's thoughts in a systematic fashion is something which Wittgenstein himself would repudiate. See Wright, *WOTFM*, Preface, viii.

which gives the manner in which the necessities are dignified such that they are therefore attractive. Wright is seeking to usurp Dummett's statement of the problem of necessity as two-fold with the prior question of whether necessity is, properly speaking, *recognised* at all.<sup>9</sup>

### 7.2.1 Three Types of Conventionalist

Dummett distinguishes two fashions in which one might follow up the (loosely speaking) Wittgensteinian thought that there is a choice involved in whether or not we take a construction to be a proof or not.<sup>10</sup> The first is Modified Conventionalism. An example of this view can be found in Ayer:

[I]t is a contingent, empirical fact that the word 'earlier', is used in English to mean earlier; and it is an arbitrary though convenient rule of the language that words which stand for temporal relations are to be used transitively. But *given* this rule, the proposition that if *a* is earlier than *b* and *b* is earlier than *c*, *a* is earlier than *c* becomes a necessary truth.<sup>11</sup>

There are conventions about which words mean what, and which rules apply to which meanings. But fixing those two aspects fixes the necessary truths as well. The looming issue for the Modified Conventionalist is that this fixing will itself turn out necessary; and necessities of this latter aetiology are not going to be conventional. If that is correct then the Modified Conventionalist will need to admit of necessities of two sorts, say 'hard' and 'soft'. The soft ones are made necessary by convention; no extra faculty is needed. The hard ones, however, are not made necessary by convention. The Modified Conventionalist therefore owes a story about how we get to know those necessities, and they are disbarred from appealing Conventionalism to do so.

This issue might motivate the Modified Conventionalist to become a Radical Conventionalist. The Radical Conventionalist holds that the necessity of *every* statement is a matter of us adopting it as such. No statement is necessary due to it being fixed as such by some other convention. This is certainly more radical. It has an unfortunate consequence of dissolving the normative content of the conventions. In order to apply a convention, one must decide how to do so. If the fashion in which the convention is to be applied is not itself adopted as necessary then the very content of the convention is threatened; what is it a convention to do? In sticking to his (definitive) thesis that the necessity of

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<sup>9</sup>Wright, *WOTFM*, 467.

<sup>10</sup>Dummett, 'Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mathematics'.

<sup>11</sup>A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* 2nd edition. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1946), preface. Emphasis in the original.

every (necessary) statement is a matter of adoption, the Radical Conventionalist threatens the very notion of convention itself. The Radical Conventionalist might therefore be motivated to become a Modified Conventionalist.

One way of viewing Wright's Cautious Strategy is as providing a route off the Radical/Modified Conventionalist see-saw. It does this by providing an argument for the negative thesis of Conventionalism which does not itself rely on the notion of convention, nor of normativity. Wright might therefore be considered as making room for a third sort of Conventionalist.

### 7.3 The Cautious Strategy

The Conventionalist is arguing that statements which specifically involve necessity should be compared somehow unfavourably with statements in other areas. As I introduced in chapter 4, the criterion Wright uses is in fact an ancestor of Cognitive Command.<sup>12</sup> I shall stay with the original criterion, which is concerned to pick out Genuine Assertions.

A declarative sentence expresses a [G]enuine [A]ssertion if it is associated with communally acknowledged conditions of acceptability in such a way that a sincere unwillingness to assent to it when such conditions are realised, and the agent is in a position to recognise as much, convicts him either of a misapprehension about the nature of the circumstances presented to him or of a misunderstanding of the sentence.<sup>13</sup>

Where Genuine Assertion is in play, then there is arguably a dimension of objectivity about the subject matter. It will help if I also introduce what I shall call 'Genuine Facts'. These are facts which make up the appropriately robust—objective—states of affairs to which the Genuine Assertions answer.

Wright's Conventionalist in *Wittgenstein on the Foundations of Mathematics* holds that necessities are not a species of truth.<sup>14</sup> The aim of the original Cautious Strategy was to argue that statements of necessity fail of being Genuine Assertions; or alternatively, that statements of necessity do not state Genuine Facts. More loosely, statements of necessity are not up for being *recognised*. The Strategy transposed into the modern framework would have it that talk about necessity fails of Cognitive Command. The talk would still be true or false, provided there were the appropriate discipline and syntax in operation.

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<sup>12</sup>See §4.2, 86ff.

<sup>13</sup>Wright, *WOTFM*, 448–9.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 442.

On the old way of casting the debate we have Genuine Assertions which answer to Genuine Facts, underwritten by a heavyweight metaphysical picture. Then to say the talk does not admit of Genuine Assertions is to say that it does not concern such heavyweight metaphysics. It is not factual, if by 'factual' we mean up for truth (or falsity), and by 'truth' we mean metaphysically-laden truth. In the new way of casting the debate, truth is involved on both sides; it is a question of whether that truth is metaphysically laden or not. Then if by 'factual' we mean up for (at least Minimal) truth, everyone agrees that the statements are factual.

I proceed in terms of Genuine Assertions, and treat it as a place-holder for debates cast in either fashion. It might seem that this elides the important difference between the thesis that statements of necessity are not up for truth and falsity, and the thesis that they are up for truth or falsity but that truth for the case of statements of necessity is constituted by some sort of convention. I shall return later to the question of whether the elision masks a dispute which is simply terminological.

### 7.3.1 The Cautious Man

The Cautious Man is part of a strategy in favour of the Conventionalist. The original debate takes place concerning formal proofs and their outcome. This applies equally to mathematical proofs and logical proofs; Wright elects to proceed in terms of logical proofs. For each proof of elementary logic, there is what Wright dubs a Corresponding Descriptive Conditional. For example, the natural deduction from  $A$  to  $\lceil A \vee B \rceil$ :

if a single step of Disjunction Introduction is applied to  $A$  as premiss, the result will be a disjunctive statement of which  $A$  is the initial disjunct.<sup>15</sup>

Accepting a formal construction as a proof, stands or falls with whether or not one accepts that the Corresponding Descriptive Conditional is necessary or not. On the face of it, it looks very much as if denying the necessity of such a construction is to be guilty of a misapprehension or misunderstanding.

The Cautious Man is invoked as embodying the person who does apprehend the construction perfectly well, and understands the language involved. He is happy to accept that the Corresponding Descriptive Conditional is true. However, he is not happy (as he sees it) to dignify it further as being necessary:

I can find no fault with the construction; it seems to me that all the steps are sound in just the ways that your descriptions of how

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<sup>15</sup>Wright, *WOTFM*, 452.

they are achieved require, and that we appear to have wound up with a proof of just what you set out to prove. Repeated checks have served only to confirm these impressions; and I accept that further repetitions would almost certainly turn out the same way. However, you are asking me to affirm that whenever exactly the specified sequence of transformations is correctly followed through on exactly the specified basis, we are *bound* to achieve this (sort of) result—that no other (kind of) outcome is *possible* provided the blueprint is correctly implemented. And that very strong claim, I feel, I am not entitled to make.<sup>16</sup>

Suppose that the proposal concerning Genuine Assertions is correct. Then the importance of the Cautious Man is that he apprehends and understands all that would be needed for an assertion of necessity. And yet he withholds his assertion. If his position is intelligible, then that puts pressure on the idea that Genuine Assertions are involved and so raises doubt as to whether the facts are Genuine or not.

The Cautious Strategy wonders what it would be like were the alleged Facts of an area not Genuine. Suppose there were someone who, *ex hypothesi*, was not equipped to pick out those Facts. But suppose further that they were able to pass off perfectly well as someone who did possess the appropriate ability. That is: the stooge can pass unnoticed, while appearing Genuinely to Assert and otherwise agree with everyone else about the Genuine Facts of an area.

The challenge to the proponent of the idea that Facts in the area are Genuine is chiefly epistemological. What the intelligibility of the Cautious Man seeks to show is that there may be an alternative, perfectly good, explanation of statements of necessity which does not involve Genuine Facts. One such option is the Conventionalist idea that the correctness of the assertions might be down

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<sup>16</sup>Wright, *WOTFM*, 453. This may bring to mind Melville's Bartleby (Herman Melville, 'Bartleby' in *The Piazza Tales* (New York: Dox, Edwards, and Co., 1856)), who does not refuse, but simply *prefers not to* accede to legitimate requests from his employer:

I called to him, rapidly stating what it was I wanted him to do—namely, to examine a small paper with me. Imagine my surprise, nay, my consternation, when, without moving from his privacy, Bartleby, in a singularly mild, firm voice, replied, 'I would prefer not to.'

I sat awhile in perfect silence, rallying my stunned faculties. Immediately it occurred to me that my ears had deceived me, or Bartleby had entirely misunderstood my meaning. I repeated my request in the clearest tone I could assume; but in quite as clear a tone came the previous reply, 'I would prefer not to.'

'Prefer not to,' echoed I, rising in excitement, and crossing the room with a stride. 'What do you mean? Are you moon-struck? I want you to help me compare this sheet here—take it,' and I thrust it towards him.

'I would prefer not to,' said he.

If the parallel holds, it is salutary to consider that Bartleby himself turns insane before suffering a solitary death.



to regular empirical observations, together with a communal policy concerning which observations to dignify with a special designation, such as ‘necessary’. The challenge for the proponent is to show how the epistemology of the area does not work as the Conventionalist suggests. That is: to provide a positive epistemology of their own. The dialectical burden would fall that way by an application of Ockham’s Razor. If the empirical observation together with a policy are enough to explain the linguistic phenomena, then, the argument runs, any additional faculty for picking out Facts in the area is otiose. And where the faculty is otiose the Genuine nature of the Facts themselves is impugned.

### 7.3.2 Essential Apparency and Necessity

There is a legitimate concern about whether the strategy is going to be vitiated by the reliance on the criterion of Genuine Assertions. It specifically invokes situations where the subject is appropriately placed to recognise that the communally accepted conditions obtain. This was the root of the problem with Cognitive Command; it was precisely the interaction with Essentially Apparent concepts which led Wright to propose that it was an epistemic principle after all.<sup>17</sup> I showed in chapter 4 above how the official solution to the problem was unsatisfactory.<sup>18</sup> I also showed how we might recover Cognitive Command using the construction of Superassertibility and a suitable theory of states of information such as the Dossier Model.<sup>19</sup> But perhaps my suggestion is not convincing. Then we face the question as to whether the problem which afflicted Cognitive Command was in fact inherited from its predecessor; the latter might possess the same Achilles’ Heel.

