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SYMPOSIUM: REALISM AND TRUTH

Wittgenstein, Wright, Rorty and Minimalism

SIMON BLACKBURN

1. Introduction

William James said that sometimes detailed philosophical argument is irrelevant. Once a current of thought is really under way, trying to oppose it with argument is like planting a stick in a river to try to alter its course: “round your obstacle flows the water and ‘gets there just the same’” (James 1909, p. 55). He thought pragmatism was such a river. There is a contemporary river that sometimes calls itself pragmatism, although other titles are probably better. At any rate it is the denial of differences, the celebration of the seamless web of language, the soothing away of distinctions, whether of primary *versus* secondary, fact *versus* value, description *versus* expression, or of any other significant kind. What is left is a smooth, undifferentiated view of language, sometimes a nuanced kind of anthropomorphism or “internal” realism, sometimes the view that no view is possible: minimalism, deflationism, quietism. Wittgenstein is often admired as a high priest of the movement. Planting a stick in this water is probably futile, but having done it before I shall do it again, and—who knows?—enough sticks may make a dam, and the waters of error may subside.

Crispin Wright is not a minimalist, although he likes to appropriate the title. His *Truth and Objectivity* (1992) provides us with only a moderately minimal landscape, for he commends some ways of thinking about issues between realists and anti-realists, and this is a division that a true minimalist will want to dismantle. And his tour of the issues certainly provides many pleasures. One pleasure that is bitter-sweet to me is reflecting on the response which chapter six, especially, seems to demand from someone seeing the intellectual landscape in the rather more contoured way that I do. Bitter, because Wright resolutely underplays an interpretation of Wittgenstein, and an approach to the central issues, that I hoped I had defended in earlier work to which he refers (Blackburn, 1990). Sweet, because now there is the opportunity once

more to say why that approach cannot be so easily sidestepped, even in a postmodern, minimalist, deflationary world in which almost nothing can be said. Bitter, again, in that I am not sure how to find better words than those I have already used, nor a better case for the way the landscape should be drawn, so that I am afraid that if the stick already in place does not work, this one may not help.¹ Sweet, though, in the prospect of putting another stick in the river.

In the first chapter of his book, Wright handsomely highlights the “expressivist” approach to various regions of discourse, as giving one of the three main anti-realist paradigms that he wants to discuss, the others being Dummettian anti-realism, and error theories (Wright 1992, p. 6). However he goes on to argue in favour of a new approach; one that has little in common with expressivism. Nevertheless, many of the things he says in pursuing his approach seem to me entirely right. When we discuss whether “realism” about some area of discourse is appropriate, Wright says, we should have in mind considerations such as these: whether (it is a priori that) ground level divergence in an area illustrates lack of cognitive command by at least one side; whether the properties in question play a role in explaining many different phenomena; whether we are happy with the thought that our responses somehow “constitute” truths in the area, and so on. These suggestions are welcome reminders of classical reasons for separating, for instance, primary and secondary qualities, or natural and moral properties, and of course historically they have played a conspicuous role in generating opposition to realism about the latter member of each pair.² Wright is surely correct that they need to be in the foreground of any adequate understanding of the topics of truth, reality, and objectivity. But they are of course consistent with there being other diagnostics as well, and ones that also, in the same way as some of these, work in favour of the expressivist tradition against which Wright sets himself.

But Wright draws things so that expressivist theories are squeezed out at the beginning. That is, he agrees for instance with Sabina Lovibond that “reference to an objective reality” cannot intelligibly be set up as a target which some propositions—or rather, some utterances couched in the indicative mood—may hit, while others fall short. If something has

¹ Similar sticks are placed by Smith (1993) and Dreier (1996).

² At least, the explanatory issues are classical and welcome. Myself I doubt whether the issue of whether disagreement illustrates a cognitive defect can be pursued except via the very considerations that suggest expressivism. For instance, to decide whether ground-floor modal or moral disagreement illustrates a cognitive defect somewhere would require discovering whether, instead, it is better seen as indicating a failure of imagination, or sympathy, or of practical or intellectual policy.

the grammatical form of a proposition, then it is a proposition (Lovibond 1983 pp. 25–6). This position has usefully been called a kind of syntacticism. Wright's own version of it is disciplined syntacticism (cf. Jackson, Oppy, and Smith 1994, pp. 287–302). That is, it is sufficient for a remark, or the tokening of a sentence, to be thought of as possessing a truth-condition that it has the syntax of an ordinary indicative sentence, and that there are (enough) norms governing its acceptance or rejection.³

This is, I think, a much stranger view than it might seem at first sight, at least unless enough norms turn out to be rather a lot of norms. For must it not be possible that there should be norms of acceptance and rejection of utterances of indicative sentences which exist for other reasons than that those sentences have truth-conditions? In principle, a commitment illustrated by the assertive utterance of some sentence might be objectionable for all sorts of reasons. One set of examples may be given by Austin's performatives, which are certainly subject to norms, but not true or false ("I christen this ship ..." etc.).⁴ Wright might say that there are not enough norms here, or more importantly, that such sentences will not enter into all propositional embeddings, although they will certainly enter into many, such as tensed contexts, disjunctions, and so on. Another example that has been urged against Wright, particularly in connection with his similar syntactic approach to reference, is that of fiction (Divers and Miller 1995). Fiction is an interesting example, in that the natural thing to say, at least about writing fiction (as opposed to reporting on established fictions), is that the (atomic) sentences written do not deserve to be called true or false because the author's intention is not to describe the real world, at least in terms of the names employed or the events represented as having happened. But that gives the obvious opening for the expressivist to insist that the same is true, for instance, of simple expressions of emotion or attitude, even when these have indicative form. Yet another pertinent example will be acceptance or rejection of metaphors. These are typically couched in indicative sentences, certainly governed by norms of appropriateness, found in complex embeddings, yet certainly not intended or evaluated as straightforward cases of truths or falsehoods. This is how the expressivist says it is in more controversial examples, such as commitment to conditional, moral, modal, or other claims. These may illustrate dispositions to bad movements of thought or bad attitudes. There will be norms for acceptance and rejection of them, but these norms will not derive from the "truth-conditions" the utterances possess, but from the propriety of the stances they evince. By contrast, on the disciplined syntactic position,

³ The element of discipline separates Wright's position from that of very simple syntactic minimalists, such as Horwich (1990). See also Stoljar (1993)

⁴ These are cited by Rumfitt (1995, pp. 100–6).

they become, immediately and effortlessly, truth-conditional, and hence expressivism, or probabilistic theories of conditionals, and all the other examples, are shouldered out without a hearing.

