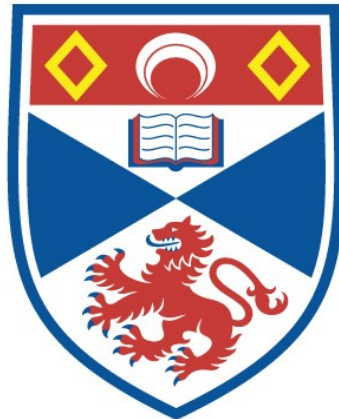


**OBJECTIVITY AND REALISM :
MEETING THE MANIFESTATION CHALLENGE**

Sven Rosenkranz

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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OBJECTIVITY AND REALISM
Meeting the Manifestation Challenge

by

Sven Rosenkranz

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of St. Andrews

June 1999



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Abstract

The anti-realist maintains that all thoughts that we may entertain are thoughts whose truth-values we can in principle come to recognise. The realist refuses to make any such claim about the limits of our thinking. The anti-realist purports to arrive at her position on the basis of considerations which relate to the manifestability of understanding, *i.e.* the idea that grasp of thoughts must be manifested in linguistic abilities. Thus she argues against the realist that this requirement cannot be met unless truth is understood not to extend beyond what we can know. Turning the tables, I argue that it is the anti-realist who cannot vindicate her position on these grounds. Some thoughts are apt for objective truth: their truth cannot be equated with their current assertibility. Our grasp of such thoughts is not yet manifested in our ability to assert or deny sentences. Once we have identified patterns of linguistic usage which display our grasp of such thoughts however, it transpires that there is no reason either to believe that their truth-values can in principle be recognised.

Declarations

I, Sven Rosenkranz, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100.000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date: 1/6/99 Signature of candidate:

I was admitted as a research student in April 1995 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in April 1995; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1996 and 1999.

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Preface

If philosophy is an activity, then philosophical writing is a constant source of dissatisfaction. Anyway, now it's done and I am wholly responsible for the result. Still I would like to thank the following friends and institutions without whose help this work would not have come into existence: Marco Iorio for getting me hooked on philosophy, endless nights of philosophizing and helpful comments on an earlier draft; Wolfgang Carl for making me stay in philosophy, for his teaching which so much shaped my philosophical thinking, and for his support; Olaf Müller for letting me attend the birth of his thesis and for his midwifery while I was giving birth to mine: his philosophical mind is an inexhaustable supply of inspiration; Lorenz Krüger and Günther Patzig for their encouragement, support and good advice; the German National Scholarship Foundation for financial support during the academic year 1995/96; the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for generous research grants which allowed me to stay in St. Andrews throughout the academic years 1996/97 and 1997/98; Patrick Greenough for those glorious days and nights in Southgait when we delved into the bottomless pit of anti-realism; the other members of the Southgait Group: Lars Binderup, Lars Bo Gundersen, Duncan Pritchard, Jesper Kallestrup and Paul Markwick for constant challenge and criticism; Stewart Shapiro for helpful comments and suggestions whose consideration has much enhanced the final draft; Thelma Mitchell for her efforts to improve my writing style; Sabine Rosenkranz, my mother, for her unconditional support and care; and Michael Kuzina for all his love which has bridged the Channel so easily.

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I dedicate this work to the memory of my father, Klaus Rosenkranz, who gave me the stamina and confidence needed to go through all this. If only he could have seen that becoming an academic philosopher does not make you a lonely soul, caught in silent thought and bowed over dusty books. Wittgenstein said that philosophy is an activity. I would like to add: philosophy would not be what it is if it was not pursued by many agents.

Introduction

With the advent of modern analytic philosophy, the traditional epistemological questions "How is knowledge possible?" and "What are its limits?" gave way to the more fundamental questions "How is thinking possible?" and "What are the limits of what we can think about?" Knowledge is knowledge that some thought or other is true. Thus, the possibility of knowledge requires the subject's ability to think how things are. Indeed, the analytic philosopher's concern with thinking is primarily with thinking how things are: she is less concerned with other modes of mental activity which it may, to some ends and purposes, still be useful to call modes of thinking. We now see how the more fundamental questions are related to the questions they ousted: in order to explain how knowledge is possible, we must explain how it is possible for us to think how things are; and the limits of what we can know cannot transgress the limits of what we can think of as being a certain way.

Thoughts, *i.e.* the contents of our thinking as thus understood, are by their very nature capable of being either true or false, for knowledge entails truth—and knowledge claims may be unsuccessful in virtue of their failure to present what is true. It is furthermore essential to thoughts that they can be shared. Otherwise, there could be no saying whether someone else's thinking constitutes knowledge of how things are. For, as Wittgenstein reminds us, if my knowledge claims were forever debarred from being assessed by others, the concept of knowledge could never legitimately be applied to them. To think that I know that I think truly will not take me beyond my thinking it: self-ascriptions of knowledge lack authority unless they allow for double-checking by others.¹ But in order to assess whether someone really knows what she purports to know, we must be able to tell what it is she purports to know, hence, what it is she thinks. Obversely, anything that cannot be shared between thinkers is external to the contents of potential knowledge claims, hence external to the thoughts these thinkers may entertain. It is this idea which underlies Frege's attempt to isolate the logical from the psychological: subjective features that accompany our thinking do not enter into an account of what thoughts are, just as they do not enter into an account of what the contents of knowledge claims are.²

How can thoughts be shared? An answer to this question presupposes an answer to the question of how we might come to think these thoughts in the first place, *i.e.* how we might come to grasp them. Frege held that we, as human beings, do not have access to thoughts other than by means of language, although he did not have much to say

¹ Wittgenstein [OnC]: §§ 12-15.

² Cf. Carl [FSR]: chapter two.

about how we may access them by this means.³ However this may be, at least we cannot communicate what we think other than by means of language. It is therefore natural to approach the question "How is thinking possible?" by means of analysing our ability to use language. For, once we have shown how thoughts can be expressed and communicated by linguistic means, we have guaranteed that thoughts are free from any subjective elements peculiar to the individual thinker. And insofar as thoughts are essentially communicable, a criterion of identity for thoughts communicated seems to furnish us with all we need in order to understand what it is to think these thoughts; it does not matter whether we are concerned with content-bearing mental states or content-bearing linguistic acts, the question how either come to be content-bearers seems to require the same kind of answer.⁴

These considerations are familiar, notably from Michael Dummett's work. We must not forget, however, that the successful communication of thoughts, though an achievement in its own right, presupposes achievements of quite another kind. The subject who communicates her thoughts must already have succeeded in representing how things have to be in order for her representing to be a representing of how things actually are. In other words, we not only need an account of how one thinker can discern what another thinker thinks, we also need an account of how someone manages to think how things have to be in order for her to think truly. This question tends to be neglected once we focus on the practical abilities required for successful communication. As Dummett observes,

[o]ur grasp of [the] contents [of the sentences of our language] could not exist [...] as a purely external practice. By the very nature of language, we could not learn its use as a means of interacting with others without simultaneously learning to use it as a vehicle for our own thoughts. It is precisely because this interior use of language as a medium of our thinking, and of our representation of reality, is from an early stage integral to our whole conscious life that we travesty the facts if we call it a 'practical ability', even though it is never severed from, and remains responsible to, the use of language in conversing with others.⁵

Dummett's appeal to the "interior use" of language, although evoking behaviourist ideology, is just another reaffirmation that the philosopher's concern with thinking can ultimately be satisfied by an account of language use. But if there is more to the ability to think thoughts than the ability to use language as a means of communicating these thoughts, then what is it?

Talk about representations has become less fashionable nowadays. This is mainly due to the empiricist idea that representing is a state of mind inflicted upon the

³ Frege [SKM]: 269; [L/b]: 145.

⁴ Dummett [PTL]: 322-23.

⁵ Dummett [LBM]: 103.

thinker by reality, rather than a mental activity which the application of concepts has to be seen as. This idea may well be bankrupt. But there is a sense of "representation" in which representations are not the imprints left by more or less vivid experiences, but the results of judgement and contemplation.

On this reading, to represent is to attain a state which effects a division of all possible states of affairs into those which would render this state a state of thinking truly, and those which would render it a state of thinking falsely. The ability to represent is accordingly the ability to offer something for the world to answer to: if states of affairs of the first kind obtain, then one's thinking yields a representation of how things actually are, otherwise not. Talk about states of affairs and their obtaining is of course just a rehashing, in ontological terms, of the cognitive processes we try to elucidate. To invoke it is therefore just as unhelpful as Russell's recasting of epistemological distinctions in terms of ontological distinctions between objects of knowledge.

However explanatorily inert, this conception of representation at least renders intelligible why, if communication presupposes thinking, one may nonetheless be drawn towards the idea that an account of language use will provide us with all we need in order to understand how thinking thoughts is possible. For if the ability to think is not a susceptibility to receive, but rather a capacity to achieve, then the question how thinking is possible becomes the question of what we have to be *able to do* in order to arrive at a representation of reality. And this question must have the same kind of answer no matter which level of description of what we do we settle on, as long as it is guaranteed that we could not do what we so describe unless we had the requisite ability, and could not be said to have this ability unless we could do what we so describe. (A pianist may exercise her ability to play Beethoven sonatas even if the piano strings are cut; and she may likewise exercise it by playing an amplified piano so as to reach a wider audience.)

What can be thought must be communicable. Given that our ability to think is about the most delicate of skills we possess, only the most refined means of communication will serve the purpose. Our use of language *is* the most refined technique of communication we possess. It is because there is no hidden mental screen on which representations are projected, but activity all the way down, that there is no obstacle in looking at the outermost manifestations of this activity, *i.e.* verbal behaviour. It is in this sense that thinking may be called a mode of silent speech. Just as Schroedinger's thought experiment was intended to present a macroscopic test-case for the adequacy of a microscopic description, the idea that an account of thinking in terms of linguistic abilities ought to be possible, is intended to present a test-case for the adequacy of a philosophical account of thinking.

The question how thinking is possible is the question of what the practical abilities are that allow us to effect a division between all possible states of affairs that

render our thinking a thinking truly and those which do not. As I have suggested, following the lead of Wittgenstein and Dummett, an answer to this question must be possible by appeal to linguistic abilities.

The idea that thinking is not a state but an operation—whether silently performed or made public in speech—gives rise to some perplexities. These perplexities show that we cannot dispense with the empiricist imagery that easily. For, as Dummett's remarks further suggest, we would get the phenomenology of representation wrong if we settled for no more than what we do when we perform these operations. These operations, however we externalise them, must issue in a cognitive achievement, *i.e.* a representation of how things may or may not be. And here, we wish to say that, if our thinking is a case of thinking truly, we have something akin to a map of how things actually are. Although metaphorical, this comparison goes further than the idea that we arrive at something like a set of instructions that tell us how to navigate. Rather, we want to say that, if we think truly, we arrive at something that faithfully reflects what reality is like, that matches reality, whether or not we set sail.

Knowing-*that* is not a case of knowing-*how*, and it is not an act either: it is a state of mind that represents how things are. Knowing-*that* is knowing of some thought or other that it is true. Hence thinking, although an activity, must be suited to issue in a state of mind that represents how things are. How then can exercises of practical abilities, such as the ability to use language, issue in a cognitive achievement of this kind? How is it that, by performing in a certain way, we manage to attain a state for reality to answer to? And how can we act in such a way that reality renders the outcome of this performance true or otherwise? (A tango performance may match the instructor's demonstration, but *that* it does so will never be matched by this performance.)

Thoughts may be true or false; so may their linguistic expressions. The use of their linguistic expressions is furthermore constrained by rules of proper use. Indeed, in order for the communication of thoughts to be possible, there will have to be rules of this kind, compliance with which is necessary for making oneself understood as expressing this thought rather than another. On the one hand, it is not essential to the linguistic expressions themselves that they express the thoughts they do such that we could tell from the expressions alone what they communicate. On the other hand, to say that it is essential to the way they are produced, that expressions express what they do, is likely to render the project of giving an account of thinking in terms of linguistic abilities futile: it invites the idea that utterances have a certain thought as their content by virtue of being preceded, or caused, by an act of thinking this thought. We would thereby sever the connection between the operations in virtue of which that act is an act of thinking this thought on the one hand, and the operations that make our utterances acts of expressing it on the other. The idea must rather be that expressing a thought is

one way to think that thought—not an effect of an act of thinking that lies further up the causal chain.

The thoughts we think relate to reality in that reality may render them true or false. They could not bear this relation to reality, or at least we could not think these thoughts if we did not, in some way or other, interact with reality. Our ability to think is exercised in response to phenomena to which we are exposed. The need to communicate requires rules; these rules, however implicit, turn the phenomena to which we react in thinking—interaction with which allows our thoughts to be about reality in the first place—into phenomena that render the use of expressions appropriate. If our interaction with such phenomena accounts for the aboutness of our thoughts, then studying these rules must help us explain how the expressions whose use they govern come to have the truth conditions that they do. And once we can explain this much, we can explain how it is possible for our thinking to be capable of being rendered true or false by reality.

The fact that there has to be something that sets our cognitive machinery in motion, however, does not yet ensure that this machinery's operations are concerned with, or about, that which sets it in motion. Quite generally, the phenomena to which we react verbally, and which render this reaction appropriate, are not what the expressions that we use on this occasion are about. In other words, these phenomena may warrant our use of these expressions, but they need not render them true. Davidson has suggested that in the most basic cases, we do indeed talk about the phenomena awareness of which leads to our talking.⁶ But even if it were appropriate, this suggestion will not provide us with a general model of how we manage to talk about reality: not all cases are basic in this sense.

Frege was at a loss to understand how rules that govern the manipulation of symbols could ever confer truth conditions on them.⁷ Rather, he believed that in order for our use of such symbols to qualify as more than indulgence in a self-contained game, our grasp of the thoughts they express must already be presupposed.⁸ According to Frege, it is our concern with knowledge that distinguishes our use of language from mere game playing.⁹ He therefore rightly emphasizes the representational dimension of our speech, and the objectivity of the standard by which it is to be assessed: truth is not of our making, it is not established by whatever makes our linguistic moves moves which conform to the rules by which we play, rather it is established by reality itself.¹⁰

⁶ Davidson [EC]: 332.

⁷ [GG/II]: § 95.

⁸ [GG/II]: §§ 90-91.

⁹ [GG/II]: § 92.

¹⁰ The Wittgensteinian analogy between assertions and moves in a game is therefore misleading: the truth of an assertion corresponds to the winning of the game, not to a property of a move that is conducive to winning—individual assertions have an end in their own.

Still, Frege himself never tried to explain how symbols can come to express thoughts, *i.e.* have truth conditions, if not in virtue of the rules set up for their use, nor how we can come to grasp the thoughts thus expressed if not by mastering these rules.¹¹

In contrast, Wittgenstein was convinced that symbols could not be endowed with any meaning in any other way, and he argued that our grasp of meaning is not a matter of intellectual intuition, but rather a matter of know-how.¹² But he himself never addressed the question in virtue of which rules symbols may be endowed with truth conditions.¹³ Instead, he shifted our attention to other than representational uses to which linguistic expressions can be put.¹⁴

We may say that Wittgenstein laid more emphasis on understanding in the sense of *Verstehen* (successful communication), while Frege laid more emphasis on understanding in the sense of *Verstand* (*noûs*). This ambiguity of the term "understanding" neatly captures the problem with which we are here concerned: the problem, namely, to explain how the rule-governed behaviour we display in verbal exchanges can so much as confer truth conditions on the expressions we use, and how behaving in this way can be conceived as the result of our concern with truth and knowledge. Therefore, I shall call this problem the *Problem of Understanding*.

It has become fashionable in recent philosophy to discredit the questions to which this problem gives rise, in two ways: either by not answering them in the way they were intended, or by refusing to answer them at all. Deflationism about truth may serve as an ample illustration of this tendency.

Deflationists hold that, at least in the homophonic case, ascriptions of truth to a given sentence mean the same as the sentence to which truth is being ascribed.¹⁵ This is a very puzzling claim, for a sentence by means of which we ascribe truth to another sentence *S* refers to *S* and says of *S* that it is true. For instance, the sentence "'Snow is white' is true" refers to the sentence "Snow is white" and says of this sentence that it is true. But the sentence "Snow is white" refers to snow and says of snow that it is white. How, if this is so, can both "'Snow is white' is true" and "Snow is white" mean the same thing? Neither is it remotely plausible to hold that a truth about the sentence "Snow is white" entails a truth about snow, nor is it remotely plausible to hold that a truth about snow entails a truth about the sentence "Snow is white". The state of snow has no impact on how it is referred to, otherwise, we could not have called snow by other names unless snow itself had changed. Likewise,

¹¹ Frege [L/b]: 145.

¹² Wittgenstein [PG]: §§ 10-12, 22-24; [PI]: §§ 138-42.

¹³ As noted by Brandom [MIE]: 76.

¹⁴ Wittgenstein [PG]: §§ 19-20; [PI]: §§ 1-27.

¹⁵ Cf. Field [DVM]: 250-51, 265-66.

the state of an expression has itself no bearing on the state of the objects it refers to, otherwise, we could change the world by altering linguistic conventions.

To this complaint it may be replied that, appearances notwithstanding, "'Snow is white' is true" does not really refer to the sentence "Snow is white"—at least this is the reply suggested by the deflationist's appeal to substitutional quantification. This kind of quantification allows us to quantify into quotation contexts to the effect that writing "'Snow is white' is true" becomes just another way of writing "Snow is white", and if writing the latter does not involve reference to the sentence written, neither does writing the former.

Alternatively, the deflationist may reply, of course, "'snow'" refers to "snow", while "snow" refers to snow; and since snow is not "snow", they refer to different things. Indeed, "'Snow is white' is true" does not even say what "Snow is white" says: the former says that "Snow is white" is true, the latter says that snow is white. For "snow" refers to snow because "snow" is the very expression which we use in order to state what it refers to, *i.e.* snow; and "Snow is white" says that snow is white because it is the very sentence which we use in order to state what it is that it says.¹⁶ Yet, all this does not show that they do not *mean* the same.

What we wanted to know is in which way a sentence must be used in order to be true, say, just in case snow is white, independently that is, of whether snow is or is not white. In treating "'Snow is white' is true" as a syntactic variant of "Snow is white", the deflationist answers this question by appeal to a grammatical rule: "Snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white, because "Snow is white" is the sentence it is. In treating "'Snow is white' is true" as meaning the same as "Snow is white", the deflationist holds that it is in virtue of the meaning which the truth predicate is stipulated to have, that "Snow is white" has the truth conditions it has. Evidently, sameness of meaning must not here be understood in terms of sameness of truth conditions or satisfaction conditions.¹⁷

A sentence does not become capable of being true or false, however, solely in virtue of the fact that it means the same as another sentence which contains an ascription of "true" to this sentence. To say with Wittgenstein that a sentence qualifies as truth-apt insofar as we apply the calculus of truth functions to it, is likewise unsatisfactory.¹⁸ We wanted to know how language relates to things other than language, yet now we are told how one part of language relates to another.

Dummett has argued that a satisfactory answer to the question, "How is thinking possible?" will at the same time yield an answer to the question,

¹⁶ Field [DVM]: 252, 260; [PHT]: 324-27.

¹⁷ Field [DCT]: 61-62.

¹⁸ Wittgenstein [PG]: §§ 79-80; [PI]: § 136.

"What are the limits of what we can think about?" According to Dummett, an account of what it is for sentences to be used in such a way that they are endowed with truth conditions will license the conclusion that their truth conditions are conditions whose obtaining we can recognise: since it is *we* who present something for reality to answer to, there is no sense attached to the idea that reality may answer but cannot be heard. This is, however, a conclusion the realist thinks we cannot be entitled to endorse. Thus, according to Dummett, realism has to be rejected.

As I shall argue, Dummett arrives at his answer to the question, "What are the limits of what we can think about?" on the basis of an inadequate answer to the question, "How is thinking possible?" His anti-realist conclusion is therefore a *non sequitur*. This thesis is intended to provide a satisfactory answer to the latter question which at the same time shows that no answer to the former can be given on its basis. To this extent, I shall be concerned with a defence of realism. The account of understanding I shall offer is, however, limited in scope: it applies only to non-evaluative empirical discourse. Accordingly, nothing will follow for the status of mathematical or moral discourse, and the role which the notions of truth and truth conditions may be said to play in these areas. But it is just as doubtful whether mathematical or moral talk is genuinely representational while, in this regard, non-evaluative empirical discourse clearly serves as our paradigm. And since Dummett's anti-realism is supposed to be a global thesis about the limits of our thinking, it will do to undermine it locally.

In chapter one I set out to get into sharper focus what is at stake between realists and anti-realists. I argue that the realism/anti-realism debate ought to be divorced from the debate about classical logic. On the one hand, logical revisionism will not yet be motivated by an anti-realist conception of truth. The argument to the conclusion that, for any proposition *P*, either *P* is true or otherwise, is intuitively compelling: *P* cannot be both, *P* cannot be neither, hence *P* must be one or the other. This argument will not lose its appeal if it is pointed out that it can constitute a proof of the conclusion only to the extent that it begs the question; nor will it do so if it is assumed that truth does not exceed the knowable. On the other hand there is no reason to think that if this argument can successfully be undermined the realist cannot avail herself of whatever it is that tells against it.

Chapter two will set the stage for the debate between realists and anti-realists by making it dependent on a successful account of how speakers have to be able to use language in order for them to conceive of the sentences in their repertoire as being endowed with truth conditions. Against the backdrop of what she takes to constitute such an account, the anti-realist is presented as putting forth an argument to the effect that all truths are knowable. This argument rests on the idea that knowledge of truth

conditions is already fully manifested in the abilities required for successful participation in assertoric practice. Minimalist claims about the objectivity of truth, however, which highlight the contrast between truth and warranted assertibility, already raise first doubts about the cogency of this argument by way of challenging the account of understanding on which it is based.

In chapter three I discuss the anti-realist's refinement of her proposal as to how assertoric practice may be seen to confer truth conditions on the sentences used. According to this proposal, sentences must be assigned truth conditions if we are to account for the warranted assertibility conditions of more complex sentences in which they occur. An assertibilist semantics which appeals to no more than conditions of warranted assertibility and deniability, however, already satisfies this demand. Provided truth contrasts with warranted assertibility, knowledge of truth conditions is accordingly not yet manifested in the abilities required for successful participation in assertoric practice. The anti-realist's argument to the conclusion that all truths are knowable, as presented in chapter two, has therefore to be rejected. Until the assertibilist semantics has been shown to be empirically inadequate, realists and anti-realists will have to join forces in their attempt to adduce facts about language use the assertibilist is at a loss to explain.

In chapter four I am concerned with Brandom's recent proposal that our engagement in inferential practice suffices to show that we conceive of the sentences we use as being endowed with truth conditions where truth is minimally objective in the sense required. In the present context, the basic idea must be that the assertibilist proves unable to account for the ways in which we treat inferences as truth-preserving. I argue that the inferential practice which Brandom describes does not yet disclose that we take premisses and conclusions to have minimally objective truth conditions. I therefore conclude that assertibilism still remains in play. The diagnosis of this failure, however, suggests viewing our practice of making assumptions, of engaging in hypothetical reasoning, as the key to a rejection of assertibilist semantics: it may be that it is rather this practice that reveals our concern with the objective truth of (some of) the sentences we use.

Chapter five takes up the suggestion made towards the end of chapter four. I argue that hypothetical reasoning may manifest knowledge of truth conditions provided it is given a proper context and purpose. This is done by way of conceiving of participation in assertoric practice as the pursuit of knowledge-*why*: speakers are described as seeking to explain why they receive the data that they do by means of sentences apt for objective truth which they take these data to be warrants for. Inferences to the best explanation go hand in hand with hypothetical reasoning in that the elimination of alternative hypotheses may, at least to some extent, proceed

hypothetically: by assuming one hypothesis to be part of the explanation of some of the evidence, one assumes that the remainder of the evidence speaking in favour of competing hypotheses is to be explained by other means, and in doing so, one may already find that one lacks the resources to give an explanation of this kind. There are contexts such that making assumptions of this kind cannot be rendered intelligible if all we are said to go in for is expressing and communicating conditions of warranted assertion or denial, while it can be rendered intelligible if we are said to grasp truth conditions. Thus, assertibilism can in the end be overcome. Similarly, I argue that the explanatory objective of the practice described takes us towards a solution to the *Problem of Understanding*.

In chapter six, I finally draw some conclusions for the realism/anti-realism debate. The explanatory role of sentences apt for objective truth casts doubt on the idea that the anti-realist's claim, that all truths are knowable, expresses a conceptual necessity. If this claim is knowable *a priori* at all, it would seem to express a contingency. The manifestation of knowledge of truth conditions in hypothetical reasoning, however, simply does not license the conclusion that the truth conditions which are assumed to obtain are such that they can be known to obtain whenever they do. This suggests that an answer to the question, "How is thinking possible?" will not yet furnish us with an answer to the question, "What are the limits of what we can think about?" Pending further arguments of a different kind, I conclude that realism stands unassailed.

Analytical Table of Contents

Chapter One

1.1 Innocence and Agnosticism

The innocent differs from the agnostic: she does not claim to know that there are no reasons for a given claim. Not only the believer, but also the agnostic must persuade the innocent. The anti-realist believes in the Epistemic Constraint on truth (EC). The logical revisionist is an agnostic about the Law of Excluded Middle (LEM). Hence both the anti-realist and the logical revisionist must persuade the innocent of their respective position.

1.2 Logical Revisionism and Anti-Realism

EC turns LEM into the principle of Completeness (C). The only reason for agnosticism about C whose acknowledgement does not already presuppose agnosticism about LEM is that there is no reason to rule out that we may neither be able to know P nor be able to know \sim P. EC is inconsistent with this possibility. Therefore the logical revisionist cannot persuade the innocent of her agnosticism about LEM by appeal to EC.

1.3 The Paradox of Knowability

EC in conjunction with classical logic leads to absurdity, so does EC in conjunction with intuitionistic logic. This is due to the existence of Moorean propositions such as *P but we will never know*. EC must be replaced by EC*. EC* does not lead to absurdity, no matter whether it is conjoined with classical or intuitionistic logic. Therefore it is not the case that a proponent of EC* is committed to agnosticism about LEM on pains of absurdity. It follows that neither is a proponent of LEM committed to agnosticism about EC* on these grounds.

1.4 Anti-Anti-Realism

Anti-realists endorse EC*. Realists do not have to deny EC*: at most they are bound to remain agnostic about EC*. Agnostics about EC* do not have to believe in LEM. I conclude that the debate between realists and anti-realists can be conducted independently from the debate between classicists and logical revisionists.

Chapter Two

2.1 The Manifestability Requirement

The Manifestability Requirement demands that the notion of meaning be such as to guarantee that the ability to use language correctly is necessary and sufficient for knowledge of meaning. By the Dummettian Criterion, realists and anti-realists alike ought to devise a systematic account of knowledge of meaning that complies with the Manifestability Requirement. The realism/anti-realism debate is a debate about the nature of truth conditions. If the Dummettian Criterion is thought to arbitrate this debate, knowledge of meaning must be equated with knowledge of truth conditions.

2.2 The Manifestation Argument

The anti-realist's Manifestation Argument proceeds from the assumption that knowledge of warranted assertibility conditions is sufficient for knowledge of truth conditions. It concludes that the obtaining of truth conditions is recognisable insofar as the obtaining of warranted assertibility conditions is.

2.3 Truth vs. Warranted Assertibility

Minimal constraints on the objectivity of truth entail that truth and (present) warranted assertibility diverge. (O1) entails that the sentence " $P \ \& \ \sim W(P)$ " may be true. (O2) entails that the sentence " $\sim P \ \& \ W(P)$ " may be true. Still both " P " and " $W(P)$ " share their warranted assertibility conditions. In contrast to " P ", " $W(P)$ " is true iff warrantably assertible.

2.4 Ought Anti-Realist Semantics to be Systematic, and How Can it Be?

" $P \ \& \ \sim W(P)$ " and " $\sim P \ \& \ W(P)$ " necessarily fail to be warrantably assertible. Unless qualified the Manifestation Argument implies that they necessarily fail to be true. Given (O1) and (O2), its conclusion has to be restricted so as to exclude sentences of this sort. The Dummettian Criterion demands that an account of knowledge of truth conditions be given for such sentences as well. If the anti-realist wants to retain her premiss that knowledge of assertibility conditions suffices for knowledge of truth conditions, a compositional account of such sentences must be given.

Chapter Three

3.1 Assertoric Content and Ingredient Sense

The anti-realist is bound to account for the truth conditions of "P" and "W(P)" in terms of the different contribution they make to the determination of the warranted assertibility conditions of complex sentences in which they occur. Although no recursive account of warranted assertibility conditions is to be hoped for, the Inferentiality Constraint (IC) demands that the systematic dependence between the warranted assertibility of complex sentences and that of their constituents be explained. The anti-realist holds that IC can only be met if the constituent sentences are assigned truth conditions.

3.2 Wright's 'Inflationary Argument': An Application

The assertibilist holds that as far as knowledge of warranted assertibility conditions is concerned, an account of understanding need not invoke truth conditions. The anti-realist claims that the assertibilist violates IC. Wright's argument against radical deflationism purports to show that speakers aim for minimally objective truth. Hence if successful, it would refute assertibilism. Wright's argument proceeds from the observation that "true" and "warrantedly assertible" behave differently in contexts of negation.

3.3 An Assertibilist Account of Negation

The assertibilist can explain this fact in terms of warranted assertibility and deniability conditions alone. Just as warranted assertibility differs from truth however, so does warranted deniability differ from falsity: speakers are not shown to aim for minimally objective truth. Hence an account of negation that complies with IC does not require any appeal to truth conditions. The assertibilist can furthermore devise a radically deflationist theory of truth. Wright's argument fails.

3.4 An Assertibilist Account of Conditionals

To the extent that this is feasible at all, the assertibilist can give a systematic interpretation of the indicative conditional that meets IC. This interpretation is based on considerations about the role of conditionals in arguments. It is hostage to there being inferential warrants for the assertion of conditionals which are available even if both antecedent and consequent are undecided.

3.5 Inferential Warrants for Conditionals

Conditionals inherit warrants inferentially even when both their subsentences are undecided. Three different ways in which they may do so are discussed. It is shown that assertibilism can explain all of them to just the same extent to which truth conditional semantics can. This completes the assertibilist's account of indicative conditionals.

3.6 An Assertibilist Account of the Quantifiers

In her treatment of inferential warrants for conditionals, the assertibilist had to appeal to the quantificational structure of object language expressions. To the extent that devising general rules for the assertibility of quantified sentences is feasible at all, the assertibilist can account for the speakers' use of quantifiers without invoking minimally objective truth conditions.