I propose that the criterion for Genuine Assertion can be used in the context of the Cautious Strategy, despite the fact that its descendant might be viewed by some as problematic. This is because it is being applied in the context of an argument for Conventionalism. The area of debate between the Conventionalist and his opponent can legitimately be restricted to that in which the usage of the target concept is tied to a communally accepted set of recognisable circumstances. This stance does not commit its proponent to a theory of meaning which holds that words have meaning only *via* their assertibility conditions. It does require that all parties agree that there are cases when the usage of ‘necessity’ occurs in circumstances which are recognisable and subject to communal agreement.

It is not required that the concept NECESSITY *only* be applicable in these circumstances. But the usage in these circumstances is clearly the hardest battle

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<sup>17</sup>See §4.3.2, 92ff.

<sup>18</sup>§4.4.3, 103ff.

<sup>19</sup>See §4.5, 105ff.

for the Conventionalist to win. So it is legitimate to restrict the battleground to those cases. And if that is correct, then the criterion governing Genuine Assertions is perfectly fit to perform its intended role.

### 7.3.3 How Is Caution Different from Scepticism?

At first sight, Caution appears very familiar. Is it not just a sceptical attitude under a different guise? It is important to realise that the Cautious stand itself is one of agnosticism.<sup>20</sup> What is the threat here? The intelligibility of the Caution is one part of an argument against the Genuine nature of Facts to do with necessity. Arguably, a sceptical attitude might be taken to *any* area of talk whatsoever. If Caution just is scepticism, and the arguments go through as intended then *any* area will be shown not to admit of Genuine Assertions. That is far too strong a conclusion; certainly stronger than intended by Wright.

Wright distinguishes between Caution and Scepticism by characterising the Sceptic as being happy to accept the reality which makes our statements true, but pressing the epistemic problem of how we know that they are true. Where the sceptic accepts the reality involved, at least for the purposes of the argument, the Cautious Man does not. The Cautious attitude is one of agnosticism, not scepticism.

The second-order nature of the Cautious attitude is important for another reason. The Cautious Man is not himself denying that Genuine Facts are involved; he is not himself a Conventionalist. If he were, and the argument worked, then the very intelligibility of his denial would entail its truth. That would be extremely bad news for the credibility of argument.

The strategy is that the Cautious Man remains agnostic on the point at issue; the possibility of Caution is intended to throw down the gauntlet to those who hold that there are Genuine Facts at stake. The substance of the challenge is to produce an appropriate epistemology for those Facts. The Cautious Man himself goes as far as holding that the alleged Genuine Facts are just that—alleged. The onus is then on the proponent of the Genuine Fact to make his case.

### 7.3.4 Is Caution Possible About Any Area?

We have seen that it would be wrong to identify Caution with scepticism. It would be correct to view it as a species of agnosticism, and this leads to a problem of its own. Scepticism is available for almost any area. It follows that

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<sup>20</sup>Hale and Wright agree on this point: Bob Hale, 'Necessity, Caution and Scepticism' in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume LXIII (1989), 183–4 and Crispin Wright, 'Necessity, Caution and Scepticism' in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume LXIII (1989), 207.

agnosticism will likewise be available. If Caution is a sort of agnosticism, does it not follow that Caution is available everywhere? This would be a serious challenge to the strategy since if the strategy generalises it threatens to be too powerful. We might end up having to admit that there are no areas which admit of Genuine Facts. That is certainly not Wright's intention. He therefore provides an argument against the thought that Caution generalises to be applicable to any area of talk.

To start with, it is postulated that one could remove all modal idiom from the language. We then introduce a new character, Hero, who has this modal-free language. Hero is to be someone who lacks the conceptual apparatus needed for the concept NECESSITY. The leading question is whether Hero can pass off as normal in a society where the language does include modal idiom. Is he able to pick up enough about the usage of the term, such that while he himself does not possess the concept NECESSITY, nevertheless he can converse as though he does?

It is important to get clear on the relationship between the various characters. The Cautious Man is a theorist who remains agnostic about whether the facts in the area are Genuine Facts. One device that the Cautious Strategy uses is the thought experiment with characters such as Hero; the question being whether they can pass off in regular society unnoticed. If so, that lends support to the Cautious conclusion, being one of agnosticism to the Genuine nature of Assertions and so Facts in the area. How is that intended to work? Imagine a society which is full of people who *ex hypothesi* are endowed with the special faculty which allows them to pick out the purported range of facts. Then suppose that someone who does not have the faculty—Hero—is parachuted into their community. Hero joins in the talk about necessities which the normal, regular, folk indulge in. But suppose he is perfectly fluent; he can pass off as regular without being caught out. He does not possess the faculty, so this possibility counts against the postulation of the special faculty in the first place. And if the faculty is called into question then the putative Genuine nature of the Facts involved is likewise questionable.

Since Hero is the example character for the target discourse about necessity, Wright compares his progress to two other characters. First, in order to bolster the plausibility of Hero's situation, we look at the situation of comedy. The Mirthless Man is introduced as an example of Hero's equivalent for the case of comedy; someone who does not have the concept FUNNY, but who learns to pick out what others will find funny. Second, in order to show that Caution will not generalise, the case of Other Minds is examined to show that the equivalent of Hero and the Mirthless Man is not coherent. I introduce a new character, Sally Anne, after the well-known psychological test, to be the equivalent of Hero and

the Mirthless Man for the case of Other Minds.<sup>21</sup> The import of the different cases is as follows. The incoherence of Sally Anne is important in order to show that Caution does not generalise across all areas. The coherence of the Cautious attitude does not stand or fall with the coherence of Hero. However, the Cautious attitude would receive considerable support if Hero turns out to be coherent himself. The plausibility of the Mirthless Man serves to prop up the case for the coherence of Hero.

### **The Mirthless Man**

The Mirthless Man is someone who was born and raised without a sense of humour, who is sent to live amongst regular, jovial, folk. The intention is to draw a contrast between two sorts of linguistic behaviour. The first is linguistic behaviour designed to mimic the population's use of the concept FUNNY; a type of learned simulation. The second is behaviour which springs from being moved, by one's sense of humour, to make judgements concerning FUNNY.

The test is whether the Mirthless Man can learn to make correct predictions about other people's uses of FUNNY without himself being moved; after all he has no sense of humour. The ability to simulate the ascription of the concept is to be parasitic on his presence in regular society. If he is removed from that society, then his ability correctly to ascribe the concept should dissipate.

Suppose such a Mirthless Man is indeed intelligible. Then, the argument runs, aspersions have been cast on the alleged faculty of 'the sense of humour'. Someone who wanted to maintain that facts about what is funny or not are Genuine Facts will need to provide a substantive explanation of the epistemology. Otherwise the way will be clear for a Conventionalist about humour to suggest that what makes something funny is a combination of a set of physical facts together with a societal policy about what is to be dignified as humorous. On this view, there is no Genuine Fact as to whether something is funny or not; there is no independently obtaining state of affairs in which the humour consists, over and above the tableau which prompted the question.

### **Sally Anne**

If the Mirthless Man is coherent, then the case for Hero is looking stronger. In order to prevent Caution from generalising, we also need to see that it is not possible in all areas. The threat is that Caution just is a rarefied agnosticism; agnosticism will be possible wherever scepticism is possible; and scepticism is

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<sup>21</sup>The false belief test is from H. Wimmer and J. Perner, 'Beliefs about beliefs: Representation and constraining function of wrong beliefs in young children's understanding of deception' in *Cognition*, 13 (1983). The Sally Anne application of the test is in S. Baron-Cohen, A. M. Leslie and U. Frith, 'Does the autistic child have a 'theory of mind'?' in *Cognition*, 21 (1985).

very widely, if not universally, applicable. Wright therefore sets out to show that Caution is not available in at least one traditional area where the sceptic engages. This is the case of Other Minds. I have dubbed the character for this case 'Sally Anne'. She is supposed to have concepts of her own mental states, but only of her own mental states; she is unable accurately to apply them to others. She can understand psychological terms, in the same sense that the Mirthless Man and Hero understand FUNNY and NECESSITY respectively. Where she struggles is over ascribing psychological states to other people, under her own steam.

Wright's contention here is that Sally Anne is not, in fact, a coherent character. There is not, in the case of ascribing psychological states to others, the required contrast between judging that (all other things being equal) a third party would ascribe the state, and being moved oneself to ascribe the state. Wright is clear about the reason for this incoherence.<sup>22</sup> It is not that a judgement that someone being in state  $\psi$  is the same as the judgement that other people would judge that person to be in  $\psi$ . Nor is it that the only proper basis for the judgement that someone is in state  $\psi$ , is that other people would judge so. The required contrast dissolves because being in position to tell what other people would judge about the ascription of psychological states just is to have mastered the grounds for ascribing psychological states oneself. The Mirthless Man is in position to be able to predict other people's sense of humour without himself being moved. His case does exhibit the required distinction. In contrast, in the case of Other Minds, Sally Anne cannot be in position accurately to predict other people's reactions without being capable of being moved to the same ascription herself.

#### **A Note on the Dialectic**

Why is it that the Mirthless Man is not in the same boat as Sally Anne? He can accurately predict other people's uses of FUNNY. Is that not exactly what is involved in possessing the concept?

There are two lines of thought here. The first is to question whether he cannot develop a sense of humour. The response is that perhaps he *can* but that possibility does not effect the result of the thought experiment, provided it is still possible that he need not. The test is whether it is possible that he could pass off as a regular person in jovial society without being possessed of the (alleged) faculty which enables the regulars to find jokes funny. His ability successfully to predict uses of FUNNY should tail off over time once he is returned to his native society.

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<sup>22</sup>Wright, 'Necessity, Caution and Scepticism', 214-5.

There is, however, a stronger line of thought; that not only *can* the Mirthless Man develop a sense of humour, but that he *must* in order accurately to predict the regular usage. But this is to beg the question against the Conventionalist. The Conventionalist holds precisely that having a sense of humour involves nothing more than being able to key off the physical features of situations, and applying a policy; there is no special feature of reality made up of facts available only to those with a sense of humour.