It has been tellingly objected against Wright that his own philosophical position simply gives him no reason to muscle out expressivism so quickly (Jackson, Oppy and Smith 1994, p. 295). His own position requires that the “platitudes” concerning assertion, truth, and above all belief must all be taken into account in forming the theory of an area. But among the platitudes governing belief may be ones that are best accommodated by recognizing that commitment in some areas is not a simple matter of belief, but more to do with endorsement of invitations to think of things in a certain light (metaphors), movements of thought (conditionals), the successful evocation of moods and emotions (poetry), or movements from representation to motivation or attitude (ethics).⁵ There is simply no reason for refusing to engage with such arguments, nor for closing the possibility that they tell in favour of expressivist options. Or, if there is a reason, it would seem to be attractive only to a more convinced minimalist than Wright: someone who says in advance that there is no theory possible about belief and attitude, or motivation or dynamic commitments. On such a blanket minimalism, we know in advance that the mind only goes in for one relevant kind of state—belief—and one kind of expression of it—assertion. But why should we believe that?⁶

Someone who seems not to have believed it is Wittgenstein. And in the final chapter of his book, Wright refers to a paper of mine as having provided a “catalogue” of instances where Wittgenstein seems to fall in line with the expressivist anti-realist tradition (Wright 1992, p. 202). The description is not quite right to my ear, because it seems to me that the paper in question is both less than a catalogue, since I by no means trawled the Wittgenstein corpus for all possible examples, and more than a catalogue, in that I discussed at some length the philosophical bearings of the data, and in particular their impact on three topics that, I shall now argue, Wright does not handle correctly: the interpretation of Wittgenstein, the

⁵ It is surely not accidental that in all these cases it is a dynamic, practical element that is at the centre of the stage. I am indebted here to conversation with Michael Smith.

⁶ Divers and Miller (1995) in response to Jackson, Oppy and Smith (1994) claim that Humean or other theories according to which essentially dynamic, non-representational aspects of the mind may get disciplined indicative expression, cannot simply rely on “platitudes” and are hence not admissible evidence. I think this mistakes the role of “platitudes”, which represent central, putatively a priori desiderata, rather than the vernacular common knowledge. If they had the latter reading, I would say that this just shows that it is wrong to confine philosophical evidence to platitudes, excluding, for instance, consideration of the theoretical distinctions we may need for an adequate taxonomy of psychological states.

bearing of a disquotational or minimalist theory of truth on these matters, and the issue of semantic descent. Before discussing these in turn, I shall mention briefly the Wittgensteinian evidence.

2. Wittgenstein's involvement with expressivism.

In my earlier paper (Blackburn 1990) I argued that Wittgenstein believes in a plurality of linguistic functions served by indicative sentences, and that these typically include the kind of function that traditional “expressivists” have liked to regard as fundamental. The summary I am giving here is not a substitute for the earlier discussion, which should be consulted if the reader remains surprised by the data. But we may start with the earliest example. In the 1929 “Lecture on Ethics” Wittgenstein’s central and repeated claim is that no statement of fact can ever be, or imply, a judgement of absolute value. He considers the “book of the world” as it might be written by an omniscient person, containing “all relative judgements of value and all true scientific propositions and in fact all true propositions that can be made” (note especially the last clause). Even if we make sure that our book describes all human feelings “there will simply be facts, facts, and facts but no Ethics”. “Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts; as a teacup will only hold a teacup full of water and if I were to pour out a gallon over it.” Considering statements of absolute value he urges that “no state of affairs has the coercive power of an absolute judge”, and goes on to consider various states of mind lying in the region of the ethical (wonder, fear, or a feeling of safety, or of the miracle of existence) (Wittgenstein 1929, pp. 5–12).

He is not merely contrasting ethical facts with scientific ones. For he explicitly adds that the book of the world contains not only all scientific truths, but all truths, but still no Ethics. And the thrust of the lecture must surely be that it is from a different standpoint than that of description that ethics is found. It is found when it is felt, or perhaps even when we think not of description but of feelings and the will, and this explains the elusiveness, even the threat of vanishing, of the ethical proposition. Now 1929 is early enough to be transitional, and some might suppose that his minimalism or quietism was not at the time fully fledged. But Wittgenstein never gave any indication of changing this view. It is not as if later he said, as the received Wittgenstein ought to say, “of course my lecture was hopeless: ethics describes facts—ethical facts”.

What does happen later is crucial. In a conversation of 1942, Rhee reports, Wittgenstein considers an ethical dilemma: “Someone might ask

whether the treatment of such a question in Christian ethics is right or not. I want to say that this question does not make sense" (Rhees 1965, p. 23). He imagines deciding which solution is right and which is wrong, and complains

But we do not know what this decision would be like—how it would be determined, what sort of criteria would be used and so on. Compare saying that it must be possible to decide which of two standards of accuracy is the right one. We do not even know what a person who asks this question is after.

In 1945 we find

Someone may say, "There is still the difference between truth and falsity. Any ethical judgment in whatever system may be true or false." Remember that "*p* is true" means simply "*p*". If I say "Although I believe that so and so is good, I may be wrong": this says no more than that what I assert may be denied.

Or suppose someone says, "One of the ethical systems must be the right one or nearer the right one." Well, suppose I say Christian ethics is the right one. Then I am making a judgment of value. It amounts to adopting Christian ethics. It is not like saying that one of these physical theories must be the right one. The way in which some reality corresponds—or conflicts—with a physical theory has no counterpart here.

Here Wittgenstein not only turns his back on the appeal to a moral reality, serving to make one opinion "the right one". He explicitly contrasts the case with that of physics where, he says, there is a different way in which reality does correspond or conflict with theory—the very antithesis of a "minimalist" view. Of course, whether he *ought* to be saying such things is another matter, and one we come to in due course.

What is apparent in this passage, and in others, is a dismissive attitude to the introduction of truth, reality, or fact, as somehow containing the key to the use of the language game. Here something like a deflationary theory of truth is indeed exposed. His constant, characteristic stand is against using facts and the rest as a separate element in our description of the language game, something that we can use to "place" or understand the activity of judgement, or that we can use as a constraint in any such attempt. However, this impatience can be shared, and indeed ought to be shared, by any (quasi-realistically inclined) expressivist. An expressivist about an area is likely to be met with sage rebuttals of the form "well, I happen to think that it is a *fact* that honesty is a virtue, or a *fact* that if you walk uphill you use energy" as if this settled the matter against the expressivist, or theorist with a dynamic view of the function of conditionals. All it illustrates is commitment to the claims in question, which, of course, the expressivist shares. It doesn't take us to a meta-level of special philosophical interpre-

tation, and Wittgenstein is rightly impatient with views that pretend that it does.