3.7 Semantic Theory and Object Language

The assertibilist can give a systematic account of the warranted assertibility conditions of negated sentences, conditionals and sentences involving quantification. There is no reason to suppose that the assertibilist cannot handle other complex sentences in an analogous fashion. Hence the anti-realist's holistic strategy to account for knowledge of truth conditions fails. The idea that the assertibilist cannot meet IC is likely to rest on a confusion between statements of semantic theory and statements formulated in the object language.

3.8 The Role of Truth in Corrections

Our conception of corrections discloses that it would be mistaken to suggest that sentences must be understood to have truth conditions only insofar as they occur as constituents of more complex sentences: even if sentences are asserted on their own, the significance of their assertion transcends the indication of their warranted assertibility.

3.9 The Manifestation Argument Reconsidered

However this finding provides no resting place for the theorist of understanding who seeks to comply with the Manifestability Requirement: assertions qualify as corrections only in virtue of the minimally objective truth conditions that they have, as there is no institution of making corrections over and above the institution of making assertions. Hence in order to vindicate (O1) and (O2), we have to turn to aspects of use other than the assertoric. The Manifestation Argument is finally shown to rest on a false premiss.

Chapter Four

4.1 Truth and Inference

Knowledge of minimally objective truth conditions cannot be explained in terms of assertoric practice. It is suggested viewing mastery of inferential practice as sufficient for knowledge of truth conditions. An account of this practice must disclose that both inferences, from "P" to "W(P)" and from "W(P)" to "P", are treated as deductively invalid. Brandom purports to devise a pragmatics that shows this.

4.2 Warrants to Assert

Warrants for asserting "P" are warrants for asserting "W(P)" and *vice versa*. Brandom concedes the point. Some such warrants furthermore mandate the assertion of "P" and mandate the denial of its negation. Given his account of empirical knowledge, Brandom is bound to concede this too.

4.3 Deductive Validity and Commitment-Preserving Inferences

Brandom first proposes to account for deductive validity in terms of the practice of drawing commitment-preserving inferences. In undertaking an assertoric commitment to "P" one commits oneself to the propriety of asserting it, hence its warranted assertibility. "P" and "W(P)" share their warranted assertibility conditions. Therefore the inference from "P" to "W(P)" is commitment-preserving, and Brandom's first proposal proves inadequate.

4.4 Inconsistency and Incompatibility

Brandom suggests that an inference is deductively valid if whatever is incompatible with the conclusion is incompatible with the premiss. Two sentences are incompatible just in case commitment to one precludes entitlement to the other and *vice versa*. Commitment to "P" forces commitment to "W(P)". Entitlement to "P" requires entitlement to "W(P)". Thus commitment to "P" precludes entitlement to " \sim W(P)" and *vice versa*. Some sentences have warrants that mandate their assertion: "W(P)" is incompatible with "W(\sim P)". So commitment to "W(P)" precludes entitlement to " \sim P" and *vice versa*. Hence anything incompatible with "P" is incompatible with "W(P)" and *vice versa*. Thus Brandom's second proposal fails too.

4.5 Hypothetical Reasoning

Both failures are due to the nature of assertoric commitments: what one is obliged to assert or debarred from asserting as a result of one's assertoric commitment to "P" is not solely a matter of the content of "P". What one is committed to conclude from a given assumption whenever one makes it, is

solely a matter of the content of this assumption. I suggest viewing the practice of hypothetical reasoning as manifesting our conception of deductive validity.

4.6 Objective Truth as Designated Value

Invalidating both inferences, from "P" to "W(P)" and from "W(P)" to "P", is not enough to vindicate (O1) and (O2): speakers may conceive of "truly assertible" and "warrantedly assertible" as being *a priori* co-extensional. If speakers who reason under the assumption of "P" in states in which "W(P)" is false do not engage in counterfactual reasoning, their commitment to (O1) will be manifested. If speakers who reason under the assumption of " \sim P" in states in which "W(P)" is true do not engage in counterfactual reasoning, their commitment to (O2) will be manifested. The latter is not ruled out: given (O2) truth claims are conjectural. If speakers engage in hypothetical reasoning in order to overcome neutrality or subject their conjectures to a test by assuming alternatives, their hypothetical reasoning will not be counterfactual.

Chapter Five

5.1 The Problem of Rational Belief Change

Whether speakers engage in hypothetical reasoning for these purposes will depend on what it is they strive for in pursuing truth and what obligation they undertake in committing themselves to truth. Addressing these questions we must render intelligible why, if truth and warranted assertibility diverge, commitment to the former is nonetheless answerable to the obtaining of the latter: why should I drop my belief in the truth of "P" whenever "P" ceases to be warrantably assertible?

5.2 Entitlement and Explanation

It is suggested that commitment to the objective truth of "P" is commitment to the claim that "P" forms part of the best explanation of all available evidence including the warrants for asserting "P". If more and more recalcitrant data become available, there will be a point at which we become obliged to explain their availability. If we continue to fail in our attempt to arrive at such an explanation, there will be a point at which we lose our entitlement to "P".

5.3 Objective Discourse and Causation

This entails that many descriptive sentences are intended as explanations and that there is evidence which can be explained by asserting such sentences. It neither entails that all descriptive sentences may perform an explanatory role nor that the evidence cannot be described at all. The proposed account is at odds with the covering law model of causation and

causal explanation. This need not count against it because there are well-known objections to this model.

5.4 Causal Origin and Evidence

Not all evidence that warrants the assertion of "P" can be causally explained in terms of the truth of "P": "P" may be warranted by claims relating to past events and by generalisations. It is merely required that "P" be entailed by the explanation of the warrants for it. If "P" is apt for objective truth, it will be entailed by sentences apt for objective truth. Hence claims about past events and generalisations should be suited to perform an explanatory role. The former will be warranted by what are taken to be effects of such events. The latter will be warranted by patterns of evidence: the generalities they state may form an irreducible part of the causal explanation of such patterns. This is rendered plausible by the nature of theoretical terms: entities referred to by such terms may play a causal role, yet their existence entails the existence of generalities.

5.5 Inferences to the Best Explanation, and their Manifestation

Although explanations are assertions, the search for explanations involves hypothetical reasoning. Inferences to the best explanation proceed by elimination of alternative hypotheses. Hypotheses may be singled out according to their explanatory costs and benefits. These can be weighed by assuming the truth of a hypothesis and concluding whatever could then be seen as causally responsible for the remainder of the available information. Thus hypothetical reasoning may help us overcome neutral states of information and likewise serve as a test for our conjectures about the causal sources of the information we receive. The assertibilist cannot account for this role of hypothetical reasoning. Our practice of hypothetical reasoning manifests our conception of truth as objective in the sense required by (O1) and (O2).

5.6 Assertoric Practice and Knowledge-*why*

This account helps explain why warranted assertibility conditions play a content-determining role. "P" and "W(P)" nonetheless differ in content because the former but not the latter can be used to express knowledge-*why*. Our concern with knowledge of this kind is explained in terms of our desire to objectify our epistemic states by relating them to an independent reality.

5.7 A Solution to the Problem of Understanding

This account does not entail that interpretation requires acquaintance with truth-makers. It does not conceive of the contentfulness of a speaker's utterance as fully determined by the causal powers which she is subject to: the speaker herself is supposed to tell a causal story. Without this exercise of her intellect she could not be said to express truth conditions. Still this exercise can be explained in terms of her mastery of rules of language. We

thus arrive at a solution to the Problem of Understanding. It is furthermore required that speakers be able to give a theory of meaning for others by exercising the very abilities ascribed to themselves. This requirement is met, given that in ascribing knowledge of truth conditions to a speaker, we seek to explain this speaker's behaviour.

Chapter Six

6.1 Superassertibility and the Limits of Truth

If truth claims feature as explanations of the availability of data that warrant their assertion, the notion of superassertibility is a poor candidate for truth. If truth and superassertibility are different concepts, it is hard to see how they might nonetheless be analytically linked. Knowability is truth *plus* superassertibility. Hence it is just as hard to see how EC* might be analytic.

6.2 Theoretical Slack?

The anti-realist who equates truth with superassertibility argues that the causalist elements of the proposed account constitute theoretical slack. Accordingly she must give an alternative account of why it may be rational to regard hypothetical reasoning as a means to acquire warrants. To assume that a sentence is superassertible is to assume the result which carrying out procedures of warrant-acquisition would have, but not yet to carry out such a procedure. Hence equating truth with superassertibility leaves us with no explanation of how hypothetical reasoning may play the role it does.

6.3 Completeness and Superneutrality

Even if not conceptually necessary EC* rules out that there is a sentence "P" such that in the actual world "P" cannot be decided. The anti-realist cannot rule this out on logical grounds without begging the question. That speakers would not hypothesize "P" and " \sim P" in order to overcome neutral states of information unless they regarded it as possible that the truth-value of "P" can be known, does not show that they would not do so unless they had a guarantee that it is ruled out that neither "P" nor " \sim P" can be known. The only possible such guarantee available in neutral states of information is a reason for believing EC*. Neither has such a reason been provided nor has it been shown that speakers must take themselves to have such a reason.

6.4 Causes and Best Explanations

The anti-realist argues that if truth claims are intended to explain data that warrant their assertion, commitments to the truth force commitments to there being such data; hence speakers regard truth as epistemically

constrained. The realist retorts that there may be data we are forever debarred from having access to. Hence the realist is a realist about data and conceives of best explanations in terms of real causes. The anti-realist urges the realist to show that speakers are concerned with data and best explanations as thus conceived.

6.5 Assumptions and their Conclusions

The manifestation of knowledge of objective truth conditions was said to lie in the speakers' practice of hypothetical reasoning not in that of reaching verdicts. If truth and knowability are different concepts, it is legitimate to assume that speakers have different terms for either concept. If EC* holds *a priori*, the assumption of " $\sim\Diamond K(P)$ " should have the same set of conclusions as the assumption of " $\Diamond K(\sim P)$ " or of " $\sim P$ ", provided the reasoning is not counterfactual. The anti-realist argues that insofar as hypothetical reasoning is undertaken for the purpose of overcoming neutrality or testing conjectures, both assumptions ought to have the same conclusions. But not all hypothetical reasoning is undertaken for such purposes: sometimes we aim to arrive at verdicts about conditionals. If reasoning under the assumption of " $P \ \& \ \sim\Diamond K(P)$ " was counterfactual, the speakers ought to arrive at the conditional "If $P \ \& \ \sim\Diamond K(P)$, then $\sim P$ ". But they may well not do so. I conclude that reasons for anti-realism have to be sought outside the semantic arena.

Chapter One*

One lesson to be learnt from the modern realism/anti-realism debate is that agnosticism with respect to certain principles may give rise to a viable theoretical position. Endorsing a claim carries with it the responsibility to vindicate it. At least, this is true of philosophical claims. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that as agnosticism about the validity of a given claim is less than endorsement of its negation, agnosticism does not carry with it any such responsibility. Entitlement to agnosticism must be earned, just as entitlement to any other position must. In other words, agnostics are bound to give reasons for believing that there are no reasons for believing or disbelieving the claim about which they are agnostic. Quite often this requirement will be met by counterbalancing the reasons brought forth in support of that claim or its negation. Sometimes it will rather be met by showing that these reasons were arrived at by dubious methods and therefore carry no conviction.¹

In this chapter, I shall try to do two things. First, I want to divorce anti-realism from logical revisionism, and realism from endorsement of classical logic. According to the line here taken, the anti-realist's conception of truth as epistemically constrained does nothing to vindicate agnosticism about the *Law of Excluded Middle*:

(LEM) $P \vee \sim P$.

The reasons for the rejection of classical logic must accordingly lie elsewhere. That realism is equally silent on the matter becomes clear once realism is revealed to be a form of anti-anti-realism, *viz.* the view according to which there is no reason to believe that truth is epistemically constrained.

This takes us to the second objective of this chapter. I shall argue that it is realism rather than anti-realism that is a species of agnosticism. The anti-realist contends that whatever is true is knowably so. The realist, on the other hand, is agnostic about this very claim. In other words, the realist denies that the *Epistemic Constraint* on truth can be justified:

(EC) if it is true that P, then it is knowable that P.²

* An earlier version of this chapter was read at the conference on *Truth and Knowledge*, held at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, in November 1997. I would like to thank Lars Bo Gundersen, the organisers as well as the participants for helpful comments.

¹ On these alternative types of defeat, see Wright [SDI]: 94-95.

² Here, knowability is not to be conceived of in terms of what can *now* be known, but rather in terms of what can *in principle* be known.

In order to assess whether agnosticism about (LEM) is supported by endorsement of (EC)—and, obversely, whether agnosticism about (EC) mandates endorsement of (LEM)—we should command a clearer view of what agnosticism is. Section (1.1) will clarify what kinds of agnosticism there are, and what agnostics of such kinds have to argue for. In section (1.2), I shall describe the dialectic between proponents of classical logic on the one hand, and intuitionists who are agnostic about (LEM) on the other. I shall argue that the intuitionists' endorsement of (EC) does not support their logical revisionism. Section (1.3) addresses the question of whether proponents of (EC) are nonetheless forced to drop classical logic on pains of absurdity. This question arises in face of what has come to be called the *Paradox of Knowability*. I shall argue that, unless its scope is somehow restricted, (EC) has absurd consequences even if intuitionistic logic is adopted. This will lead to a reformulation of the anti-realists' position in terms of a weakening of (EC). In section (1.4) then, I shall be concerned with the obverse question of whether realism engenders endorsement of classical logic. Again, my answer will be negative. Insofar as agnosticism about the restricted version of (EC) is sufficient for a realist conception of truth, realism can be shown to be consistent with agnosticism about (LEM). The realist position which emerges is an epistemological thesis about the limits of what we can think about, rather than a metaphysical doctrine about the determinacy of reality.

If agnosticism must be earned, so must realism. The aim of the second chapter will accordingly be to prepare the ground for a successful defence of realism in subsequent chapters, the lead idea being Dummett's suggestion that the dispute between realists and anti-realists ought to be decided on the basis of an account of understanding.

1.1 *Innocence and Agnosticism*

Call someone *innocent* with respect to a given proposition P just in case she lacks an answer to the question of whether she should or should not endorse or deny P. The innocent may have taken no interest in attaining, or been deprived of access to, the available information on the basis of which such an answer can be given—or she may just happen never to have entertained the proposition in question. We all are innocent with respect to many propositions, which of course is not to say that there are any propositions with respect to which all of us are innocent.

It is clear from the way the term has been introduced that innocence contrasts with *agnosticism*. Agnosticism with respect to a given proposition P is the denial of the justifiability of P or its negation, and hence a position which can only be arrived at with the available information borne in mind. Innocence, on the other hand, is a state of mind one may find oneself occupying by merely entertaining the proposition in question. It is

in any case a state in which one cannot reasonably take a stand with respect to that proposition precisely because one lacks any information that may provide the rational grounds for doing so.³

The agnostic is bound to hold that her attitude towards the proposition she is agnostic about can, and indeed ought to, be adopted once the reasons for her position have been appreciated. In this regard, the agnostic in no way differs from the believer who likewise takes her reasons for believing to mandate adoption of her stand. This is simply part of what it is to take a stand within a rationally constrained debate.

Debates between agnostics and believers can accordingly be conceived to have the innocent as their audience. Ultimately, the opponents must attempt to persuade the innocent of their respective position. The quality of their arguments will thus depend on whether they can induce a first rational conviction of what these arguments are intended to be arguments for. In other words, these arguments will carry no weight at all if the innocent can acknowledge their bearing on what she ought to believe only if she is already convinced of their conclusion.⁴

Provided that agnosticism with respect to P amounts to the claim that neither P nor its negation is justifiable, we have to distinguish two kinds of agnosticism that correspond to two different readings of "justifiable". Let us call *temporary* agnosticism with respect to P the denial that P or its negation can here and now be justified—where it is not ruled out that in future, further information may decide the matter in favour of either P or its negation.⁵ Agnosticism that is arrived at *a posteriori* will for the most part

³ It might be suggested that, in the state of information the innocent occupies, neither P nor \sim P is warrantably assertible so that anyone occupying that state ought to be agnostic about P. This way of putting it presupposes, however, that the state of information the innocent occupies is a state in relation to which the present warranted assertibility of P is to be assessed. But this is precisely what the self-proclaimed innocent is unwilling to say. Rather, she distinguishes between the currently available evidence and her grasp of it.

⁴ If the debate concerns the status of a proposition (e.g. a purported logical law) to which, if it has this status, every rational thinker will be committed, one might wonder how the suggested methodology can be made to work: for although there may be independent criteria of rationality in some such cases, it would still seem likely that there are propositions P such that any argument for P can only be acknowledged if P has already been endorsed. Take arguments for the validity of *modus ponens* as an example: if we seek to persuade the innocent of the validity of *modus ponens* by means of an argument that involves an application of *modus ponens*, it would appear that the rational suaveness of the argument cannot be measured against an independent standard; and there seem to be no arguments for the validity of *modus ponens* that do not share this feature. Since there is no initial reason to think that arguments for and against the justifiability of those propositions we are going to consider, i.e. (EC) and (LEM), necessarily share this feature, the suggested methodology can here be adopted until proven inadequate. However, the reasoning that leads to this caution does not seem to be compelling anyway: first, it is not at all clear whether all arguments for the logical validity of a given claim need themselves be logically valid; and secondly, even an argument that involves the application of a rule of inference may be recognised as a good argument quite independently from whether the applied rule is recognised as generally valid.

⁵ Whereas both the belief that P and temporary agnosticism about P call for warrants, it is only the former attitude which is accompanied by the claim that the available warrants will not be overturned in future.

be temporary in this sense, for empirical evidence—if it warrants neither P nor $\sim P$ —is likely not to warrant either that in future no empirical evidence will be forthcoming that warrants either P or $\sim P$. It may be argued, however, that sometimes we have defeasible evidence from which we can infer that an empirical proposition will never be decided. Thus it may be argued that we have *a posteriori* grounds for thinking that it will never be found out whether the number of coins I had in my pocket last month is even.

In any case, temporary agnosticism is not always arrived at *a posteriori*. Whereas temporary agnosticism *a posteriori* denies the current justifiability of an empirical proposition, temporary agnosticism *a priori* denies the present justifiability of a proposition apt for *a priori* justification. For example, one might adopt agnosticism towards a mathematical proposition on the basis that so far, no proof of it or its negation has been given. Again, this is not to rule out that such a proof can eventually be given. Thus, even if a proof of P is a conclusive *a priori* reason to believe P , temporary agnosticism about P may be based on the observation that such a proof has never been advanced—and at the same time be defeasible in virtue of the fact that such a proof might be advanced in future. Insofar as the agnostic lacks a reason to preclude this possibility, her agnosticism is temporary, owing its suaveness to nothing but all the proofs hitherto advanced and all the proofs hitherto wanting. Insofar as the agnostic has to evaluate the credentials of mathematical constructions, her agnosticism will nonetheless be arrived at *a priori*.⁶

In contrast, call *principled* agnosticism with respect to a proposition P the denial that P or its negation can ever be justified. For obvious reasons, this form of agnosticism cannot solely be based on the observation that all hitherto attained evidence falls short of establishing either P or its negation. Rather, it will have to rest on an argument to the effect that no evidence will ever be had which can establish either P or $\sim P$. If meant to be conclusive, such an argument will be arrived at *a priori*. For no empirical evidence that is itself insufficient to warrant either P or its negation has the force to guarantee that no further evidence can be gained which warrants either P or $\sim P$.

It would be mistaken to suggest, however, that for this very reason, principled agnosticism can only relate to the *a priori* justifiability of a proposition. It has already been remarked that, arguably, we may come to possess defeasible evidence from which

⁶ It might be objected that temporary agnosticism with respect to a proposition P apt for *a priori* justification will always be arrived at *a posteriori*, because it will *inter alia* be based on the observation that, besides all the pseudo-proofs hitherto dismissed *a priori*, the current state of information does not include any other attempted proof of P . On this view, neither can there be an *a priori* justification for believing P that may be trumped in future, for any inconclusive *a priori* grounds for P will have to be supplemented by reasons for believing that no trumping evidence is presently available; and such reasons are supposed to be *a posteriori*. I am not at all attracted to this view. However, for the purposes of this essay, it does not matter whether we can be said to arrive at temporary agnosticism about (EC) on *purely a priori* grounds.

we can infer that a given empirical proposition will never be decided. Principled agnosticism of this kind will be arrived at *a posteriori*, and the arguments on which it is based will be less than conclusive: we have no guarantee that we will never know whether the number of coins I had in my pocket last month is even.

But it may even be thought that there are empirical propositions for whose undecidability we have such an *a priori* guarantee. For instance, let us stipulate that x is a *master criminal* just in case x has committed a deed which is not detectable as a crime and the causal history of which we cannot trace back to anything x did. Then we know *a priori* that the proposition that Maggie was a master criminal cannot be vindicated on the basis of any empirical evidence. By the same token however, it would appear that we know *a priori* that neither can its negation be so vindicated, for this would require showing that there was no such crime to which Maggie was so related, and this it might be argued, cannot be shown on the basis of any empirical evidence: if Maggie can be shown to have committed a crime, this does not rule out the possibility that there is another crime Maggie has committed but cannot be convicted of, and if there is nothing Maggie can be shown to have done which qualifies as a crime, this does not rule out that something Maggie did is a crime, but cannot be identified as such.⁷ However, principled agnosticism of this *a priori* kind can only be maintained at the cost of embracing scepticism about the credentials of empirical evidence in general.⁸ For otherwise we may after all be credited with the capacity to acquire good, albeit defeasible evidence for the claim that Maggie is no master criminal, *e.g.* by following her around. Principled agnosticism *a priori* is more modest if it is directed at the *a priori* justifiability of a proposition and its negation, for here it is most unlikely to be infectious so as to undercut all *a priori* justification.

Both disputes about logic and disputes about the correct conception of truth relate to the question whether certain principles, or rules, can be justified *a priori*.⁹ In

⁷ Another example would be "Everything is uniformly increasing in size". There is no way in which we could detect the truth of this sentence because our measuring rods would likewise increase in size. By the same token, it would appear that we cannot detect the falsity of this sentence either because our measurements will yield precisely those results they would yield if the sentence was true. Insofar as we have reason to believe, however, that space and time are continuous manifolds, we have reason to believe that there is no intrinsically defined metric, hence that length is relational. We will then have reason to regard the claim that everything uniformly increases in size as incoherent, and therefore as false. Cf. Grünbaum [PPS]: 42-43. Accordingly, principled agnosticism about this claim could only be retained if it could be shown that we can have no reason to believe that space and time are continuous manifolds.

⁸ I here take it that a principled agnostic about the claim that Maggie was a master criminal does regard this claim as apt for truth and falsity. In other words, she does not deny the justifiability of this claim or its negation on the ground that they are devoid of sense.

⁹ Realists deny that (EC) can be justified *a priori* just as intuitionists deny that (LEM) can be justified *a priori*. In what follows I shall describe realists as agnostics about (EC) and intuitionists as agnostics about (LEM). In doing so I seem to subscribe to the claim that both (EC) and (LEM) can only be justified *a priori* if they can be justified at all. For if I left room for the possibility that someone might deny that (EC) or (LEM) are *a priori* justifiable, yet affirm that they are nonetheless justified, then calling realists

order to see how—with respect to the *a priori* justifiability of P—either temporary or principled agnosticism about P might be justified, hence how the agnostic might succeed in persuading the innocent of the propriety of her position, it is instructive to ask first on which grounds P could be shown to be valid *a priori*. There are basically two ways in which this might be done: either one offers a proof for P—a demonstration of P from premisses and by means of rules which are themselves known *a priori*—or one makes a successful case for the claim that P can be known *a priori* even though it does not admit of such a proof.

In principle, any purported proof of P is open to two forms of criticism: either the agnostic may argue that this purported proof rests on premisses whose *a priori* validity she denies. Alternatively, she may argue that at least one step in the derivation of P relies on the propriety of a rule of inference whose *a priori* validity she again denies.

Since every proof—even if it does not rest on any undischarged assumptions—at least draws on the propriety of rules of inference to which a logical law corresponds, it would appear that some propositions must be known *a priori* without proof, if anything is to be provable at all. Therefore sooner or later, the agnostic is likely to challenge that all those propositions can be known *a priori* which the believer takes to be knowable without proof, and on whose validity the purported proof of P depends. In other words, it is likely that there will be a point at which both the agnostic and the believer agree that a proposition on which the alleged proof of P depends cannot itself be proved, but disagree as to whether it can be known *a priori* nonetheless. Indeed, this is precisely the shape that the debate between intuitionists and classicists takes.

and intuitionists agnostics would seem to be misguided: by definition, agnosticism rules out belief. But if (EC) and (LEM) were apt for empirical confirmation, it seems they would have to be endorsed on that basis, for their known instances are legion. (The only way I can think of in which (EC) might be said to be refuted empirically is in terms of a well-confirmed scientific theory which entails, for some P, that neither P nor \sim P is knowable, but rules out that both P and \sim P may fail to be true. I owe this idea to Jesper Kallestrup. It would then become a matter of dispute however, whether there can be reasons for believing that P is not knowable, which are not yet reasons for believing that \sim P is knowable, hence whether the notion of knowability alluded to is the one the proponent of (EC) has in mind.)

The claim that (EC) and (LEM) are not apt for empirical justification is highly contentious. Although I think a lot can be said in its favour (*e.g.* by appeal to projectibility), I shall not here argue the case. For present purposes I need not subscribe to this claim anyway: it is sufficient to point out that the debates are concerned with the *a priori* status of (EC) and (LEM) respectively and that all parties involved agree that in the context of these debates, empirical evidence for (EC) or (LEM) would not suffice for winning. It is important to keep in mind though, that the finding that (EC) or (LEM) cannot be known *a priori* would not yet license the conclusion that (EC) or (LEM) cannot be known at all (see footnote 14). My argumentation will in any case depend on there being a sense in which (EC) and (LEM) are apt for *a priori* justification. Chapter two will be designed to explain which sense this may be.

1.2 Logical Revisionism and Anti-Realism

Dummett has argued that realists are committed to endorsement of classical logic and the bivalent semantics that underpins it, while abstention from such an endorsement is essential to anti-realism. In particular, endorsement of the Law of Excluded Middle:

(LEM) $P \vee \sim P$

has been regarded as essential to realism, while the denial of its *a priori* justifiability has accordingly been taken to be essential to anti-realism. In what follows, I want to contest this account of the dialectic between realists and anti-realists. As I shall argue, there is no obvious route from anti-realism to revisionism in logic, nor is there any reason to suppose that a successful case for realism will be a successful case for classical logic. But in order not to prejudge the issue, let us confront a proponent of classical logic with a proponent of intuitionistic logic.

The intuitionist denies that (LEM) can be *a priori* justified. But neither does she commit herself to the falsehood of any of its instances. We are therefore prone to describing her as an agnostic about (LEM). But recall that agnosticism with respect to a given P was described as the denial that either P or its negation can be justified; and as it is to be expected, proponents of different logics may have divergent views about what counts as the negation of a given proposition, hence eventually about the identity of this very proposition. In some cases, the point of view from which we describe someone as an agnostic is therefore most likely to be biased. Indeed, as we shall see, the intuitionist does not conceive of the negation of (LEM) as involving the claim that (LEM) has false instances.¹⁰ Still, for the time being, we may assume that it is sufficient for one's agnosticism about a given generalisation or schema if one denies that this generalisation or schema can be justified and furthermore refuses to claim that it has false instances. For, it is still correct to say that, in the sense agnosticism has originally been defined, the intuitionist is agnostic about some instances of (LEM), *viz.* those for none of whose disjuncts there are warrants or effective procedures for acquiring such warrants; and at least intuitively, any reason to move beyond agnosticism about P will involve a reason for believing that P can be refuted, while there is no intuitive conception of refuting a generalisation or schema that does not amount to producing a counter-example. However, any reader who is sceptical about this bias towards intuitive thinking may be reassured: we can still run the reasoning about to follow with respect to particular

¹⁰ This is owing to the fact that, for the intuitionist, the inference from ' $\sim \forall x \Phi x$ ' to ' $\sim \sim \exists x \sim \Phi x$ ' is invalid, with the effect that she can, if certain other conditions are satisfied, consistently endorse both ' $\sim \forall x \Phi x$ ' and ' $\sim \exists x \sim \Phi x$ '; see footnote 14.

instances of (LEM) rather than (LEM) itself, instances with respect to which the intuitionist would describe herself as an agnostic. In the end, it is the idea of refusing to endorse an instance of (LEM) despite the fact that it is impossible to deny it which puzzles the innocent.

Given that even an agnostic must be capable of convincing the innocent, we have to ask how the intuitionist may argue her case against classical logic. As suggested, we should start by describing how the classical logician may try to show on *a priori* grounds that (LEM) is valid. Suppose she offers the following *reductio* proof:

1	(1)	$\sim(P \vee \sim P)$	Ass.
2	(2)	P	Ass.
2	(3)	$P \vee \sim P$	2, \vee -I
1,2	(4)	\perp	1, 3, \sim -E
1	(5)	$\sim P$	2, 4, \sim -I
1	(6)	$P \vee \sim P$	5, \vee -I
1	(7)	\perp	1, 6, \sim -E
	(8)	$\sim \sim(P \vee \sim P)$	1, 7, \sim -I
	(9)	$P \vee \sim P$	8, DNE

Confronted with this proof, the intuitionist will reply that the step from (8) to (9) relies on the propriety of the rule of *Double Negation Elimination*:

$$\text{(DNE)} \quad \frac{\sim \sim P}{P},$$

and hence on the validity of the *Law of Double Negation*:

$$\text{(LDN)} \quad \sim \sim P \rightarrow P.$$

Unlike the classicist, the intuitionist claims that this law cannot be shown to be valid *a priori*. It might thus appear that we have made some progress by narrowing down what the classicist and the intuitionist disagree about, just as troubleshooters isolate the source of trouble. But this is an illusion: both for the intuitionist and the classicist, the claim that (LEM) is logically valid is equivalent to the claim that (LDN) is logically valid.¹¹ Indeed, the classicist may concede that neither (LEM) nor (LDN) can be proved

¹¹ The same goes for the claim that the rule of *Dilemma* is logically valid and the claim that the rule of *Classical Reductio* is logically valid; cf. Tennant [ARL]: 186-87.

without circularity and therefore rather claim that (LEM) and (LDN) can be known *a priori* without proof. The intuitionist will accordingly deny that this is so.