Perhaps the Cautious line is implausible in the case of humour; perhaps our own experience of the phenomenology of humour as spontaneously arising from within tells against it. Then the question is whether a Cautious line is plausible in *any* area? If so, the example can simply be re-written using the more plausible area. If the opponent denies the plausibility of *any* other area being subject to Caution then we are stuck with the single original issue in question; that of necessity. But in that case the opponent certainly cannot argue that the Cautious Strategy is incoherent on that grounds that it generalises too widely.

### 7.3.5 Can Hero Understand Empirical Science?

The threat to the Cautious Strategy just dealt with was the suggestion that it might be too widely applicable to be interesting. Wright notices a further threat to the Strategy which applies even when it is confined to necessity. This is the threat that Hero himself will be unable to understand empirical science; without the concept NECESSITY he will be unable to participate. Thus even if he is intelligible, he would be severely disadvantaged, and would certainly not pass unnoticed.

Wright presents what he calls a 'quasi-transcendental argument' to the effect that an understanding of NECESSITY is required for empirico-predictive reasoning.<sup>23</sup> He does this by beginning in the context of an empiricist approach to arithmetic.

#### Hero and Arithmetic

Arithmetical statements have the appearance of being different from the statements of science. Arithmetic proceeds in terms of proofs; science involves developing theories and testing hypotheses. What is Hero to make of the notion of mathematical proof? He cannot mark the *prima facie* difference between science and mathematics as being based in the necessity of the latter. For him, at least, there is no such difference to be had.

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<sup>23</sup>Wright, *WOTFM*, 318–323, 415–20.

How does this work in a simple case such as that of arithmetic? He might consider arithmetical statements as stating contingent generalisations. The generalisation is over cases of counting groups of objects as they are put together, or split up. The arithmetic statement is taken as predicting what the result of a properly executed counting procedure will be after, say, one group of objects is combined with another. It is subject to the *proviso* that no objects are lost or added, or merged. The arithmetic calculations are not themselves experiments. Rather, they are taken to be applications of the generalisations. The results of the calculation are then up for being tested empirically.

How would Hero justify our methods of calculation? He can verify empirically the times-tables for the numbers from 1 to 9. We have a technique for extending the process of multiplication to larger numbers. This involves using the times-tables and also a system of carrying digits over to other columns. We might take the Peano Axioms as *definitional* of number, and proceed to *prove* that the process of carrying the digits across the columns does indeed conform to the Axioms. However, this route is not open to Hero, since the notion of *proof* depends on the conclusion being considered necessary. What he *can* do is take the Peano Axioms as expressing (quite basic) generalisations. The calculations of arithmetic can then be compared to other scientific laws, such as Boyle's Law, that where the temperature of a gas is constant, then the pressure divided by the volume is also constant. The Law is supported by empirical observations. Assuming the Law is in place, then when we find the volume and pressure of a gas we can apply it to discover the temperature. We could also check the temperature independently, and this might serve to support the Law. So Hero can take the calculations of arithmetic to be on a par with the application of a scientific law.

### Hero and the Consequences of Theories

On Hero's view, an arithmetical calculation is not itself an experiment. Instead it is considered as the working through of an application of a more general theory which leads to a prediction of an outcome. But he now faces a problem. The theorising will issue in arithmetical statements such as

$$(6 \times 2) + 1 = \sqrt{169}$$

For Hero, this states that under the general theory of arithmetic, the predicted outcome of multiplying 6 by 2 and adding 1 to the result will be the same as the predicted outcome of taking the square root of 169. We should like to say that this equality *follows from* the general theory and the mooted circumstances. Similarly we should like to say that it *follows from* Boyle's Law that when the

volume and the pressure of a gas are such-and-such then the temperature will be so-and-so.

If Hero were confined to being an empiricist about arithmetic, then at this point he could appeal to the logical necessity of the inference. However, that is not the situation. He lacks the alleged faculty which allows the regulars to pick out necessary truths. This applies to logical necessities too. So what story can he tell about the strength of the results ‘following from’ the theories? How does he explain the confidence we have that the results do indeed follow from the theories? Wright presents a sharp argument which shows why the confidence in the idea of ‘following from’ cannot be given a purely empirical basis. This is of significance since it will render Hero’s position untenable. That puts the Cautious Strategy at risk.

### **The Quasi-Transcendental Argument**

This is how I understand Wright’s Quasi-Transcendental Argument. Suppose there is a theory  $\Theta$ , and a consequence  $B$ , which follows from the theory. The mooted conditional is

If  $\Theta$  then  $B$

The question is: what story can Hero tell about the confidence we have that such a conditional holds good? He might venture that our experience supports the fact that when  $\Theta$  holds, then  $B$  occurs. But what if the conditional is one which he has not yet experienced? That is: what about the case where  $\Theta$  holds but he has not yet experienced  $B$  with it? Suppose that the example is arithmetical and it involves the addition of large numbers. He has no experience of joining two groups of objects which are that numerous. We are confident that the prediction of the theory holds good; so what, according to Hero, is the ground for that?

If there is no experience of the example in question, then the justification for confidence must be found in some more general theory, say  $\Sigma$ . This will be such that  $\Sigma$  justifies

If  $\Theta$  then  $B$

But it is not enough that there be such a more general theory; we also need the confidence in the work that it is being proposed to do. That is: we need confidence that

If  $\Sigma$ , then if  $\Theta$  then  $B$

However, this cannot find its support in Hero’s experience. This is because it was assumed above that the consequent ‘if  $\Theta$  then  $B$ ’ is not supported by his



experience. Thus he cannot have observed the concomitant holding of  $\Sigma$  and ‘if  $\Theta$  then  $B'$ ’. So where does its support come from? It appears that Hero requires another, more general, theory to support statements about what follows from  $\Sigma$ . And it is clear now that he is embarking on an infinite regress.

If this is correct for arithmetic, then there is every chance that it will readily transpose to other areas of mathematics. In general it will infect Hero’s ability to provide the justification for certainty about what follows from theories. This is central to the operation of empirical science, so it seems that Hero will not be able to participate or even understand that discipline. It looks very much as if Hero is not intelligible after all. And even if he remains intelligible, he certainly will not be able to pass off unnoticed amongst the regulars.

### **Eccentricity**

Wright presents the problem of the need for necessity in the guise of a problem for the *intelligibility* of Hero. However, perhaps that is not the best way to see it. Hero may be perfectly intelligible as someone without the conceptual resource required to grasp NECESSITY, whilst perfectly able to get by in a society which does. It may be precisely because Hero is parasitic on that society’s usage of NECESSITY, that his empirico-theoretic predictions will not be impugned. It is not, therefore, the intelligibility of Hero which is at issue here. The problem is that in this case Hero is only surviving by being parasitic on a society which *does* have a grasp of the necessary/contingent distinction. The thought is that whilst a lone Hero amongst a regular society would be undetectable (if he so chose), a society composed wholly of Heroes would be severely handicapped by its inability to make empirico-theoretical judgements at all.

This is serious for the Cautious Strategy itself. If it is correct that Hero can function undetected in a regular society, but only *because* that society is responsive to Genuine Facts about necessities, then it is hard to see how the overall strategy is going to show the putative Genuine Facts in a bad light. The thought experiment has gone badly wrong if we need to postulate Genuine Facts to which the regular society is responsive, in order to allow Hero to pass unnoticed.

Wright’s response to this difficulty is to change the support which is brought to bear for Caution. Instead of supporting the agnostic stance by arguing that someone with no ken whatsoever could pass undetected amongst regular folk, he moves instead to propose an Eccentric. In contrast to the Mirthless Man, the Eccentric about humour *does* have a sense of humour; however, it is off-beat and so does not line up with everyone else’s. Likewise the Eccentric Modaliser is someone who does accept that some statements are necessary, but whose sense

of necessity is similarly off-beat such that it does not agree with the regular folk. Since the Eccentric Modaliser can make judgements of necessity under his own steam, he can perform empirico-theoretic reasoning. The lone Eccentric Modaliser will stand out in a (regular) crowd, but if his situation is tenable, then he will not be guilty of missing out on anything, nor of misunderstanding the words involved. A society composed entirely of such Modalisers would not suffer the severe disability that would afflict the society of Heroes.

Caution as supported by the intelligibility of Eccentric behaviour would still count as agnosticism, but of a particularly rarefied variety. The role played by the Eccentric is the same as that of Hero before him. The question is whether it is intelligible for the Eccentric to be appraised of all the relevant details, disagree over the necessity of some statement and yet not be guilty of some cognitive shortcoming. If it is intelligible, then Caution is possible in the area, in which case the way is clear for a Conventionalist proposal.

### 7.3.6 Eccentric Functions?

The shift in implementation of the Cautious Strategy from Hero to Eccentric Modaliser leads Wright to question whether any (putatively) necessary judgement could be up for the Eccentric to deny. Consider, for example the Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC). In this case, Wright says, Eccentricity is bizarre.<sup>24</sup> Eccentricity requires an 'epistemic distance'; in this case between the truth of  $P$  and the falsity of its negation. Negation is, Wright avers, essentially a truth-function. The Eccentric stance in this case is therefore guilty of misunderstanding the concept; which is to say Eccentricity is unavailable. Wright extends the lesson. Eccentricity will not be available about operations which are functions, and which have to be understood as such in order to be grasped.<sup>25</sup> This leads Wright to admit further that Eccentricity will be unavailable for the propositional logical rules. There is no chance, for instance, that correct applications of Conjunction Introduction on the same premisses might vary in their output.

Wright need not have been so generous to the anti-Conventionalist. To begin with, intuitionistic logic is not truth-based, but proof-based. It is part of the case in point as to whether proofs are simply mechanistic or not. It is clear that truth-functional classical propositional calculus must be understood as truth-functional if it is to be understood at all. Eccentricity about Disjunction Introduction within the classical calculus is, therefore, not possible. However, there is room for manoeuvre with respect to whether the classical calculus is the correct logic or not.

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<sup>24</sup>Wright, 'Necessity, Caution and Scepticism', 230.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 234.