The next examples concern mathematics and necessity. Rather than highlight the many passages throughout the *Remarks* and *Zettel* that I cited in my earlier paper, I shall content myself with one of the most telling, concerning description

Why do you want always to consider mathematics under the aspect of discovering and not of doing?

It must influence us a great deal that in calculating we use the words “correct” and “true” and “false” and the form of statements. (Shaking and nodding one’s head) ... There is no doubt at all that *in certain language games* mathematical propositions play the part of rules of description, as opposed to descriptive propositions.

But that is not to say that this contrast does not shade off in all directions. And *that* in turn is not to say that the contrast is not of the greatest importance. (Wittgenstein 1964, Pt. V, 6, p. 163)

There are many other equally good examples. As I said, one might almost use as a motto for the *Remarks* section IV, 28 “... the words don’t determine the language game in which the proposition functions”. According to Wittgenstein the game is better described in many ways than just saying that it is the one in which we attempt to describe the mathematical or modal facts, for this is never an illuminating description of a language game. (Or almost never. Perhaps he thought that it was an illuminating way of describing the physical or empirical language game. It is certainly telling that in the later work he does not directly consider the best way to describe the language game of describing everyday physical objects, or their scientific cousins.)

Other cases I cited included Wittgenstein’s attitude to first person ascriptions of psychological states: the doctrine of avowals (“‘I intend’ is never a description, although in certain circumstances a description can be derived from it”), his attitude to the bedrock or framework commitments (motor-cars do not grow on trees, etc.) that form the grounds of normal assessments of truth and falsity, but about which “there is something misleading” in calling them true or false. All these cases show that Wittgenstein is acutely aware of the difficulty in knowing what makes a sentence, in the current phrase, “truth-apt”: “here one must, I believe, remember that the concept ‘proposition’ itself is not a sharp one” (1969, §320).⁷ Other cases that would go into a full catalogue would include his attitude to the propositions of philosophy, that appear to describe the deep foundational abstract structure of the world, but really amount to expressions of gram-

⁷ The remarks are the culmination of the discussion arising from § 309.

mathematical rules. And then there is the interplay between attitude and belief that informs his philosophy of religion.⁸

We see then how the true Wittgenstein thinks, to use his words, that while the clothing of our language makes everything alike, it masks a prodigious underlying diversity, and that it is the task of the philosopher to confront that diversity. He is in fact diametrically opposed to minimalism. Expressions of attitudes versus beliefs? Inexorability of attitude versus real necessity? Framework setting versus describing? Religious conviction versus empirical belief? It is not according to Wittgenstein that all such differences dissolve into a motley of vague similarities, where all faces resemble each other sufficiently to count as being from the same family. Only the force of the Jamesian river makes those drowning in it hallucinate him as one of their number

In fact, I can think of no area that he actually did work upon, in the later period, without invoking a *distinctive* and *non-descriptive* function for some commitments. It is his weapon of choice.

3. *Wright and Wittgenstein's attitude to the differences*

Wittgenstein nearly took as a motto for the *Investigations*, Kent's "I'll teach you differences" from *King Lear*. So how can Wright put forward a view of things according to which passages such as these cannot have been emphasizing any real differences of linguistic function at all? I think the reason surfaces in a telling passage at the beginning of chapter six. Here Wright recognizes the evidence that Wittgenstein should be seen as ascribing a non-descriptive function to many commitments, but, he continues

The point I will venture is that it is only if one overlooks a distinction that there will seem to be an obvious inconsistency between passages where Wittgenstein seems to want to look past the overtly assertoric cast of a range of sentences and the passages on which the quietist interpretation draws.

He goes on

⁸ Putnam (1992, Ch. 7) is right that Wittgenstein refuses to rest content with a simple contrast between attitude and belief. But he fails to come to terms with the distinctive function that Wittgenstein is actually exploring, as if he accepts the simple dichotomy, and thinks that since religious conviction is not just attitude, so it must be just belief. For Wittgenstein it is whatever is distinctive about being in the grip of a picture: potentially a very different state altogether, and only improperly or carelessly assimilated to either "belief" or "attitude".

[the discussion] may be aimed, as by expressivism, to persuade us to reclassify certain sentences in terms of a framework of robust notions—*genuine* assertion, *genuine* truth, and so on—which supply the expressivist’s stock-in-trade ... [but] It may be intended precisely to help *subvert* any such framework—to suggest that there is not the clean distinction to be made between genuinely truth-apt contents and “merely grammatical” assertions which the expressivist needs to work with ... (Wright 1992, pp. 202–3)

The implication is that it is the second route that Wittgenstein is to be interpreted as following. But this is highly bizarre. One would expect evidence of Wittgenstein saying, in effect, that he has had us fooled all along. We *thought* he was teaching differences, but really he was *subverting* the very differences he seemed to bring up. All along he was warning us against thinking that it might be significant to try to understand mathematics in terms of rules, or to propose that the difference between description and expression of attitude was important, or to suggest that framework propositions might not be true (did we *need* this warning?), or to wonder if religious commitment or ethics expressed emotional and other cognitive states, and so on. There are no such differences! His motto is: I’ll teach you *samenesses*!

We could certainly imagine a Wittgenstein who is doing this. He would take for example the idea that statements of necessity are kinds of commands or perhaps rules of thought, say that this sounds different from anything that modal realism (which Wittgenstein, alas, calls “the slightly hysterical style of university talk”—1967, §299) might make of them, and then by some sleight of minimalist hand, make the difference disappear. He would take, say, the doctrine of avowals, and say that this might look like an interestingly different approach from the view that first person statements are self descriptive, but—no difference at all. The unfortunate thing is that there is not a jot of evidence for this view. Only the belief that some combination of the rule-following considerations and minimalism about truth must *force* Wittgenstein to such a “metaphysical wet-blanket”⁹ could overcome the visible and incontrovertible evidence that he is doing nothing of the sort. So should we find his position “obviously contradictory”?