The intuitionist cannot rest content with the observation that up to now, this law has not been vindicated. For, this would take the innocent towards no more than a temporary agnosticism about (LDN). One may ask, however, why should the intuitionist go for more than temporary agnosticism about (LDN)? Well, insofar as we do reason in accordance with this law, the innocent is tempted to think that it is just a matter of overcoming technical difficulties that such a vindication will be forthcoming in the end: no philosophy of logic will be faithful to our inferential practice unless it accords the status of a valid rule of inference to (DNE); and the innocent may rightly claim to have a coherent understanding of the logical constants without being able to demonstrate the validity of those rules which have to be valid in order for her to have that understanding.¹² In other words, the innocent will not refrain from using the laws of classical logic as long as she is presented with no more than the finding that until now, philosophers of logic have failed to demonstrate our entitlement to these laws.¹³

True: the mere fact that we actually reason according to the laws of classical logic does not yet show that we are justified in doing so. In other words, revisionism is still an option. The innocent's temptation to stick to actual practice, however, is not completely groundless either. For until now, she is incapable of understanding in which sense a proof to the effect that negating an arbitrary instance of (LEM) leads to contradiction may fall short of being a proof of (LEM). A proof to the effect that $\sim P$ leads to contradiction is a proof that, necessarily, $\sim P$ fails to be true. If such a proof is said to be less than a proof of P , then this seems to be an invitation to think it possible that P may nonetheless fail to be true. To conceive of P as failing to be true, however, is to think it possible that $\sim P$ is true; and this possibility has already been ruled out by the *reductio* of $\sim P$. Accordingly, the intuitionist's abstention from (LEM), if it is to be backed up by suasive reasons at all, must be motivated by a train of thought other than this one.

In other words, the innocent is puzzled by the fact that (i) she has been offered a reason for more than just *not* endorsing the negation of an arbitrary instance of (LEM) but actually for *denying* it, whereas (ii) she is told that having reason to deny the negation of a proposition is not yet a reason to affirm that proposition. Thus, it would appear that the intuitionist is agnostic about (LEM), while not being agnostic about its

¹² This is just one application of the more general principle according to which one may have knowledge without knowing that the enabling conditions for this knowledge are satisfied. Cf. Burge [IS]: 653-55.

¹³ Cf. Dummett [LBM]: 301-304; and [ILE]: 281-84.

negation. And it is this combination of ideas which the innocent is as yet incapable of digesting.¹⁴

It was conceded that the fact that we do reason according to the laws of classical logic does not yet vindicate these laws. Being a principled agnostic about these laws, the intuitionist will therefore argue for revisionism by arguing that our actual inferential practice is incoherent. Since the intuitionist does not deny (LEM) but only its *a priori* justifiability, the incoherence she tries to bring out will not amount to any inconsistency amongst the laws in accordance with which we reason. Rather this putative incoherence is most likely to be thought of as an inconsistency between the epistemic status we assign to such laws and evaluations of other principles to which we are committed. Thus one way of displaying such an incoherence—without yet offering a diagnosis of it—would consist in proving that if (LEM) was accepted as valid, we would be licensed to infer statements whose *a priori* validity we have independent reason to deny.

Dummett has suggested that an anti-realist conception of truth underpins logical revisionism.¹⁵ Indeed, intuitionism is a species of anti-realism. This alone does not yet

¹⁴ Being a principled agnostic about (LEM) in the context of the current debate *as well as* an anti-realist about truth, the intuitionist will be bound to hold that there is a sense in which the negation of (LEM) can be known, if she furthermore contends that (LEM) can only be known *a priori* if it can be known at all. For given (EC), if A is not knowable, then $\sim A$, and if $\sim A$, then $\sim A$ is knowable. The intuitionist may try to accommodate this by driving a wedge between (a) and (b):

(a) $\sim \sim$ (for all P: $P \vee \sim P$)

(b) for all P: $\sim \sim (P \vee \sim P)$.

(Cf. Dummett [EI]: 30.) While the intuitionist is forced to endorse (b) in any case, she can indeed consistently deny (a) provided that the range of "P" is not finite. And to deny (a) is to affirm the negation of the universally quantified version of (LEM), as in intuitionism triple negation collapses into single negation. (For double negation introduction holds so as to allow for contraposition.)

Why is the proviso that the range of "P" not be finite essential? If the range of "P" is finite, the negation of (a) is accordingly equivalent to the negation of a conjunction of finitely many instances of (LEM), while (b) is equivalent to the conjunction of the double negations of these instances. But then the conjunction of (b) and the negation of (a) yields a contradiction, since in general:

$$\sim \sim P \ \& \ \dots \ \& \ \sim \sim R \ \vdash \ \sim \sim (P \ \& \ \dots \ \& \ R).$$

For example, suppose that $\sim \sim P \ \& \ \sim \sim Q$ and that $\sim (P \ \& \ Q)$. From the latter, we derive that $P \rightarrow \sim Q$, and so by double negation introduction, that $\sim \sim P \rightarrow \sim Q$. From this together with $\sim \sim P$, we derive $\sim Q$, contradicting $\sim \sim Q$. (This proof was pointed out to me by Crispin Wright. Note that intuitionists do not already regard (LEM) as in good standing if the range of "P" is finite: it must furthermore be guaranteed both that all predicates involved are decidable and that the domain of quantification is finite and decidable.)

As already mentioned in footnote 9 however, principled agnosticism about (LEM) with respect to the current debate does not amount to the claim that (LEM) cannot be known at all: it only amounts to the claim that (LEM) cannot be known *a priori*. But suppose that the intuitionist indeed endorses the bolder claim that (LEM) can only be known *a priori* if it can be known at all. Then even if the range of "P" cannot be shown to be finite such that no contradiction can be derived either, it seems obvious that the anti-realist's prescription to endorse (b) but to deny (a), does not yet relieve the innocent from her dyspepsia.

show, however, that the intuitionist is agnostic about (LEM) *because* she is an anti-realist about truth. It is even less clear whether the innocent can be brought to adopt agnosticism about (LEM) on the basis of reasons for anti-realism. It might now be argued, however, that once the innocent can independently be convinced of anti-realism, (LEM) would allow her to infer a statement whose *a priori* validity she has in turn independent reason to deny. This would then provide her with a reason to deny the *a priori* validity of (LEM). In this way, anti-realism might be shown to support logical revisionism.

Suppose then that the Epistemic Constraint on truth has been vindicated on independent grounds, *i.e.* that it has been established that

(EC) if it is true that P, then it is knowable that P.

Endorsement of (LEM) would then allow us to infer the following principle of *Completeness*:

(C) either it is knowable that P or it is knowable that \sim P.

And now it would seem that the innocent is offered a suasive reason for dropping (LEM)—given she has been persuaded of the *a priori* validity of (EC)—for, clearly, there is no *a priori* reason to believe (C). Or is there? Assume that the innocent is intrigued by the following line of thought: it cannot be established by reflection alone that either P is knowable or \sim P is knowable, because it is still a possibility that for some P, neither will there be any evidence available that is sufficient to yield knowledge of P nor will there be any evidence available that is sufficient to yield knowledge of \sim P. If (EC) is a valid principle however, then this possibility is ruled out. If this was possible, it would have to be possible that neither P nor \sim P is true. And given the *Negation Equivalence*:

(NE) it is not the case that P is true iff it is the case that \sim P is true,

this would mean that it was possible that neither P is true nor P is not true.¹⁶

¹⁵ Dummett [RoP]: 362-64; [PBI]: 224-26.

¹⁶ (NE) uncontroversially follows from the Equivalence Schema for truth:

(ES) it is true that P iff P,

which is also uncontroversial with respect to the present debate. Thus the innocent can be taken to have been introduced to and convinced of the following proof:

But a contradiction is necessarily false, and

$$\sim P \ \& \ \sim \sim P$$

is a contradiction in both classical and intuitionistic logic. Accordingly, it would appear that endorsement of (EC) on *a priori* grounds leaves the innocent with no independent reason to be agnostic about (C): she would already have to have lost her innocence with respect to (LEM) in order for her to get into a position to countenance any reason for agnosticism about (C). For, given (EC), (C) is equivalent to (LEM); and being able to conceive of a reason for agnosticism about (C) will then already require the ability to conceive of a reason for agnosticism that is less than a reason to believe in the possibility of counter-examples—just the kind of reason the intuitionist sought to provide for agnosticism about (LEM). Insofar as agnosticism about (C) was supposed to engender agnosticism about the propriety of (DNE), hence of (LEM), it would thus appear that endorsement of (EC)—rather than supplying the innocent with a reason for logical revisionism—bereaves her of any independent reason she may have been offered for abstaining from the very principle which (EC) turns (LEM) into, *i.e.* (C). When Crispin Wright contends that

the thesis of EC, that truth is essentially evidentially constrained, *must* enjoin a revision of classical logic, one way or another, for all discourses where there is no guarantee that evidence is available, at least in principle, to decide between each statement of the discourse concerned and its negation,¹⁷

he appears to suggest that there is a reason for thinking that there is no such guarantee for (C)—a reason which can be shared by both the intuitionist and the classicist—and that, once (EC) is independently established, logical revisionism is forced upon us. Quite the contrary: if there is a reason to be agnostic about (C), (EC) necessarily would turn that reason into a reason for logical revisionism. Accordingly, if there is no reason for logical revisionism to start with, then neither is there any reason to be agnostic about (C) given that there is a reason to believe (EC), for (EC) and (C) are classically equivalent.¹⁸ Hence it has still to be shown why the innocent should opt for logical revisionism.

1	(1)	it is true that $P \leftrightarrow P$	(ES)
1	(2)	$\sim P \leftrightarrow$ it is not true that P	1, contraposition
3	(3)	it is true that $\sim P \leftrightarrow \sim P$	(ES)
1,3	(4)	it is not true that $P \leftrightarrow$ it is true that $\sim P$	2,3

¹⁷ Wright [TO]: 43.

¹⁸ We have already indicated that (EC) classically entails (C); but (C) also intuitionistically entails (EC):

Any *a priori* warrant for agnosticism about (C) we can be said to have simultaneously with an *a priori* warrant for (EC), cannot furnish us with any *a priori* warrant for logical revisionism we did not already have independently from the argument that leads from (EC) and agnosticism about (C) to agnosticism about (LEM). Rather, it is only if we are already in possession of an *a priori* warrant for logical revisionism that we can take ourselves to have *a priori* warrants for both agnosticism about (C) and belief in (EC). In other words, any warrant that the innocent may independently be offered for being agnostic about (C) is undermined by warrants for (EC), such that if she is presented with a vindication of the latter, for her there will no longer be any warrant to be had for resisting belief in (C) until she has been convinced of logical revisionism in the first place. Accordingly, given (EC), any argument for logical revisionism based on agnosticism about (C) will not be suasive.¹⁹

1	(1)	$\Diamond K(P) \vee \Diamond K(\sim P)$	Ass.
2	(2)	P	Ass.
	(3)	$\Diamond K(\sim P) \rightarrow \sim P$	knowability is factive
2	(4)	$\sim \sim P$	2, A $\rightarrow \sim \sim A$
2	(5)	$\sim \Diamond K(\sim P)$	3, 4, modus tollendo tollens
1, 2	(6)	$\Diamond K(P)$	1, 5, modus tollendo ponens
1	(7)	$P \rightarrow \Diamond K(P)$	2, 6, \rightarrow -I.

The importance of this result lies in the fact that even the innocent can acknowledge that endorsing (C) is one way of endorsing (EC), with the effect that she has a guarantee that her warrants for (EC) will not be undermined once (C) is accepted. Of course, she is not thereby said to have a reason for thinking that her warrants for (EC) are already sufficient to warrant (C), for this would depend on the validity of (LEM). Intuitionists may accordingly suggest that logical laws alone can never license the transformation of warrants for (EC) into warrants for (C) which, for the intuitionists, is a far stronger principle than (EC). But again this does not seem convincing: classically, (EC) is just as strong a principle as (EC) because both are equivalent; accordingly the intuitionists' worries about the epistemological inertness of logical laws are counter-balanced by the classicists' suggestion that, strictly speaking, no transformation of warrants for (EC) into warrants for (C) is called for because, appearances notwithstanding, (EC) and (C) come down to one and the same (highly contentious) claim.

¹⁹ Another way of expressing that the anti-realist's argument is not suasive, is in terms of *begging the question*. Following a suggestion by Jackson [PPA] we may say that

an argument for a conclusion K begs the question against an audience who has doubts about K if the evidence adduced in support of the premisses $\{P_1, \dots, P_n\}$ is sufficient only if conjoined with beliefs $\{R_1, \dots, R_m\}$ and anyone who has doubts about K ought not to share $\{R_1, \dots, R_m\}$ independently from being presented with this evidence.

The anti-realist's argument is this:

P_1 : It is true that P iff it is knowable that P
 P_2 : There is no reason to claim: it is knowable that P or knowable that $\sim P$
 P_3 : It is true that $\sim P$ iff it is not true that P

K: There is no reason to claim: it is true that P or not true that P.

Whatever the evidence that is adduced in support of the premisses, it will be sufficient to do the job only if (DNE) is taken to be invalid. For otherwise this evidence would have to be sufficient to vindicate demurrals from the double negation of (LEM), which is a logical truth even for the intuitionist. But anyone who is not yet convinced of (K) will not yet be convinced that (DNE) is invalid, because (LEM) (intuitionistically) entails (LDN) which validates (DNE). Hence the anti-realist's argument begs the question.

None of this shows that the laws of classical logic are valid. Until now, the innocent is bound to subscribe to temporary agnosticism with respect to the question of which of the competing logics ought to be adopted. It emerges, however, that the intuitionist's principled agnosticism about (LEM) will not yet be served by the anti-realist's vindication of (EC). Rather, it would appear that a vindication of (EC) is compatible with a vindication of (LEM).²⁰

1.3 *The Paradox of Knowability*

Timothy Williamson has argued that the position just sketched—endorsement of (EC) plus endorsement of classical logic, and hence (C)—is bound to collapse into absurdity.²¹ Even if this was a correct diagnosis, it would appear that the conclusion reached in the last section would stand unassailed. For if (EC) and the laws of classical logic together indeed had absurd consequences, then anyone not yet biased towards logical revisionism would regard any argument to this effect as a *reductio* of (EC). This view should definitely be taken, if logical revisionism could not prevent endorsement of (EC) from collapsing into an absurd position. However, Williamson is convinced that intuitionism is the way out for anyone promoting (EC). I shall argue that this diagnosis is mistaken.

The last section revealed that, even if there were independent reasons to endorse (EC), these reasons would not yet motivate agnosticism about (LEM). The present section is intended to show that reasons for anti-realism need not at the same time be reasons for logical revisionism. In other words, it is intended to show that there may well be independent reasons for the claim that truth is epistemically constrained. Of course if (EC) leads to absurdity, no matter which logic is adopted, this claim will have to be modified. As we shall see shortly, (EC) must be restricted in a systematic way.

Williamson's argument for the claim that an anti-realist conception of truth lends itself to intuitionism draws on a proof originally due to Fitch.²² This proof shows that (EC) classically entails that every truth will at some point be known, and has therefore come to be known as presenting the *Paradox of Knowability*. Let "K(P)" be short for "There is a time at which it will be known that P".²³ The proof then runs as follows:

²⁰ Cf. Posy's discussion of Kant's view of the nature of mathematics in [KMR]: 123-28. Cf. as well Blackburn [MR]: 44-45.

²¹ Williamson [ID]; cf. as well his [KC].

²² Fitch [LAV]; cf. as well Hart [AI], Edgington [PoK] and Williamson [OPK].

²³ As Williamson has shown, the proof is blocked once "K(P)" is interpreted as "It is known at *t* that P", for some specific time *t*; see his [ID]: 204-205.

1	(1)	$P \ \& \ \sim K(P)$	Ass.
1	(2)	$\diamond K(P \ \& \ \sim K(P))$	1, given (EC)
1	(3)	$\sim \Box \sim K(P \ \& \ \sim K(P))$	2, df. \diamond
4	(4)	$K(P \ \& \ \sim K(P))$	Ass.
4	(5)	$K(P)$	4, given $K(A \ \& \ B) \rightarrow K(A)$
4	(6)	$\sim K(P)$	4, given $K(A \ \& \ B) \rightarrow A \ \& \ B$, $\&-E$
4	(7)	\perp	5, 6, $\sim\sim E$
	(8)	$\sim K(P \ \& \ \sim K(P))$	4, 7, $\sim I$
	(9)	$\Box \sim K(P \ \& \ \sim K(P))$	8, $\Box I$
1	(10)	\perp	3, 9, $\sim\sim E$
	(11)	$\sim(P \ \& \ \sim K(P))$	1, 10, $\sim I$
	(12)	$P \rightarrow K(P)$	11, given $\sim(A \ \& \ \sim B) \rightarrow (A \rightarrow B)$. ²⁴

According to Williamson, (12) is absurd. Indeed, one should be ready to agree: we know that we are far too lazy to track every truth that there is, and sometimes irreversible changes occur that obstruct any attempt to answer a question which we have every reason to believe nonetheless has an answer.

For instance, consider the following case. Patrick is sitting in his office, door and window locked from the outside. Kaufmann has set a time-bomb that will blow up Patrick's office in three minutes, and Patrick knows this. Patrick goes on to look through his lifetime achievements, stored in two-hundred folders. Mixed with these, there are one-hundred qualitatively identical folders containing copies of articles on polygamy. For convenience' sake, let us suppose that each folder has a unique number printed onto it, but otherwise lacks any information about its contents. Now, every statement of the form "Folder number x contains a sheet with the word 'polygamy' on it" is effectively decidable (where x is a number between 1 and 300). Only two minutes left. Patrick has checked the contents of no more than twenty folders. Patrick knows that there is a number between 1 and 300 such that the folder with that number will contain a sheet

²⁴ The step from (11) to (12) involves an application of Double Negation Elimination (DNE):

1	(1)	$\sim(P \ \& \ \sim K(P))$	Ass.
2	(2)	P	Ass.
3	(3)	$\sim K(P)$	Ass.
2, 3	(4)	$P \ \& \ \sim K(P)$	2, 3, $\&-I$
1, 2, 3	(5)	\perp	1, 4, $\sim\sim E$
1, 2	(6)	$\sim \sim K(P)$	3, 5, $\sim\sim I$
1, 2	(7)	$K(P)$	6, DNE
1	(8)	$P \rightarrow K(P)$	2, 7, $\rightarrow I$.

with the word "polygamy" on it, but no one will ever know.²⁵ How can anyone ever refuse to assert this? Or rather, how can anyone ever claim to be in a position to rule this out?

Williamson maintains that, if she blocks the step from (11) to (12) by way of dropping (DNE), the anti-realist can avoid the absurd conclusion that all truths will at some point be known.²⁶ Accordingly, intuitionism is what the anti-realist should opt for. In doing so, she would still be bound to deny that there are any truths that will never be known. But, she would nonetheless be agnostic about (12).²⁷

Williamson's recommendation that the anti-realist forestall (12) by going in for logical revisionism, however, is far from helpful. As Tennant has argued, the step from (11) to (12) is intuitionistically acceptable in cases in which the discourse is effectively decidable; and if "P" is effectively decidable so is "K(P)", contrary to what Williamson suggests.²⁸ If (12) is absurd for the reasons cited above, it will remain to be so in cases in which both "P" and "K(P)" are effectively decidable. Accordingly, anti-realism has not yet been saved from absurdity, even if classical logic is being rejected.

On the other hand, if (12) is absurd for the reasons sketched above, so seems (11). Indeed, (11) is intuitionistically equivalent to (12*):

(12*) $\sim K(P) \rightarrow \sim P$,

viz. the claim that all propositions that will never be known are false. The idea that it is inconsistent to hold that there is a truth that will, as a matter of fact, never be known—

²⁵ If there are any qualms about Patrick's loss of memory, just suppose that (Patrick knows that) his illiterate friend put the manuscripts into the folders, and (he knows as well that) Kaufmann randomly stamped the numbers onto them. There is then no sense to the idea that anyone ever knew of every number between 1 and 300, whether or not the folder with that number contained a sheet with the word "polygamy" on it. The present case will thus differ from the one discussed by Dummett [T]: 6.

²⁶ See footnote 24.

²⁷ Williamson [ID]: 206. Here, we see once more that (EC) itself does nothing to help render intelligible how the proof that counterexamples to a given claim are ruled out *a priori* may fall short of being a proof that this claim holds good. Again, it would appear that intuitionism must take care of itself before it can so much as back up anti-realism.

²⁸ Tennant [TT]: 268-69; Williamson [KC]: 428. One might have some qualms about the cogency of Tennant's argument. Tennant argues that in implementing the effective decision procedure for P we either establish the truth of P and thereby come to know P, hence make K(P) true; or we establish the falsity of P and thereby come to know $\sim P$, hence make $\sim K(P)$ true. He concludes that therefore this procedure is also an effective decision procedure for K(P). This, it might be objected, is just as bad as regarding building a castle on this spot as a decision procedure for 'A castle will one day be built on this spot': again, implementing the procedure is bringing about the very state of affairs for which this procedure is supposed to be a decision procedure; and this, it might be argued, is not what we take a decision procedure to be. However, the crucial difference between these cases is, of course, that we can tell beforehand what result building a castle on this spot would have, while we cannot tell beforehand what result implementing the decision procedure for P would have. A lot more needs to be said about this issue; but suffice it to say that, even if Tennant's argument does not go through, there are other reasons for thinking that going intuitionist does not resolve the paradox; see main text.

and hence likewise inconsistent to hold that there *may* be such a truth—is indeed hard to swallow.²⁹ Thus, even if we were not in a position to affirm that there is a true instance of

(1) $P \ \& \ \sim K(P)$,

still it would appear that we are neither in a position to deny there are any such true instances.³⁰ Even the innocent about (EC) who did not contemplate sentences like (1) before may regard any *a priori* reasoning that leads to this conclusion as overreaching the limits of what we can know purely by reflection. The same goes for anti-realists who, when proposing (EC), were not familiar with the paradox: otherwise it would seem surprising why they did not argue for (12*) in the first place. Indeed, (12*) not only makes truth dependent on our epistemic powers but on what mankind will at some time believe: knowledge implies belief; hence if a proposition will never be believed it will never be known; (12*) allows us to infer that any such proposition P will be false; since not both P and $\sim P$ can be false, as ' $\sim P \ \& \ \sim \sim P$ ' is contradictory, it cannot be the case that $\sim P$ will never be believed. How can this conclusion be justified on purely *a priori* grounds?

Of course, intuitionistic semantics would commit anyone who held that there was such a truth as (1) to presenting an example of such a truth; and the latter is certainly impossible, as everyone is willing to concede. But then, this is the crucial point: to be prepared to say on the one hand, that there is a question which has an answer that will never be known, is not to be prepared to say on the other, what this answer is. Compare the present case to the following context much dwelled upon by G. E. Moore:

$\Sigma P(P \ \& \ I \text{ disbelieve that } P)$.

²⁹ Note that line (11) and hence (12*) can be prefixed by the necessity operator, if (EC) is taken to be valid.

³⁰ If the proof had proceeded from the assumption

$\Sigma P(P \ \& \ \sim K(P))$

rather than (1) it would have led to a *reductio* of this assumption, too. And the step from the negation of this assumption to

$\Pi P \sim (P \ \& \ \sim K(P))$

is intuitionistically valid. The point made in the text is that, even if the above assumption is controversial such that making it would be to beg the question against anti-realism, its negation lacks any justification. The proof merely shows that the anti-realist is committed to its negation; it does not show that she is entitled to this commitment.

Here, again, we are ready to say that this generalised statement is true, since we have been mistaken or ignorant in the past, and it is unlikely that we have changed in this respect. Still, we are unwilling to accept, and unable to produce, any instance of this existential claim that renders it true.

Accordingly, a constructivist reading of the existential quantifier is precisely what is at odds with what we intend to convey in affirming that there are truths which will never be known—to the same extent, that is, to which such a reading is at odds with what we intend to convey in affirming that, amongst the beliefs we hold, there are some which fail to be true. Thus, invoking intuitionism in order to reconcile (EC) with our concession that we will not in general be bothered to get to know the answer to every question that has an answer would appear to be the wrong step altogether.

Even if it was conceded, however, that necessarily, we have no reason to affirm that there is a *P* that renders (1) true, or that there is some one truth we disbelieve—*e.g.* because every reason to assert an existential claim will have to be a reason to assert a particular instance—why should that be sufficient to show that we are in a position to deny that there is any such *P*, or any such truth? But this is precisely what anyone committed to (EC) is bound to claim.³¹

Tennant has therefore suggested to impose a restriction on (EC) so as to exempt propositions like (1) from the range of its propositional variable.³² The restriction Tennant envisages is unnecessarily strong though. Thus he argues that contradictions should not be subject to (EC).³³ But contradictions necessarily fail to be true, and knowably so, hence there is no reason not to think that they satisfy (EC). Let us therefore consider an alternative restriction.

Call *P* a *Moorean proposition* just in case (i) '*P*' is neither a substitution instance of a formal contradiction nor obtainable from such an instance by replacing synonyms for synonyms, and (ii) '*P*' is equivalent to a conjunction **A & B** such that, necessarily, if **A** is known **B** is false, and neither **A** nor **B** is unknowable.³⁴ It follows that Moorean

³¹ If (EC) holds, then, if **A** is not knowable, then \sim **A**, and if \sim **A**, then \sim **A** is knowable.

³² Tennant [TT]: 272-76.

³³ Tennant [TT]: 272-74.

³⁴ Ad (i): a formal contradiction is meant to be a schema all of whose instances are known to be false *a priori*, where it is essential that these instances can be generated from one another by uniformly substituting all but the logical vocabulary they contain; cf. Quine [TD]: 22-23.

Ad (ii): for the anti-realist, if **A** is unknowable, \sim **A** will be true, hence for any **B**, **A & B** will be false; the same holds *mutatis mutandis* for **B**; but the problematic cases are not cases in which **A & B** is false; the requirement that neither **A** nor **B** be unknowable highlights the fact.

The problem of vagueness suggests an alternative to (ii): in order to accommodate the existence of unknowable sharp boundaries, we may instead require that, necessarily, knowledge of **A** requires ignorance of **B**, where **B** may nonetheless be true. This restriction would leave room both for the knowability of **A** and the knowability of **B**, even where **A & B** states the existence of a sharp cut-off point. However, it does so at the cost of rejecting the idea that knowability is closed under conjunction: there will be no state of information in which both **A** and **B** are known.

propositions are, if true, never known to be so. Indeed, they are unknowable in precisely this sense: that the knowledge seeking subject destroys in getting to know one conjunct the fact that makes the other conjunct true, and in not destroying the latter is bound not to get to know the former. I can neither appreciate the vase behind me and destroy it with my back when turning: I can only appreciate it if I turn around without destroying it, and only destroy it with my back when turning without appreciating it.³⁵

With this notion being in place, we may rephrase the Epistemic Constraint on truth as follows:

(EC*) for all non-Moorean propositions P, if P, then it is knowable that P.

The anti-realist will now be free to admit that there are unknowable truths of a Moorean kind. Would this not bereave anti-realism of its substance? No. A realist will still be opposed to the idea that (EC*) can be shown to hold on *a priori* grounds.³⁶ Accordingly, even after being restricted in the way suggested, the Epistemic Constraint is a controversial and substantive doctrine that stands in need of defence.³⁷

Does the concession that there are unknowable truths not already undermine any such line of defence however? Not necessarily—it is not at all clear whether, in conceding that there are unknowable truths of a Moorean kind, the anti-realist thereby has to grant that there are facts which are in principle unrecognisable. Ever since Russell, we seem to have abandoned the idea that there are conjunctive facts in virtue of which a conjunction is true over and above atomic facts which make its conjuncts true.³⁸

In order to keep matters simple I shall henceforth restrict attention to Moorean conjunctions, *i.e.* the conjunctions **A & B** to which Moorean propositions are said to be equivalent. Thus I will sometimes speak of the conjuncts of Moorean propositions although not all Moorean propositions are conjunctions, but only equivalent to conjunctions.

³⁵ Note that the claim that there are truths that will never be known is itself known, not by investigating, but by *not* investigating. It is known by reflecting on one's natural limits as an investigator (laziness, being about to be bombed by Kaufmann, *etc.*).

³⁶ One might be tempted to think that (EC*) is trivialized in the following way. Suppose that there is an unknowable truth P such that 'P & $\sim\hat{\Delta}K(P)$ ' is true. P is equivalent to 'P & P'. If P is unknowable ' $\Box(K(P) \rightarrow \sim P)$ ' is true. Hence it would seem that P is a Moorean proposition. Accordingly, it would appear that each unknowable truth turns out to be Moorean, with the effect that (EC*) should be acceptable even to the realist. Now, this thought is already blocked by the definition of Moorean propositions: the conjuncts of the conjunction **A & B** to which a Moorean proposition is equivalent are not themselves unknowable; accordingly, if P is unknowable then its being equivalent to 'P & P' does not yet reveal that P is Moorean. But considering this thought is nonetheless instructive because it rests on a conflation of two different notions of impossibility. The unknowable truths the realist wishes to leave room for besides those that drive Fitch's paradox are none whose existence would license the conclusion that ' $\Box(K(P) \rightarrow \sim P)$ ' is true: clearly, to say that some truths may not be humanly recognisable is not to say that there are some truths such that it is logically impossible to know them.

³⁷ Tennant [TT]: 275. As has been shown in footnote 18, the refusal to accept (EC) engenders the refusal to accept (C). But the latter will then no longer amount to a rejection of classical logic.

³⁸ Russell [PLA]: 185-87.

Thus the anti-realist, though forced to concede that we cannot know the truth of an instance of

(1) $P \ \& \ \sim K(P)$,

may not thereby be forced to admit that there are facts which we cannot recognise: either conjunct is recognisably true, although their joint obtaining is not. Compare this to the following example: even though I cannot go to Aarhus and to Wolverhampton at the same time, it is still possible for me to go to Aarhus, and still possible for me to go to Wolverhampton. Or take this example: I can face North, and I can face South, even though I cannot face North and South at the same time. By the same token, the realist who grants that there are unknowable truths of the form of (1) may not *eo ipso* be committed to the existence of states of affairs which it is beyond our epistemic powers to recognise. Thus, the assumption of unknowable truths of the kind in question seems metaphysically light-weight.

One might object that talk about the knowability of truth, or the recognisability of facts, involves only epistemic possibilities, with the actual world held fixed, not metaphysical possibilities. However, the world in which one conjunct of the conjunction equivalent to a Moorean proposition is known will not be a world in which its other conjunct is known. Thus, in saying that either conjunct of a true Moorean proposition can be known, we have smuggled in metaphysical modality where we were not supposed to do so. Alternatively, if we confine ourselves to epistemic modality, then not both conjuncts of a true Moorean proposition are knowably true.

At first sight, this seems fair comment. The realisation of epistemic possibilities, however, does have an effect on how the actual world is, *i.e.* on what facts there are. In this sense, the actual world cannot be held fixed when it comes to the actualisation of epistemic possibilities. Still, the actual world is such that it allows for the knowability of either conjunct of a Moorean proposition, even if it does not allow for the knowability of their conjunction. If there is a world in which someone comes to know that P , then this world will not be the actual world if it is knowably true in the actual world that $\sim K(P)$. Accordingly, a Moorean proposition will be true just in case certain epistemic possibilities are never actualised.³⁹

For all its metaphysical innocence, we shall see in the second chapter that restricting the Epistemic Constraint in the way suggested has consequences for the most prominent strategy to defend anti-realism. This strategy relates to an account of the meaning of sentences, including complex ones; and such an account must yield an

³⁹ As I take it, these remarks capture the gist of Edgington's solution to the present problem as set out in her [PoK].

explanation of what it is to understand conjunctions, whether Moorean or not. Anti-realism, however, was supposed to be vindicated on the basis of an account of understanding that represented a speaker's grasp of any one sentence as her ability to recognise this sentence as true if it is true, and as false if it is false. Obviously, this account will have to be modified if there are truths of a Moorean kind which we nonetheless understand.