For the intuitionist, there is ‘epistemic distance’ between  $P$  and the falsity of its negation ( $\neg\neg P$ ). This is because an intuitionist can have a proof of the negation of a falsehood of a proposition without having a proof of the proposition itself;  $\neg\neg P$  does not entail  $P$ . However, there is not enough distance to allow an Eccentric intuitionist to question LNC. Since, for an intuitionist,  $P \rightarrow \neg\neg P$  does hold, an intuitionist who denied LNC would still be guilty of misunderstanding their own logic. In this case, then, negation is not understood as a truth-function, but its meaning is such that LNC still holds. However there are other non-classical, paraconsistent, logics in which it fails; to be explicit, logics which treat of propositions that may be both true and false. There is, therefore, room for someone to deny LNC, even if the intuitionist, in his right mind, cannot.

Wright’s position here could be damaging to the would-be Conventionalist about arithmetic. If addition is a function, then it seems there is no room for Eccentricity about its outcome. If it has been properly understood, then the same inputs *must* produce the same outputs. To say otherwise is to betray a misunderstanding of the fact that it is a function.

The brute response to this would be straightforwardly to deny that addition is a function. We should then want to see what sort of story can be told about our arithmetic. The route of producing a purely empirically based philosophy of mathematics was roundly criticised by Frege.<sup>26</sup> It will also encounter the problems which we saw Hero facing above, in the form of the quasi-transcendental argument. A more tempered response is to hold that the best philosophical grasp of addition is that it is a function, but nevertheless one can understand ADDITION without realising it is a function. After all, many people learn to add without knowing what a function is.

The chances of a Conventionalism about arithmetic, supported by the Cautious Strategy, may appear slim. With the expanding study of non-classical logics, Caution about logic may, *contra* Wright, seem plausible after all. The third, separate, area where the Cautious Strategy may pay off is that of metaphysical necessities. The plausibility of Eccentricity about metaphysical necessity has recently been questioned by Peacocke. I now examine Peacocke’s contribution and show that despite his efforts, the Cautious Strategy remains alive and well.

## 7.4 Peacocke’s Objection to Caution

Peacocke sets himself the task of what he terms the Integration Challenge; squaring our epistemology with our metaphysics in a given area. One area

<sup>26</sup>Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A logico-mathematical enquiry into the concept of number* Second revised edition. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

he considers is that of metaphysical necessity.<sup>27</sup> He puts forward what I call a semantic way with necessity, and defends it against Wright's Cautious Man.<sup>28</sup> I shall adumbrate Peacocke's proposal, before showing how the Cautious Strategy is effective against it.

### 7.4.1 Peacocke's Proposal

Peacocke's proposal lays down the Principles of Possibility. These are to fix the concepts involved so that an objective interpretation of 'necessity' is obtained. The aim is to bring about the happy result that we can come to know the facts about what is and what is not metaphysically necessary.

#### Semantic Assignments

The approach proceeds in the standard Fregean vein, using assignments of semantic values to expressions. An assignment gives concepts particular semantic values. Singular concepts are assigned objects; one-place predicates are assigned functions which map from objects to truth values. I write ' $val(C, s)$ ' for the semantic value of a concept  $C$  under an assignment  $s$ . I use ' $a$ ' to refer to the actual assignment.

As well as the atomic cases, there are also complex cases, where the rule for determining the semantic value is a function of the semantic values of its constituents. Writing ' $SV$ ' for semantic value, these rules are written thus:

$$R(SV_1, \dots, SV_n)$$

For example, take the concept HORSE. Under the actual assignment, this concept takes as its semantic value a function which yields the value True just when the object to which it is applied is a horse. Also consider the concept PEDIGREE. This takes as its semantic value a function which similarly picks out such objects of pedigree as there are. These two atomic assignments are used in the determination of the assignment to the complex concept PEDIGREE HORSE, which encompasses all and only those horses which are indeed pedigree. Assignments can be summed up as follows.<sup>29</sup>

#### Semantic Assignment

An assignment  $s$  gives

<sup>27</sup>Peacocke, *Being Known*, ch 4.

<sup>28</sup>Peacocke is explicit about engaging Wright's Cautious Man from Wright, *WOTFM*; see Peacocke, *Being Known*, 187, fn 62. I deploy the more mature strategy as introduced above.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 126.

(i) an atomic concept  $C$  a semantic value:

$$SV = val(C, s)$$

and (ii) a complex concept  $C$  a semantic value based on the rule governing  $C$ :

$$val(C, s) = R(val(C_1, s), \dots, val(C_n, s))$$

### Relevant Similarity and Admissibility

The thought driving Peacocke's proposal is that when some proposition turns out true under all assignments which are relevantly similar to the actual assignment, then that proposition is necessary. To do that, Peacocke introduces a technical concept for the loose notion of 'relevant similarity'. This is the concept **ADMISSIBILITY**. The Principles of Possibility are intended to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for this concept.

Once we have admissibility, we can move to a specification, or characterisation, of what 'necessity' means; 'possibility' is likewise available.<sup>30</sup>

#### Characterisation of Necessity (CHN)

A Thought or proposition is necessary iff it is true in all admissible assignments.

#### Characterisation of Possibility

A Thought or proposition is possible iff it is true under some admissible assignment.

Admissibility is introduced by Peacocke as a property of semantic assignments. In fact, it is properly considered as a relation between assignments; it marks whether one assignment is relevantly similar to another. It is therefore proper to speak of one assignment being admissible from another. I introduce the following short-hand for 'assignment  $t$  is admissible from assignment  $s$ '. If an assignment  $t$  is admissible from  $s$ , then I call it  $s$ -admissible. That means that  $t$  is admissible according to the semantic value assigned to **ADMISSIBLE** by  $s$ .

### The Principles of Possibility

The main Principle of Possibility is the Modal Extension Principle (MEP). This states that an assignment is admissible if it assigns semantic values to a concept

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<sup>30</sup>Peacocke, *Being Known*, 150.

according to the same rule which determines the semantic value on the actual assignment.<sup>31</sup>

**Modal Extension Principle (MEP)**

Where

$$val(C, a) = R(val(C_1, a), \dots, val(C_n, a))$$

then, if an assignment  $s$  is admissible,

$$val(C, s) = R(val(C_1, s), \dots, val(C_n, s))$$

and for *de jure* rigid concepts, if  $s$  is admissible, then

$$val(C, s) = val(C, a)$$

The last clause is to cope with rigid concepts. For instance, ventures Peacocke, one might expect that proper names, if they designate, should designate the same object under all assignments. He writes

[m]y claim is that there is a class of concepts and expressions grasp or understanding of which involves some appreciation that in their case, an assignment is admissible only if it assigns to each one of them its actual semantic value.<sup>32</sup>

Argument about the metaphysics of certain objects may lead us to conclude that they have essential properties. Without those properties the object simply would not be the object that it is. The racehorse Red Rum, for instance, is perhaps essentially an animal, but furthermore essentially a pedigree horse. In that case, no assignment should count as admissible unless it is such that the object which it assigns to 'Red Rum' falls under the semantic value which the assignment gives to the complex concept PEDIGREE HORSE. This sort of case is captured in a further principle.<sup>33</sup>

**A Constitutive Principle—of Fundamental Kinds**

If  $P$  is a property which is an object  $x$ 's fundamental kind, then an assignment is inadmissible if it counts the proposition ' $x$  is  $P$ ' as false.

The principles so far yield the necessary conditions for an assignment to be admissible. In order to complete the notion, we need a sufficiency clause. This is provided thus.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Peacocke, *Being Known*, 134.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 137.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 149.

### Principle of Restrained Recombination

An assignment is admissible if it respects the set of conditions on admissibility given hereto.

Taken together these conditions are the necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept ADMISSIBLE; I refer to them jointly as 'ADM'.<sup>35</sup>

### The Rock and the Hard Place

Peacocke recounts that it took him some time to realise that the Modal Extension Principle can be applied recursively.<sup>36</sup> The nature of that epiphany is of prime importance. Peacocke uses the recursion to save his position from being 'stuck between a rock and a hard place'.<sup>37</sup> It will not do for a theory of metaphysical necessity to turn out to be contingently true. So it is essential that ADM, being the specification of ADMISSIBLE, itself turns out to be necessary.<sup>38</sup> And yet the theory will be circular if it is *stipulated* that it be necessary. Peacocke's hope is that by applying MEP recursively the theory will turn out necessary without him having to stipulate it as such.

How is that meant to work? If ADMISSIBLE were stipulated *de jure* rigid under the actual assignment, then it follows from MEP that on any admissible assignment, ADMISSIBLE will be assigned its semantic value according to the rule which governs its actual assignment. But even without stipulating the rigidity of ADMISSIBLE, MEP can be used recursively. One assignment is only admissible from another if it assigns concepts their semantic values according to the same rule. It follows that all semantic assignments which are admissible from the actual assignment must give ADMISSIBLE its semantic value according to the same rule as the actual assignment. In that case ADM holds true under all assignments which are admissible from the actual one, and so according to CHN, it holds necessarily.

### 7.4.2 A Cautious Reply to Peacocke's Proposal

Cautious Peacocke is a fictional colleague of Peacocke who does not see the light when Peacocke does. He continues to be agnostic about the necessity of the theory. Can Cautious Peacocke understand the theory and still remain agnostic? To show that his agnosticism is coherent, and indeed warranted,

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<sup>35</sup>It is straightforward to transpose these conditions into possession conditions as introduced in Christopher Peacocke, *A Study of Concepts* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1992).

<sup>36</sup>Peacocke, *Being Known*, 151.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 151–2.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

I show that by the lights of the theory itself, ADM can be possibly true and even possibly necessarily true without actually being true. To do this I draw a parallel with Kripke's possible world semantics, and look at the analogues of the three main relations of accessibility between worlds; reflexivity, transitivity and symmetry. This is how the parallel is to work: instead of worlds I consider semantic assignments and instead of accessibility I consider admissibility. What is in focus throughout is the semantic value assigned to ADM itself.