I think not. The interpretation that most clearly saves Wittgenstein is the one that construes him as working in the spirit of F. P. Ramsey. Ramsey explicitly emphasizes the transparency property of truth, and he explicitly proposes a redundancy theory of truth to explain it. He does not work with a “framework of robust notions” in semantics. He is a *real* minimalist about truth. His expressivism lies quite elsewhere

⁹ Gareth Evans’s phrase, quoted by Wright (1992, p. 205).

But before we proceed further with the analysis of judgment, it is necessary to say something about truth and falsehood, in order to show that there is really no separate problem of truth but merely a linguistic muddle. Truth and falsity are ascribed primarily to propositions. The proposition to which they are ascribed may be either explicitly given or described. Suppose first that it is explicitly given; then it is evident that “It is true that Caesar was murdered” means no more than that Caesar was murdered In the second case in which the proposition is described and not given explicitly we have perhaps more of a problem, for we get statements from which we cannot in ordinary language eliminate the words “true” and “false” . . . [he goes on to propose the kind of elimination mentioned above, using a relational proposition aRb] . . . it is clear that the problem is not as to the nature of truth and falsehood, but as to the nature of judgment or assertion, for what is difficult to analyze in the above formulation is “he asserts aRb ”. (Ramsey 1931, pp. 142–3)

But when Ramsey goes on to do that, the emphasis on non-descriptive function really gets into its stride: assertions of probability, of causality of ethics and of universal generalizations must all be thought of other than as assertions of propositions: “Many sentences express cognitive attitudes without being propositions; and the difference between saying yes or no to them is not the difference between saying yes or no to a proposition” (Ramsey 1931, p. 239). Ramsey prosecutes this theory by considering the behaviour characteristic of various propositional attitudes we take up to these contents—attitudes of acceptance, doubt, partial belief—and it is the differences between these in the different areas that dominate theory. Again, he is working with platitudes governing commitments to probabilistic, conditional, or ethical assertions, but drawing from those platitudes the non truth-conditional basis of his account of them.

That this option is invisible to Wright can be inferred from the casual way in which he asserts that Wittgenstein’s sympathy with the redundancy theory of truth (“the passages on which the quietist interpretation draws”¹⁰) will appear obviously inconsistent with his expressivist sympathies, unless one sees him as dismantling the debate. But I have already remarked that Wittgenstein deploys the deflationary or redundancy theory of truth primarily in order to warn us that the bare repetition of “it is true that p ” or “it is a fact that p ” itself contains none of the requisite meta-theory about the nature of the commitment to p . Like Ramsey, he wants to insist that this is not where the battle is fought.

The point is that Ramsey and Wittgenstein do not need to work with a sorted notion of *truth*—robust, upright, hard truth versus some soft and

¹⁰ It is important to add that Wittgenstein is nowhere “quietist” or minimalist about psychological concepts, such as belief or attitude, or acquiescence in a norm.

effeminate imitation. They need to work with a sorted notion of a *proposition*, or if we prefer it a sorted notion of *truth-aptitude*. There are propositions properly theorized about in one way, and ones properly theorized about in another. The focus of theory is the nature of the commitment voiced by one adhering to the proposition, and the different functional roles in peoples' lives (or forms of life, or language games) that these different commitments occupy. Indeed, I should say that although a good title for the position might be "non-descriptive functionalism", Wittgenstein could even afford to throw "description" into the minimalist pot. Even if we have to say that all commitments describe their coordinate slices of reality, we can still say that they are to be theorized about in a *distinctive* way. You come at them differently, offering a different theory of their truth-aptitude (again, this ought not to be uncongenial to Wright, since it is only extending the very kind of move he himself makes to rehabilitate versions of the realism debate, in the face of minimalism about truth). You may end up, that is, saying that these assertions describe how things are with values, probability, modality, and the rest. But the way you arrive at this bland result will be distinctive, and it will be the bit that matters.¹¹

Wittgenstein never faced up to a dilemma that confronts any such view. This is that there are two ways that detail can develop. One way is to allow the emergence of a proposition—something capable of truth or falsity—even given the distinctive function of the expression. This is the route I call "quasi-realism". Another is to insist on a sharp separation of spheres, saying that if a non-descriptive functional story best fits a given sentence then it does not express a proposition and is not capable of truth and falsity. In the interesting cases, this threatens to be a revisionary view (yet philosophy "leaves everything as it is"), because minimalists are right that it is obviously a feature of our language game with "true" and "false" that we pretty promiscuously call even bedrock sentences, those functioning as norms, claims of necessity, first person statements of intention and the rest, true or false. There may be even better things to say, but one good thing to say is that it is false (not true) that motor cars grow on trees, that I intend to take up tight-rope walking, that envy is a virtue, and so on. It is not just that these are false in certain contexts (which Wittgenstein would allow), but rather that in any normal situation in which the embedded sentence might occur it expresses a view that we will call false. They

¹¹ It is quite astonishing how often this point needs making. People still typically write as if a single sentence, along the lines "I think it is a fact that ..." or "I think the predicate *P* refers to a property" is enough to establish a "realist" or at any rate an anti-expressivist position. See also my 1993, pp. 52–60, and *passim*. For a neat exposure of difficulties arising in Wright's adoption of sorted truth predicates, see Tappolet (forthcoming).

are things to which we “apply the calculus of truth functions” (1953, §136).

Wittgenstein never gives us any inkling of how much of the propositional surface of such commitments ought to be abandoned, if we faced up to their distinctive function in our lives. One has a strong sense that he ought to prefer the answer “none of it”. And that is to embrace the first, quasi-realist alternative. To do philosophy, to understand the language game, we remind ourselves of the distinctive function of these commitments in our activities, but the result is an appreciation of just how a content emerges, giving us a proposition properly called true or false, properly subject to argument and doubt and properly embedded in various contexts.

4. Rorty on Wright

Perhaps this gives us a Wittgenstein who is too much like a theorist, and we all know his dislike of theory. Rorty attacks Wright for giving too much scope to orthodox or classical philosophical concerns (Rorty 1995, pp. 281–300). But anybody wanting to flatten Wright’s landscape might pause at the blank view Rorty wishes to substitute for it, in which no landmarks of traditional philosophical interest, including those separating primary from secondary qualities, or natural from moral, are visible at all. We might suppose then that the line-up is as follows: on the far left, as it were, is Rorty, the complete minimalist; in the centre is Wright, with his moderately contoured landscape, and further right is a philosopher such as myself, who sees even more scope for realist versus anti-realist theorizing than Wright admits. To some extent this picture is helpful, but not, I think, ultimately satisfactory, for it slides over the different attitudes that Wright and I have to the a priori in philosophy. Still, for the purpose of this section Wright and I are more substantive allies than elsewhere. To show why, I shall first make some comments on Rorty’s reaction to Wright.