The Paradox of Knowability brings to the fore that there are complex sentences whose assertibility conditions necessarily go uninstantiated, yet which are nonetheless not internally inconsistent. As we shall see in chapter two, the anti-realist will therefore have to give an account of the distinction between (grasp of) the truth conditions and (grasp of) the assertibility conditions of the constituent sentences.

Whatever the exact costs of restricting (EC) in the way sketched, it has at least become clear that, contrary to what Williamson suggests, endorsement of the claim that truth is epistemically constrained, once properly conceived of, is far from forcing logical revisionism.

Nevertheless Tennant argues that endorsement of (EC*) together with adoption of classical logic yields a position which, even if not inconsistent, ultimately lacks any justification.⁴⁰ This may well be so. Anyone endorsing (EC*) but objecting to the endorsement of both (EC*) *and* classical logic, however, will not object to the latter position for reasons of epistemological modesty. It would appear that the principle of Completeness to which such a position gives rise, *i.e.*:

(C*) for all non-Moorean propositions P and \sim P,
 either it is knowable that P or it is knowable that \sim P

will rather be objected to on metaphysical grounds. Thus no anti-realist will argue against the suggestion that for all non-Moorean propositions P and \sim P, either it is knowable that P or knowable that \sim P on the ground that our epistemic powers may be too limited. Rather, it is likely that she will argue against this suggestion because it relies on the metaphysical contention that reality is determinate in that it settles for every proposition P, that either P or \sim P is true.⁴¹

If it can be shown that we are not entitled to this metaphysical claim, however, then even someone who refuses to endorse (EC*) will be in a position to reject classical logic. In other words, any anti-realistically acceptable argument against the endorsement of (C*) being based on a metaphysical reservation, is likely to be an argument which a principled agnostic about (EC*), such as the realist, is free to embrace. As I shall argue

⁴⁰ Tennant [TT]: 239-40.

⁴¹ Tennant [LEM]: 213.

in the next section, it would indeed be mistaken to suggest that realism is wedded to classical logic.

1.4 Anti-Anti-Realism

If it turns out to be inessential to anti-realism that intuitionistic logic be adopted—at least to the extent that the combination of anti-realism and Completeness has not been refuted—it still remains to be seen whether or not it is essential to realism that classical logic be adopted. Dummett has argued that a commitment to classical logic is indeed essential to realism. He says,

[t]he very minimum that realism can be held to involve is that statements [...] relate to some reality that exists independently of our knowledge of it, in such a way that that reality renders each statement [...] determinately true or false, again independently of whether we know, or are even able to discover, its truth-value.⁴²

Once the realist is committed to the principle of *Bivalence*—*i.e.* the principle that for all sentences "P" stating a proposition, either "P" is true or "P" is false—it is easy to see how this may issue in the further commitment to any instance of (LEM), hence to the validity of that law.⁴³

This quotation betrays a conflation of two different ideas however: the one a metaphysical doctrine, the other an epistemological reservation. According to Dummett, realism turns out to be a metaphysical theory professing claims about the nature of reality itself: to endorse the principle of Bivalence is not just to say something about the nature of our thoughts, but about the extension of the concept of truth; and this extension is supposed to be determined by the way the world is. According to this version of realism, the world is such as to allow our thinking to carve it up in determinate ways. Indeed, one may wonder how such a form of realism can be vindicated at all. One should expect that the prospect for doing so on the basis of an account of truth conditions looks less than bright precisely because realism as thus understood lays claim to the determinacy of reality over and above the determinacy of thought.⁴⁴

Some years ago, McDowell suggested that a refusal to subscribe to (EC*) should be compatible with a refusal to endorse Bivalence. He argued that

⁴² Dummett [R/b]: 230. Cf. as well Dummett [ILE]: 274; [R/a]: 146; [RoP]: 358; [FPL]: 466; [PBI]: 228.

⁴³ Insofar as "P" is false iff " \sim P" is true, (LEM) is equivalent to Bivalence, given the truth-predicate is disquotational; see Tennant [LEM]: 212, 228.

⁴⁴ Tennant [LEM]: 213.

[i]n the context of intuitionistic logic, to say, on the one hand, that the truth condition of a sentence may obtain even if we cannot tell that it does, and may not obtain even if we

cannot tell that it does not, is not to say, on the other, that the truth condition of any sentence either does obtain or does not, even if we cannot tell either that it does or that it does not. For the position outlined [*i.e.* agnosticism about (EC*) plus agnosticism about Bivalence] combines, coherently if intuitionistic logic is coherent, refusing to say the latter with continuing to say the former.⁴⁵

Unfortunately, McDowell's reasoning turned out to rely on the mistaken assumption that the intuitionist and the classicist agree on the meanings of the logical constants, but disagree about whether certain logical laws hold true of them—hence that, in dropping (LEM), one can retain one's previous interpretation of " \vee " and " \sim " while merely purging one's logic from that law.⁴⁶ But, the intuitionistic logician does not conceive of herself as understanding the logical constants in just the way the classicist pretends to. As a revisionist, neither will she be ready to concede that the classicist has a coherent understanding of the logical constants in the first place. Rather, the intuitionist wishes to say that what we grasp in understanding the logical constants does not extend to a validation of certain rules of inference the classicist takes to be valid.⁴⁷

Dropping (LEM), hence (DNE), must accordingly be accompanied by a reassessment of how the logical constants are to be understood. Insofar as valid rules of inference preserve truth, this reassessment will at the same time involve a reassessment of what truth is.⁴⁸ Now the interpretation which the intuitionist offers happens to proceed not only from the assumption that truth fails to be bivalent, but from the assumption that truth is epistemically constrained. It is therefore misleading to suggest, as McDowell does, that if intuitionistic logic is coherent, so is the thought that one should be agnostic about both Bivalence and (EC*). It is likewise misleading to suggest that someone who is a realist about truth can simply help herself to intuitionistic logic.

It is for this reason that philosophers such as Williamson and Tennant can object to McDowell's suggestion on the ground that it leaves the interpretation of the intuitionistic calculus—which results from the classical calculus when certain rules of inference are dropped—quite obscure. What McDowell should have said is rather that there is no reason to deny offhand that the intuitionistic calculus may be given a semantics according to which truth is not epistemically constrained. This possibility is not ruled out by Williamson's observation that, without the intuitionistic analysis of proof, the intuitionistic calculus is "but a dead formalism".⁴⁹ Nor is it ruled out by

⁴⁵ McDowell [TBV]: 55.

⁴⁶ McDowell [TBV]: 56-57.

⁴⁷ Cf. Dummett [LBM]: 301-302; and [ILE]: 269-89.

⁴⁸ Cf. Frege [GG/I]: xiv-xviii.

⁴⁹ Williamson [ID]: 207.

Tennant's argument that if, as "[f]or the intuitionist, the obtaining of the truth-condition of [a given statement] consists in the (constructive) existence of a proof of [that statement]" there will then be no statements whose truth-value it may be beyond our powers to recognise.⁵⁰ The notion of proof alluded to clearly belongs to intuitionistic semantics rather than the intuitionistic calculus.⁵¹

Tennant finally dismisses the combination of ideas suggested by McDowell when he writes that

[t]he [McDowellian realist] [...] has no refuge in the logical space occupied by the proponent of intuitionistic logic. The logic itself imposes certain demands on the meanings we can take our logical operators to have. *One cannot simply give up the classical rules and carry on thinking like a realist.* McDowell has failed to appreciate just what is involved, by way of semantic and philosophical foundations, in being an intuitionistic logician. Intuitionistic logic provides no home for a closet realist who wishes to think of himself as logically hobbled but still attuned to the transcendent.⁵²

This dismissal is premature however. McDowell may have failed to appreciate that being an intuitionistic logician involves "by way of semantic and philosophical foundations" promotion of an anti-realist conception of truth. He likewise may have failed to appreciate that the interpretation of the logical constants is constrained by the rules of inference that are supposed to govern them. But to conclude from this that McDowell thereby failed to appreciate that a realist conception of truth as potentially evidence-transcendent forces endorsement of Bivalence is simply fallacious—there may be no such fact for McDowell to appreciate. Nothing has as yet been done to show that a realist about truth has to be a classicist. To expel the position sketched by McDowell—*i.e.* joint agnosticism about (EC*) and Bivalence—from the philosophical market place solely on the ground that it cannot coherently be described as intuitionism minus (EC*) is hardly convincing.

Indeed, there is no straightforward connection between the metaphysical worry that reality may not be determinate in all respects and the epistemological idea that we are in a position to recognise all the respects in which it is. To refuse to assert (EC*) is not yet to claim that there are (non-Moorean) truths we cannot recognise. Accordingly, neither will this refusal have to flow from the assumption that every statement is

⁵⁰ Tennant [TT]: 236-39.

⁵¹ Indeed, one may wonder how the standard anti-realist semantics for intuitionistic logic can accommodate the restriction of (EC) to (EC*): as logic applies to all truth-apt sentences, its semantics should accordingly yield an interpretation of sentences expressing Moorean propositions. The existence of such sentences rather suggests that another semantics than the standard one is called for. But if this is so anyway, what reason do we have for believing that the semantics the intuitionistic calculus requires will underwrite (EC*)?

⁵² Tennant [TT]: 238-39 (emphasis mine).

guaranteed to have a determinate truth-value anyway, that is, regardless of whether or not we are able to figure out which truth-value this is.

If presented with a *pro tem.* undecidable statement, one may react in one of two ways: either one claims this statement to have a determinate truth-value, even though one does not know which, or one refuses to do so.⁵³ The former reaction may be reasonable only if one takes oneself to be entitled to the principle of Bivalence. But it would be mistaken to suggest that the latter reaction is reasonable only if one takes oneself to be entitled to (EC*). Arguably, the claim that a statement has a determinate truth-value can justifiedly be made only if there is a method to decide that it has this, rather than that, truth-value. But, in refusing to claim that the given undecidable has a determinate truth-value, one does not rule out the possibility that it has a determinate truth-value even if we will never be able to tell which truth-value this is. In doing so, one merely expresses one's reluctance to assume that reality is determinate—an assumption which in the case at hand, may only be justifiable by means of deciding the statement in question.

Accordingly, if the anti-realist potential of anti-realism lies in the endorsement of (EC*), then, *contra* Dummett, there is a more moderate form of realism which sustains an epistemological theory rather than a metaphysical one. Moderate realists maintain that it does not follow from the truth of what we think that we can know whether it is true. Consequently, moderate realism entails that we have the conceptual resources which allow us to distinguish truth from knowability. As thus understood, realists—rather than setting a limit to what we can know—refuse to set a limit to what we can think about. It is this version of realism which is directly opposed to anti-realism—anti-anti-realism, so to speak—and for which I am going to argue.

Moderate realism is the view that truth cannot be shown to be epistemically constrained. Yet to say so is not to deny that whatever is true is knowably so. According to the moderate realist, it may well be that, as a matter of contingent fact, all truths that there are can be recognised. What she denies is that it can be shown on *a priori* grounds that this is so. In other words, the moderate realist will argue for agnosticism about (EC*), or at least doing so will be sufficient for qualification as an anti-anti-realist. The moderate realist is furthermore a principled agnostic: she denies that (EC*) can ever be justified *a priori*. Thus, she will not rest content with the finding that, until now, the anti-realist has not succeeded in showing that (EC*) holds *a priori*, otherwise she would not call herself a realist. Rather, she would leave it open whether she ought or ought not to call herself by that name.

⁵³ The term "*pro tempore* undecidable" is taken from Tennant [ARL]: 111. *Pro tem.* undecidable sentences are sentences "whose truth value we do not know how to determine by any effective means at present" (*ibid.*).

In this chapter, I have argued that we should regard the question of whether truth is epistemically constrained as independent from the further question of whether truth is bivalent. Although intuitionists give answers to both questions in one go, logical revisionism is independent from anti-realism. Whether or not the combination of anti-realism and classicism can in the end be motivated, reasons for anti-realism alone will neither suggest nor rationally compel logical revisionism. Similarly, a realist conception of truth as epistemically unconstrained does not entail that truth is bivalent. Metaphysical worries may lead one to demur from the latter, while leaving one's endorsement of the former unaffected. The idea that features of reality may render our statements true, yet undetectably so, is perfectly consistent with the idea that not every statement is rendered either true or false by some features of reality.

So, on which battleground should anti-realists and (moderate) realists fight? What is the right *choix des armes*? The next chapter will describe the opponents as choosing the Wittgensteinian mace—a very heavy but effective tool. The anti-realist will open the battle, but it turns out that the particular mace she picks is too heavy for her to lift, therefore, she has to revert to another of a smaller size. In chapter three, we shall see that even though she can indeed lift that one, it is still too heavy, and so it bounces back on her own head.

Chapter Two

The realism/anti-realism debate is a debate between those who think that (EC*) can *a priori* be justified—the anti-realists—and those who deny that this is so—the realists. As I have argued, this debate is independent from the one of whether or not classical logic ought to be adopted: it is now time to ask how the dispute between realists and anti-realists may be resolved.

Throughout his writings, Dummett has argued that disputes of this kind ought to be settled by a systematic account of understanding—the idea being that whether or not a sentence may be true but unknowable is to be decided according to whether competent speakers can be said to understand that sentence as having truth conditions whose obtaining it may be beyond their epistemic powers to recognise. In other words, Dummett proposes to settle which conception of truth is correct by settling which concept of truth we can legitimately be said to possess. In subsequent chapters, I shall follow this line of thought which I shall refer to as the *Dummettian Criterion*. This criterion determines the battlegrounds on which the realist and the anti-realist have to meet. At the end of this thesis, it will hopefully have emerged that anti-realism loses the battle fought on these grounds.

2.1 The Manifestability Requirement

As Moritz Schlick observed some decades ago, we have not yet demonstrated our understanding of a given expression if we offer another expression with the same meaning as its paraphrase.¹ Ultimately, our understanding of such an expression must be anchored in our ability to use it in a certain way. This ability may well comprise the ability to use this expression in just the same way as another, but the ability to use it in that way must consist in more than one's readiness to enunciate conceptual equivalences. Otherwise, we would display no more than our knowledge that two expressions mean the same, knowledge that we may possess without knowing what either expression means.²

If our ability to use an expression in a certain way is to display that we understand this expression, then the way in which we prove able to use it will display *how* we understand it: an expression can be used correctly or incorrectly, and it is the ability to use it correctly that demonstrates one's understanding of this expression. Since the conditions under which two expressions are used correctly differ according to

¹ Schlick [MV]: 339-42. Cf. as well Dummett [WTM/II]: 44-45; [PBI]: 224.

² Cf. Davidson [RI]: 129; and Dummett [WTM/I]: 2-6.

whether the ways in which we understand them differ, the ability to distinguish between the conditions under which a given expression is correctly used and those under which it is not, will demonstrate the way in which this expression is being understood.

To understand an expression is to know what it means. If what it means is determined by the way it is correctly used, then learning how it is used correctly will result in knowledge of its meaning.³ Since one cannot be said to have that knowledge unless one is capable of using the expression correctly, it follows that the ability to use an expression correctly will be necessary and sufficient for knowledge of its meaning.⁴

Any theory of understanding will accordingly have to determine the nature of the meaning of an expression in such a way that knowledge of what this expression means is fully manifested in the ability to competently use it. Thus, if the meaning of a sentence is said to be the condition under which it is true, then it must be possible to determine by observation of, or successful participation in, the practice of using this sentence in a norm-governed way which truth condition this is. If it is impossible to do so, then this will prove one's account of the nature of meaning to be flawed. By the same token, if the meaning of a sentence is said to consist in truth conditions whose obtaining it may be beyond our powers to recognise, then it must be possible to ascribe to speakers, and to acquire oneself, on the basis of their competent use of this sentence, knowledge that this sentence has a specific set of truth conditions of such a kind. Again, if it impossible to do so—say, because the competent use of this sentence comprises the ability to recognise its truth-value—then the nature of its meaning has not properly been identified. Call this constraint on theories of understanding the *Manifestability Requirement*.⁵

³ This is compatible with the idea that one may merely have a partial understanding of a word whose meaning is fully known only to select members of the speech community. Thus, if I do not know exactly what "arthritis" means, say, because I mistakenly think that gout is not a form of arthritis, then neither will I use "arthritis" correctly on all occasions.

⁴ This is not to say that someone to whom such knowledge can be ascribed is able to ascribe this knowledge to herself. Of course, some allowance must be made for illiterate speakers, mute writers, grammatical mistakes, dialects, accents, stammering and mumbling. But the observation that these phenomena do exist hardly constitutes an objection to the idea that knowledge how to use an expression correctly is necessary for knowledge of its meaning. It rather suggests that what counts as the correct use of an expression should be specified functionally in such a way as to allow for physical variation in the tokenings of that expression. That such a specification should be possible is already built into the idea that use determines what it is that is meant, as two distinct expression-types that are used in the same way will be said to have the same meaning. The example of the stroke victim who is from one day to the next debarred from participating in any form of exchange furthermore suggests that we should here allude to the distinction, of considerable importance in other contexts as well, between possession of an ability and the opportunity to exercise it.

⁵ Tennant reserves the term "manifestation requirement" for a more specific—and more controversial—requirement. According to Tennant, this requirement says that "[g]rasp by a speaker of the meaning of a sentence should be fully manifestable in observable exercises of recognitional capacities concerning it" ([ARL]: 111). As we shall see, what is controversial about this constraint is that knowledge of meaning should be *fully* manifestable in *recognitional* capacities. Tennant argues that "[t]he mention of recognitional capacities is to alert one to the need to manifest knowledge that is implicit, rather than

The Manifestability Requirement itself is neutral as to the question of what the nature of meaning is. Indeed, this question may have many different answers since the notion of meaning is notoriously indeterminate. To identify the meaning of a sentence with its truth conditions is therefore not to say that whatever use-facts determine its truth conditions exhaust all aspects of use that may be of concern to other theories that do not make this identification.⁶ The notion of meaning is a *determinable* that behaves very much like the notion of intelligence in psychological theory: how it is to be understood depends to a considerable extent on the very theory which is meant to be a theory of what this notion denotes.⁷ In what follows, I shall assume, however, that realists and anti-realists agree on the nature of meaning in that both take the meaning of a sentence to consist in its truth conditions.

There is a reason for making this assumption: realists and anti-realists disagree which conception of truth is correct, and hence which kind of truth conditions sentences can be known to have. In particular, the anti-realist claims that only those sentences whose truth conditions underwrite (EC*) can be understood. Suppose then that the meaning of a sentence was identified with something other than its truth conditions. It could still be the outcome of the debate that only those sentences can be said to have a meaning which are true just in case they are knowable. But how could we ever know that this was so, unless the truth conditions of a sentence were determined alongside its meaning?

knowledge explicitly formulated in further sentences" (*ibid.*). But neither does the observation that knowledge of the meaning of an expression cannot in general be manifested in the enunciation of other expressions with the same meaning establish that it be manifestable in recognitional skills; nor, if a case could be made for the latter, would this show that knowledge of meaning be *fully* manifestable in this way. Rather, Tennant's version of the Manifestability Requirement is already a piece of substantive anti-realist thinking that needs to be justified. It is for this reason that I shall relocate the constraint Tennant invokes in the context of what I call the Manifestation Argument.

⁶ I here depart from Dummett's position that "[a] conception of meaning—that is, a choice of a central notion for the theory of meaning—is adequate only if there exists a general method of deriving, from the meaning of a sentence as so given, *every* feature of its use"; [WTM/II]: 93 (my emphasis). This criterion of adequacy seems to me to be far too demanding. It would for instance be surprising if, on whatever conception of meaning one chooses, there was a general method of deriving from the meaning of "London is in England" when it is correct to use this sentence in a political speech. This will depend on the interplay of various factors such as the purpose of the speech, the values and expectations of the audience, what is being said before, what is being said afterwards *etc.* How can one ever hope to formulate an algorithm that takes all these situational differences into account? By contrast, a solution to the Problem of Understanding, as it was specified in the introduction, merely requires that there be aspects of use whose mastery is necessary and sufficient for the grasp of thoughts: our concern is epistemological rather than psychological or sociological.

⁷ Cf. Dummett [WTM/I]: 1-2. The relation between a determinable and its determination, as it is understood here, is similar to that between an *explicandum* and its explication in Carnap's sense; cf. Carnap [LFP]: 3-8.

Dummett once suggested identifying the meaning of a sentence with its assertibility conditions, and then defining truth in terms of the *Equivalence Schema*:

(ES) It is true that P iff P.⁸

It would have followed that truth is defined only for sentences which have assertibility conditions. But in order to show that truth therefore proves to be epistemically constrained, it would have been necessary to say in addition *what these sentences can be used to state*. Given (ES), what they can be used to state are their truth conditions. Thus, in order to vindicate anti-realism, it would have been necessary to show how the facts about the correct use of these sentences determine, not only which assertibility conditions, but also which truth conditions they have.⁹ But then it would have been more to the point to identify the meaning of a sentence with its truth conditions right from the start.¹⁰

⁸ Dummett [WTM/II]; cf. as well Dummett [TOE]: xxii.

⁹ According to Skorupski, to show this will not be sufficient to vindicate anti-realism either; [MUV]: 40-45.

¹⁰ Dummett agrees; see [TOE]: xxii. Cf. as well Wright [MMM]: 249, and especially 253 where Wright shows some sympathy for the idea that the connection between understanding and knowledge of truth conditions is a mere platitude. To identify the meaning of a sentence with its truth conditions is neither to say that truth cannot further be analysed in terms of epistemic notions, nor to say that knowledge of truth conditions cannot be so analysed; cf. Dummett [LBM]: 304. In other words, the claim that knowledge of meaning is knowledge of truth conditions is not the claim that ascriptions of such knowledge are treated as primitive.

It might be suggested that the identification of the meaning of a sentence with its truth conditions will be problematic for the anti-realist, because she will typically use the notion of assertibility rather than truth in the recursive clauses of her theory of meaning; and there is the danger that two sentences may share their truth conditions but nonetheless diverge in their assertibility conditions. It is not clear to me how this latter idea may be substantiated without begging the question against the envisaged anti-realist: if one argues that two sentences have the same truth conditions but different assertibility conditions, one must appeal to an independent criterion of sameness of truth conditions that is inconsistent with the criterion proposed by the anti-realist. Anyway, the point made in the text is that even if the suggested difficulty does *not* arise, there is still a problem with an anti-realist theory of meaning based on assertibility conditions; and if this problem has been answered, then the suggested difficulty will *no longer* arise. Here is why: if a theory of meaning is thought to have implications for the scope of what a sentence can be used to state—where what a sentence can be used to state are its truth conditions—then we should be able to recover from that theory not only what it is for a sentence to have the same truth conditions as another, but furthermore what these truth conditions are. Even if two sentences indeed had the same truth conditions just in case they have the same assertibility (or knowability) conditions, it would not follow from the correctness of this criterion that they are true just in case they are assertible (knowable): a sentence may be meaningful only if it has assertibility (knowability) conditions, and still be true without being assertible (knowable). Hence the anti-realist should come up with a criterion of sameness of truth conditions that allows her to say that a sentence is true iff knowable. Therefore she should give a theory of meaning that identifies the meaning of a sentence with its truth conditions. Accordingly, if the anti-realist does the recursion on 'x warrants assertion of ϕ ', it is indeed conceivable that she may fail on two counts: sentences may differ in their assertibility conditions while having the same truth conditions (according to some other criterion); or they may not so differ and still nothing follows for what has to be the case in order for them to be true. However since it is the latter kind of failure that must be foreclosed, any worries about the former kind of failure are quite pointless: a theory

Indeed, the Manifestability Requirement owes its thrust to the perplexities that arise once we try to explain how we can arrive at a representation of how things are by way of manipulating symbols. This is what I called in the introduction the *Problem of Understanding*: purporting to represent how things are is a cognitive act which is involved in all epistemic endeavours; thus if we want to explain this kind of act in terms of linguistic abilities, then we must show how exercises of these abilities can terminate in a representation of how things are. But to represent how things are by means of language is precisely to make a true statement. Hence, in order to show that practical abilities can be representational in this sense, we should ask how having these abilities can result in knowledge of truth conditions.

Something akin to the Manifestability Requirement looms large in Wittgenstein's post-Tractarian philosophy.¹¹ It would appear, however, that Wittgenstein himself never addressed the question of how, by using a sentence, we can purport to represent how things are. Instead, he was at pains to make clear that language can be used for a variety of other purposes.¹² As Brandom succinctly puts it,

not every piece of a representation contributes to its content by itself representing, and not every move in a language game is a representing of something. But Wittgenstein does not explain what one must do to be using an expression to refer, characterize, or claim (the features of use he associates with representational content), nor does he explain what is required for something caught up in a language game to express a specifically propositional content.¹³

If the realist/anti-realist debate is to be decided on the basis of the Dummettian Criterion at all, then it seems realists and anti-realist alike must attempt to settle the matters Wittgenstein himself left open. And they will have to do so in line with his insight that our understanding of words must be explained by the way in which they are correctly used.¹⁴

strong enough to license the conclusion that a sentence is true iff knowable will be strong enough to yield a criterion of sameness of truth conditions. Accordingly, if an assertibility conditional theory of meaning does not license this conclusion, then it is not a theory of meaning the anti-realist should go for.

¹¹ Especially in [PG] and [PI]. Schlick mentions conversations with Wittgenstein as a source of his considerations in [MV]: 341.

¹² Wittgenstein [PG]: §§ 19-20; [PI]: §§ 1-27.

¹³ Brandom [MIE]: 76. These are the questions one would have expected Wittgenstein to answer, given that he took issue with Frege's criticism of formalism; see Wittgenstein [PG]: 2; Waismann [WVC]: 105, 150; and Frege [GG/II]: §§ 86-137, especially § 95 where Frege complains that "I acknowledge that the chess pieces are there, and also that rules for their manipulation have been set up; but I know nothing of any content. Surely, it cannot be said that the black king designates something in virtue of these rules".

¹⁴ Wittgenstein [PG]: §§ 10, 23, 44.

The Manifestability Requirement is furthermore neutral as to the question of what counts as a correct use of a sentence. In Wittgenstein's words,

[i]t all depends *what* settles the sense of a sentence, what we choose to say settles its sense. The use of the signs must settle it; but what do we count as the use? ¹⁵

Thus, while the Manifestability Requirement demands that realists and anti-realists show how good they are at explaining grasp of truth conditions in terms of abilities to use language—at wielding the Wittgensteinian mace, as it were—it leaves a variety of maces to choose from depending on one's preferred account of use. As we shall see in the next section, anti-realists tend to focus on the assertoric use of sentences.

2.2 *The Manifestation Argument*

The Manifestability Requirement provides the backdrop for the anti-realist's master-argument, the so-called *Manifestation Argument*. There has been some controversy about the way in which the anti-realist's Manifestation Argument ought to be formulated. This is not the least due to the fact that there is still a considerable confusion about the proper target of this argument which, again, springs from a failure to separate anti-realism from logical revisionism.¹⁶ Here, I shall not be concerned with the question of whether the argument originally so labelled was intended to justify the rejection of classical logic.¹⁷ As we have seen, there is no straightforward connection between a rejection of Bivalence or (LEM) and a vindication of (EC*). Accordingly, if there is an anti-realist master-argument, and if this argument is called by the name "Manifestation Argument", then the Manifestation Argument should better be suited to vindicate (EC*).

The Manifestation Argument centres around a claim about how knowledge of truth conditions is manifested in use which is ultimately intended to establish (EC*) as its conclusion. In searching for the proper formulation of the Manifestation Argument, I

¹⁵ Wittgenstein [RFM]: V § 7. Anscombe translates "Satz" as "proposition" instead of "sentence". This is misleading because of the ambiguity of the term "proposition". Wittgenstein is definitely concerned with linguistic items. On a potential confusion between sentences and propositions, see Schlick [MV]: 340.

¹⁶ Recently Tennant has acknowledged that (EC*) and logical revisionism are two different strands of his anti-realism. He seems to betray this insight, however, when he goes on to argue along the following lines: (i) classical logic ought to be dropped on the basis of manifestationism, (ii) McDowell's position is flawed because intuitionism entails (EC*), therefore (iii) manifestationism gives us (EC*); cf. his [TT]: 195-244. As I have argued in chapter one, this reasoning is fallacious because accepting the intuitionistic calculus is not yet tantamount to accepting intuitionistic semantics. Moreover, neither is dropping classical logic tantamount to adopting the intuitionistic calculus. Thus, if all the Manifestation Argument did was to show that we ought to be logical revisionists, it would not give us (EC*). Cf. Blackburn [MR]: 44-45.

¹⁷ Cf. Tennant [ARL]: 111.

shall briefly review two suggestions as to how this claim ought to be understood. These suggestions are due to McGinn and Tennant respectively. As it turns out, neither of these suggestions provides a convincing starting point for a defence of (EC*). I shall then consider two versions of the Manifestation Argument, those given by Wright and Dummett respectively. While Wright seems to argue for no more than there being no reason to suppose that realism can be vindicated, Dummett more decidedly argues that there is a reason to suppose that it cannot be. Even so, both these arguments can be seen to rest on the claim that knowledge of truth conditions be fully manifestable in the exercises of recognitional abilities. In the end, Wright's anti-realist must also be taken to believe that there is a reason to suppose that realism cannot be vindicated. With these considerations in place, I shall present what I take to be the premisses from which the anti-realist's attempt at a direct vindication of (EC*) must proceed.

According to McGinn, the anti-realist contends that insofar as knowledge of meaning consists in knowledge of truth conditions, knowledge of the meaning of a given sentence must be manifested in the ability to determine in some canonical way whether or not this sentence is true.¹⁸ This would imply that we understand only those sentences whose truth-value we have an effective means of deciding.

Tennant rightly objects that if this was the anti-realist's contention, it would backfire and render anti-realism itself absurd.¹⁹ There are sentences whose truth-value we have at present no effective means of deciding. Nevertheless, we claim to understand these sentences *now*. If the anti-realist denies that we do at present understand these sentences, she will give an altogether implausible account of understanding. On the other hand, if she denies that there are any *pro tem.* undecidable sentences, she is plainly wrong (unless she presents us with a proof or disproof of Goldbach's conjecture, *etc.*).

It would therefore appear to be more adequate to present the anti-realist as contending that understanding a sentence is manifested in the ability to recognise its truth-value—where this ability is not to be understood as the possession of an effective means of deciding which truth-value, if any, this is. In the case of *pro tem.* undecidable sentences, this would mean that we are credited with an ability to recognise whether these sentences are true or otherwise, whose ascription does not depend for its justification on whether we can at present exercise it.