**The Relation of Admissibility**

First the analogue of the modal principle T ( $\Box P \rightarrow P$ ):

$$\Box ADM \rightarrow ADM \quad T^*$$

This holds when assignments are admissible from themselves. *I.e.* ADMISSIBLE receives such a value that the assignment itself falls under that concept. Consider figure 7.1. The boxes represent assignments, and the arrows show the relation of admissibility between assignments. When a proposition is shown to be true under an assignment, it is written in the box.

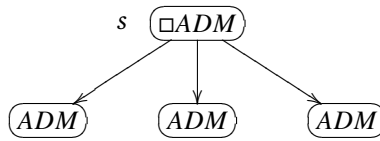


Figure 7.1: The Relation of Admissibility

In figure 7.2, ADM is necessary under  $s$ , and so ADM is true under all assignments that are admissible according to  $s$ . Where reflexivity holds, one of those assignments is  $s$  itself. If the relation between assignments is reflexive, then whenever  $\Box ADM$  is true, ADM is true, which means that  $T^*$  holds.

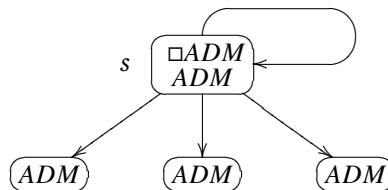


Figure 7.2: Reflexivity



Inspection of ADM reveals it to be reflexive. Intuitively, the idea is that assignments which are relevantly similar to the actual one will count as admissible. The actual assignment is relevantly similar to itself, since it is self-identical. ADM does, therefore, yield reflexivity.

Next consider the analogue of 4 ( $\Box P \rightarrow \Box\Box P$ ):

$$\Box\text{ADM} \rightarrow \Box\Box\text{ADM} \quad 4^*$$

This is a consequence of transitivity. Transitivity means that where  $u$  is  $t$ -admissible and  $t$  is  $s$ -admissible, then  $u$  is  $s$ -admissible. If transitivity applies, then  $4^*$  will hold. Take any assignment  $s$ , where  $\Box\text{ADM}$ . Then on all  $s$ -admissible assignments, ADM is true. Now consider one of those  $s$ -admissible assignments, say  $t$ . Figure 7.3 shows the case where ADM is true under  $t$ , and so ADM is true on any assignment which is  $t$ -admissible. That means that  $\Box\text{ADM}$  is true under

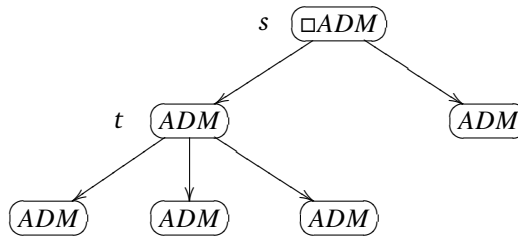


Figure 7.3: Transitivity

$t$ , where  $t$  is any  $s$ -admissible assignment (figure 7.4).

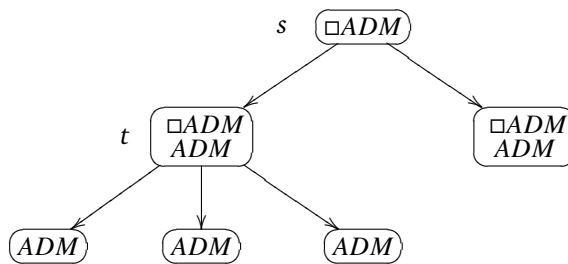


Figure 7.4: Transitivity and 4 (i)

Since  $\Box\text{ADM}$  is true under any  $s$ -admissible assignment,  $\Box\Box\text{ADM}$  is true under  $s$  (figure 7.5). Therefore if the relation between admissible assignments is transitive, we have  $4^*$ . That is, when  $\Box\text{ADM}$  is true under  $s$ , we will also have  $\Box\Box\text{ADM}$ .

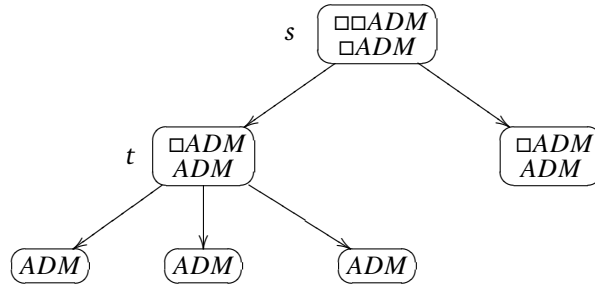


Figure 7.5: Transitivity and 4 (ii)

Does ADM support transitivity? The answer lies in the recursive nature of MEP. Any  $s$ -admissible assignment must have the same rule as  $s$  for determining the semantic value of ADMISSIBLE. Otherwise it would fail to be  $s$ -admissible. If ADM is true under  $s$ , then it will be true under all  $s$ -admissible assignments. Hence ADM will be true under all the assignments admissible according to those, and so on. Thus ADM does grant transitivity; 4\* holds good.

Lastly, take the analogue of the modal principle  $5\Diamond (\Diamond\Box P \rightarrow \Box P)$ , which is the dual of 5 ( $\Diamond P \rightarrow \Box\Diamond P$ ).

$$\Diamond\Box ADM \rightarrow \Box ADM \qquad 5\Diamond^*$$

This is a product of symmetry. Symmetry says that when  $t$  is  $s$ -admissible then  $s$  is  $t$ -admissible. If the relation between admissible assignments is symmetric, then  $5\Diamond^*$  will hold. Begin with the antecedent,  $\Diamond\Box ADM$ . It is possible that ADM is necessary, so by Characterisation of Possibility we know that there is at least one  $s$ -admissible assignment under which  $\Box ADM$  is true. Call it  $t$  (figure 7.6).

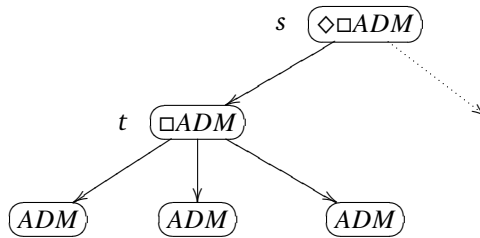


Figure 7.6: Symmetry (i)

ADM is necessary under  $t$ , so by Characterisation of Necessity, ADM is true under all  $t$ -admissible assignments. Assuming that symmetry holds, then since  $t$  is  $s$ -admissible,  $s$  is  $t$ -admissible. Since  $s$  is  $t$ -admissible and ADM is true on all

$t$ -admissible assignments, ADM is true under  $s$  as in figure 7.7.

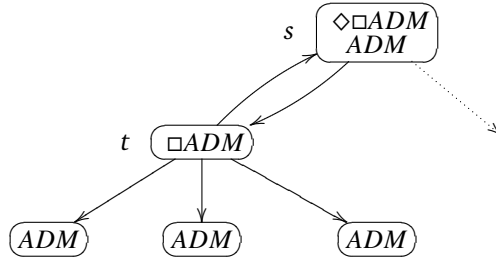


Figure 7.7: Symmetry (ii)

If ADM is true under  $s$ , then ADM is true on any  $s$ -admissible assignment. By Characterisation of Necessity, that makes ADM necessary under  $s$  (figure 7.8).

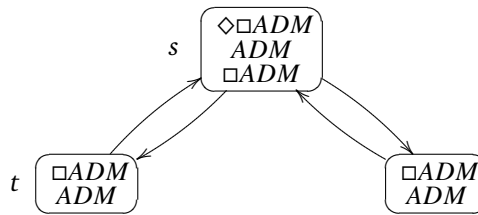


Figure 7.8: Symmetry (iii)

On the assumption that symmetry holds between the assignments to ADMISSIBLE, we have shown that wherever we have  $◇□ADM$  we also have  $□ADM$ , which is for  $5◇^*$  to hold.

### The Cautious Stand

Cautious Peacocke maintains that ADM does not license symmetry in the relation of admissibility between semantic assignments. He admits that if ADM is true, then it is so necessarily. However, it is consistent with the structure induced by ADM that it be false. Figure 7.9 presents Cautious Peacocke's reason for doubt.

Under  $s$  it is possible that ADM is true, and so possible that it is necessarily true. But it need not be true, and so as it happens, need not necessarily be true. Were it to follow from ADM that the relation between admissible assignments turned out symmetric then this position would not be coherent. But where both

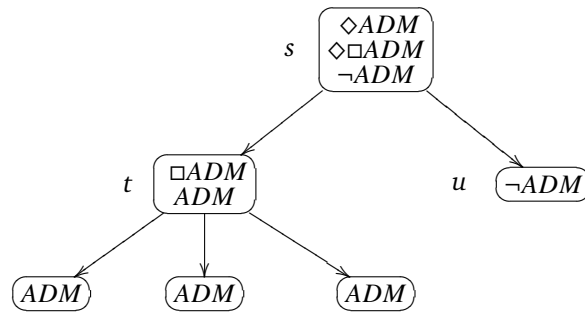


Figure 7.9: Cautious Contention

reflexivity and transitivity do follow—and hence  $T^*$  and  $4^*$ —symmetry does not. And that means that  $5\Diamond^*$  fails.

This is how things stand, intuitively. ADM cannot *use* the concept ADMISSIBLE. If it did, then it would be circular. But since it cannot make use of the concept, the most it can do is to guarantee assignments to ADMISSIBLE downstream, so to speak. Hence we do get transitivity. But because no use can be made of ADMISSIBLE, no guarantee can be made of what has happened upstream, as it were. Hence we do not get symmetry.

### The Stooge and the Eccentric

Cautious Peacocke understands the proposal embodied in ADM, and can coherently deny it. The bone of contention is whether the proposal is actually true, or only possibly true. Those two options are consistent, but where Peacocke is happy to make that leap of faith, Cautious Peacocke is not.

The second order part of the Cautious Strategy is therefore clear. What of the stooge amongst the normals? What of the equivalent of the Hero, the Mirthless Man, and Sally Anne, for this case?

At first sight, it seems that a stooge who does not understand ADMISSIBLE in line with Peacocke’s theory would be able to mimic the regular linguistic behaviour concerning ‘necessary’. However, the other *proviso* on the stooge was that he come to understand the word, even if he lacked the appropriate faculties. The special issue here is that Peacocke’s proposal intends to make metaphysical necessities a matter of a semantic theory. It seems then that the appropriate faculty which the stooge would need to lack is the one which enables us to hold the meaning of words stable. The Cautious Strategy has no truck with meaning scepticism or the rule-following considerations generally. The mooted stooge, like Sally Anne, suffers from incoherence.