Rorty couches the discussion in terms of the conception of truth that fuels realist versus anti-realist debates. He agrees of course with Wright’s remark that “truth is not intrinsically a metaphysically heavyweight notion”, but disagrees with Wright’s view that nevertheless, in areas where realism is appropriate, where talk of representation of the facts is in order, truth should be regarded as “seriously dyadic”. Rorty allies himself, he believes, with Dewey and Davidson in opposing just this last conception. He points to the hostility of such writers to any conception of the “facts” as entities which would support a seriously dyadic conception of

representation or judgement (Rorty 1995, p. 295). Seriously dyadic views are committed, thinks Rorty, to independent proposition-like objects in the world: sentence sized configurations of things, properties, and relations called “facts”; and this conception is completely delusive.

We might not be very enthusiastic about a debate couched in terms of whether truth is always or sometimes “seriously dyadic”. But Ramsey’s work gives us this way of cashing the metaphor, which is to think of the conditional with a judgement on one side and our relationship to the judgement on the other

If we do our stuff properly (in accordance with the best norms of justification), and believe that *p*, then *p*.

If *p*, and we do our stuff properly, then we will believe that *p*.

These are versions of what in *Spreading the Word* I called correspondence conditionals (1984, p. 244). They do not overtly mention truth. But in spite of minimalism, truth is seriously dyadic in so far as these are *serious* conditionals, that is, ones whose status is a potential object of interesting explanation. One way of sympathizing with the gap that Wright finds, and Rorty deplores, between justification and truth is to realize that the theory of why we can believe these conditionals may look very different in some areas and in others. It would look different, for example, in the case of belief about shape and size, and belief about colour, at least if we sympathize with any of the various motivations for taking a primary/secondary distinction seriously. The point is that there is nothing in the theory of truth to prevent us from taking those motivations seriously, and this is a matter on which Wright is perfectly correct.

Rorty is not altogether clear on the significance of denying that truth is seriously dyadic. He admits in his paper that philosophers such as himself and James “swing back and forth” between offering reductive analyses of truth, in sociological terms of what our contemporaries let us get away with and so forth, and sheltering behind some kind of “breezy disquotationalism”. The paper under discussion illustrates the swing, for although its intention is entirely minimalist (disquotationalist), it also offers Rorty’s preferred account of the idea that truth is a goal of enquiry: shorn of misleading pictures “to say that truth is our goal is merely to say something like ‘we hope to justify our belief to as many and as large audiences as possible’” (Rorty 1995, p. 298). But this, like other reductions, grates badly, and not just because we are locked into a conservative metaphysic of facts. It is off-key because *of course* an investigator can care about finding the truth without having any such hope. A person may, like Plato, despise the people, and think that truth is only for initiates, or he may like Hume know that he is going to die before the prevailing systems of superstition collapse. Conversely a lawyer or spokesperson may be paid to jus-

tify a belief to as many and as large audiences as possible and hope to earn their money, without in the least caring whether their belief is true. We are indeed social animals, and for most of us agreeing with those around us is a value. But so is getting things right, and sometimes it trumps the other. So why doesn't Rorty keep away from the lame reductionism?

I suggest that the reason is that it is the *only real way* of deflating the correspondence conditionals. Take, for instance, a historical example. Suppose I care to find the truth about whether (*p*) Richard III murdered the princes in the tower. I then contemplate whether

If we do our stuff properly, and believe that *p*, then *p*

or

If *p*, and we do our stuff properly, then we will believe that *p*

and rightly worry whether, given what I know about the gaps in the historical record and the potential for misleading documentation and myths, it is not all that sensible of me to find these conditionals highly assertible. Rorty wants to find here suspect adherence to a seriously dyadic conception of truth, but this *cannot* be right since there is no mention of truth on the table, yet our attitude to the conditionals is infused by our awareness that our relation to the historical event is tenuous and fragile, as dyadic (and polyadic) relations often are. What it actually takes to make the conditionals trivially assertible is an attack on the *content* of *p*: a way of turning it into a proposition about our norms, or even a proposition of sociology.

To make the conditionals trivially assertible we would: (1) substitute "it is true that *p*" for "*p*", and (2) equate truth with something to do with acceptance. We can then turn the seriously dyadic conditional into a harmless tautology, along the lines of "if we do our stuff properly (according to accepted norms) and believe that *p*, then others can be expected to do so as well" or "if everyone can be brought to accept *p*, and we do our stuff according to the same norms, then we will believe that *p*". But what has happened is nothing essentially to do with truth, but merely amounts to substituting sociology for history, violating the content of the historical remark.

Perhaps that is a little overstated. For we might give the norms a less sociological status. We might try saying that there are right or true norms for accepting a historical remark as justified, and indeed according to some of us there are. But nobody can happily suppose that such norms are independent of a conception of historical fact. For, plausibly, we would only be able to describe such norms, and only able to give an account of their status, their defeasibility and so on, if we also had a conception of historical truth as "there anyway". At the very least, the two projects of articulating such norms, and articulating a conception of historical truth,

would have to be conceived of as going hand-in-hand. You cannot have a going understanding of either side without having a going understanding of the other (this, I think, accords better with Davidson's views than Rorty suspects).

I now turn to considering Rorty's hostility to Wright's characterization of a discourse as exhibiting cognitive command, in terms of it being a priori that difference of opinion arising within it can be satisfactorily explained only in terms of "divergent input". Here Rorty complains that Wright's picture of a well-oiled representation machine is part of the conservative metaphysics which he wants to supplant (p. 292), and he goes on to contrast it unfavourably with a more flexible, fluid, approach to the way in which we describe the "input", and (presumably) the way in which we describe the output. Rorty thinks that Wright needs a "non-conceptualized" conception of an input (the configurations of objects that make up facts), and this is what makes him vulnerable to Strawson and especially McDowell (Rorty 1995, p. 295).