Tennant goes on to argue, however, that the anti-realist's contention should rather be that understanding a sentence is manifested in one's ability to recognise whether a piece of evidence is a verification or falsification of that sentence, if one is presented with this piece of evidence.²⁰ This ability can be displayed now, even if the

¹⁸ McGinn [TU]: 21.

¹⁹ Tennant [ARL]: 113-17.

²⁰ [ARL]: 111-27; and [TT]: 195-244, especially 202.

sentence in question is *pro tem.* undecidable: we can at least check purportedly verifying or falsifying evidence and conclude that they fail to do their job; and we can search for further evidence on the basis of our grasp of what would count as a verification or falsification of that sentence.

It is hard to see, however, how the anti-realist could ever proceed from this conception of the manifestation of understanding to a vindication of (EC*). The realist may indeed concede that a competent speaker should be able to recognise whether x verifies or falsifies S , for any x she is presented with and any S she understands.²¹ What the realist denies, and can still consistently deny, is that it can be shown on *a priori* grounds that, if S is true, there is an x accessible to the speaker which verifies S , and if S is false, there is a y accessible to the speaker which falsifies S . In other words, the realist has no problem with ascriptions of the recognitional abilities Tennant invokes; and any argument which is apt to show that (EC*) holds would appear not to depend on the truth of such ascriptions. Thus, Tennant has not yet provided an account of how knowledge of meaning is manifested in use, that serves the anti-realist's purpose.²²

As suggested earlier, the anti-realist should therefore better claim that knowledge of truth conditions is knowledge of conditions whose obtaining the knowing subject is able to recognise, and that it is this recognitional ability that manifests this knowledge. In other words, what is being ascribed to the subject is not the ability to recognise a sentence as true (or false), if the subject has verifying (or falsifying) evidence for this sentence, but rather the ability to recognise this sentence as true (or as false), if the sentence is true (or false). In face of *pro tem.* undecidable sentences, she should accordingly allow for the distinction between the truth of ascriptions of this ability and the truth of statements to the effect that the subject can exercise this ability now. With respect to *pro tem.* undecidables, ascriptions of the former kind must accordingly be conceived of as conjectures whose justification solely rests on the justification of ascriptions of recognitional abilities that can at present be exercised, as well as on systematic constraints on theory. Since the anti-realist is not committed to the claim that the undecidables in question lack a truth-value, the fact that the subject cannot now recognise that they have a determinate truth-value will not be taken to entail that the subject has fully exercised the ascribed ability. Since the anti-realist is neither committed to the claim that the undecidables in question have a determinate truth-value,

²¹ In Wright's happy phrase, "[r]ealism is a mixture of modesty and presumption", the former being expressed in the refusal to endorse (EC*), the latter in the readiness to grant that we have the ability to recognise the truth, if only the world cooperates ([RTM]: 1-2). Still, there may be independent reason to deny that Tennant has given the right account of understanding, for the proof of an arithmetical sentence S may require resources, such as set theory, which I may not be able to understand despite the fact that I understand S . I owe this example to Crispin Wright.

²² Tennant himself is quite explicit about the fact that what he calls the Manifestation Requirement must be supplemented by (EC*); see [TT]: 202.

the fact that they cannot now be decided either way does not even come close to undermining the ascription of this ability either.

In light of this theoretical nature of anti-realist semantics, Wright has given his view of what the Manifestation Argument is supposed to establish.²³ According to Wright, it is not designed to show that the realist cannot possibly account for the manifestation of knowledge of truth conditions. Hence, it would appear that neither does it have to proceed from a claim about the nature of the practical abilities in which such knowledge must be manifestable. Wright rather presents the Manifestation Argument as proceeding directly from the Manifestability Requirement. Wright contends that the realist has so far simply failed to comply with this requirement: nothing in the speakers' use of language has as yet been brought to our attention that would justify the ascription of knowledge of potentially recognition-transcendent truth conditions. Thus far, all that has been said about language use in the philosophical literature, be it explanatory or otherwise, can equally well be said in terms of an epistemically constrained notion of truth. In other words, Wright maintains that the realist's semantic theory is underdetermined by data—to the effect that anti-realist semantics proves likewise empirically adequate—and that it is therefore incumbent upon the realist to adduce further facts that single out her theory as the correct one. If she cannot do so, her theory is revealed to contain theoretical slack that has no basis in use.

This line of reasoning gives a somewhat distorted picture of the debate though, for it is the anti-realist who advances a claim that stands in need of *a priori* justification. True: principled agnosticism about a given claim has to be argued for too. The realist must therefore be understood to undertake some responsibility. But then, the finding that a semantic theory that entails (EC*) and a semantic theory that does not entail (EC*) are empirically equivalent, should be seen to tell in favour of a principled agnosticism about (EC*) rather than the belief in its *a priori* justifiability. Nor is there as yet any clear sense in which the former theory is more parsimonious than the latter. It would appear that a failure to acknowledge this can only be due to the mistaken idea that anti-realism yields something more akin to a description of use than to a semantic theory, while realism imports a theoretical superstructure that is underdetermined by that description. If for no other reason, anti-realism must also be seen to import such a superstructure because of its adherence to (EC*) and its corresponding account of the understanding of *pro tem.* undecidable sentences.

Moreover, Wright's reasoning would appear to rest on the idea that anti-realism differs from logical revisionism in that it has no revisionist consequences, for if it had, the rules of the game which Wright sets up seem to dictate that anti-realist semantics would prove inadequate: if the debate is to be decided by way of determining which

²³ [RTM]: 13-23; and [MMM]: 246-56.

theory of meaning is empirically adequate, there is no room left for criticising actual practice.²⁴ Since we happen to reason in accordance with the rules of classical logic, this would mean that Wright's view of the matter rests on the idea that the principle of Completeness can be given evidential support:

(C*) for all non-Moorean propositions P and $\sim P$,
 either it is knowable that P or it is knowable that $\sim P$.

As I have argued, realism itself is indifferent to the question of which logic ought to be adopted. Thus, it may after all be the case that, although Wright's view of the matter is inappropriate as far as the debate between classicists and logical revisionists is concerned, it is nonetheless correct with regard to the realism/anti-realism debate. In other words, it may be that our actual inferential practice cannot be said to justify classical logic, while it still holds that the way we actually use language settles whether or not truth is epistemically constrained. Therefore, I shall ignore the further worry that, even if Wright's line of thought serves the anti-realist's purpose, Completeness will have to be endorsed.

Still the worry remains that Wright's line of reasoning does not serve the anti-realist's purpose in the first place. For argument's sake, let us concede that the fact that both realist and anti-realist semantics are supported by the same data gives no comfort to the realist. Unless Wright thinks that the facts about linguistic usage which have hitherto been adduced in writings on this topic somehow speak in favour of an anti-realist semantics, he cannot be said to have done more than pointed out a stalemate. And unless Wright thinks that there are no more facts about linguistic practice to be adduced which are essential to the manifestation of knowledge of truth conditions, he must be taken to argue for no more than temporary agnosticism about realism; and such an agnosticism fares badly with a belief in the apriority of (EC*).

Indeed, Wright himself is a temporary agnostic about realism, and hence about the apriority of (EC*²⁵). Still, he suggests that knowledge of truth conditions be fully manifested in recognitional abilities. Although this suggestion can easily be understood to rest on a verificationist prejudice, the way Wright conceives of these recognitional abilities makes it look fairly unobjectionable even to the realist. The recognitional abilities Wright has in mind are abilities

to recognize whether, and if so by what, a particular use of [a given] sentence is rendered appropriate in a prevailing context.²⁶

²⁴ Cf. [MMM]: 256-57.

²⁵ [MMM]: 250.

²⁶ [MMM]: 247.

The claim that the practical abilities that manifest one's understanding of a given sentence be recognitional in this sense seems merely to reflect the fact that, in order to be a competent user of an expression, one must be able

intentionally to suit one's use of the expression to the obtaining of factors which can be appreciated by oneself and others to render one's use apt.²⁷

In other words, understanding differs from other practical abilities—such as the ability to swim—in that it essentially involves the general ability to evaluate one's own performances and the performances of others.

The suggestion that understanding be fully manifested in recognitional abilities, however, is prone to be misleading. It is only too natural to conceive of the exercises of recognitional abilities to terminate in recognition-judgements which find their proper expression in assertions; and if the exercises of such abilities are supposed to display one's understanding of a given sentence, then it is likewise natural to conceive of the sentence whose understanding is thus displayed as the very sentence which is being asserted. But the understanding of a given sentence may involve the ability to use it in speech acts other than assertion, and the judgement that, under the prevailing circumstances, it is apt to use that sentence in this way will then not be expressed by means of asserting that sentence itself. Take the ability to *assume* a sentence to be true as an example. The conditions that prevail whenever it is appropriate to use a given sentence in this way may comprise conditions under which asserting this sentence does not so qualify.²⁸ The conditions I assume to obtain are not typically conditions whose obtaining I take myself to be in a position to ascertain.²⁹

In the same vein, however, the ability to use a sentence in a certain way will not in general be reducible to the ability to recognise the conditions under which it is appropriate to use that sentence in this way. This might go unnoticed if attention is restricted to the assertoric use of sentences. Indeed, the ability to assert a sentence and the ability to recognise the aptness of asserting it will both be displayed in asserting it; and arguably a speaker cannot be said to recognise that certain conditions do obtain, unless she can be said to know what the point of asserting is. By contrast, one cannot

²⁷ [MMM]: 247.

²⁸ The notion of assumption and its cognates ought here to be understood in terms of suppositions, rather than in terms of unargued-for beliefs as the notion of a background assumption. I nonetheless prefer "assumption" to "supposition" because the former, but not the latter, is used in order to characterise logical proofs such as *reductio ad absurdum*. In chapter four I shall argue that assumptions provide the key to a proper understanding of deductive validity.

²⁹ Sometimes I will assume P although I (claim to) know P. For instance, I may do so in order to tease out the logical consequences of P or to convince someone else who does not (claim to) know P.

An important question to be asked in the present context is: does the ability to correctly assert "It is correct to assume S" manifest one's understanding of S or rather one's understanding of "It is correct to assume S"?

infer from a subject's recognition that it is apt to assume a sentence under certain conditions that she has the ability to assume this sentence by herself. Thus, while a subject who makes an assumption thereby displays her ability to recognise that doing so is presently apt, the recognitional ability involved is not all that the subject is required to possess: she must as well be able to make the assumption.³⁰ Generally, one might know that it is at present correct to Φ , without knowing how to Φ oneself, or even what, in general, the point of Φ -ing is.³¹ It is for this reason that the suggestion that understanding be fully manifested in recognitional abilities is not only misleading, but likely to be false. It all depends on whether it can be shown that the ability to use a sentence assertorically already suffices for understanding that sentence.

Having identified understanding with a complex of recognitional skills, Wright then asks

[h]ow can knowing what it is for an unappreciable situation to obtain be constituted by capacities of discrimination exercised in response to appreciable ones?³²

Insofar as this question is meant to pose a challenge to the realist, it invites the thought that whatever conditions a sentence can be used to communicate, not only the grasp of these conditions, but these conditions themselves will lie open to the speakers' view.³³ If the ability to assume a sentence to be true could after all be described as a discriminatory capacity, and if this ability could be taken to contribute to a manifestation of understanding, then it would not be hard to see how knowledge of what it is for an unappreciable situation to obtain can be constituted by discriminatory capacities. Neither is the ability to make assumptions a discriminatory capacity, however, nor are the conditions one assumes to obtain typically the appreciable conditions one responds to when making that assumption.

In asserting a sentence, one lays claim to the obtaining of its truth conditions. To do so is to exercise a recognitional ability, *i.e.* the ability to recognise that it is appropriate to assert this sentence under the conditions one does. If knowledge of what one asserts by means of that sentence is already fully manifested in this recognitional ability, then it is indeed hard to see how the realist might defend her view that what one

³⁰ It may seem that the ability to make assumptions requires very little. However, this ability is not independent from the ability to draw conclusions, and knowing which conclusions may be drawn from a given assumption is to have a substantial piece of semantical knowledge.

³¹ This echoes Dummett's remarks on what is involved in possessing the concept of truth; [T]: 2-4. Contrary to what I shall argue for in subsequent chapters, Dummett holds that the point of the concept of truth can already be grasped by grasping the significance of assertions.

³² [MMM]: 248.

³³ I do not suggest that in posing this challenge Wright really endorses this thought. But then, he is not an anti-realist either. What we have to track is how a believer in the apriority of (EC*) must argue, and not how a temporary agnostic about realism does.

asserts may outstrip what one can recognise—that is, without at the same time violating the Manifestability Requirement. If understanding a sentence is not yet fully manifested in the ability to perform assertions by means of this sentence alone, but in the ability to perform assertions by means of this sentence and others, then again it is hard to see how what one can assert by means of these sentences can outstrip what one can recognise.

Indeed, Wright's anti-realist contends that, on this basis, we are not licensed to attribute to speakers a grasp of conditions which goes beyond a grasp of conditions whose obtaining they can recognise.³⁴ In other words, we have no reason not to assume that (EC*) is valid, therefore we should assume that (EC*) is valid: the data confirm a theory which takes knowability as its core concept; and if knowability is less comprehensive than truth, how does this fact manifest itself? Since it would appear that we have no answer to this question, the claim that knowledge of meaning consists in knowledge of truth conditions yields as the only empirically acceptable conclusion that truth just is knowability. Thus, while we previously argued that anti-realism must show that knowability is as comprehensive a notion as truth, Wright's anti-realist now turns the tables and contends that, as far as the theory of meaning is concerned, knowability can play the rule assigned to truth, and any claim that truth is nonetheless more comprehensive than knowability must be further justified. Given that the Dummettian Criterion is adequate, however, there is then no such further justification to be had. According to this criterion, all that matters for deciding the debate between realists and anti-realists is which concept of truth we can legitimately be said to possess in face of what an explanation of our linguistic understanding requires. The alert reader will have noticed that this line of reasoning crucially depends on the claim that knowledge of truth conditions is indeed fully manifested in recognitional abilities—a claim the realist should consider as highly controversial.

Dummett has given a more straightforward argument designed to show that realism cannot be vindicated.³⁵ According to Dummett, the realist leaves altogether obscure how knowledge of potentially recognition-transcendent truth conditions—that is, of conditions whose obtaining we can think of as independent from there being any evidence for it—can ever be connected with the exercises of our recognitional skills, *i.e.* our assertoric practice. Since a theory of meaning is designed to give a systematic account of what linguistic competence consists in, it should be suited to explain this practice. Thus, if such a theory identifies knowledge of meaning with knowledge of truth conditions, then it should accordingly be suited to explain our assertoric practice in terms of our knowledge of the conditions under which a given sentence is true. But if what we know in knowing the truth conditions of a given sentence is that this sentence

³⁴ [MMM]: 250-52.

³⁵ Dummett [LBM]: 306-309.

is true under conditions the obtaining of which it is beyond our powers to recognise, how could this knowledge render intelligible why we respond to certain data the way we do? How could this knowledge ever guide our assertoric moves?

This suggestive line of thought rests on the idea that if truth is taken not to be explicable in terms of any epistemic notions, so must the notion of a sentence having a specific truth condition.³⁶ While endorsement of the antecedent is essential to realism, however, endorsement of the consequent is not. In knowing the truth conditions of S, I know *which* conditions are such that S is true under these conditions. It may well be that in order to know the latter, I have to know under which conditions S qualifies as defeasibly warranted and those under which it does not. I may likewise be required to know what would count as a conclusive warrant or as a refutation of S. Still it does not follow that I have to be able to recognise S whenever it is true, or that if I have the ability to recognise whether S is true, it is possible for me to exercise this ability whenever S is true. But then it is not at all mysterious how, in knowing the potentially recognition-transcendent truth conditions of S, I can be said to have knowledge that guides or informs my assertoric practice. Dummett simply fails to recognise the *structure* of the knowledge I am said to possess in knowing the truth conditions of S: to know the truth conditions of S is to know, of some conditions C, that S is true under conditions C; and nothing yet follows from what determines whether S has truth conditions C for what determines whether C. Dummett merely highlights the fact that we should not take as primitive (our knowledge) that S is true under C in order to explain (our knowledge) that S is warranted under conditions W.³⁷ But, by reversing the order of explanation, we do not in any way bring the truth of S closer to its warranted assertibility, even if warrants are understood to be conclusive.³⁸

Matters would be different if it could furthermore be shown that knowledge of truth conditions already flows from or simply consists in knowledge of the conditions under which sentences can correctly be asserted. There would then be no reason to suppose that the truth conditions of a sentence could obtain without the speaker being able to get into a position in which that sentence could correctly be asserted. Again we have pinpointed the claim on which the anti-realist's case for (EC*) will have to depend, *viz.* the claim that knowledge of truth conditions is fully manifested in recognitional skills. The exercises of such recognitional skills are assertions: assertions as to what is justified, assertions as to what justifies what, assertions as to what follows from what—and if anti-realism is correct, assertions as to what is true whenever it is true.

³⁶ Compare what Dummett says in [LBM]: 304 with what he says in [LBM]: 308.

³⁷ Cf. Dummett [LBM]: 102, 306-309.

³⁸ Cf. Blackburn [MR]: 36.

With these considerations in place, the anti-realist's Manifestation Argument³⁹ may be formulated as follows:

- (i) the ability to engage in assertoric practice, *i.e.* the practice of expressing verdicts or giving answers to questions, solely requires the ability to recognise the obtaining of those conditions under which the assertion of a given sentence qualifies as correct, and those under which it does not—and, we may add, the ability to act upon the recognition of their obtaining
- (ii) knowledge of truth conditions is already fully manifested in the ability to engage in assertoric practice—it would, for instance, still be so manifested if we lacked the means to give commands, express wishes, *etc.*⁴⁰
- (iii) the only conditions the knowledge of which we fully display in assertoric practice are conditions whose obtaining we are able to recognise
- (iv) hence truth conditions will be amongst those conditions whose obtaining we are able to recognise—and knowledge of truth conditions is accordingly manifested in the ability to recognise that these conditions obtain, if they do obtain.⁴¹

³⁹ As the preceding discussion has made clear, I do not wish to be understood as claiming that the version of the Manifestation Argument I here present has anywhere explicitly been stated. Anti-realists usually infer from the fact that knowledge of meaning cannot solely consist in explicit, verbalisable knowledge that it must be construed as implicit knowledge which is manifested in practical abilities, and move rather swiftly to the conclusion that these practical abilities must be recognitional; see Dummett [PBI]: 220-26; Wright [MMM]: 247-48; and Tennant [ARL]: 4-5, 111. Starting from premisses about the centrality of assertion, the version of the Manifestation Argument to be presented here is intended to make this move explicit and thereby a possible matter of dispute.

⁴⁰ On the anti-realist's preoccupation with the act of assertion, see *e.g.* Tennant [ARL]: 33-36; and Dummett [PBI]: 220-21.

⁴¹ Recall that to say, on the one hand, that understanding a sentence consists in the ability to recognise that its truth conditions obtain whenever they do obtain is not to say, on the other, that one cannot be said to understand a sentence unless one proves to have this ability by way of determining its truth-value. The manifestation of understanding in a practical ability ought not to be conflated with an exercise of that ability. Since we do not wish to say that sentences which are *pro tem.* undecidable are neither true nor false, the fact that we do not at present possess an effective means of deciding their truth-value should not be regarded by the anti-realist as entailing that we lack the ability to recognise their truth-value. That we cannot now exercise this ability does not entail that we cannot exercise it. As Tennant reminds us, the Manifestation Argument bears on knowledge of truth conditions, not on knowledge of truth-value; [ARL]: 115. The Manifestation Argument is designed to vindicate (EC*) by way of showing that the only truth conditions a speaker can be said to manifestly grasp are conditions whose obtaining can be acknowledged by that speaker—to the effect that envisaging their obtaining is envisaging a situation in which a speaker can acknowledge the fact.

As has been argued in this section, premiss (iii) seems highly plausible, insofar as assertoric practice is here understood to comprise no more than the assertoric use of sentences: if all the use-facts we can go for consist in speakers' verdicts in response to appreciable situations, then it is hard to see what justification there may be for the view that the expressions so used nonetheless receive their coherent interpretation in terms of states of affairs potentially beyond the speakers' ken. Obviously, such states of affairs, even if they do obtain, will not be what speakers can respond to; at most, speakers can be taken to respond to situations that (defeasibly) warrant the assertion that such states of affairs obtain. But if this is the correct guide to the interpretation of the speakers' assertions, and nothing else can be brought to bear that would further control it, then how can an interpretation of these assertions be justified that assigns to the sentences used or those constructible from their components truth conditions whose obtaining is independent from the feasibility of acquiring warrants for their assertion? It would appear that, given this limited data base, any such interpretation would indeed contain theoretical slack that has no basis in use and thus violate the Manifestability Requirement.

It will be my main contention, which I shall defend in subsequent chapters, that not both premisses (i) and (ii) can be true—the idea being that, if they were, we could not properly distinguish between knowledge of truth conditions and knowledge of warranted assertibility conditions. Once either premiss is rejected however, it seems that knowledge of truth conditions cannot fully be manifested in recognitional abilities either: the exercises of recognitional abilities cannot but find their expression in verdicts that qualify as warranted. Accordingly, we must ask: how else can we discern (grasp of) those conditions under which an assertion is presently warranted and true from (grasp of) those under which it is presently warranted but false (and from those under which it is true but presently unwarranted)? Once we have an answer to this question, it will have to be re-examined whether the conditions knowledge of which we display in displaying our knowledge of truth conditions indeed are such that we are able to recognise that they obtain, if they do obtain.

The next section will provide the background for the problem which I shall raise for the anti-realist in section (2.4). How anti-realists who base their case on the Manifestation Argument may try to solve this problem is the topic of chapter three, and by the end of this, it will hopefully have become clear that the proposed solution does not work, and that the Manifestation Argument must therefore be rejected.

2.3 *Truth vs. Warranted Assertibility*

In this section I shall be concerned with the contrast between warranted assertibility and objective truth. I shall argue that sentences which share their conditions of warranted assertibility may nonetheless diverge in their truth conditions, while there are sentences whose truth coincides with their warranted assertibility. In the latter cases, truth is not objective in the sense I intend the term "objective" to be understood: truth is objective only insofar as it diverges from warranted assertibility. I shall proceed by explicating the notion of warranted assertibility.

The warranted assertibility of a sentence is always relative to a total state of information j . Warrants for S available in j may fail to establish the warranted assertibility of S because j contains further warrants which either establish the warranted assertibility of the negation of S , or of the claim that S is not warrantably assertible in j . A warrant for S may accordingly be understood as part of a body of evidence that would confer warranted assertibility onto S , if no further evidence was available.

Warrants for claims can be classified according to whether they are *mandatory* or *purely permissive*.⁴² Whether a warrant is mandatory at a given time depends on the sum total of evidence available at that time. We may therefore say that a warrant for S is mandatory relative to a state of information j just in case, for all speakers x , if x is in j , x 's refusal to assent to S (or her readiness to assent to its negation) in face of that warrant, ought not to be tolerated. Accordingly, no state of information will contain both warrants which mandate assent to S and warrants which mandate assent to its negation, for then it would be mandated to hold or express contradictory beliefs. On the other hand, a warrant for S is purely permissive relative to j just in case, for all speakers x , if x is in j , it is not the case that x 's refusal to assent to S despite the existence of this warrant, ought not to be tolerated. Purely permissive warrants for S can co-exist with purely permissive warrants for its negation. The thesis that the class of mandatory warrants is not empty, will be of some importance in the next section as well as in chapter four.

Even if all warrants were mandatory in the sense explained, it would be mistaken to suggest that, generally, the conditions under which the assertion of a sentence is warranted are the conditions under which this sentence is true, or that the conditions under which its assertion ought to be withdrawn coincide with those under which it is false. Consider the following two examples:

- (1) I have a proof of P
- (2) P is provable.

⁴² Wright [TO]: 95-104.

The conditions under which an assertion of (1) counts as warranted are conditions under which the speaker who makes this assertion can be shown to be able to produce a proof of P now. If she can be shown to be able to do so, though, then (1) will indeed be true. Similarly, an assertion of (1) must be withdrawn, if the speaker cannot now produce a proof of P. Again, these conditions will be conditions under which (1) is indeed false.

Although (1) is not a statement of mathematics, both (1) and (2) pertain to mathematical discourse if "P" itself is a mathematical statement. Let us assume that it is indeed characteristic of mathematical discourse that the only evidence participants can allude to is conclusive evidence. This feature of mathematical discourse would have the consequence that the conditions under which an assertion of (2) is warranted will likewise be conditions under which (2) is true. Such an assertion would then be acceptable only if the speaker can produce a proof of P or at least knows someone who can produce such a proof.⁴³ If she can produce or obtain such a proof, it will be provable that P—and hence (2) will be true. The conditions under which an assertion of (2) must be withheld, however, do not coincide with the conditions under which (2) fails to be true. The fact that no one can produce a proof of P now does not entail that it is not provable that P—and *a fortiori* neither that it is provable that \sim P. We must therefore distinguish between the fact that a sentence is warrantably assertible *now* and the fact that it is possible to acquire a warrant for asserting it.⁴⁴ Given the contrast between (1) and (2), we may already record that there are sentences S such that

(O1) S may (actually) be true, even if S fails to be at present warrantably assertible.

All sentences apt for objective truth will be taken to satisfy (O1).⁴⁵

⁴³ Arguably such a proof need not be constructive. In any case, the notion of provability involved is meant to be informal; cf. Shapiro [IIE]: 613-14.

⁴⁴ The linguistic confusion in this area is astounding. How else can one explain the existence of Tennant's [NTW] in which he charges Wright of a realist prejudice (!) because Wright distinguishes between truth and warrantably assertibility, see [TO]: 20-21; and [RC]: 917-18. A similar complaint is made by Shapiro/Taschek [IPC]: 81. I here follow Wright in understanding warrantably assertibility, not as designating the possibility of a warranted assertion, but as designating the actual warrantableness of a possible assertion. Thus, even in the mathematical case, it would be misleading to identify, or assimilate, warrantably assertibility with provability, although both are modal notions. Rather, provability is what truth becomes, once an anti-realist stance towards mathematics is adopted; and for realists and anti-realists alike, the warrantably assertibility of a mathematical sentence will consist in one's having a proof for it, cf. Williamson [DAS]: 5n. Here, as in the empirical case, a sentence may be true without being warrantably assertible. Hand falls prey to a similar confusion when he argues that intuitionism cannot allow for neutral states of information, because to do so would be to violate the principle of *Tertium non datur*, and therefore ought to be replaced by a gappy theory when it comes to empirical discourse; see his [RAN].

⁴⁵ Sentences expressing our occurrent *cogitationes* such as "I am judging that P" or "I am wondering whether P" will accordingly not be objective in the intended sense. If one thinks that it is inappropriate to exclude these sentences from aptness for objective truth, then one should be even more inclined to reject the idea that "It is now warrantably assertible that P" is not apt for objective truth. As we shall see in due course however, it is hard to make sense of the suggestion that the latter sentence satisfies (O1). There

But (O1) is not the only constraint that sentences apt for objective truth will have to meet. Consider (3) and (4):

- (3) it is warrantably assertible that P
 (4) P.

If we conceive of (3) and (4) as sentences that belong to empirical discourse, then although an assertion of (3) will be acceptable just in case (3) is true, and unacceptable just in case (3) is false, an assertion of (4) may not only be unacceptable when (4) fails to be false, but acceptable when (4) fails to be true. In empirical discourse, the evidence which entitles speakers to assertions of sentences like (4) is in principle defeasible: it may turn out later that this evidence misled us to assert something false. We may express this feature of warrants as follows: there are some sentences S such that

- (O2) S may (actually) fail to be true, even if S is at present warrantably assertible.

All empirical sentences apt for objective truth will be taken to satisfy (O2). Although some sentences of mathematics may after all be warranted on the basis of inconclusive evidence, there will be mathematical sentences, *e.g.* sentences of basic arithmetic, for which there is but conclusive evidence if any. These sentences will therefore fail to satisfy (O2). Still they will satisfy (O1). Thus we face the choice of either restricting the term "objective" so as to exclude certain mathematical sentences from aptness for objective truth, or demanding that sentences apt for objective truth at least satisfy (O1) (and maybe also satisfy (O2)). Since our main concern will be with empirical discourse we need not now make this choice: empirical sentences will be apt for objective truth only if they satisfy both (O1) and (O2).

Given the Dummettian Criterion, anti-realism turns out to be a global thesis about what can and what cannot be understood by speakers. Hence, the realist will already be on safe ground if she can show that there is an area of discourse relative to which (EC*) cannot be vindicated. As indicated in the introduction, this essay will exclusively be concerned with empirical discourse. The defeasibility of warrants as captured by (O2), will therefore be of crucial importance.

Williamson, himself a staunch defender of realism, objects to (O2) against the backdrop of a distinction between defeasible warrants which one may cease to have in virtue of gaining new evidence, and non-factive warrants which one may have despite

may well be alternative readings of "objectively true" according to which sentences like "I am judging that P" and "It is now warrantably assertible that P" qualify as apt for objective truth. These will not comprise the reading the present section seeks to precisify however.

the falsehood of what they warrant.⁴⁶ For Williamson all warrants to assert are factive, although he concedes that a belief may be reasonable but false: his argument rests on the idea that there is just one constitutive rule for the speech act of assertion which takes the form

One must: assert P only if C(P).⁴⁷

According to Williamson, "C(P)" must be read as "one knows P"; and knowledge is obviously factive.⁴⁸ Against the suggestion that "C(P)" might be interpreted in terms of reasonable belief, he argues that such an interpretation would not yet capture the fact that an assertion of P is faulty if false.⁴⁹

Williamson's demand that warrants to assert be factive, however, seems to me to be far too strong. Even if defeasibility does not entail non-factiveness, it seems that sometimes one may cease to have warrants for asserting "P" because of misleading evidence suggesting the contrary. This evidence will then consist in non-factive warrants to assert " \sim P". To demand that we should not assert " \sim P" on that basis is, in William James' words, to live by the maxim "Better go without belief forever than believe a lie!", *i.e.* to take the avoidance of error as paramount and the chase for truth as secondary.⁵⁰ That Williamson takes this view, most clearly emerges when he opposes assertions to (the expression of) conjectures.⁵¹ By contrast it will be part of the account of understanding, to be developed in chapter five, that in a sense yet to be specified some assertions do express conjectures. As for Williamson's complaint that the interpretation of "C(P)" in terms of reasonable (non-factively warranted) belief cannot do justice to the fact that an assertion is faulty if false, this complaint, rather than refuting that interpretation, points to Williamson's unargued-for assumption that an account of assertion ought to be given in terms of a single rule of the form he suggests.⁵²

It is most likely that there will be more than one rule constitutive of the speech act of assertion, albeit of a different form than the one Williamson has in mind. For instance, asserting P will be *successful* only if P. If you know P and I do not, then if I assert "P" on the basis of misleading evidence, you will nonetheless accept my assertion as correct, *i.e.* as true, although it was made for the wrong reasons; and if I assert " \sim P" on the basis of misleading evidence, then you may nonetheless concede that I was

⁴⁶ Williamson [KA]: 518-19.