If Cautious Peacocke puts forward the Eccentric instead then the Strategy

fairs somewhat better. The Eccentric is endowed with an understanding of ‘necessity’, such that whilst he agrees in the main with the regulars, he stands out from the crowd in that he dissents on key points. Were the society sufficiently philosophically clued up, he might, for instance, even dissent from the necessity of ADM.

This line of thought highlights how very much of metaphysical necessity is not settled by Peacocke’s theory. He supposes, for instance, that some terms will need to be *de jure* rigid. We might argue with Dummett (as in the chapter above) that we do not need rigidity at all.<sup>39</sup> Or if we grant that some terms will be rigid, how on Peacocke’s theory, do we know which? Recall the theory is intended to solve the problem of the epistemology of metaphysical necessity. Even granting that the Principles of Possibility are necessary and sufficient to fix the concept ADMISSIBLE, and thus NECESSARY, that does not help us determine what is rigid or not. There is, therefore, still plenty of room for Eccentricity. Where the Eccentric Modaliser is plausible, then the Cautious Strategy can be brought to bear.

## 7.5 Conclusion

Suppose the Cautious Strategy succeeds in supporting a Conventionalism about necessity as the early Wright hoped. Could such a Conventionalism survive on the proposed framework of T&O? The answer is that, strictly speaking, it cannot. The reason is that the early Wright explicitly argues that necessary statements are not true or false; they do not relate to facts. The original motivation for the criterion of Genuine Assertion was to avoid ‘assertion for cheap’.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, assertion for cheap is precisely what T&O offers us. As long as there is syntax and discipline in an area, then there are (at least) Minimal truths, which are up for being asserted and believed.

If the Cautious Strategy were to be transposed into the modern framework, it would become an argument that Cognitive Command failed for the area in question. As I showed in the chapter above, Cognitive Command as a Crux within a pluralist theory of truth has issues of its own. I then proposed one way in which it might be saved, using Superassertibility and states of information under the Dossier Model. This bolstering of Cognitive Command was limited to where the target area was Epistemically (or at least Assertorically) Constrained. Nevertheless, the failure of Cognitive Command would signal that True Relativism holds. Thus, the success of the transposed Cautious Strategy about logical necessity, for instance, would show that the area is, at heart, relativistic.

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<sup>39</sup>§5.4, 124ff.

<sup>40</sup>Wright, *WOTFM*, 448.

This much can be accommodated on the framework of T&O. However, what is distinctive of the Cautious Strategy is the denial that statements of necessity have a ‘seriously representative’ quality; the quality picked out by the criterion of Genuine Assertion. The purpose of mounting such an argument was to leave room for Coventionalism. This involves a claim, similar to one motivation for Expressivism broached in the previous chapter, that the direction of fit for necessary statements is not from the world to us, but from us to the world.

The Cautious Strategy itself does not address the direction of fit; and I have not considered what story the Conventionalist might tell. It is clear however that whatever the story is, it will not be cashed out in terms of Genuine Facts. Whilst the framework of T&O can accommodate the lack of Genuine Facts in an area, which within the new framework would be True Relativism, it makes no place for cashing the metaphor of the direction of fit. So it is not just that the area admits of a Relativism, although that is consonant with Conventionalism generally. Conventionalism also involves the statements having a special motivational quality, which contrasts with ‘seriously representational’ statements.

We might cede that we can call the statements true on some minimal theory of truth. But we should still want to pick out the peculiar fashion in which they are normative; the special attraction. In the Conventionalist case, this would square with the direction of fit running the other way. Buying assertion for cheap and rebranding ‘belief’, ‘assertion’, and ‘truth’ obscures this original motivation. It might be argued that the sort of fact involved can be normative; when we believe in this sort of fact, then the co-ordinate sort of belief is able to motivate one to action. Then the facts (not Genuine Facts, mind) involved might be normative facts in some distinctive fashion. But the transition into the framework of T&O is certainly not harmlessly terminological if it commits the Conventionalist to postulating such things.

What would help is a new dimension—a new Crux—for expressing the distinctive normativity of the necessary statement. The possibility of new Cruces is something which Wright explicitly countenances. As well as allowing expression of the Conventionalist motivations, such a Crux would also go some way to appeasing the disgruntled Expressivist from the last chapter. The analysis needed for a detailed proposal of a new dimension to anti-/realist debates along these lines is clearly a substantial undertaking. I provide some preliminary thoughts in the next, and final, chapter.

## Chapter 8

# Summary Conclusion

[T]he thought is always consoling that, often in philosophy, it is more instructive to travel than to get anywhere.

Crispin Wright<sup>1</sup>

### 8.1 Summary

In this final chapter I give a synopsis of my thesis. I then offer a very rough sketch as to how one might augment the framework of T&O with a new Crux, which would allow the Expressivist about morality and the Conventionalist about necessity to be represented.

#### The Project of T&O

The project of T&O is ambitious. It aims to provide a way of disentangling a variety of different arguments which were all caught by Dummett's original intuition of an 'anti-/realist' debate. In the first chapter I began (§1.2) by introducing the project in more detail. This highlighted the programmatic assumption that assertion should be treated as essentially syntactic. Building on that assumption, I presented (§1.2.2) Wright's Minimal basis of a theory of truth with the Platitudes. Any predicate which abides by the Platitudes is to count as a truth predicate. This opens the way for a pluralism about truth.

There are various problems with a pluralism about truth. To start with it might be thought that it makes the concept of truth ambiguous. I showed (§1.3.1) how it does not in fact have that consequence by comparing the case

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<sup>1</sup>Wright, 'Realism, Anti-Realism, Irrealism, Quasi-Realism'.

with that of identity. I then noted (§1.3.2) that the Platitudes enforce the fact that for any single discourse, there can only be a single truth predicate. One further issue was whether there is a plurality of discourses to support the pluralism about truth. I made an attempt (§1.3.4) to allay concerns in this direction. To begin with, I invoked an intuitive analogy with geography. The discourses are to be compared to mountains. The problem of telling one discourse from another is then analogous to telling mountains apart. First the peaks are distinguished. The suggestion here was to identify distinctive sets of key concepts which feature in the area of talk in question. We then need to define where an area begins and ends. As in the geographical case, I proposed that we can do this more or less arbitrarily. A slightly more formal gloss on this approach was given in terms of classes of utterance types. If these efforts to prop up the pluralism of discourses fail, then I noted it must be taken as a further programmatic assumption of T&O that the problem is, in fact, soluble.

### **The Argument for Inflation**

Since pluralism about truth involves truth having characteristics which vary with the area of talk, it finds a natural enemy in traditional deflationism. The traditional deflationist holds that ‘true’ is a merely grammatical device which is introduced and entirely explained by the Disquotational Schema. In the second chapter, I covered Wright’s Argument for Inflation in detail. This aims to show how traditional deflationism is incoherent; that if the Disquotational Schema does apply to truth then ‘true’ cannot be simply a grammatical device.

It was surprisingly hard to reconstruct a cogent argument from the material. It involves an interplay between two norms; truth and warranted assertibility. Everyone grants that both norms do hold sway. The Argument seeks to claim that because of the way in which they are yolked together, there is no space for truth to be a merely grammatical device. The second, later, presentation of the Argument was also examined. Both presentations were found to fail in the detail of their intention, *viz.* to show that the traditional deflationist is incoherent. However, one driving thought which emerged from the Argument presented itself; this is that justification for assertion will transmit across the Disquotational Schema thus:

$$WA[T[P]] \text{ iff } WA[P]$$

I concluded (§2.5) that if there were broad ways in which the characteristics of warranted assertibility can be seen to vary across areas of talk, then those features can still be seen as demarcating something of philosophical interest.



That is: the deflationist need not inflate, but he should still take account of these interesting features. It is for this reason that he might prefer to rename T&O as '*Warrant and Objectivity*'.

Wright holds that the Cruces are debates about whether particular features are characteristics of truth. It is open to the deflationist to hold that they are not characteristics of truth, but rather characteristics of warranted assertibility, which, because justification for assertion transmits over the Disquotational Schema, are *reflected* in the truth predicate. The truth predicate is perfectly well equipped for that as a mere grammatical device. But nevertheless he should have to reckon with the features. And this conclusion extends to a modern minimalist such as Horwich. Although Horwich does not hold that truth is a merely grammatical device, he does hold that the Disquotational Schema alone provides sufficient conceptual resource to understand it. The Argument for Inflation does not touch him; he is not a traditional deflationist. Suppose with Wright that the characteristics are characteristics of truth and not (primarily) of warranted assertibility. Then the Disquotational Schema is not solely adequate for our understanding of truth. On the other hand, Horwich can insist that the Disquotational Schema is solely sufficient. But then, just like the traditional deflationist, he must reckon with the features of warranted assertibility which T&O brings out.

### Epistemic Constraint and Justification

In chapter three I supported one of the features; Epistemic Constraint. I did so by arguing for the plausibility of a feature of warranted assertibility, which turned on the availability of justification for asserting a proposition, when it is true. Where such justification is always available, I called the area *Assertorically Constrained* (§3.2). I stated (§3.2.1) that some concepts were *Essentially Apparent* meaning that when they obtain we humans cannot fail (in the right conditions) to have evidence for the fact. One example of a philosopher who held this about colour is Sellars, who held that the following was a necessary link between colour concepts and standard observers:

x is red iff x would *look* red to standard observers under standard conditions.<sup>2</sup>

I expressed the view that RED and other concepts which are involved in *how things are for us* are Essentially Apparent. The areas of talk which they pick out will be Assertorically Constrained. I then provided (§§3.2.3, 3.2.4, 3.2.5) three further examples of Assertorically Constrained areas; the Law, Art History

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<sup>2</sup>Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, §12, 36, emphases in the original.

and the Tennis Match. I argued that these bolster the plausibility of the usefulness of a Crux based on Assertoric Constraint. I then briefly dealt with the Euthyphro Contrast, as a distinction within areas of talk which are Assertorically Constrained. The contrast is between whether the normal observers are correct to assert that the object is red *because* it is red, or whether the object is red *because* the reaction and pronouncement of the normal observers goes to determine the correctness of the assertion.