I am not sure Wright needs any such conception of the "input". But there is, I think, an important grain of truth here, and it arises because of Wright's stress on a priority. Take the example of ethical discourse. One way of characterizing an ethical sensibility (mine) is as something that delivers an output of affect and attitude given an input of descriptions of situations. Another way (McDowell's) is as something that takes as input an appreciation of ethical aspects of things; we respond to an evaluative aspect of the world by deploying a thick concept. A third way (Mackie's) is as something that delivers as output beliefs that cannot be true, given an input of other descriptions. Another (rationalist) way would be as something that delivers as output beliefs that must be true, as rationally compelled consequences of other beliefs. No doubt there are others. Now the debates between these *may* be a priori, but it is not clear that they *must* be so. In principle, we might want to adduce as evidence a good number of contingent beliefs or principles: beliefs about what nature contains, what counts as a successful explanation of a phenomenon, beliefs about how best to place the phenomenon of moralizing within a more general understanding of human emotions and motivations, and so on.

Rorty may be right to doubt whether a purely a priori approach may win the day for one characterization of the function. But this does not mean that "the indefinite plurality of rules makes it impossible to draw an interesting representational/non-representational line between discourses"—as he approvingly interprets McDowell to have shown (Rorty 1995, p. 296). The line is as interesting as the differences of explanation that appeal to us. If they appeal to us partly, for instance, because of culturally entrenched views about what counts as acceptable naturalism, or accept-

able ways of thinking of the difference between changing the world and describing it, then Rorty can hardly object because of that. All that happens is that the stakes become higher. It is not a demonstrably mistaken a priorism, neglectful of such matters as the rule-following considerations, on the one side, versus a sophisticated modern revolutionary quietism on the other side. It is only a full set of views about naturalism and explanation on one side, versus a different set on the other. Battle is then still to be joined. But in such a battle one's money might still be on Wright or (dare I say it) on even less quietistic allies such as myself. For it is extremely hard to believe that there is simply nothing in the direction to which Wright points and I point: difference in explanatory reach, for instance, between primary and secondary properties, or difference in motivational function between evaluation and description. My own inclination would be to offer Wright "a priori" if he will offer me "best overall explanation". In other words, we could, with Quine, lose interest in whether a tighter or wider conception of the a priori is involved, provided that we do *not* think that very narrow, purely linguistic, considerations of surface aspects of the discourse in question settle the issue of realism. This ought to be congenial to Wright, for if the everyday surfaces sway things, cognitivism and realism always win easily: we talk without strain of people who disagree ethically, or over probabilities, or conditionals, or modals, or even the comic, as "not knowing what they are talking about". Wright does not want such cheap victories to determine the philosophical spoils, any more than I do.

Many people are suspicious of explanatory projects: they see them as philosophically tainted, for instance by ill-defined conceptions of naturalism, or, in a word "scientism". So it may be worth pointing out that it is not only explanation that might be at issue. Ironically, and rather deliciously, at this point we might oppose minimalism by becoming more-pragmatic-than-thou. We might ask which of the descriptions of an ethical sensibility is the one for which to campaign—the one that does the most use. Consider the "non-splitting" proposal that we stand upon the unity of thick concepts, resisting the idea that we can (usefully) distinguish an input in descriptive terms from an output of attitude. Let us consider the proposal pragmatically. Suppose that someone using a rather doubtful thick concept (cute, nerd, oik, ...) defends himself by rejecting the split. He simply deploys a thick concept, he says, and if a critic doesn't cotton on to the rule that governs it, that is too bad. I think this defence will not impress. Sheltering behind thickness naturally turns, ethically and pragmatically, into benign acquiescence in a status quo cemented into place by that most insidious of all cultural devices, language. Since I believe such benign acquiescence is politically and morally disastrous, I think Rorty

and others should be opposed as much on ethical or pragmatic grounds as on a priori intellectual grounds.

A final remark is in order here about Rorty's contrasting attitudes to Mackie's error theory, and to Dewey and James on truth. Rorty is enthusiastic about replacing our current conception of truth with his preferred successor, and he supposes that "Dewey and Davidson" would also applaud, presumably because of their views about truth, Wright's aim of rebutting Mackie (Rorty 1995, p. 290–1). But it seems to me that there is no principled distinction between Mackie's error theory of ethics and Rorty's error theory of truth. Each takes it that we make a metaphysical mistake, reading something more into a discourse than in fact is there. Each recommends a hygienic replacement: Mackie wants a properly Humean concept of values, free of certain connotations of objectivity, Rorty wants a properly sociological concept of truth, similarly free of certain connotations of objectivity. Rorty's line of thought must be that it was only because Mackie thought of truth as properly more than sociological that he thought that ethics could not live up to truth, although it is conceived of as doing so. But I do not think that this is so: what Mackie could not see is what so many others cannot see, which is how a concept so intrinsically involved in directing motivations could also claim the kind of binding independence of human aim and desire that is commonly attributed to moral concepts. The problem objectivity poses is still with us, and it is still possible to be more pragmatic than Rorty about it: just as it is not at all clear what gains could ever be made by making truth (or content) sociological, neither is it clear what gains could be expected by making ethics so. Losing the capacity to think "we do it this way, but we may be wrong" is the first casualty in each case, and politically and morally it is a fairly important one.

5. *Panic about irrealism*

If we look further at the detail, I believe we can see that Wright shares too much of the framework with which Paul Boghossian approaches the issues to be able to perceive the Ramsey option clearly. Boghossian (1990) mounts two distinct attacks on the coherence of coupling a quasi-realist or irrealist stance about some commitments with a minimalist or disquotational theory of truth. These however fail once we separate, as we did in §3, the question of the nature of the proposition from any question directed at the truth predicate itself.

Let us take a *contrastive* anti-realism, of the kind exhibited in Kripke's Wittgenstein, and older philosophies such as Ayer's emotivism, Hume on

causation, and Ramsey on virtually everything. Some commitments are to be thought of as genuinely representative, descriptive, hard, or whatever (“D”) and others as something more indirectly connected with representation and description and best theorized about in a different key (“Q”). Where do “D” and “Q” operate? In the first instance they operate on *commitments*: it is the distinctive function of a moral or hypothetical or modal commitment that is of interest. It is their role in our lives or language games, and this is a point where philosophy of mind and nature underlies the necessary philosophy of language. If we bring the distinction back to *sentences* or semantic *predicates*, care must be taken. Suppose for example we have the mention of a sentence, and an ascription of a semantic property

“S” is true (has a truth condition, means something ...)

then there are three possibilities for a sentence expressing a Q commitment

“S_q” is true (has a truth condition, means something ...)

“S” is_q true (has_q a truth condition, means_q something)

“S” is true_q (has a truth_q condition, means some_q thing).