⁴⁷ [KA]: 492-93.

⁴⁸ [KA]: 502-12.

⁴⁹ [KA]: 514.

⁵⁰ James [WB]: 48-50.

⁵¹ [KA]: 496.

⁵² As I interpret it, this complaint even rests on a conflation between the norms one should follow in laying claim to the truth, and the goal one intends to achieve in doing so.

warranted to make that assertion although I did not achieve my goal. This difference in evaluation, which is central to our practice of making corrections, is neglected once all warrants are conceived to be factive.⁵³

Although there are some sentences which satisfy (O1) and (O2), these sentences will share their conditions of warranted assertibility with sentences which satisfy neither (O1) nor (O2). To begin with, consider:

- (A1) "P" is warrantably assertible iff
 "It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible.

This principle is highly plausible: insofar as I am entitled to assert "It is warrantably assertible that P", I am entitled to put "P" forward as a sentence whose assertion can warrantably be made. In other words, I am then entitled to issue a license to assert "P". How can this be so if "P" fails to be warrantably assertible? Conversely, if in being warranted in asserting "P" I am licensed to put "P" forward as a sentence whose assertion can warrantably be made, then I am entitled to passing this license on to others and thus entitled to assert "It is warrantably assertible that P".⁵⁴ This will hold good, even if "P" satisfies (O1) and (O2).⁵⁵ Next consider:

⁵³ This is not to say that it is essential to an assertion that it be performed with the intention of achieving the truth. One may perform an assertion and lie. It is merely to say that it is essential to assertions that they be taken to be performed with this intention. Otherwise one could not lie. And it cannot be essential to assertions that they be taken to be performed with this intention, unless they are mostly performed with this intention. This is why one cannot always lie.

⁵⁴ We must distinguish two different readings of (A1):

- (i) $\forall x[x \text{ warrants "P"} \leftrightarrow \exists y(y \text{ warrants "P is warranted"})]$
 (ii) $\forall x[x \text{ warrants "P"} \leftrightarrow x \text{ warrants "P is warranted"}]$.

Suppose that "P" is warranted in virtue of certain memories I have and that there is accordingly no reason to doubt that I am pretty reliable in remembering states of affairs of the kind "P" expresses. On the first reading, (A1) would require that there is a further warrant that warrants "P is warranted", say information about the reliability of my memory. Yet I may reliably remember that P without having any such additional information. Thus on this reading (A1) would seem implausible. But this reading cannot be what is intended anyway, because x warrants "P" only relative to a total state of information; and if y warrants "P is warranted" and $x \neq y$ there will be a state of information containing x but not y . (A1) would accordingly say that there is an enlargement of the state of information containing x that will contain y . But what was meant was that any state of information in which "P" is warrantably assertible is *itself* a state of information in which "P is warranted" is warrantably assertible, and *vice versa*. Thus the second reading of (A1) is intended: the very memories that warrant assertion of "P" likewise warrant assertion of "P is warranted", because they issue a license to put "P" forward as a sentence whose assertion can warrantably be made and they can only do so if this license can be passed on, *i.e.* if "P is warranted" is warrantably assertible too. In other words, even if I lack information confirming the reliability of my memory, my memories will warrant assertion of "P" only if taken to be reliable; and if I am entitled to treat them as such I am *a fortiori* entitled to assert "P is warranted" on their basis.

⁵⁵ It is not clear whether (A1) and, in effect, the principles to follow, (A2) to (A5), are available to an externalist about warrant, for I may be reliable with respect to a certain class of statements (telling that there is a barn) without being reliable with respect to my reliability (telling that I am not in fake-barn county). However, it is not clear either that externalism does not allow for some notion of warranted

- (A2) "It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible iff
it is warrantably assertible that P.

Given (A1), "It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible just in case "P" is warrantably assertible. (A2) follows from (A1) only if "P" is warrantably assertible just in case it is warrantably assertible that P. But then, how should it be possible that "P" is warrantably assertible, while the claim we express when asserting "P" is not, or that "P" is not warrantably assertible, while the claim we express when asserting "P" nonetheless is? This is simply unintelligible. Insofar as (A1) holds, so does (A2).⁵⁶

Given (A2), it can easily be shown that for sentences of the form "It is warrantably assertible that P", truth and warrantable assertibility will coincide. (A2) and the *Disquotational Schema* for truth:

- (DS) "P" is true iff P

jointly entail (A3):

- (A3) "It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible iff
"It is warrantably assertible that P" is true.

assertion (or reasonable belief) that validates (A1) to (A5). In any case, Williamson has argued that anti-realists who base their case on manifestationism are bound to endorse (A1) to (A3); cf. [DAS]: 4-7 and [CH]: 569-73; and as I shall argue below, once (A1) to (A3) are accepted, the rejection of (A4) to (A5) seems hardly motivated. I shall follow Williamson in this respect and presume that if anti-realism is compatible with externalism, so are (A1) to (A5). Thus if there are externalist arguments against (A1) to (A5), on any conception of warrant that is admissible, then these arguments will also count against anti-realism. Since my ultimate goal is to show that anti-realism cannot be vindicated, my arguments, resting on the acceptability of (A1) to (A5), may be regarded as supplementing such externalist arguments (if there are any) to the effect that anti-realists are faced with a dilemma: if (A1) to (A5) do not hold, anti-realism cannot be justified on the basis of manifestationism, and if they do, anti-realism cannot be justified on this basis either.

⁵⁶ (A2) needs qualification in cases where the sentence mentioned contains indexicals: "It is warrantably assertible that I am Gustav Lauben" is warrantably assertible by Gustav Lauben even though it is not warrantably assertible by Gustav Lauben that I am Gustav Lauben. For the time being let the context of an utterance be the triple composed of speaker, place and time of utterance, $\langle s, l, t \rangle$. Let 'P(σ, λ, τ)' be a sentence involving indexicals for speaker, place and time and no others. Then the appropriate version of (A2) reads:

- (A2*) 'It is warrantably assertible that P(σ, λ, τ)' is warrantably assertible by s in l at t iff
it is warrantably assertible by s in l at t that P(s, l, t).

This can only be a first step in the right direction, for a sentence may furthermore contain indexicals for the audience, for objects previously mentioned *etc.* But it should be fairly obvious how the suggested account may be extended so as to cover these other cases. Notice that the difficulties in specifying truth conditions for sentences involving indexicals are precisely the same. Since any further pursuit of the matter will take us too far afield, I shall henceforth take the liberty of ignoring these complications.

If (A2) is valid, then (O1) and (O2) will accordingly fail to hold for sentences of the form "It is warrantably assertible that P". Their truth will not be objective in the sense laid down.⁵⁷

It seems rational to maintain that the same applies to the negations of such sentences. In other words, the following should hold as well:

(A4) "It is *not* warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible iff
it is *not* warrantably assertible that P.

If one has reason to believe that there are no reasons to believe P, then one has no reason to believe P; and if there are no reasons to believe P, then that should be reason enough to believe that there aren't any. In other words, the absence of reasons of a certain kind

⁵⁷ Again, Williamson objects. He presents an argument designed to show that (A3) leads to absurdity; see his [DAS] and [CH]. This argument does not seem compelling however, because it rests on the following premiss which is reminiscent of the major premiss of a Sorites:

(W) If it is warrantably assertible at *t* that it is warrantably assertible that P,
then it is warrantably assertible that P at *t-1*.

Anyone already convinced of (A3) will read (W) as tantamount to (W*):

(W*) If it is warrantably assertible at *t* that it is warrantably assertible that P,
then it is warrantably assertible at *t-1* that it is warrantably assertible that P.

(W*) will yield false instances under any complete sharpening of "warrantably assertible". Thus, anyone already convinced of (A3) will reject (W) on the very same grounds.

Williamson motivates (W) by appeal to the idea that in general, speakers must reliably respond to facts in order for them to be in a position to warrantably assert that these facts obtain. He argues that one's being equally confident that P a second ago would undermine one's reliability when asserting P a second later, unless P was the case a second ago; [CH]: 558. If this line of reasoning depends on the assumption that all warrants to assert are factive, we need not consider it here. If the motivation for (W) does not depend on this assumption, then it will at least depend on the assumption that claims about the warranted assertibility of P are subject to a standard of correctness, *viz.* truth, such that a speaker's disposition to make such claims yields knowledge that they meet this standard *only if it is reliable with respect to this same standard*. Why should this be the case? Why shouldn't it be enough that P is subject to such a standard reliability with respect to which is necessary for a speaker's knowledge both of P and its being warrantably assertible that P? In other words, one's possession of a warrant for asserting "P" may imply that one's assertion of "P" is the outcome of a reliable procedure; and one's possession of a warrant for asserting "It is warrantably assertible that P" may likewise imply that one's assertion of *it* is the outcome of a reliable procedure; but the reliable procedure may just be the same in both cases: its reliability may consist in the tendency to get things right as far as the truth-value of "P" is concerned. If a cognitive procedure is reliable in this respect, assertions of "P" that result from its implementation will count as warranted. From the point of view under attack, "P" is warrantably assertible if and only if "It is warrantably assertible that P" is. Therefore such a procedure will *ex hypothesi* also be a procedure by whose means one can arrive at a warranted assertion of the latter sentence. To rejoin that following this procedure does not yet imply that one gets things right as far as the truth-value of "It is warrantably assertible that P" is concerned clearly begs the question: it already presupposes that the truth of the latter sentence does not collapse into its warranted assertibility. To rejoin that getting things right with respect to the truth of "It is warrantably assertible that P" does not yet imply that one gets the truth-value of "P" right is correct, but seems to rest on the mistaken assumption that reliable procedures are *failsafe*. In light of these remarks I see no reason to endorse (W) that would outweigh the reasons brought forth in support of (A3). But see footnote 55.

itself constitutes a reason for believing that there are no reasons of such a kind: if there aren't any reasons of this kind, then you won't find any; and that you don't find any is reason to believe that there aren't any.⁵⁸

Accordingly, for sentences of the form "It is not warrantably assertible that P", truth and warrantable assertibility will come down to one and the same:

- (A5) "It is not warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible iff
 "It is not warrantably assertible that P" is true.

⁵⁸ (A4) implies that warrants for non-objective claims are always mandatory: let 'W' stand for warrantable assertibility; then all things considered, a warrant for \sim WP cannot co-exist with a warrant for WP, as $W\sim$ WP implies \sim WP and W WP implies WP. This is as it should be, for it can hardly be permissible to say that something is permissible and also be permissible to say that it is not; cf. Wright [TO]: 97-98.

Consider the following apparent counterexample to the conditional from right to left across (A4): suppose that there are no reasons to believe P, while it is nonetheless believed that there are such reasons that will soon be discovered; then it would seem that it cannot reasonably be believed that there are no reasons to believe P. If this case is meant to yield a counterexample to (A4), then the belief that there are reasons for P that will soon be discovered will have to constitute a warrant for believing that there are reasons for P *where this warrant is not trumped by any warrant presently available*. For recall that the warrantable assertibility of a given claim is always relative to a total state of information. Let us refer to all the other information presently available as w . Now either the warrant for the claim that there are reasons for P is trumped by w or it is not. If it is then w will warrant \sim WP, hence the left-hand side of (A4) will be satisfied. If the warrant for the claim that there are reasons for P is not trumped by w , however, then, all things considered, this warrant will warrant WP, whence by (A2) WP will hold and the right-hand side of (A4) will be false. In either case no counterexample to (A4) has been presented. This suggests that the meaning postulates governing the notion of warrantable assertibility form a coherent system that can accommodate *prima facie* counterexamples nicely.

Timothy Williamson has raised the following objection against the conjunction of (A2) and (A4): (A2) and (A4) taken together classically entail $W(WP) \vee W(\sim WP)$; but this conflicts with the general principle that in a recognised borderline case for ϕ , $\sim W(\phi) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim\phi)$ will be true; therefore either there are no recognised borderline cases for WP or classical logic has to be abandoned. The obvious response is to reject Williamson's principle. Thus in what follows I shall assume both that classical logic is correct and that there are indeed recognised borderline cases for WP. (Of course, recognised borderline cases will not be regarded as being *defined* in terms of Williamson's principle.) Notice first that Williamson's principle entails that if ϕ is recognisedly borderline neither $W(\phi)$ nor $W(\sim\phi)$ will be recognisedly borderline. But why should we endorse this conditional? Why shouldn't we rather claim that if ϕ is recognisedly borderline sometimes $W(\phi)$ and $W(\sim\phi)$ may be borderline too? The reason telling against this latter suggestion will presumably be the worry that if borderline cases for ϕ gave rise to borderline cases for $W(\phi)$ and $W(\sim\phi)$, could only conceive of borderline cases for ϕ as cases in which we are ignorant of the truth-value of ϕ at the cost of making what we are ignorant of a non-objective matter: by overcoming our ignorance of the truth-value of $W(\phi)$ we would already have to have overcome our ignorance of the truth-value of ϕ ; thus, in particular, knowing that $W(\phi)$ is false would be sufficient for knowing that ϕ is false, as knowing that ϕ is true in any case requires knowing that $W(\phi)$ is true. But then it should also be noticed that the conflict with Williamson's principle only arose for special ϕ , *viz.* those equivalent to some WP. Yet, it is precisely with respect to claims like these that the aforementioned worry gets no grip: it already follows from (A2) and (A4) that whether WP is true or false is not an objective fact of the matter. Thus it would appear that it is precisely with respect to the problematic cases that we lack a justification for Williamson's principle. Hence even if it is, for the sake of argument, conceded that if ϕ is apt for objective truth, recognised borderline cases for ϕ are cases in which $\sim W(\phi) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim\phi)$ is true, it remains to be shown that this conception is adequate for borderline for non-objective ϕ . If (A2) and (A4) hold, an alternative account of such borderline cases must be provided. To give such an account is undoubtedly beyond the scope of the present investigation.

Thus, sentences of the form "It is not warrantably assertible that P" fail to satisfy (O1) and (O2), hence fail to qualify as apt for objective truth.

(O1) and (O2) yield a minimalist conception of objective truth which both realists and anti-realists are bound to endorse.⁵⁹ No matter what else the notion of objective truth may be invested with—recognition-transcendence, bivalence or what have you—any truth conditional account of speakers' knowledge will have to make room for the understanding of sentences whose truth conditions satisfy (O1) and (O2). How this may be done will be the main theme of the remainder of this essay. As already indicated towards the end of the last section, it will be my contention, to be substantiated in chapter three, that satisfaction of (O1) and (O2) cannot be accounted for on the basis of assertoric use alone. This is in large part due to the validity of (A1), and it is for this reason that the premisses of the Manifestation Argument must eventually be rejected.

In the final section of this chapter I shall give an indication of the tension between the Manifestation Argument and our objectivist conception of truth. I shall argue that compliance with the Dummettian Criterion forces the anti-realist to explain a speaker's understanding of sentences which express Moorean propositions. Sentences of this kind have warranted assertibility conditions which necessarily go uninstantiated. The Manifestation Argument, if sound, establishes that truth conditions are conditions whose obtaining speakers can get into a position to warrantably assert.⁶⁰ It would follow that Moorean sentences are necessarily false. This proves to be inconsistent with our minimalist conception of objective truth, however.

The anti-realist merely intends to show that for any non-Moorean sentence S, if S is true, we can attain a state of information which will furnish us with warrants on whose basis we may recognise that S is true. She will accordingly have to explain the truth conditions of Moorean sentences in terms of the truth conditions of their constituent sentences. Moorean sentences are necessarily not warrantably assertible because their constituent sentences have exclusive warranted assertibility conditions, but are not necessarily false because their constituent sentences do not have exclusive truth conditions.

⁵⁹ Recall that we are concerned with empirical discourse. As noted before, sentences of mathematics typically fail to satisfy (O2).

⁶⁰ This conclusion would be consistent with (O1), for recall that the warranted assertibility of S is always relative to a state of information; and S may fail to be warrantably assertible given the present state of information while being warrantably assertible given an enlargement of this state. The anti-realist claims that the actual world is such that, if S is true, we can attain a state of information relative to which S is warrantably assertible. She does not claim that if S is true we already are in this state.

One of the conjuncts of a Moorean sentence, however, will share its warranted assertibility conditions with a third sentence which is inconsistent with the second conjunct.⁶¹ How then can it be explained, on the basis of assertoric practice alone, that the first conjunct is not inconsistent with the second? It is suggested that the only way out of this impasse is holistic: the anti-realist has to conceive of the truth conditions of a given sentence as the systematic contribution this sentence makes to the determination of the warranted assertibility conditions of more complex sentences in which it occurs. Sentences which share their warranted assertibility conditions may nonetheless fail to be interchangeable *salva assertibilitate* in some embedding contexts. In chapter three I will explore whether this construal of truth conditions already allows the anti-realist to reconcile our minimalist conception of objective truth, as embodied in (O1) and (O2), with the Manifestability Requirement.

2.4 *Ought Anti-Realist Semantics to be Systematic, and How Can it Be?*

The Dummettian Criterion forces the anti-realist to devise an account of understanding. Such an account will have to yield for every meaningful sentence of arbitrary complexity, a specification of what it is for a speaker to understand this sentence. Accordingly, attention is shifted from concepts to terms and from propositions to sentences. Realists and anti-realists will agree that to understand a sentence is to know its truth conditions. They will only disagree about which notion of truth is admissible.⁶² The Manifestation Argument, if sound, leads to the conclusion, unacceptable to the realist, that knowledge of truth conditions consists in the ability to recognise that these conditions obtain whenever they do obtain: if a sentence is true then speakers will be able to attain a state of information in which this sentence can warrantably be asserted.

It follows that the anti-realist is bound to explain what it is to understand sentences that express Moorean propositions. However, it will not yet do to explain, for every Moorean proposition, what it is to understand a sentence expressing it, for it may be that two sentences express the same proposition, *i.e.* have the same truth conditions, and yet mastery of one is not sufficient for mastery of the respective other.⁶³

⁶¹ Just as in chapter one I shall speak of Moorean conjunctions, rather than conjunctions equivalent to Moorean sentences, in order to keep matters simple.

⁶² Cf. Dummett [TOE]: xxii; [LBM]: 304.

⁶³ This does not undermine the identification of understanding with knowledge of truth conditions, though. For, knowledge of which truth condition a given sentence has is after all knowledge about this particular sentence, hence it differs from knowledge that another sentence has that truth condition.

Unobvious logical equivalences provide one clear example for this—sentences containing indexicals may be seen to provide yet another. Arguably, the sentence "Paul is in Havana on 4th of July 1997" expresses the same proposition as "Paul is in Havana today" as uttered on 4th of July 1997; and for any day *D*, there will be a matching sentence "Paul is in Havana on *D*" that expresses the same proposition as "Paul is in Havana today" as uttered on *D*.⁶⁴ But what it is to master the use of the latter sentence will not yet be explained by a mastery of eternal sentences of the former sort. For instance, I may correctly assert that Paul is in Havana today, even though I have no idea what day it is today. By the same token, I may correctly assert that Paul is in Havana on 4th of July 1997, without being aware that today is the 4th of July 1997.

It is important to stress this feature of sentences containing indexicals because it may well turn out that the same proposition may be knowably true in the guise of one such sentence, but fail to be so in the guise of another—in the same sense in which I cannot now see that I am now standing on an earth worm, but can see later that I was standing on one. The Dummettian Criterion entails that even if a case could be made for the claim that sentences containing indexicals express the same propositions as eternal sentences, the anti-realist cannot rest content with the fact that there are circumstances under which a sentence of the latter kind can be known to be true, while there are no circumstances under which the corresponding sentence of the former kind can be known to be true.⁶⁵

In face of the Manifestation Argument, the anti-realist would appear to be ill-advised to opt for Tennant's strategy of restricting the Epistemic Constraint so as to avert the Paradox of Knowability. The Manifestation Argument yields the general conclusion that whenever a sentence is true there exists a state of information in which it may warrantably be asserted. Accordingly, the truth conditions of a Moorean sentence could obtain only if there was a state of information relative to which it is warrantably assertible. Since there is no such state because the warranted assertibility conditions of Moorean sentences are necessarily uninstantiated, it would follow that Moorean sentences are necessarily false. But then we are back to square one: the anti-realist would have to claim that all truths will at some point be known, or at least deny that there are truths we will as a matter of fact never know.

⁶⁴ Cf. Frege [Th]: 10-11; as well as Davidson [RI]: 135-36. Nothing in what follows will hinge on this view being correct, however.

⁶⁵ It is for this reason that I will henceforth talk about Moorean sentences rather than Moorean propositions. The definition of Moorean propositions we have given in chapter one, section (1.3), can without further ado be transposed into the metalinguistic key.

Although he himself argues for a restriction of the Epistemic Constraint, Tennant shows some sympathy for this radical version of anti-realism, when he says that

it is not obvious that it is obviously silly. Therefore it may not be obviously silly. It may not be silly either, even if ultimately unacceptable.⁶⁶

It so turns out, however, that an anti-realist of this radical kind will be bound to make even wilder claims. For instance, she will not only have to claim that if *S* is true, *S* is at present warrantably assertible, but also that if there are at present mandatory warrants to assert *S*, then *S* is true. Or at least, she will not only have to concede that there are no true sentences *S* that fail to be warrantably assertible now, but also that there are no sentences *S* which it is at present mandated to assert yet which fail to be true. Neither is the least acceptable if the present warranted assertibility of a sentence is taken to consist in the current availability of defeasible and non-factive warrants for asserting it.

Apart from principle (A4) laid down in the last section all we need to invoke in addition in order to prove these unpalatable results are, (i) a consequence of the unrestricted version of the Epistemic Constraint, (ii) the principle according to which one cannot be warranted in believing a contradiction, (iii) the principle that warranted assertibility distributes over conjunction, and (iv) a further principle about mandatory warrants.

Insofar as knowledge of matters of fact is based on warrants, the unrestricted metalinguistic version of the Epistemic Constraint, as established by the Manifestation Argument,

(EC) "P" is true \rightarrow "P" is knowable

entails that for any true sentence "P", there is an attainable—*i.e.* possibly attained—state of information relative to which "P" is warrantably assertible. We may put this formally as follows:

(WC) $T(P) \rightarrow \Diamond W(P)$.

The claim that contradictions can never count as warrantably assertible is arguably too strong, because some contradictions are not obviously contradictory and can therefore reasonably be believed. To this it might perhaps be replied that, once we have figured

⁶⁶ Tennant [TT]: 246.

out that what we believed is contradictory, we ought to deny that we were warranted in believing it in the first place. However this may be, some contradictions are obviously contradictory and should therefore never count as warrantably assertible, and the contradictions we shall be concerned with are obviously contradictory. With this restriction in mind, we may lay down:

$$(A6) \quad \sim W(A \ \& \ \sim A).$$

Even if it may not in general be the case that one is warranted in believing **A & B** whenever one is warranted in believing **A** and warranted in believing **B**, the converse should be unobjectionable: if one is warranted in believing a conjunction, then one will be warranted in believing either conjunct. Hence we get:

$$(A7) \quad W(A \ \& \ B) \rightarrow W(A) \ \& \ W(B).$$

We shall arrive at the last principle we need, (A9), by indirect means. Reflect first that if I have reason to believe that **A & B**, then not only do I have reason to believe **A** and reason to believe **B**, and reason to believe that I have these reasons: I furthermore have reason to believe that I have reason to believe **A** under conditions **B**, and have reason to believe that I have reason to believe **B** under conditions **A**. Therefore, (A8) will hold good:

$$(A8) \quad W(A \ \& \ B) \rightarrow W(W(A) \ \& \ B).$$

Now, the converse of (A8) does not hold if the warrant I have for **A** is purely permissive. Insofar as this warrant is mandatory, however, the converse of (A8) does hold. The only reason why I could fail to have a warrant for **A & B**, although the consequent of (A8) holds, would be that my having a warrant for **A** was consistent with both **B** and my having a warrant for **B**, while **A** was not. If the warrant I have for **A** was mandatory however, then I would thereby be forced to endorse what is either inconsistent with my having a warrant for **B**, or inconsistent with **B**. But in either case, the consequent of (A8) would fail to hold: I would not then be entitled to assert **B**. Thus with respect to mandatory warrants, we may lay down:

$$(A9) \quad W(W_M(A) \ \& \ B) \rightarrow W(A \ \& \ B).$$

With (WC), (A4), (A6), (A7) and (A9) being in place, we may now give the following proofs:

1	(1)	$P \ \& \ \sim W(P)$	Ass.
1	(2)	$\diamond W(P \ \& \ \sim W(P))$	1, given (WC)
1	(3)	$\sim \Box \sim W(P \ \& \ \sim W(P))$	2, df. \diamond
4	(4)	$W(P \ \& \ \sim W(P))$	Ass.
4	(5)	$W(P)$	4, given (A7)
4	(6)	$W(\sim W(P))$	4, given (A7)
4	(7)	$\sim W(P)$	6, given (A4)
4	(8)	\perp	5, 7, \sim -E
	(9)	$\sim W(P \ \& \ \sim W(P))$	4, 8, \sim -I
	(10)	$\Box \sim W(P \ \& \ \sim W(P))$	9, \Box -I
1	(11)	\perp	3, 10, \sim -E
	(12)	$\sim(P \ \& \ \sim W(P))$	1, 11, \sim -I
	(13)	$P \rightarrow W(P)$	12, given $\sim(A \ \& \ \sim B) \rightarrow (A \rightarrow B)$
1	(1)	$W_M(P) \ \& \ \sim P$	Ass.
1	(2)	$\diamond W(W_M(P) \ \& \ \sim P)$	1, given (WC)
1	(3)	$\sim \Box \sim W(W_M(P) \ \& \ \sim P)$	2, df. \diamond
4	(4)	$W(W_M(P) \ \& \ \sim P)$	Ass.
4	(5)	$W(P \ \& \ \sim P)$	4, given (A9)
6	(6)	$\sim W(P \ \& \ \sim P)$	Ass. (A6)
4,6	(7)	\perp	5, 6, \sim -E
6	(8)	$\sim W(W_M(P) \ \& \ \sim P)$	4, 7, \sim -I
6	(9)	$\Box \sim W(W_M(P) \ \& \ \sim P)$	8, \Box -I
1,6	(10)	\perp	3, 9, \sim -E
6	(11)	$\sim(W_M(P) \ \& \ \sim P)$	1, 10, \sim -I
6	(12)	$W_M(P) \rightarrow P$	11, given $\sim(A \ \& \ \sim B) \rightarrow (A \rightarrow B)$

Note that the indexicality involved in "W(P)" has the effect that in line (2), (WC) yields the claim that it be possible that (1) is warrantably assertible *now*. The warrants on whose basis the proposition expressed by a sentence containing indexicals may be known, must include warrants that are available on the occasion of the assertion of this sentence. As we have noted, this is a direct consequence of the Dummettian Criterion: the anti-realist has to give an account of the understanding of every meaningful sentence. But the understanding of a sentence involving indexicals cannot be accounted for in terms of the ability to recognise the truth-value of another sentence containing no

indexicals, even if both sentences relate to the same state of affairs. This ability will, if at all, constitute the understanding of the latter sentence, not of the former.

An intuitionistically minded anti-realist may object to the step from line (12) to line (13) in the first proof, and to the step from line (11) to (12) in the second. But line (12) in the first proof, and line (11) in the second already seem unacceptable; and arguably the last line of either proof will be in good standing anyway if "P" is effectively decidable. So, what to do?

As I have argued in the last section, the anti-realist will have to resist the identification of truth with warranted assertibility.⁶⁷ The proofs given are general; and at least in empirical discourse the warrants we may be said to have tend to be non-factive. On the other hand, the acquisition of warrants for empirical claims will often be a matter of much experimental work of which the results are not presently available.

We are therefore bound to acknowledge that we have hit on an *a priori* refutation of the general conclusion of the Manifestation Argument: Moorean sentences, of which (1) in either proof is an example, show that knowledge of truth conditions cannot in general be taken to consist in the ability to recognise whether or not these conditions do

⁶⁷ It would indeed be surprising if the anti-realist accepted that we can infer from the current warranted assertibility of a given sentence that this sentence is true, or from its truth that it is at present warrantably assertible, for then it should strike one as unintelligible that anti-realists have gone to great lengths arguing for intuitionistic logic. If anti-realists equated truth with warranted assertibility, then they should rather promote a logic that allows for truth-value gaps. Why so can be shown by appeal to the fact that (LEM) holds for sentences of the form "W(P)", and the fact that sentences such as "P" and "~P" may both fail to be warrantably assertible in neutral states of information. Given that

$$\begin{aligned} &W(P) \vee \sim W(P) \\ &W(\sim P) \vee \sim W(\sim P) \end{aligned}$$

we can prove that the following disjunction holds good,

$$(W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P))$$

which gives expression to the idea that either "P" is warrantably assertible or "~P" is warrantably assertible or neither is. Given the envisaged identification of truth with warranted assertibility, this would yield the result that either "P" is true or "~P" is true or neither of them is. Cf. Hand [RAN]. Proof:

1	(1)	$W(P) \vee \sim W(P)$	Ass.
2	(2)	$W(P)$	Ass.
2	(3)	$\sim W(\sim P)$	2, $W(A) \rightarrow \sim W(\sim A)$
2	(4)	$W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P)$	2, 3, &-I
2	(5)	$(W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P))$	4, v-I
6	(6)	$\sim W(P)$	Ass.
7	(7)	$W(\sim P) \vee \sim W(\sim P)$	Ass.
8	(8)	$W(\sim P)$	Ass.
6,8	(9)	$\sim W(P) \ \& \ W(\sim P)$	6, 8, &-I
6,8	(10)	$(W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P))$	9, v-I
11	(11)	$\sim W(\sim P)$	Ass.
6,11	(12)	$\sim W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P)$	6, 11
6,11	(13)	$(W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P))$	12, v-I
6,7	(14)	$(W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P))$	7, 8, 10, 11, 13, v-E
1,7	(15)	$(W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ W(\sim P)) \vee (\sim W(P) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim P))$	1, 2, 5, 6, 14, v-E.

obtain. While their warranted assertibility conditions necessarily fail to obtain, their truth conditions do not. The conclusion of the Manifestation Argument has therefore to be modified so as to exclude Moorean sentences: whether their truth conditions obtain will not depend on there being a state of information in which they can warrantably be asserted.

How then does an anti-realist who promotes no more than (EC*)

(EC*) for all non-Moorean sentences "P", if "P" is true, then "P" is knowable

account for our understanding of Moorean sentences?