A structural issue then presented itself. The notion of warrant involved so far in Assertoric Constraint has the problem that it cannot admit of fallibility or of ignorance. The point of Assertoric Constraint is not to demarcate areas in which we are infallible and omniscient. In order to solve this looming structural issue with Assertoric Constraint, I put forward (§3.3) a constitutive analysis of Moore's Paradox. This consisted of a set of principles which are jointly necessary and sufficient for the paradox to present itself. The outcome of the comparison with Moore's Paradox was the proposal that warrants be best considered as involving states of information, and that these states of information need to be appropriately indexed. I therefore revised Assertoric Constraint by indexing the states of information involved.

This led to a discussion (§3.4) of Superassertibility, which is Wright's construction of a candidate truth predicate for Epistemically Constrained areas of talk. I mooted (§3.4.2) a realist who holds that All Roads Lead to Rome, being the belief that whatever state of information you begin with, after enough investigation (whichever road you travel), you will always converge on the same state (Rome). A purely formal objection is raised that a relativist might deny Convergence; that for any two states of information there will be a third which is an improvement on both. Since All Roads Lead to Rome entails Convergence, this relativist can be seen as an anti-realist.

In order to win through to Epistemic Constraint from Assertoric Constraint I showed (§§3.5.3, 3.5.4) how, *modulo* differences about ineffable truths, they can be inter-derivable. I gave an argument for people who are consistently internalist; that is, internalist about justification and knowledge. I also suggested that a consistent externalist might be swayed by this argument. However, I noted that 'mixed up' people (who are internalist about justification and externalist about knowledge, or *vice versa*) would not be swayed.

Those in the legitimate scope of the considerations were therefore given good reason to agree that Epistemic Constraint is a plausible, interesting, principle. Those who fall outside the scope were still left with Assertoric Constraint as an independently plausible principle, based on the notion of justification for assertion.

## Cognitive Command

Cognitive Command was the topic of chapter four. I explained it (§4.1) as a principle governing whether or not an area can admit of disputes in which neither party has any fault; leaving room for what was called True Relativism. This faced (§4.3) an immediate, sharp, problem, that the situation envisaged is not logically possible. I advanced (§4.4) Wright's response to this problem. This involved examining a principle of agnosticism, and augmenting it with a special case of compound ignorance which Wright labelled a 'Quandary'. I showed (§4.4.3) the way in which Wright himself gives up on the idea of a True Relativism. Then, taking up the formal thoughts on Superassertibility from the previous chapter, I supplemented them (§4.5.3) with the Dossier Model of states of information. Using this, I proposed a way in which a True Relativist might deny Convergence, and so deny that All Roads Lead to Rome. If these considerations are correct, then we can re-instate Cognitive Command in the sense in which it was originally intended, *viz.* pivoting on the possibility of blameless disagreements. It is a limited victory; the considerations, if correct, have been developed for areas which are Epistemically (or Assertorically) Constrained. But then that was the target area where the problem for Cognitive Command became so acute. It is not clear whether this approach could be extended to support areas which are not Epistemically Constrained.

## Three Dummettian Anti-Realisms

Cognitive Command concluded my view of the framework of T&O. I then began to look at some anti-realist paradigms which the framework disqualifies, whether explicitly or otherwise. Wright's broad claim in T&O is that the motivation behind Dummettian anti-realism is wrapped up with Epistemic Constraint. The motivations behind it should therefore officially be seen as to do with that Crux. In chapter five I introduced three sorts of Dummettian anti-realist which I distinguished as Stances. The First Stance (§5.2) holds a complex position in the philosophy of language. The Law of Excluded Middle is a casualty for some areas of talk, under certain programmatic assumptions which Dummett makes about how a Theory of Meaning is best to be constructed. The assumptions are first that language does admit of systematic regimentation; second the decision to aim for a molecular rather than a holistic theory; and third the decision to aim for a Full-Blooded Theory as opposed to a Modest one. I suggested (§5.5.1) that this complex motivation does not line up happily with a single Crux in the framework of T&O.

The Second Stance (§5.3) is where I dealt with Dummett's famous example of Jones. This Stance relies on the principle that where something is true, then

there is something in virtue of which it is so. What Dummett calls a ‘realist’ here is someone who denies that principle, and holds that there can be Bare Truths. This is apt to strike one as the wrong way up; surely the realist should be sticking to the idea that truths always have something that make them true, while the anti-realist denies it? This is simply a matter of terminology; what is important is not so much how we label the positions but rather the substance of the dispute. I proposed (§5.5.2) that this Stance can be accommodated on the framework; the position which maintains Bare Truths (the ‘realist’) being equivalent on the framework to holding that an area of talk is only Minimally true. There is nothing in virtue of which the statements are true, but nevertheless we do have the appropriate syntax and discipline to qualify as asserting and denying them.

The Third Stance I examined (§5.4) is taken in response to a Kripkean line of thought about Essentialism. It employs a Dummettian counter-proposal to the Kripkean thesis of rigid designation. I provided (§5.4.5) one way in which the demonstrative can be treated such that it is not formalised as a rigid designator. I then posited (§5.4.6) that the Kripkean intuition about Essentialism could seem more powerful than it might be, if one assumed the rigidity of the demonstrative. The more sophisticated regimentation allows better expression of the content of Kripke’s intuition about Essentialism whilst at the same time reducing the pull of that intuition.

This Third Stance is nuanced, holding that issues of metaphysics *might* be down to how our language works. In so far as the Kripkean rigidity of the proper name, and so the demonstrative, threatens that position, then that threat can be dealt with. I claimed (§5.5.3) that this sort of anti-realist could be aligned with a broadly Wittgensteinian attempt to dispel metaphysical issues *via* proper examination of the workings of language.

## **Error Theory and Expressivism**

Chapter six first dealt with Mackie’s Error Theory. While we can, do, and should, make assertions which involve moral properties, Mackie holds that nevertheless they are all false because there are no such moral properties to make them true. I compared this (§6.2.1) with Field’s nominalism about arithmetic. The chief difference which came out was as follows. Field is under an onus to argue for the dispensibility of arithmetic, in order that it may be a conservative extension to science. Mackie is left with the task of maintaining that the moral statements are useful, but without being true, and that they are, in an important sense, not dispensable. In short, Mackie is going to need to provide adequate explanation for *why* we engage in moral talk. In whatever fashion the detail of that

explanation proceeds, it will issue in conditions under which it is going to be correct and incorrect to utter the moral assertions. Then those conditions will transmit across the Disquotational Schema such that we will be warranted in calling an assertion true when we are warranted in making the assertion. So we shall be able to call them true and false after all. I then presented (§6.2.4) one way of reconstructing an Error Theory, such that the twin motivations of Queerness and Relativity can be respected within the framework. This involved comparison with the person who entertains Bare Truths.

In the second half of chapter six I broached (§6.3) the Expressivist tradition. This falls foul of the framework of T&O because it proposes that moral statements look like assertions, while deep down they are not. This is ruled out by the foundational assumption of T&O that assertion is essentially syntactic. I looked at three positions in the Expressivist tradition. The first is Ayer's Logical Positivism. This was seen to be motivated by the need to assign moral statements some sort of meaning whilst maintaining that it cannot be assertoric content, since they are not verifiable. The second motivation for Expressivism I gave was that of the Humean folk-psychological model. Beliefs alone cannot motivate. Moral statements (in the best case) do motivate; so to do that they must be expressive of desires rather than beliefs. The third position in the Expressivist tradition which I considered was Blackburn's Quasi-Realist. This is special in that for him the Expressivism is a stepping-stone on the way to reconstructing moral truth. The aim of the Quasi-Realist is to win back to a position where we can see moral statements as assertions.

The Expressivist is faced with a problem of how to deal with the logic of moral debates. This is one of the chief reasons which Wright cites in order to support the view that although the framework has no place for Expressivism, it is no great loss. I showed (§6.3.2) the way in which Blackburn initially attempts to solve the problem of logic within a moral debate, using gerunds and gerundival operators 'Boo!' and 'Hooray!'. It was criticised since on this view, failing to follow a moral *modus ponendo ponens* turned out to be at worst a moral failing; there is no failure of rationality. I introduced (§6.3.3) one answer to that problem in a gerundival attitudinal logic of my own. This type of response was beset with a further problem from Hale; that of mixed conditionals. These are intended to have a truth-apt antecedent but an evaluative consequent. It is clear that an attitudinal gerundival logic has no way of coping with arguments which involve such conditionals. However, I pointed out (§6.3.4) that one route for the Expressivist here is to maintain that there are no such conditionals in moral debate; it is only when a moral attitude is taken to the antecedent that the conditional can feature in a moral debate. Or so it is open for the Expressivist to maintain.

Blackburn's Quasi-Realist, on the other hand, is impressed by the problem of the mixed conditional. I presented (§6.3.7) his newer system, AC, which treats of sentences rather than gerunds. Some adjustments were made due to Hale, and the system does indeed look plausible as a way of maintaining consistency amongst sets of propositions and attitudes of insistence and tolerance that one has taken towards them. Wright wonders how this reconstruction project can be well-conceived. Expressivism starts out by claiming that moral statements look like assertions, but in fact are not. That is their distinctive position. Blackburn's Quasi-Realist project aims to reconstruct truth for moral statements such that he can once again dignify moral assertions as such. Why not just admit they are truth-apt in the first place? Blackburn's response to this is that the route one takes is just as important as where one ends up.

I then looked at (§6.3.8) the motivation for Expressivism from Humean folk psychology. On the common folk-psychological picture, beliefs and desires are separate psychological states. They are characterised by their different directions of fit with the world. Our beliefs are responsible to the way the world is, whereas desires go the other way; they describe ways we should like the world to be. Moral statements are not assertions since they express desires, and not beliefs. On the syntactic approach to assertion, we find a Minimal notion of truth, *via* the Truth/Assertion Platitude that to assert is to assert as true. The Assertion Belief Link also drives the Minimalist to propose a lightweight notion of belief. We might hope that the debate will be simply terminological. The parties agreed to the Truth/Assertion Platitude and to the Assertion Belief Link. The difference comes when the Minimalist insists that assertion is essentially syntactic. That engenders a lightweight notion of truth, and of belief to go with it. But to follow the Expressivist thought we then need this lightweight notion of belief to be motivational, and not only indicative of a psychological state which is purely representational. The Minimalist proposal, then, seems to bring with it mixed psychological states, at least as a baseline from which to argue. The response I mounted (§6.3.8) was that a mixed psychological state is not common ground to which all parties agree. Therefore it is a substantial matter, and not simply terminological, to adopt a Minimalism about folk psychology.