For the sake of simplicity I shall assume that the second marks no distinct option, taking the Fregean view that the copula is logically redundant. The first then is the Ramsey, and Wittgensteinian option, when Wittgenstein is construed as a quasi-realist. It sorts sentences into the Q and the D, according to whether the commitments they express are Q or D. It is what we would get if we said “‘S’ is, as a consequence of a quasi-realistic transformation, true”, the idea being that some sentences require one kind of story and others a different kind, before we can be happy with their truth-aptitude. If we say this we sort sentences into those that do, and those that do not, require this kind of story.

The expressivist’s stock in trade, when matters are pursued in this way, is not between “genuinely truth-apt contents and ‘merely grammatical’ assertions”, as Wright has it. Genuineness of truth-aptness is not in question. Just as Quine taught us that it is better to think of existence as univocal, although we talk of many different kinds of things existing, so it is better to think of the truth predicate as univocal, and many different kinds of commitment deserve it. It will certainly be univocal if it is not robust enough to have a sense at all, and hence potentially different senses in different applications, as the minimalist believes. And whilst I do not know what a “merely grammatical” assertion is, the implication seems to be that there remains something shifty about the commitments theorized about in this way. But the whole point of this approach is that nothing shifty

remains (quasi-realism is most easily thought of as the enterprise of showing why projectivism needs no truck with an error theory).

Boghossian himself characterizes “irrealism” in terms that presuppose the *second* option. He tells us that “what all non factualist conceptions have in common”, or what is “constitutive” of them, is, when such a sentence contains a predicate “*P*”

- (1) the claim that the predicate “*P*” does not denote a property and (hence)
- (2) the claim that the overall (atomic) declarative sentence in which it appears does not express a truth condition (Boghossian 1990, p. 161).

He goes on to claim that neither of these fits with a disquotational or minimalist theory of truth, and chivvies Ayer for holding the combination (Boghossian 1990, p. 163). Ayer may indeed have paid inadequate attention to the problem, but that is not enough to put all non-factualist conceptions in the dock. For, as we have seen, the certain interpretation of Ramsey, and the most plausible of Wittgenstein, puts them down as irrealists about large sections of discourse who would *not* express their view as either (1) or (2). In fact (2) is especially uncharitable, it being evident that even on the option that I am not recommending, that sorts semantic predicates, “having a truth condition” would be sorted just as “true” is, so that the only view to which the anti-realist is committed is that the sentence in question does not have a truth_d condition, and (since it has a true_q condition) this is perfectly harmless.

Boghossian’s further, more intricate argument, is an attempt to refute the Kripkean and Dennettian idea that attributions of semantic properties to sentences are themselves the kind of commitment that is always Q. They are the upshot of the taking of a stance, or the plunge into an essentially dramatic idiom. Boghossian’s argument has several versions, but the following from Wright’s final chapter is perhaps as clear as any: the trick is to substitute a metalinguistic statement as the sentence talked about in (2). Let *S* be any sentence. The Kripkean position is presented as

- (A) It is not the case that “*S* has the truth condition that *P*” has a truth condition.

But from this it follows that

(B) It is not the case that “*S* has the truth condition that *P*” is true and via removal of the truth-predicate

- (C) It is not the case that “*S* has the truth condition that *P*”.

From which, as Wright points out, we can derive, by another application of the principle that got us from (A) to (B) that

- (D) It is not the case that *S* is true.

(C) is not an entirely perspicuous claim, juxtaposing as it does the propositional operator “it is not the case that” with a quoted expression. But let us waive the difficulty: from (B) and the uncontroversial

(B’) “S has the truth condition that *P*” means that S has the truth condition that *P*

we can derive

(C’) It is not the case that S has the truth condition that *P*

from which (D) follows as before.

Wright himself is not now persuaded by the argument, for complex reasons that I am not sure bear on its major infirmities. In any case, the central and critical flaw is that (A) is not the expression of anything to which the Kripkean irrealist about meaning has any allegiance. Metalinguistic commitments on that view are indeed *Q*. But they can be *true*, even if sentences expressing them are themselves *Q*. Then the argument stops. If we go the non-recommended route of sorting the truth predicates, then they are *true_q*. But even on this option there is no prospect of the move to (B) and onwards. Once truth is sorted you cannot infer that $\neg P$ from “S expresses *P*” and “S is not *true_d*”. You would need that S is neither *true_d* nor *true_q*, that is not true in any sense, but this you do not have. So you cannot force an opponent who takes an irrealist stance to semantic attributions to end up denying them all. It would be like arguing that an expressivist about ethics cannot allow that “it is wrong to set cats alight for fun” is true, and hence is ethically committed to it being all right to set cats alight for fun. There is no prospect whatever of a formal argument of this kind against Kripkean irrealism.

6. *Semantic descent*

Further matters lie in the offing. Wright takes me to task (p. 222, fn. 16) for supposing that Boghossian’s argument must be implicitly dependent upon an illegitimate semantic descent. The charge, says Wright, is quite misconceived. At this point the interpretation that I offered was one horn of a dilemma. Certainly one sympathizing with Boghossian might eschew any concern with semantic descent. But then, I point out, any conclusion remains inexorably *metalinguistic* and this robs it of its apparently intended significance: it is no trick to point out that if sentences like “S means that *p*” are *Q* sentences, so are sentences like “S is true”. If an element of dramatic idiom, or the taking of a stance, is involved in seeing a sentence as meaning some definite thing, then so will it be involved in supposing that it means some definite thing that is true. To inject signifi-

cance into the discussion, I conjectured that a semantic descent is intended, the idea being that if semantic attributions are Q then all sentences become Q, meaning that the contrast between D and Q sentences, and hence D and Q commitments, has been lost. This still seems to me the best way of attributing force to Boghossian's strategy. It makes semantic irrealism bite its own tail by destroying the very distinctions on which it depends.