It has been a standard realist rejoinder to the Manifestation Argument to argue as follows: the anti-realist's account of understanding is in order insofar as effectively decidable sentences are concerned. Here, grasp of truth conditions can indeed be conceived of as the ability to recognise their obtaining. But in mastering these sentences, a speaker acquires an understanding of subsentential expressions which enables her to understand novel sentences built up from these, yet whose truth-value it may be beyond her powers to recognise.

This appeal to compositionality has been shown to be illegitimate though, as the question immediately arises: due to the understanding of which subsentential expressions may a speaker come to grasp potentially evidence-transcendent truth conditions, if that understanding is said to be exhaustively determined by her ability to recognise the truth-value of effectively decidable sentences in which these expressions occur? This question seems to have no answer.⁶⁸

If this is a successful repudiation of the realist's attempt to drive her point home by appeal to compositionality however, then the same line of argument seems to be available if the anti-realist now attempts to account for the understanding of Moorean sentences by appeal to an understanding of their atomic parts. For how can we come to understand a complex sentence as possibly true yet unrecognisably so, if our understanding of its constituent terms is exhaustively determined by our ability to recognise the truth-value of sentences in which they occur, as the Manifestation Argument requires?

Thus, it would now appear that the anti-realist's answer to the realist's illicit appeal to compositionality backfires. If the understanding of a Moorean conjunction such as "W(P) & ~P" or "~W(P) & P" cannot be taken to consist in the ability to

⁶⁸ Cf. Tennant [ARL]: 112; and Wright [RMT]: 21-22. In general, merely concatenating meaningful expressions according to syntactical rules will not already result in an intelligible sentence even if it results in a grammatically well-formed sentence; *vide* sentences like "Green ideas sleep furiously": there is simply no identifiable set of practical abilities that would constitute the grasp of a thought this sentence expresses.

recognise it as true, if it is true, then how can this be so if the understanding of its conjuncts is taken to consist in the ability to recognise them as true, if they are true? It would seem that the breakdown of the Manifestation Argument in the case of Moorean sentences affects its validity in the case of sentences from whose combination Moorean sentences result. And since "P" may be replaced by any sentence, this will be a devastating result.

This may however be considered to be a premature conclusion. The unknowability of Moorean truths has a straightforward explanation: although neither "W(P) & ~P" nor "~W(P) & P" is internally inconsistent, they are nonetheless unassertible. The reason seems clear: "W(P)" and "P" share their conditions of warranted assertibility, so do "W(~P)" and "~P"; and insofar as neither "P & ~P" nor "~W(P) & W(P)" is assertible, "W(P) & ~P" and "~W(P) & P" are not assertible either. Still "W(P)" and "P" may have different truth conditions.

In order to show then that "W(P) & ~P" and "~W(P) & P" are not contradictory, it is incumbent upon realists and anti-realists alike to devise an account of knowledge of truth conditions which makes room for the idea that speakers conceive of some sentences S in their repertoire as satisfying (O1) and (O2):

(O1) S may (actually) be true, even if S fails to be at present warrantably assertible;

(O2) S may (actually) fail to be true, even if S is at present warrantably assertible.

Here lurks another threat to the cogency of the Manifestation Argument however, this time affecting its premisses rather than the generality of its conclusion. Recall that (A3) holds:

(A3) "It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible iff
"It is warrantably assertible that P" is true.

In other words, the truth conditions of "It is warrantably assertible that P", *i.e.* "W(P)", are its warranted assertibility conditions, and those coincide with the warranted assertibility conditions of "P":

(A1) "P" is warrantably assertible iff
"It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible.

Now, if the conditions under which "P" is warrantably assertible coincide with those under which "W(P)" is, then how can the ability to recognise that these conditions do

obtain when they do, and that they do not obtain if they do not, already manifest knowledge of the truth conditions of "P", where those are, given (O1) and (O2), supposed to differ from the truth conditions of "W(P)"? It would appear that, if premiss (i) of the Manifestation Argument holds good, premiss (ii) proves wrong: knowledge of truth conditions is not yet manifested in the abilities required for the participation in assertoric practice.

Even so, it may be thought to be possible to give an account of knowledge of truth conditions without transgressing the limits set by the premisses of the Manifestation Argument. Indeed, Dummett has argued that the difference between truth conditions and conditions of warranted assertibility emerges once we take the compositionality of language to heart. According to this suggestion, knowledge of the truth conditions of a given sentence is manifested in the ability to recognise those conditions under which not only this sentence but all its (non-Moorean) embeddings are warrantably assertible and those under which they are not. Amongst these embeddings, negation and the conditional are the most obvious examples: the warranted assertibility conditions of " $\sim P$ " differ from those of " $\sim W(P)$ "; and so do the warranted assertibility conditions of " $P \rightarrow Q$ " and " $W(P) \rightarrow Q$ ". The truth conditions of "P" and "W(P)" are accordingly conceived to consist in the systematic contribution either sentence makes to the determination of the warranted assertibility conditions of more complex sentences in which it occurs.

Thus, the anti-realist will argue that even though the conditions under which a sentence will be recognised as true are conditions under which it is correct to assert that this sentence is warrantably assertible, still there is a difference in the way "P" and "W(P)" are understood that is fully manifested in the ability to engage in assertoric practice. And this, or so Dummett suggests, is sufficient to demonstrate the speakers' grasp of the truth conditions of "P"—that is, even if "P" happens to satisfy (O1) and (O2). In the next chapter, however, I intend to prove that Dummett's suggestion is mistaken.

In this chapter, we have identified the battlegrounds on which the realist/anti-realist debate may be fought: given the Dummettian Criterion, the question of whether truth is epistemically constrained will have to be decided by way of showing which concept of truth speakers may legitimately be said to possess. Realists and anti-realists alike will have to argue their case by devising an account of understanding. Such accounts were shown to be constrained by the Manifestability Requirement, *viz.* the requirement that knowledge of meaning be fully manifested in abilities to use language. This requirement determined the *choix des armes*: the opponents must show how knowledge of truth conditions can be constituted by a complex of practical skills. However, it was left to the opponents to identify those features of language use which

fill the bill. The anti-realist's Manifestation Argument could be seen to rest on the idea that mastery of the assertoric use of sentences is already necessary and sufficient for knowledge of truth conditions. In spelling out a minimalist conception of objective truth, we distinguished truth from warranted assertibility. It turned out though that sentences which differ in their truth conditions nonetheless share their conditions of warranted assertibility, and this finding in turn gave rise to a problem for any anti-realist who bases her case on the Manifestation Argument. She will have to solve this problem by way of conceiving of the truth conditions of a sentence as the systematic contribution this sentence makes to the warranted assertibility conditions of all the sentences of which it is a constituent. The next chapter is designed to show that this attempt to salvage the Manifestation Argument fails.

Chapter Three

In this chapter I intend to do two things. First I shall challenge Dummett's suggestion as to why truth conditional semantics is forced upon us, and argue instead that the reasons why this is so lie elsewhere: contrary to what Dummett suggests, there is no principled reason to deny that, on the basis of the assertoric use of sentences alone, an assertibilist semantics, which takes the notions of warranted assertibility and deniability as its core concepts, can yield a systematic account of the contribution sentences make to the determination of the warranted assertibility conditions of complex sentences in which they occur—at least to the extent that, for an anti-realist, such an account is feasible on that basis. This will be argued for by means of showing first how a radical deflationist who opts for an assertibilist semantics can respond to Wright's 'inflationary argument', intended to prove that radical deflationism is at odds with our use of negation; and secondly, how an assertibilist can give a pragmatics for the indicative conditional which, though not backed up by a fully compositional semantics, cannot be shown to be inferior to an account of the warranted assertibility conditions of conditionals that is based on anti-realist truth—at least if the data base includes no more than speakers' assertions and denials. Throughout, I will proceed by arguing that if there is a problem assertibilism cannot at present or in principle overcome, there will be a corresponding problem besetting anti-realist truth conditional semantics: as I suggest, these problems rather reveal that the systematicity any account of warranted assertibility conditions for compounds can achieve is limited in principled ways.

Nevertheless, assertibilism will be seen to be wrong in that it misconstrues the assertoric content we take some of our sentences to have. That this is so is already disclosed by our conception of what we do when asserting or denying atomic sentences. Far from indicating how this conception is manifested however, this observation rather suggests that we should look for use-facts other than assertions and denials.

Thus, secondly, I shall argue that once the reasons why assertibilism fails have been acknowledged, the realism/anti-realism debate—insofar as it centres around the question of which concept of truth should feature as the core concept of a theory of meaning—has to be seen in a different light: it turns out that the anti-realist's Manifestation Argument systematically misconstrues the way in which a grasp of truth conditions is manifested in use, by focusing exclusively on the speakers' practice of reaching verdicts.

3.1 Assertoric Content and Ingredient Sense

Throughout his writings, Dummett asks us to distinguish between the *assertoric content* of a sentence and its *ingredient sense*.¹ According to Dummett, the assertoric content of a sentence is determined by the conditions under which an assertion of this sentence qualifies as warranted and those under which such an assertion does not so qualify, hence ought to be withdrawn; the ingredient sense of a sentence, on the other hand, is the systematic contribution this sentence makes to the determination of the assertoric content of complex sentences of which it is a constituent.²

Dummett argues that the ingredient sense of a sentence is not yet determined by the conditions under which an assertion of this sentence is warranted and those under which such an assertion ought to be withheld, hence that assertoric content and ingredient sense come apart.³ Rather he contends that we are bound to conceive of the ingredient sense of a sentence as given by its truth conditions as soon as we attempt to explain how the warranted assertibility conditions of a complex sentence depend on the semantic features of its parts.⁴ Here Dummett goes wrong, or so I shall argue. If all we intend to do is give a systematic account of the conditions under which assertions of complex sentences are acceptable, and those under which they are not, and if this account is based on no more than assertoric usage, then, to the extent that systematicity can be achieved at all, we can do well without any appeal to the truth conditions of the sentences these complex sentences take as their constituents (sections 3.2 to 3.7).

Nevertheless, the ingredient sense of a sentence must be taken to be given by its truth conditions. This is due to the fact that contrary to what Dummett suggests,⁵ the assertoric content of a sentence must already be seen to be determined by its truth conditions (3.8). In other words, given Dummett's conception of assertoric content, the observation that the warranted assertibility conditions of a complex sentence systematically depend on the semantic features of its constituents will not yet force an account of ingredient sense in terms of truth conditions; and once assertoric content is properly conceived of in terms of truth conditions, the distinction between assertoric content and ingredient sense collapses.

Dummett furthermore argues that in the absence of complex sentence-forming devices, we have no means to distinguish between speech communities who go in for asserting what is true and speech communities who go in for asserting what is

¹ Dummett [FPL]: 446-47; [LBM]: 47-50; [SCT]: 188-201.

² [LBM]: 48.

³ [LBM]: 48; [SCT]: 192.

⁴ [SCT]: 192-93. Brandom follows Dummett in this respect; see his [TA].

⁵ [SCT]: 191.

warranted.⁶ But if Dummett's conception of assertoric content was correct, then it would appear that this alleged indeterminacy would not be resolved by an appeal to the notion of ingredient sense either. How could the fact that embedded sentences must be assigned truth conditions have any bearing on what speakers lay claim to when asserting the embedding sentences? In particular how can this be so if such assignments do no more than help determine under which conditions asserting the embedding sentences is acceptable, and under which conditions it is not?⁷

This complaint seems illicit though, given the anti-realist's present programme. The anti-realist wishes to conceive of the truth conditions of a non-Moorean sentence as conditions whose obtaining guarantees the accessibility of a state of information in which this sentence can warrantably be asserted.⁸ She intends to do so on the basis of an account of the systematic contribution such a sentence makes to the determination of the warranted assertibility conditions of complex sentences in which it occurs—such that the truth conditions of these complex sentences can again be conceived of as conditions whose obtaining guarantees the availability in principle of warrants for their assertion. What these truth conditions are will in turn depend on an account of the ingredient sense of the complex sentences themselves.⁹ As the last chapter revealed, the complex sentences to be considered must exclude Moorean sentences as well as sentences and equivalents thereof which essentially involve Moorean sentences as one of their constituents.¹⁰

⁶ [SCT]: 191, 199; cf. as well [FPL]: 451, and the postscript to [T] in [TOE]: 21-22.

⁷ Cf. Williamson [ADC]: 313. After having argued that the ingredient sense of a sentence is to be given in terms of its truth conditions, Dummett writes: "[t]he adoption of the concept of truth does not, of course, render that of justifiability [*i.e.* warranted assertibility] otiose; but, in an obvious manner, it makes the latter dependent on the former: an assertion will now be regarded as justifiable [*i.e.* warrantably assertible] provided the speaker was in a position to know, or had good grounds for believing, that the statement asserted was true"; [SCT]: 198. How can this be more than a purely verbal issue, unless speakers can be seen to commit themselves to the truth of what they assert rather than merely to its warranted assertibility? It would then appear that by asserting a given sentence, a speaker already effects a distinction between those conditions under which what she asserts is true and those under which it is other than true. Accordingly, the assertoric content of such a sentence must be understood to be determined, not by its conditions of warranted assertibility, but by its truth conditions. The crucial question would then turn out to be whether we can, on the basis of a speaker's assertoric use alone, arrive at the conclusion that she effects this distinction.

⁸ Dummett [LBM]: 338. Recall that the warranted assertibility of a given sentence is always relative to a state of information. Hence, it is not inconsistent to hold, on the one hand, that *S* may be true but fail to be at present warrantably assertible and, on the other, that the truth conditions of *S* are conditions whose obtaining implies the possibility that *S* may warrantably be asserted: to say the latter is to say that if *S* is true there is a state of information relative to which we may recognise that *S* is true.

⁹ Dummett has even argued that the dispute about whether conditionals are truth-apt arises because we have no use for conditionals with conditionals as antecedents; see [SCT]: 196-97. Cf. as well Edgington [OC]: 280-84.

¹⁰ The second half of this restriction is necessary because if "*P*" is Moorean and "*Q*" is non-Moorean, then "*P* ∨ *Q*" will not be Moorean; but since "*P* ∨ *Q*" will be true if "*P*" is true and "*Q*" is false, "*P* ∨ *Q*" may be true under conditions under which one cannot know that it is. Thanks to Timothy Williamson for drawing my attention to this point.

However this may be, since it will be shown that an account of ingredient sense, if based on no more than speakers' verdicts, does not force the conclusion that speakers grasp truth conditions, the distinction between truth claims and claims as to what is warrantably assertible will have to be drawn by other means anyway. I shall argue that Dummett's contention that there would be no reason to draw this distinction, if all the sentences we use were atomic, rests on a rather limited conception of how knowledge of meaning is manifested in use, which stands in the way of a proper solution to this problem (3.9).

As I have argued in section (2.3) of chapter two, it would indeed be mistaken to suggest that, generally, the conditions under which the assertion of a sentence is warranted are the conditions under which this sentence is true, or that the conditions under which its assertion ought to be withdrawn coincide with those under which it is false. Thus if the assertoric content of a given sentence is taken to be jointly determined by the conditions under which its assertion counts as warranted and those under which it does not, then the assertoric content of a sentence cannot in general be taken to be determined by the conditions under which it is true and those under which it is not.¹¹ By the same token, if Dummett argues that the ingredient sense of a given sentence consists in the systematic contribution this sentence makes to the determination of the assertoric content of complex sentences in which it occurs, he must not be taken as suggesting that the ingredient sense of a sentence consists in the systematic contribution this sentence makes to the determination of the conditions under which its embeddings qualify as true, and those under which they do not.

What should we make of the idea that the warranted assertibility conditions of a complex sentence systematically depend on the semantic features of its constituent sentences? Why should this be so? One way to conceive of this idea is to suggest that an account of the warranted assertibility conditions of complex sentences must be *fully compositional*, that is, must yield an algorithm that allows us to determine the warranted assertibility conditions of a complex sentence solely in terms of the semantic features of

¹¹ In his discussion of the principle of *Tertium non datur*, Dummett suggests that the correctness of an assertion can be equated with its truth; see his preface to [TOE]: xvii-xviii. In his postscript to [T] in the same volume, he first distinguishes between correctness and warranted assertibility and then goes on to contrast warranted assertibility with truth, again suggesting that correctness and truth coincide; [TOE]: 21. In both places, he is commenting on what he said in [T]. However, in [T] he was concerned with the distinction between correctness and truth. The postscript contains an acknowledgement of this tension; he writes: "I should maintain that [the] distinction [between correctness and warranted assertibility] also derives its significance from the behaviour of sentences as constituents of more complex ones. [...] If we are concerned with an assertoric sentence which cannot appear as a constituent of a more complex sentence, we have no need of a distinction between cases in which an assertion made by means of it would be warranted and those in which it would be correct"; [TOE]: 21-22. In light of this remark, it becomes clear that according to Dummett, the assertoric content of a sentence is already determined by its conditions of warranted assertibility.

its constituents.¹² Such an account would show mastery of the warranted assertibility conditions of complex sentences already to flow from knowledge of the meaning of their constituents. Since the number of complex sentences we can produce or encounter in conversation is indefinitely large, while the vocabulary from which they are constructed is most likely to be finite, this would allow us to model our understanding of an indefinite number of expressions in terms of our understanding of a finite number of expressions. And this, it may be suggested, is precisely what we need to do in order to explain engagement in assertoric practice as the exercise of a competence that can be acquired in a finite amount of time.¹³

An account of such a kind is likely to be an unattainable ideal however. As we shall see in sections (3.4) and (3.5), there are conditions under which a complex sentence may be warrantably assertible, but which are not yet determined by the truth conditions of its constituent sentences in conjunction with their warranted assertibility conditions. And although we can make some headway in the attempt to account for such cases by appeal to further rules, there is no guarantee that *all* cases of this kind can be catered for by means of a finite stock of such rules. It therefore seems that our mastery of the warranted assertibility conditions of sentences may not just flow from our linguistic competence, but be informed and shaped by our experience.

We could try to keep the influence of experience out of the picture, if we were allowed to isolate semantics from pragmatics and could help ourselves to a truth conditional conception of semantics. For then we would conceive of what the semantic features of the constituent sentences do determine as the truth conditions of the sentences whose constituents they are; and giving an account of assertoric content, in Dummett's sense of the term, would no longer be part of our business as semanticists. Indeed a lot of work has been done in the past, notably by Davidson, to make the prospects for a fully compositional account of truth conditions look brighter than ever.¹⁴

But Dummett's quest for a systematic account of warranted assertibility conditions is based on the idea that isolating semantics from pragmatics is illegitimate, and that it is only through its pragmatic anchorage that we become entitled to a truth conditional conception of semantics. The following quote reads like a manifesto for manifestationism:

[i]t is a natural reaction to regard the requirement [that we incorporate into our theory of [meaning] an account of the basis on which we judge the truth-values of our sentences] as excessive, as asking the theory of meaning to take over the functions of a theory of

¹² This is suggested by Brandom [TA]: 141-42.

¹³ Cf. Davidson [TML]: 3; [TM]: 17; and [SNL]: 55.

¹⁴ Cf. Davidson's accounts of quotation in [Q], of indirect discourse in [OST], and of adverbial modifiers in [LFA]. Note though that in some logical systems whose semantics is truth conditional, truth functionality nonetheless breaks down; see van Fraassen [STF].

knowledge. If we were convinced that we understood in principle how the [meaning] of a sentence determined what we took as being evidence for its truth, and that the problems in this area, however intricate, were ones of detail, then it might be satisfactory to relegate them to a different philosophical discipline: but the difficulty is that we have no right to be satisfied with this. A conception of meaning—that is, a choice of a central notion for the theory of meaning—is adequate only if there exists a general method of deriving, from the meaning of a sentence as so given, every feature of its use, that is, everything that must be known by a speaker if he is to be able to use that sentence correctly; unquestionably, among the things that he must know is what counts as a ground for the truth of a sentence. Most of us serenely assume that a theory of meaning in terms of truth-conditions is capable of fulfilling this role, without stopping to scrutinize the difficulties of devising a workable theory of this type. [...] But until we have, for some one choice of a central notion for the theory of meaning, a convincing outline of the manner in which every feature of the use of a sentence can be given in terms of its meaning as specified by a recursive stipulation of the application to it of that central notion, we remain unprovided with a firm foundation for a claim to know what meaning essentially is.¹⁵

As already indicated, the requirement that the warranted assertibility conditions of a sentence themselves be recursively specified seems excessive. However, this finding does not diminish the persuasiveness of Dummett's demand that, where possible, a theory of meaning—be it based on truth conditions or something else—ought to yield an account of warranted assertibility conditions. The question is: in which sense can such an account be systematic?

A fully compositional, hence recursive account of warranted assertibility conditions is too much to be hoped for, even if this account makes appeal to the notion of truth.¹⁶ If we are asked to give an account of how the semantic features of embedded sentences contribute to the determination of the warranted assertibility conditions of their embedding sentences, this should not be conceived of as the request that we give an account that is fully compositional in the sense explained. Even if we cannot be asked to present the warranted assertibility conditions of complex sentences as already fully determined by the semantic features of their constituents, we should at least present them as being systematically dependent on these features. Here one might be tempted to reply: if we give up on the idea that engagement in assertoric practice can be explained in terms of a finite body of knowledge, why should we bother to show that there is any such dependence?

The answer relates to the role complex sentences play in our cognitive economy: complex sentences feature as premisses of inferences or are made available as such by inferences, deductive or inductive, as whose conclusions they feature. Our inferential

¹⁵ Dummett [WTM/II]: 92-93; cf. as well his [LBM]: 308. Recall though that, for the purposes of the present enquiry, we should not subscribe to Dummett's highly contentious claim that a "conception of meaning—that is, a choice of a central notion for the theory of meaning—is adequate only if there exists a general method of deriving, from the meaning of a sentence as so given, every feature of its use"; *ibid.* (my emphasis). As argued in the introduction as well as chapter two, we are here merely concerned with those features of use that bear on the representational dimension of speech.

¹⁶ Contrary to what Brandom suggests; [TA]: 142.

practice would not be what it is without them. To the same extent however, they could not play the role they do unless their warranted assertibility, in conjunction with the warranted assertibility of sentences involving some of their constituents, established the warranted assertibility of yet other sentences. Nor could they do so unless their warranted assertibility was in turn established by the warranted assertibility of sentences involving some of their constituents. In order to account for our inferential practice, we must accordingly represent linguistic competence as an articulate body of knowledge reflecting the inferential liaisons between complex sentences and those sentences that feature as their constituents. Call this for want of a better name the *Inferentiality Constraint*, or (IC) for short.

If Dummett's contention is right—that meeting (IC) forces a distinction between assertoric content and ingredient sense—then some sentences that share their conditions of warranted assertibility must nonetheless diverge in the contribution they make to the determination of the warranted assertibility conditions of complex sentences in which they occur. Hence, there must be complex sentences with divergent warranted assertibility conditions which can be obtained from one another by substituting constituent sentences which share their warranted assertibility conditions. For example:

(c1) $A \rightarrow B$

(c2) $W(A) \rightarrow B.$

Once we have identified such complex sentences, we must then enquire whether Dummett is furthermore right in maintaining that an account of the warranted assertibility conditions of sentences like (c1) and (c2) cannot meet (IC) unless it assigns truth conditions to their constituent sentences.

3.2 Wright's 'Inflationary Argument': An Application

Crispin Wright has devised an argument intended to show that truth and warranted assertibility record different norms.¹⁷ Initially, one may find the idea that truth records a norm puzzling because it seems that, if at all, truth would have to be an epistemic norm and epistemic norms are usually understood as norms compliance with which is conducive to preserving or attaining truth. But given the way Wright conceives of norms, it is clear that he argues for no more than that truth is a goal of enquiry other than warranted assertibility.¹⁸ Viewed in this way, his claim that a difference in

¹⁷ [TO]: 12-24.

¹⁸ See [TO]: 15-16, and especially 19.

extension between truth and warranted assertibility makes for a difference in the norms either records may seem intuitively compelling, for goals differ if the conditions under which they are reached differ.

However, this claim rests on the further assumption that (objective) truth can be shown to be a goal of enquiry in the first place. Whether truth can be shown to be a goal of enquiry at all will depend on whether speakers can be seen to set themselves this goal; and whether this is so will in turn depend on whether they can be seen to commit themselves to the obtaining of truth conditions where these diverge from conditions of warranted assertibility. Indeed this is what anyone committed to the minimalist conception of objective truth is bound to show: anyone who thinks that there are sentences S such that

(O1) S may (actually) be true, even if S fails to be at present warrantably assertible

(O2) S may (actually) fail to be true, even if S is at present warrantably assertible

is bound to hold that facts about the use of S determine that speakers conceive of S as being endowed with truth conditions that underwrite (O1) and (O2). In the end, Wright's argument falls short of redeeming this assumption.

Wright presents his argument as an argument against *deflationism*, i.e. the view that all that can be said about truth is exhausted by a suitably generalised version of the Disquotational Schema:

(DS) "P" is true \leftrightarrow P.

A fortiori Wright's argument is directed against *radical deflationism* according to which all instances of (DS) are partial definitions of truth and hence conceptually necessary equivalences.¹⁹ Indeed, as Field has argued, it is hard to see how a genuinely deflationist position could fall short of being radical in this sense.²⁰ For the radical deflationist, the following generalised versions of (DS) are equivalent definitions of truth:

(1) $\forall x[x \text{ is true} \leftrightarrow \Sigma P(x \text{ says that } P \ \& \ P)]$

(2) $\forall x[x \text{ is true} \leftrightarrow \Sigma P(x = \text{"P"} \ \& \ P)].$ ²¹

¹⁹ The term "radical deflationism" as well as the characterisation of the position to which it applies are taken from Field [DVM]; cf. as well his [DCT] and [PHT].

²⁰ See Field [PHT]: *passim*.

²¹ Cf. Field [DVM]: 251-52, 255n., 267n.

On the other hand, if (1) and (2) were taken to be non-equivalent—on the grounds that "P" has its syntactic properties essentially but might not have had the truth conditions it actually has—then truth would after all be a substantial notion: that "P" has the truth conditions it has will be contingent on how "P" is being used in relation to what it is about (on what else?); and it will then merely be a matter of theoretical objective whether that use is explained in terms of the speakers' knowledge of truth conditions. In other words, there can then be no further question as to whether, in asserting "P", speakers commit themselves to the obtaining of conditions that, if they did obtain, would make "P" true and whose obtaining depends on how matters stand with respect to what "P" is about—where its aboutness in turn depends on relations, *inter alia* causal ones, between language users and reality. On such a view, truth can hardly be considered as being 'deflated'.²² Thus, for the sake of argument, I shall henceforth consider radical deflationism as Wright's proper target.

As Dummett has famously argued, deflationists of this ilk are bound to deny that truth is the core concept of a theory of meaning.²³ If (2) is a definition of truth, then an understanding of the sentences to which truth can be ascribed must always be presupposed: we cannot learn anything about the semantic features of sentences we do not yet understand by being told under which conditions they are true, for that piece of information can only be conveyed by using the sentences in question.²⁴ By the same token, we cannot in turn explain what it is to understand such sentences in terms of knowledge of truth conditions—even if anyone familiar with (DS) will have this knowledge just in case she understands these sentences—for such knowledge will be as insubstantial as knowledge that $P \text{ iff } P$.²⁵ It is therefore natural to conceive of Wright's argument as directed against the view that truth has no role to play in a theory of meaning.²⁶

Let us call *assertibilism* the view that our minimalist conception of objective truth has no basis in use, in that all that speakers can be said to manifest is their knowledge of warranted assertibility conditions. I do not wish to imply that anyone ever

²² See Field [PHT]. As Field observes, it would therefore be a mistake to characterise Ramsey as a deflationist about truth; Field [DCT]: 60-61; cf. Ramsey [FP]: 158-161.

²³ See Dummett's preface to [TOE]: xxi; [WTM/II]: 42-43; and [LBM]: 67-69, 71. Cf. as well Field [DVM]: 249-50, 253-56.

²⁴ Notice that this differs from saying that in order to understand an instance of (DS) we must be able to understand its right-hand side. This is indeed trivial. What is not trivial is that in order to understand a truth-ascription we must first come to understand the sentence to which truth is being ascribed. It is this feature of the radical deflationist's account that is in tension with the idea that truth may play a role in theories of meaning; as Dummett puts it, "the meaning-theory itself must make no appeal to our prior understanding of the object-language; it would not, for example, impair its adequacy as a meaning-theory if it were translated"; [LBM]: 68.

²⁵ Indeed, Field considers the hallmark of deflationism to be that truth has no explanatory role to play in semantics or the theory of mind; [DVM]: 249-52, 255.

²⁶ This is precisely the role a forerunner of Wright's 'inflationary argument' plays in his [CDM]: 409-25.

held this view, although much of what Quine says suggests that he sympathises with assertibilism.²⁷ Nor do I myself wish to be understood as endorsing it: it will be particularly important to keep this in mind since, in this chapter, I shall try to give assertibilism the best run for its money. Assertibilism is used here as a mere foil in order to bring out more clearly what a manifestation of our minimalist conception of objective truth requires. Insofar as the anti-realist shares this conception, she is not an assertibilist. In other words, both realists and anti-realists have to prove assertibilism wrong.

In defending her position, the assertibilist exploits principle (A1):

- (A1) "P" is warrantably assertible iff
 "It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible.

This principle, uncontested by her opponent, serves as the central plank of her theory of meaning.

Assertibilism is radically deflationist. It denies the notion of truth, hence the notion of sameness of truth conditions, any role to play in an explanation of what speakers do, or in a specification of what speakers have to know in order to be able to do what they do. Thus if Wright's argument is directed against radical deflationists, then it is directed against assertibilists.

Wright's anti-deflationist argument proceeds from a combination of three independently plausible assumptions. First he assumes that all instances of (DS) hold good. Secondly he takes it that all sentences to which the truth predicate may be applied admit of significant negation—to the effect that their negations do themselves fall within the range of sentences to which "is true" can significantly be applied. Thirdly he regards the negation operator as governed by the following introduction rule:

$$\frac{A \leftrightarrow B}{\sim A \leftrightarrow \sim B}$$

From (DS) together with the second assumption, Wright infers (i):

- (i) " \sim P" is true \leftrightarrow \sim P.

Applying the above introduction rule for negation to an instance of (DS), he infers (ii):

- (ii) \sim ("P" is true) \leftrightarrow \sim P.

²⁷ Combine Quine's stimulus-response-semantics as set out in chapter two of [WO], with what he has to say about truth in [PoL]: 10-13.

Finally, from (i) and (ii), he infers the Negation Equivalence:

(NE) \sim ("P" is true) \leftrightarrow " \sim P" is true.