### **Caution and Convention**

It appears, then, that there is no dimension or Crux for expressing the distinctive normativity of statements in an area of talk, such as morality. One aspect that the Expressivist can be seen to be attempting to capture is precisely that distinctive pull. This is not to say that he succeeds. But the framework of T&O is not able to register the Expressivist's philosophical intention. In chapter seven

I examined a Conventionalism about necessity which faces the same short shrift as the Expressivist. In this case the proponent comes from Wright's earlier work of trying to make sense of a Wittgensteinian line of thought that statements of mathematics might better be considered as invented rather than discovered. This is what I called a Conventionalism about necessity. I showed (§7.2.1) that Wright's Conventionalism can be seen as a third sort of conventionalist approach alongside radical and moderate varieties.

I put forward (§7.3) Wright's Cautious Strategy as arguing that the facts in an area are not Genuine Facts, which are up for Genuine Assertion. The principle of what counts as Genuine Assertion is itself an ancestor of Cognitive Command. I showed how Caution had better not be a sort of scepticism, but rather a special type of agnosticism. Following Wright, I argued (§7.3.4) that this sort of agnosticism was not available in every area. The strategy then hit a problem in the form of Wright's own objection that this sort of agnosticism about necessary statements cannot be universally available; that is: it cannot be applied to all necessary statements at once. In order to back this claim up I provided (§7.3.5) Wright's quasi-transcendental argument that empirico-theoretic predictions require *some* conditionals, at least, to be necessary. Wright's own response to this problem is to introduce the Eccentric, whose sense of modality is off-beat, rather than absent.

More recently the Cautious Strategy has come under fire from Peacocke. I summarised (§7.4) Peacocke's proposal for a semantic way with metaphysical necessity. This involves the Principles of Possibility, which seek to fix the meaning of a new relation of *admissibility* amongst semantic assignments such that a proposition is necessary on an assignment if, and only if, it is true on all admissible assignments. I argued (§7.4.2) that the proposal cannot succeed in fixing the meaning of *ADMISSIBILITY*. This argument involved an application of the Cautious Strategy.

## 8.2 A New Crux?

It seems, then, that the drive behind the Cautious Strategy was good. The Conventionalism which it was invented to support, however, does not survive on the framework of T&O. The elusive but distinctive fashion in which mathematical or logical statements are normative does not feature as a Crux. The Conventionalist finds himself in much the same position as the Expressivist. They both have intuitive motivations for undercutting the thought that statements in an area are representational. Within the framework of T&O one can draw the distinction between a heavy-weight representation and a light-weight version as

expressed in the Correspondence Platitude. However, characterising statements as possessing only light-weight representative powers is not sufficient to mark them as endowed with the intuitive type of normativity.

The discussion so far points to the fact that there is a gap in the framework of T&O. I shall now briefly sketch a proposal for a new Crux which would fill the gap. It seems to me that the reason the framework does not cope adequately with the Expressivist about morality and the Conventionalist about logic or mathematics is the inability of the framework to indicate the involvement of the normative; the action-guiding nature of some areas of talk. I believe there is a debate which fits quite naturally with Dummett's original intuition about what distinguishes an anti-realist from the realist.

The datum for the extension to the framework of T&O is that some areas of talk are action-guiding. More precisely, the statements of some areas are apt to feature in practical reasoning. The definitive mark of practical reason is that its conclusion is an action, rather than a proposition. The thinking behind the new Crux concerns action-guiding reason. The proposed anti-/realist debate concerns the source of such necessity. The anti-realist will claim that the normativity in the area is constructed by us. The realist on the other hand holds that source of the normativity, although it does move us, is nevertheless external to us.

We can generalise the analogy that Wright makes of moves in a game and the descriptive and prescriptive norms which attach to the moves in that game. He uses the analogy to support the idea that assertoric discourse has a norm of warranted assertibility in operation, which is both descriptive and prescriptive. The analogy as described by Wright is closed under assertion, in that it concerns only assertoric discourse. But suppose we relaxed that restriction and allowed actions other than assertion to feature as possessing the prescriptive characteristic. Such a set-up could be used to model the practical syllogism, being action-guiding reasoning whose conclusion is an action, including actions other than assertion. The mark of normativity would attach in the first place to the action in which the reasoning issued. In the second place it can be seen as a feature of the premisses in the practical syllogism which led to the action.

### 8.2.1 Expressivism

The new Crux would allow us to provide a place for the distinctive part of Expressivism. Expressivism was ruled out on the grounds that there is no such thing as deep syntax. In order to fit on the framework of T&O the Expressivist will have to give up that part of his thesis, and accept that moral statements are Minimally true. The distinctiveness of the statements will still feature since



the Expressivist will argue that the motivational quality of the moral statement arises internally to us; the source of the normativity is *constructed*.

We can now see how an anti-/realist debate could arise around such a distinctive normativity. Dummett asks after the source and how we recognise it. I propose that this sort of anti-realist denies that necessity is up for *recognition* at all. This is not to deny that statements of necessity can be true; on the framework of T&O the statements will be truth-apt. But the anti-realist will argue that the source of the necessity is best seen as arising from within ourselves. The realist, or platonist, on the other hand will hold that the source of the necessity is outwith ourselves. It is easier, at least *prima facie*, for the anti-realist to explain the pull of the normative, since on his view it arises from within us. Given this view it is clear that a natural partner will be a relativity about the requirements of the norm. The realist, on the other hand, will be drawn to an absolute conception. And he, at least on the face of it, will have trouble with how the normativity motivates us. However I do not mean to suggest that an anti-realist in this sense must be a relativist about morality, nor that a realist cannot be a relativist.

That is by way of a sketch to make the extension appear plausible. If we substitute Hume for the anti-realist and Kant for the realist I believe we can see a familiar dialectic emerging.

### 8.2.2 Conventionalism

My tentative suggestion is to extend the framework of T&O with a new Crux, concerning the source of normativity. This is to involve practical reason, and so the scope of the prescriptive characteristic no longer applies just to the assertoric content of the propositions of the discourse but also to actions in general. Suppose we allow that this tentative sketch is promising enough with respect to allowing the Expressivist contention about direction of fit to be represented on the framework. I claim that the Expressivist and Conventionalist are in essentially the same boat. So I am committed to the proposed extension being of help with accommodating the Conventionalist.

At first sight my proposal does not help at all. It seems that logical reasoning is closed under assertoric warrant; there is no further action required outside pure reason. However, it is this assumption which I should like to question. I hold that Carroll shows that there is more involved in logical reasoning than the accepting of premisses; there is also an act of endorsement.<sup>3</sup> Here I reproduce the essential parts of the argument which Carroll sets up between Achilles and the Tortoise. Achilles is challenged to produce his reasoning for the conclusion

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<sup>3</sup>Lewis Carroll, 'What the Tortoise said to Achilles' in *Mind*, 14 (1895).

of a simple *modus ponendo ponens*.

(A)  $P$  and  $\lceil \text{if } P \text{ then } Q \rceil$

Achilles holds that  $Q$  follows from (A); logic tells us that this is the case. But, asks the Tortoise, should we not be explicit about the reasoning involved? What, exactly, is the principle involved in moving from (A) to the conclusion  $Q$ ? Achilles writes out the principle on which he is relying:

(B) (A) and  $\lceil \text{if } (A) \text{ then } Q \rceil$

The Tortoise grants (A), so if he also grants (B) then it seems that Achilles has indeed given his reasoning to the conclusion  $Q$ . The Tortoise, however, is not so easily pleased; he does grant (A) and (B), but repeats his request for Achilles to be explicit about how he reasons from there to the conclusion. Achilles once again obliges:

(C) (B) and  $\lceil \text{if } (B) \text{ then } Q \rceil$

And from here it is clear that Achilles is off on an infinite regress.

I take the lesson from Carroll's story to be as follows. The descriptive content of the conditional:

If  $P$  and  $\lceil \text{if } P \text{ then } Q \rceil$ , then  $Q$

is different in kind from the content of the inference rule

$$\frac{P \quad P \rightarrow Q}{Q} \text{ MPP}$$

The latter has a normative aspect; it is not just permitting the conclusion of  $Q$  from  $P$  and  $\lceil \text{if } P \text{ then } Q \rceil$ . It is an imperative: from  $P$  and  $\lceil \text{if } P \text{ then } Q \rceil$  *infer*  $Q$ .

I hold that it is this normative aspect which can be seen as the subject of an anti-/realist debate in a similar fashion to the case for morality discussed above. The Conventionalist will hold that the source of the normativity arises from within ourselves. The platonist will deny this.

The proposed new Crux could therefore allow Wright's Conventionalist to feature on the framework of T&O. On the existing categorisation, the Conventionalist is seen as denying Cognitive Command, which is to argue that a True Relativism holds about logical necessity. That may be a natural concomitant position, but it does not capture the heart of the Conventionalist position. The heart of the position, which is in fact consistent with Cognitive Command holding for logical necessity, is about the normativity exerted by the statements of logical necessity. The Conventionalist takes the anti-realist stance that the

## *8. Summary Conclusion*

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source of the normativity is internal to us. That is independent from whether Cognitive Command fails for statements of logical necessity.

The point of the proposed extension to the framework of T&O is not to arbitrate between the positions. The point is to suggest an extension to the framework of T&O which will enable the Expressivist and the Conventionalist to feature as legitimate types of anti-realism. The proposed new Crux has been given a very simple outline. There are many issues arising which would need to be covered in more detail. Not least, since the area concerns normativity, the extended literature on Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations would need to be considered. However, I hope enough has been said to indicate a line of enquiry which might make good the gap in the conception of T&O which this thesis has uncovered.

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