At any rate, in thinking that this conclusion will depend upon semantic descent, at least I have the consolation of company. For while Wright sees my exploration as misconceived, he makes the charge in the course of a prolonged confrontation with the same problem: the final ten pages of the book explain and explore the same issue of semantic descent that is explored in the final section of my article, entitled "Hard Mistakes for Irrealists" (Blackburn 1990). Wright properly worries about the same point, namely that while mention of propositions and thoughts block the technical argument, we may be perplexed by any hardness that judgement can ever secure when meaning goes Q ("soft"). Wright in fact believes that a Boghossian who *did* go in for semantic descent would have truth on his side, for he himself affirms that

At the least then, the rule-following considerations set an *upper bound* on the robustness of the realism which is available anywhere: the bound is set by the robustness of the realism which, after those considerations, it is appropriate to apply to judgments concerning meanings, rules, and what complies with them. (Wright 1992, p. 212)

He believes, in other words, that if semantic attributions go "soft" to some degree, then everything goes soft to at least that degree with them.¹²

I share, and indeed stated, the view that this is a tempting line. Wright however supports it by urging that

We have no grip on the truth status of a claim which doesn't make it into the question whether a tokening of a sentence is true.

Now this principle, that there is no difference between assessing the truth status of a claim, and assessing whether the tokening of a sentence is true, is plausible only because we are thinking of a sentence as ready-interpreted, transparent to meaning. If we "flick" into the other mode where a sentence becomes a lifeless string of syntax, ready for use one way or another, than clearly there is a difference, because wondering whether any such thing is true must involve wondering how it is used. Certainly, if the only alternatives are thinking about a sentence or its tokening, on the one

¹² Wright's double-barrelled weapon points at both me and Boghossian. I am quite misconceived in discussing semantic descent, although semantic descent is central, because Boghossian never involved himself in it, although he should have.

hand, and linguistically innocent interaction with a pure and unadorned Fregean thought on the other, as Wright suggests, then the principle will seem compelling. But it is not at all clear that these are the alternatives. The object of thought is typically how things stand, and forcing us to identify this with an abstract Platonic object, on the one hand, or with words, on the other, is a characteristic piece of philosophical violence. Certainly, appealing for the last time to authority, Wittgenstein himself did not see it that way. He did not, for instance, see the hardness of the logical must as *undermined* by the “natural history” or anthropology of mathematics that he offers us in the *Remarks*. The propositions of mathematics have entirely different *uses* from those of semantics; “mathematics does not seem to treat of words, and therefore it does not”.

How then can any judgement be hard, if the words using it have their semantics only softly? It may seem that there is no problem at all. After all, that the word “good” has the semantics it does is (for instance) contingent upon linguistic history and usage; that a particular situation or character trait is good will in general not be contingent on any such thing. “Hard” and “soft” are metaphors for the underlying story about the kind of judgement we are dealing with, and there is no principled obstacle to metalinguistic judgement being of one kind, and judgments made with words being of a different kind.

But I do not really think this is enough to deflect all worries. I suggest that the “gestalt-switch” involved here is similar to that which afflicts us when we think about the indeterminacy of radical translation. From an external or objective perspective we can see how our behaviour might be multiply interpretable. From an inside or deliberative standpoint, there is no question: however much Quine or Kripke rattle us about the objective possibility of underdetermination, when I think in terms of rabbits I do not think in terms of undetached rabbit parts, and when I compute addition I do not compute quaddition. The thinking, deliberative stance is one that abstracts from the contingencies of meaning and takes them as read. Thinking about rabbits or the shape of an object or the answer to a sum is an activity, and a *different* activity from reflecting upon the words involved. Checking a friend’s answer to a question and finding it right or wrong is a different activity from reflecting upon the meanings of the words used, although that activity may be the next step when something sufficiently hard to understand is going on.

To see no question of semantic indeterminacy is perhaps to take up a stance—one that I believe is necessary to the activity of the deliberating, thinking subject. We may always be dimly aware of Quinean possibilities, and in some places we may be made vividly aware that our words have let us down, and our thoughts were confused. But normally as we

use words, we do not at the same time mention them, or keep an ear cocked for commentary from philosophers and semanticists who do. We take them for granted.¹³ That we get on well by doing so may depend upon a raft of contingencies, but what we do as a result—make judgments—delivers truths abstracted away from those contingencies, just as mathematics abstracts away from the natural history that makes its use possible.

The difference is visible in everyday life. When the child comes up with the wrong answer we do not always or usually consider it an “open” possibility that she has cottoned on to the wrong rule. We simply cannot imagine a practice or use with the contours of a quus-like function: we silently refuse to deem such a function to be in operation, and we mark the result wrong. The wrongness we deem harder than the semantic imposition. It is, I freely acknowledge, not easy to understand our right to do this. It is parallel, I believe, to the way in which “hard” moral obligation can become part of our practice when only “soft” attitudes and sentiments exist to bankroll it. But that we do it seems to me indubitable, and I think it was so too to Wittgenstein.

The difference between taking up the stance of a subject or agent, using words and thinking, and standing back and reflecting upon the contingencies that underlie their semantics is not easy to understand. It is certainly not impossible that some give-and-take is in order, and that reflections of the latter sort force us to reconceptualize the objectivity that we feel as we make judgement in the former, normal, frame of mind. Think of wondering whether particularly difficult judgments are in order, and the activity blurs into wondering whether words “fit”. Perhaps the difference between “Q” and “D” becomes itself blurred (Wittgenstein talks of the distinction shading off in all directions). Perhaps marking the difference at one place or another itself manifests a stance: the assertion that this on one side is a D commitment and this on the other is a Q commitment may itself be a Q commitment, but none the worse for that.¹⁴ And perhaps we are, characteristically, inclined to invest our words with more determinacy, more hardness in their application, than the raft of contingencies will actually support. Assessing that will be engaging with another typically postmodernist current, namely scepticism about the extent to which objectivity is

¹³ Even when we go metalinguistic, the equivalent point applies. I might start wondering whether, say, the word “postmodernist” applies to Putnam, but in my thought there is no question which word and which person I am referring to. I cannot simultaneously entertain Kripkean thoughts about the chance that inverted commas are here quommas, where a quomma . . .

¹⁴ This is neatly explored by Kraut (1990) who believes that deeming a commitment “D” manifests a commitment to its explanatory ineliminability.

possible. That current, too, needs sticks planting in it, but that would be the business of another day.¹⁵

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¹⁵A close ancestor of this paper was delivered to a Wittgenstein Colloquium at the Australian National University in Canberra in summer 1993, and published in the proceedings as “Wittgenstein and Minimalism” in *Themes from Wittgenstein, Working Papers No. 4*, ed. Garrett B. and Mulligan K. Canberra: Research School of Social Sciences. I have profited by comments from Richard Holton, Frank Jackson, Rae Langton, Graham Oppy, Michael Smith and many others of the audience. I am grateful to the Australian National University for the Fellowship that enabled me to create it.

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