Wright correctly points out that in (NE) "is warrantably assertible" cannot be substituted for "is true" given there are neutral states of information in which neither "P" nor " \sim P" is warrantably assertible, for then the conditional from left to right across (NE) would fail. Insofar as the possibility of such neutral states is genuine, both predicates potentially differ in extension.²⁸

From this Wright concludes that truth and warranted assertibility are distinct goals of enquiry. Is this conclusion justified? To reiterate: whether truth can be shown to be a goal of enquiry will ultimately depend on whether speakers can be shown to commit themselves to the obtaining of truth conditions where these diverge from conditions of warranted assertibility; and whether this is so would require a theory of meaning to elucidate.²⁹

²⁸ Whether or not such states of informational neutrality present a genuine possibility crucially depends on the concept of negation employed. If negation was understood as follows:

\sim P \equiv Not: it is warrantably assertible that P,

then there would be no states in which neither "P" nor its negation was warrantably assertible. For as we have seen, (A1), (A2) and (A4) hold:

- (A1) "P" is warrantably assertible iff
"It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible
- (A2) "It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible iff
it is warrantably assertible that P
- (A4) "It is not warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible iff
it is not warrantably assertible that P.

If we apply the rule

$A \leftrightarrow B$

Not: A \leftrightarrow Not: B

to (A1) and (A2), then, by the transitivity of the biconditional, we will get:

(A4*) " \sim P" is warrantably assertible iff
"P" is not warrantably assertible.

Cf. Shapiro/Taschek [IPC]: 79-80. However, I shall assume that we can discern a negation operator that leaves room for states of (present) informational neutrality.

²⁹ Wright seems to suggest that in order to show that truth is a goal of enquiry, it is sufficient to point out that truth and warranted assertibility coincide in what he terms positive normative force; see [TO]: 18. But given the Disquotational Schema for truth, this comes down to pointing out that (A1) holds; and (A1) itself does nothing to establish that in asserting a given sentence, speakers commit themselves to more than that those conditions do obtain under which that sentence is warrantably assertible. Indeed, if Wright's suggestion were apt, then appearances notwithstanding, " x is an electron" and " x is a negatively charged subatomic particle" would turn out to be normatively charged predicates—be it in virtue of the fact that their applications are co-assertible or the fact that these applications are assertible just in case applications of "it is warrantably assertible that x is an electron" are. Of course, there is a

We have already seen that the position attacked by Wright gives rise to a theory of meaning that leaves no room for the idea that speakers commit themselves to the obtaining of truth conditions where these do not coincide with conditions of warranted assertibility. For if they did, truth would after all play a crucial role in an account of understanding—and this was already ruled out by radical deflationism. Indeed, (NE) has been exempted from playing any part in such an account to the same extent to which (DS) has. Accordingly, the assertibilist will have to accommodate the fact that "is true" cannot be substituted for by "is warrantably assertible" in contexts of negation—and hence that it is not the case that " \sim P" is warrantably assertible if "P" is not—and this in such a way that Wright's conclusion will not follow.

The assertibilist who endorses (DS) will indeed have to concede that " \sim ("P" is true)" and " \sim P" share their conditions of warranted assertibility, while these conditions do not coincide with the conditions under which "P" and "'P" is true" fail to be warrantably assertible.³⁰ She cannot however just confine herself to saying this much and appeal to (A1) in order to specify the content of " \sim P". In truth conditional semantics, (NE) is taken to yield a compositional account of negation in that it explains, for any sentence S, what the truth conditions of the negation of S are. In an assertibilist semantics however, (NE) cannot be put to this use.³¹ But given (IC), an account of negation is nonetheless needed in order for it to be made explicit how the warranted assertibility conditions of negated sentences depend on the warranted assertibility conditions of the sentences negated. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the assertibilist to give a semantics for negation that reflects this dependency. Dummett and Wright both

sense in which any predicate has a normative dimension in that there are conditions under which it is correctly applied. The assertibilist can agree that in *this* sense the truth predicate has a normative dimension as well. But as long as nothing is being said about the distinctive way in which the application of a given predicate—be it the truth predicate itself—can qualify as true, the finding that applications of "is true" to an arbitrary sentence "P" and applications of "is warrantably assertible" to that same sentence share their conditions of warranted assertibility—as (A1) contends—does nothing to vindicate the claim that the use of this sentence or, for that matter, the use of the truth predicate is governed by a distinct norm of truth—in particular, since it has not been shown that "is not true" is invested with normative features that would allow us to infer the existence of a single norm associated with both predicates.

³⁰ Notice that the conditional from left to right across (NE) takes us from the correctness conditions of an application of " \sim (—is true)" to the sentence "P" to the correctness conditions of an application of "—is true" to the sentence " \sim P". If the latter are determined according to whether or not "' \sim P" is true" qualifies as warrantably assertible, then all Wright has shown is that " \sim ("P" is true)" and " \sim ("P" is warrantably assertible)" do not share their conditions of warranted assertibility. Rather, (NE) ensures that the warranted assertibility conditions of " \sim ("P" is true)" coincide with those of "' \sim P" is true". A notion of correctness distinct from warranted assertibility need not be invoked in order to say this much though.

³¹ See Price [SAD]: 162-63.

seem to think that the assertibilist is bound to fail: they contend that our use of negation reveals that we take the sentences in our repertoire as being endowed with objective truth conditions.³² As I shall argue in the next section, however, both Dummett and Wright are wrong.

3.3 *An Assertibilist Account of Negation*

Let us distinguish between the refusal to assert a given sentence and the readiness to deny this sentence—or rather, between such refusals to assert a given sentence which are and those which are not accompanied by the readiness to deny it. Either attitude has its distinctive behavioural manifestations. A refusal to assert "P" that is accompanied by one's willingness to deny it may be displayed by way of shaking one's head if confronted with the question "P?" On the other hand, a refusal to assert a sentence "P" that is not accompanied by the willingness to deny it may be displayed by way of shrugging one's shoulders when confronted with the question "P?" Both responses are to be conceived of as being answerable to quests for justification. In other words, no matter which response a speaker shows, she will be held responsible for displaying her entitlement to this response. In this sense, denials have to be warranted in order to be acceptable to the same extent assertions do. There is no reason why the assertibilist should be debarred from availing herself of the notion of warranted deniability.³³

³² In an earlier paper, Wright also contends that a compositional account of negation mandates the transition from a purely assertibilist semantics to a truth conditional semantics; [CDM]: 409-18. The fact that Wright construes truth in terms of superassertibility—in effect, an assertibilist simulacrum of truth—ought not to mislead us into thinking that this transition does not, in Dummett's phrase, involve a major "conceptual leap" ([SCT]: 200-201). After all, the existential quantification involved in the notion of superassertibility is timeless.

³³ See Price [SAD]: 169; and Williamson [ADC]: 307-308. Indeed, Wright himself seems to leave room for this when he distinguishes positive from negative norms; he writes: "[...] *negative* descriptive norms would be characteristics such that participants in a practice treat a move's having such a characteristic as a reason for avoiding, condemning, discouraging or prohibiting it"; [TO]: 15. Unfortunately however, he does not make anything out of this idea.

In conversation, John Skorupski has put the following objection to me: in order to be able to conceive of what one does as denying something, one must be able to conceive of what one denies as not being the case—where its not being the case does not reduce to its not being warrantably assertible. Therefore, mastery of the practice of denial requires grasp of objective truth conditions. If this objection were cogent, then the notion of denial would prove far too inflated to be available to the assertibilist. Even so, the assertibilist's opponent will have to agree that there is a kind of behaviour characteristic of denials in order to give substance to her recursive clause for negation, *i.e.* (NE); and the assertibilist is free to refer to this behaviour in terms of what her opponent would call an expression of denial.

In his [MUV]: 47, Skorupski himself invokes the notion of denial in order to explain negation, but then goes on to treat denial just like negation, *viz.* as an operator rather than an attitude. It is for this reason that I cannot quite see how his assertibilist account of negation can get off the ground.

With these considerations in place, the assertibilist may define negation in terms of the following two clauses:

(N1) " \sim P" is warrantably assertible iff "P" is warrantably deniable

(N2) " \sim P" is warrantably deniable iff "P" is warrantably assertible.³⁴

Indeed, this account of negation is perfectly in line with the idea that all that speakers can be said to communicate is that those conditions do obtain under which a given sentence is warrantably assertible: if a speaker asserts " \sim P", she claims that those conditions do obtain under which " \sim P" is warrantably assertible; and if she denies " \sim P", she claims that those conditions do obtain under which "P" is warrantably assertible.³⁵

Once she has learnt how to use " \sim P" in these ways, the speaker will be able to introduce a truth predicate into her language which satisfies both (DS) and (NE):

(T1) "'P" is true" is warrantably assertible iff "P" is warrantably assertible

(T2) "'P" is true" is warrantably deniable iff "P" is warrantably deniable.³⁶

³⁴ Price [SAD]: 167.

³⁵ Here we must distinguish between what someone has to learn in order to become able to communicate by means of negated sentences, and what it is she communicates by these means once she is so able. The idea that mastery of negation requires mastery of deniability conditions is not in tension with the idea that what one conveys by means of negated sentences are their warranted assertibility conditions.

³⁶ Rumfitt who too invokes the notion of warranted deniability in order to salvage deflationism from Wright's argument contends that just as applications of "is true" can be replaced by applications of "is warrantably assertible", applications of "is not true" can be replaced by applications of "is warrantably deniable"; see his [TW]. This suggestion has prompted the following objection by Wright [TDR]. If we apply the rule

$$A \leftrightarrow B$$

$$\sim A \leftrightarrow \sim B$$

to (NE), then we get:

$$\text{"P" is not not true} \leftrightarrow \text{"}\sim\text{P" is not true.}$$

If we now replace "is not true" by "is warrantably deniable", then this yields:

$$\text{"P" is not warrantably deniable} \leftrightarrow \text{"}\sim\text{P" is warrantably deniable.}$$

Again, the conditional from left to right across this biconditional fails in neutral states of information.

This objection is seen to be misplaced though once we realise that, contrary to what Rumfitt suggests, it is not part of the assertibilist account of negation that "is not true" can be replaced by "is warrantably deniable" in contexts of negation—just as it is not part of this account that "is true" can be replaced by "is warrantably assertible" in such contexts. As a deflationist, the assertibilist claims that applications of the truth-predicate play no role in semantic theory. As an assertibilist, she claims that these applications can nonetheless receive their proper interpretation in terms of conditions of warranted assertibility and deniability alone. More on the difference between object language and semantic theory in section (3.7) below.

(T1) and (T2) in conjunction with (N1) and (N2) yield:

(T3) "'~P" is true" is warrantably assertible iff
"~("P" is true)" is warrantably assertible

(T4) "'~P" is true" is warrantably deniable iff
"~("P" is true)" is warrantably deniable.

We may say that (T3) and (T4) together constitute the assertibilist's version of the Negation Equivalence. From the assertibilist's standpoint, Wright's argument has been blocked: it has proved to rest on the unargued-for assumption that (DS) and (NE) can be conceived of as statements of semantic theory, rather than the object language.³⁷

It is as much part of our minimalist conception of objective truth that there are sentences "P" and "~P" such that (O3) and (O4) hold:

(O3) "~P" may (actually) be true, even if "P" is at present warrantably assertible
(and "P" *a fortiori* fails to be at present warrantably deniable)

(O4) "~P" may (actually) fail to be true, even if "P" is at present warrantably deniable
(and "P" *a fortiori* fails to be at present warrantably assertible).

Still, even for a truth conditional semanticist, (N1) and (N2) may be fairly unobjectionable.³⁸ Indeed, insofar as theories of meaning have to give a systematic account of the warranted assertibility conditions of negated sentences, the truth conditional semanticist will have to invoke something akin to (N1) and (N2) alongside (NE). If she nonetheless objects to the assertibilist's treatment of negation, the truth conditional semanticist will accordingly have to find some fault with the idea that (N1) and (N2) capture all semantic features of negation. But the additional features she has in mind will not then consist in the warranted assertibility conditions of negated sentences.

(N1) and (N2) explain the use of sentences whose principle operator is negation. Negated sentences occur as constituents of more complex sentences however, *e.g.* as antecedents of conditionals; and just as asserting a conditional does not involve asserting its antecedent, asserting a conditional whose antecedent is governed by negation does not involve the denial of the sentence negated in the antecedent.³⁹ Whether the assertibilist has captured all the semantic features of negation relevant to

³⁷ See section (3.7) below.

³⁸ The assertibilist's account of negation, as given by (N1) and (N2), is of course at odds with intuitionism as Berger rightly points out; [QAL]: 275; cf. as well, Price [SAD]: 167-68.

³⁹ Cf. Frege [IL]: 185; Brandom [PPT]: 83-85.

assertoric practice will therefore depend on whether she can, on the basis of (N1) and (N2) alone, explain the role negated sentences play when embedded in more complex sentences. To explore whether the assertibilist can give an account of *all* complex sentence-forming devices is no doubt beyond the scope of this essay.⁴⁰ It will be instructive, though, to see how the assertibilist might handle conditionals, for notoriously here she is said to fail.⁴¹

3.4 An Assertibilist Account of Conditionals

Dummett argued that in our attempt to give an account of how the assertoric content of complex sentences is being determined, we are forced to conclude that there are sentences that otherwise share their assertoric content but nonetheless differ in their role as constituents of other sentences; it was his further contention that we are thereby bound to assign truth conditions to these sentences. According to Dummett, there will be sentences **A** and **B** such that the following four conditionals differ in assertoric content:

(c1) $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$

(c2) $\mathbf{W(A)} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$

(c3) $\mathbf{B} \rightarrow \mathbf{A}$

(c4) $\mathbf{B} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$.

Granted that this is so, the assertibilist will not only have to explain how the warranted assertibility conditions of conditionals depend on the warranted assertibility conditions of their constituents, but must furthermore show how, with this account being in place, the warranted assertibility conditions of (c1) and (c2), and of (c3) and (c4), might diverge.

If the warranted assertibility of the conditional $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ was assessed according to the warranted assertibility of the material conditional $\mathbf{A} \supset \mathbf{B}$, then it would seem, at first sight, that the assertibilist could simply appeal to Kleene's table for the conditional with the values *true*, *false* and *indeterminate* replaced by the values *yes* (warrantedly

⁴⁰ In particular, I will not address the question of how the assertibilist might account for propositional attitude locutions. For an assertibilist treatment of tense, see Wright [CDM]: 404-409.

⁴¹ Cf. Dummett [SCT]: 195-96.

assertible), *no* (warrantedly deniable) and *undecided* (neither warrantedly assertible nor warrantedly deniable), respectively: ⁴²

B	A	→	B
A	<i>y</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>y</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>u</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>
<i>n</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>y</i>

However, even if the warranted assertibility conditions of indicative conditionals matched those of the material conditional, Kleene's table would not yet do, for clearly if **A** and **B** are identical, $\mathbf{A} \supset \mathbf{B}$ should not receive the value *undecided* if **A** and **B** do.

But there is good reason to believe that the warranted assertibility conditions of the indicative conditional $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ do not match those of the material conditional $\mathbf{A} \supset \mathbf{B}$ anyway, for as has been noted in the literature, the warranted deniability of **A** alone will not, in general, suffice for the warranted assertibility of $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$: on the contrary, asserting $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ solely on the grounds that **A** must be denied would violate norms governing assertoric practice.

To this it might be objected that we should not conflate conversational appropriateness with warranted assertibility which is, after all, an epistemological notion. However, the reasons for this way of distinguishing the indicative conditional from the material conditional are not merely a matter of conversational appropriateness, but of epistemic rationality: in the context of rational enquiry, to assert a conditional typically is not only to present oneself as being in possession of evidence for asserting it, but as offering this evidence for borrowing when the conditional is summoned for use as a premiss in inferences, of which *modus ponens* and *modus tollens* are the most prominent examples.⁴³ Asserting a conditional simply on the ground that its antecedent ought to be denied is to undermine this epistemic division of labour and thus more than just a conversational misdeed. In what follows, I shall assume that this view of the matter is correct and offer some further considerations to support it.

While Jackson has maintained that $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ nonetheless shares its truth conditions with $\mathbf{A} \supset \mathbf{B}$, Edgington has argued that $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ has no truth conditions at all.⁴⁴ For present purposes though, it does not matter who is right in this respect. All that matters is whether any systematic account of the assertibility and deniability conditions of $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ must regard **A** and **B** as being endowed with objective truth conditions; and both

⁴² Cf. Kleene [IM]: § 64.

⁴³ Cf. Jackson [PPA]: 29-31.

⁴⁴ Jackson [AIC]; Edgington [DCH] and [OC].

Jackson and Edgington would seem to take this for granted. Jackson and Edgington both appeal to conditional probabilities: according to them, $A \rightarrow B$ is assertible only if $P(B/A)$ is high. Conditional probabilities are a tricky business for the assertibilist, because it is not clear whether a speaker can be said to calculate these probabilities without grasp of the concept of objective truth. Nor is it clear, however, whether a speaker's probability assignments can already be discerned from his assertoric use of sentences alone.⁴⁵ In any case, the assertibilist will have to show that an account of the assertibility and deniability conditions of $A \rightarrow B$ is possible without ascribing objective truth conditions to either A or B .

It is agreed on all sides that $A \rightarrow B$ will have to be denied, if A receives the value *yes* and B receives the value *no*. It should likewise be regarded as uncontroversial that $A \rightarrow B$ will be undecided, if either A receives the value *yes* and B receives the value *undecided*, or A receives the value *undecided* and B receives the value *no*: for to deny $A \rightarrow B$, rather than merely to refuse asserting it, is, on almost all views, to assert $A \& \sim B$; and how can one be in a position to assert this conjunction if either A or B is undecided? Thus, corresponding to (1) to (3), we have (1') to (3') respectively:

- (1) $y(A), n(B)$
- (2) $y(A), u(B)$
- (3) $u(A), n(B)$
- (1') $y(A), n(B); \text{ ergo } n(A \rightarrow B)$
- (2') $y(A), u(B); \text{ ergo } u(A \rightarrow B)$
- (3') $u(A), n(B); \text{ ergo } u(A \rightarrow B)$.⁴⁶

While Jackson rejects the idea that the deniability of the antecedent is sufficient for the assertibility of the conditional, he still holds that in some cases the assertibility of B is

⁴⁵ Although Edgington has argued that conditionals do not have truth conditions, she nonetheless considers their antecedents as having truth conditions; [DCH]: 200-201. Her analysis of conditionals in terms of conditional probabilities cannot get off the ground, however, unless we consider the use that is made of sentences in the context of assumptions (suppositions); [DCH]: 177-78, 200. I shall return to this issue towards the end of section (3.5). We would accordingly have to abandon some of the premisses on which the Manifestation Argument rests. Indeed, it will be essential to the account suggested in chapter four and developed in chapter five that speakers' knowledge of truth conditions is *inter alia* manifested in their practice of making assumptions. Assertibilism runs into difficulties when it comes to explaining this practice.

⁴⁶ Here "ergo" indicates a warrant-preserving inference.

sufficient for the assertibility of $A \rightarrow B$. Such cases are highlighted by the use of ordinary language constructions like "Even if —, still ...".⁴⁷ Here the assertibility of the conditional solely rests on the assertibility of the consequent; and it is suggested that whichever value the antecedent receives has no bearing at all on the assertibility of the consequent. Of course, not all cases in which $A \rightarrow B$ is assertible will be of this kind.

In what follows, I shall accordingly distinguish between cases in which $A \rightarrow B$ owes its assertibility exclusively to the assertibility of B , and cases in which it does not. The possible assignments of values to A and B which we still have to consider, are the following:

(4) $u(A), y(B)$

(5) $n(A), y(B)$

(6) $y(A), y(B)$

(7) $u(A), u(B)$

(8) $n(A), n(B)$

(9) $n(A), u(B)$.

The only cases in which the assertibility of $A \rightarrow B$ may solely rest on the assertibility of B are (4), (5) and (6). Consider assignments (4) and (5) first. Insofar as "Even if —, still ..." has application, the warrants available for B will be such that they warrant the following claim:

(R1) even if A were to become warrantably assertible,
 B would remain warrantably assertible.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Jackson [AIC]: 578.

⁴⁸ There are conditionals whose assertibility solely depends on the assertibility of their consequents although the relevant instances of (R1) are not assertible. For example, the conditional "Even if Richard III was innocent, we shall never know that he was" may be assertible because it is warrantably assertible that all the relevant historical evidence has been destroyed; yet, it will not be warrantably assertible on these grounds that if unexpected evidence for King Richard's innocence became available, there would still be reason to believe that we shall never know that he was innocent. (I owe this nice example to Timothy Williamson.)

But recall that we have explicitly excluded from our present discussion all Moorean sentences as well as all compounds and equivalents thereof that essentially involve a Moorean sentence as one of their constituents; see section (3.1). Otherwise, the anti-realist programme of explaining the truth conditions of Moorean sentences in terms of the truth conditions of their constituents, and of explaining the latter in terms of their systematic contribution to the assertibility conditions of compounds in which they occur,

As Jackson has pointed out, asserting $A \rightarrow B$ under these circumstances is not to put it forward for use in a *modus tollens* step—quite the contrary.⁴⁹ For if the assertibility of A is taken to have no bearing on the assertibility of B , then if B were to become deniable, the conclusion that A was deniable too would so far be unjustified. Insofar as the warranted assertion of conditionals is typically understood as issuing the license to use these conditionals in inferences, it is indeed mandated to indicate if one's assertion is not to be understood in this way, *e.g.* by using "Even if —, still ...".

Insofar as (6) obtains and $A \rightarrow B$ owes its assertibility exclusively to the assertibility of B , the warrants for B should be such as to warrant (R2):

- (R2) even if A were to become other than warrantably assertible,
 B would remain warrantably assertible.

Asserting $A \rightarrow B$ under these circumstances cannot be regarded as putting it forward for use in a *modus ponens* step: the verdict that B is assertible will not be arrived at by first determining that A is assertible and then deriving B from both A and $A \rightarrow B$, as the assertibility of $A \rightarrow B$ is established on the basis of one's recognition of the assertibility of B in the first place. Again, this should be highlighted (*e.g.* by the use of "If —, anyway ..." or by furthermore asserting $\sim A \rightarrow B$).

From this we may conclude that insofar as the warrants for B already suffice for the warranted assertibility of $A \rightarrow B$, these warrants are of such a kind that they are taken to be available no matter whether it is (4) or (5) or (6) that obtains.

With (R1) and (R2) being in place, we get:

$$(4') \quad u(A), y(B), y(R1); \text{ ergo } y(A \rightarrow B)$$

$$(5') \quad n(A), y(B), y(R1); \text{ ergo } y(A \rightarrow B)$$

$$(6') \quad y(A), y(B), y(R2); \text{ ergo } y(A \rightarrow B).$$

The assertibilist has still to explain what it is for (R1) or (R2) to be warranted however. (Notice that (R1) and (R2) need not be warrantably assertible come what may.) It is important to note though, that even theorists like Jackson and Edgington owe us an account of when $P(B/A)$ is high: if conditional probabilities are to tell us anything about

could not get off the ground. The conditional in question will, however, be true if the Moorean sentence "Richard III was innocent and we shall never know that he was" is true; hence we can and should ignore it.

⁴⁹ Jackson [AIC]: 578.

the warranted assertibility conditions of $A \rightarrow B$, then the value for $P(B/A)$ cannot solely be a matter of the subjective probability assignments of individual speakers. Instead, there must be reasons why a subject *ought* to ascribe this rather than that conditional probability to B given A .⁵⁰

Before addressing the question of how (R1) and (R2) may be warranted, let us consider those cases in which the assertibility of $A \rightarrow B$ is not due to the assertibility of B (alone). Consider (7) first, *i.e.* the case where both A and B are undecided. If both A and B are undecided, the warrants for $A \rightarrow B$ will be available independently from the warrantedness of A and ought not to be lost if A were to become warrantably assertible—provided, of course, there would then be no independent reasons for denying the warranted assertibility of B . Otherwise either (1') or (2') would apply and $A \rightarrow B$ would cease to be warrantably assertible. At the same time, if both A and B are undecided, the warrants for $A \rightarrow B$ will be available independently from the deniability of B and ought to be regarded as not being lost if B were to become warrantably deniable—provided, that is, A would not then fail to be deniable on independent grounds. Otherwise either (1') or (3') would apply and $A \rightarrow B$ would cease to be warrantably assertible anyway. Thus, if both A and B are undecided, $A \rightarrow B$ will nonetheless be assertible if there are warrants for both (R3) and (R4):

(R3) if A were to become warrantably assertible,
then B would become warrantably assertible, too

(R4) if B were to become warrantably deniable,
then A would become warrantably deniable, too.

However, Timothy Williamson has suggested to me the following example that seems to show that both A and B may be undecided and (R3) and (R4) may be assertible while $A \rightarrow B$ nonetheless fails to be assertible: consider two historical documents whose pedigree is presently in doubt; the first document states that two otherwise unconnected historical claims A and B are true; the second document states that both A and B are false. Suppose that we are about to subject both documents to a scientific test that will settle whether they are forgeries. Williamson suggests that our present state of information warrants both that if A would become assertible so would B and that if B would become deniable so would A . Still, it would seem that the conditional $A \rightarrow B$ is not assertible, as *ex hypothesi* both A and B relate to independent states of affairs.

⁵⁰ Contrary to what is suggested by Lewis [PCP]: 133, subjective probabilities are too dependent on the subject; cf. Williamson [V]: 221. I shall come back to this issue in section (3.5).

On the face of it, this case seems to present an obvious counter-example to what has been said above. It is not clear, though, whether in cases like the one described, $A \rightarrow B$ indeed fails to be assertible—at least, this is unclear as long as anti-realism has the chance of being correct. In this respect, it is important to recall that, for the purposes of this chapter, we should not rest our case against assertibilism on a rejection of anti-realism: since we are presently concerned with the question of whether the anti-realist can substantiate her claim that knowledge of objective truth conditions already surfaces in the assertoric use of conditionals—in the sense that the former is indispensable for a systematic explanation of the latter—it will suffice for rejecting this claim if we can establish a parity between assertibilism and anti-realism. For strategic purposes, we should therefore set aside any genuinely realist intuitions an assertibilist account of the conditional might violate.

Thus suppose that we know that one of the documents is genuine but do not know which. For example, we may be in possession of a third document whose reliability is not in doubt and which reports no more than that the first two documents have been subjected to the very same scientific test before and that this procedure decided between them. Then we have a reason both to assert $\sim(A \ \& \ B) \rightarrow \sim A \ \& \ \sim B$ and to assert $\sim(\sim A \ \& \ \sim B) \rightarrow A \ \& \ B$, hence a reason to assert $(A \ \& \ B) \vee (\sim A \ \& \ \sim B)$. But this reason should be enough to warrant the assertion of $A \rightarrow B$, contrary to what has been assumed. Thus suppose instead that we have no reason to believe that one of the documents is genuine. Now, unless we have reason to believe that the only warrant for or against A and B that we may come across will consist in a confirmation of the genuineness of one of the documents, we seem to lack any reason to assert (R3) or (R4): A may become warranted independently from B ; and $\sim B$ may become warranted independently from $\sim A$. After all, A and B are supposed to lack any internal connections other than those established by the two documents; and *ex hypothesi* we have no reason to believe that the scientific test to which these documents are about to be subjected will yield any positive result. *Ex hypothesi* though, we have a reason for asserting (R3) and (R4). But if we have a reason to believe that the only way in which we might come in a position to know B is by coming to know A , and that the only way in which we might come in a position to know $\sim A$ is by coming to know $\sim B$, then, at least from an anti-realist perspective, we should not fall short of having a reason, however defeasible, to assert $A \rightarrow B$ or, for that matter, to consider $P(B/A)$ as high. Accordingly, it is not clear whether, in the presence of anti-realism, Williamson's alleged counter-example does not destabilise.

For the sake of argument, we may therefore conclude that if **A** and **B** are undecided and (R3) and (R4) are assertible, so is $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$. Thus, we get:

(7') $u(\mathbf{A}), u(\mathbf{B}), y(\mathbf{R3}), y(\mathbf{R4}); \text{ ergo } y(\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B})$.

The warrants for $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ are available *although* both **A** and **B** are undecided, not *because* **A** and **B** are undecided: otherwise $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ cannot be understood as being offered as a premiss for future *modus ponens* or *modus tollens* steps; and it is the *raison d'être* of conditionals in our language that we may use them in inferences of these kinds.⁵¹ Accordingly, the warrants for $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ should be available no matter which case out of (6), (7) or (8) it is that obtains. On the other hand, it is already clear from (1'), (2') and (3') that these warrants will not be available in cases (1), (2) and (3). But if these warrants are available although **A** and **B** are undecided, then as long (1) to (3) do not obtain, they should also be available no matter which case out of (4) to (9) it is that obtains: in order for $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ to be available as a premiss for inferences, it must be taken to be warranted independently both from the warrants that may become available for **A** and those which may become available for $\sim\mathbf{B}$; and since neither in (4) nor in (5) nor in (9) such warrants for $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ will already be refuted, they should survive changes in informational state that take us from (6), (7) or (8) to (4), (5) or (9).

Next consider (8), *i.e.* the case where both **A** and **B** are deniable. If Jackson's diagnosis is right that a conditional will not yet be assertible if its antecedent is deniable, then in case (8), the assertibility of $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ will not just rest on the deniability of **A**. Instead, we may suggest that the assertibility of $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ is due to the fact that *both* **A** and **B** are deniable. But this is not satisfactory either. For why should we not then say that in case (5), the assertibility of $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ is due to the fact that **A** is deniable *and* **B** is assertible? What we should rather claim is that $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ is assertible insofar as it is assertible that the assignments of values to **A** and **B** are systematically linked, and this again in such a way that (1) to (3) are ruled out. Thus, in case (8), we should again add that there have to be warrants for (R3) and (R4). Therefore:

(8') $n(\mathbf{A}), n(\mathbf{B}), y(\mathbf{R3}), y(\mathbf{R4}); \text{ ergo } y(\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B})$.⁵²

⁵¹ Jackson stresses the utility of *modus ponens*, but underrates the utility of *modus tollens*; [AIC]: 577-78, 578n. Once those cases in which the assertibility of the conditional is solely due to the assertibility of the consequent ("Even if P, still Q") are distinguished from those in which it is not, the failure of *modus tollens* in cases of the first kind (*vide* Jackson's example) ought not to lead us to underrate its utility in cases of the second kind.

⁵² Strictly speaking, $y(\mathbf{R4})$ already follows from $n(\mathbf{A})$ and $n(\mathbf{B})$. We should therefore rephrase (R4) throughout as follows:

(R4*) if **B** were to become *or remain* warrantably deniable,
then **A** would become *or remain* warrantably deniable, too.

Again, (8') seems to be threatened by a variation of Williamson's example: this time, the second historical document is supposed to seem genuine. But again, either there will be a reason both to assert $\sim(\mathbf{A} \ \& \ \mathbf{B}) \rightarrow \sim\mathbf{A} \ \& \ \sim\mathbf{B}$ and to assert $\sim(\sim\mathbf{A} \ \& \ \sim\mathbf{B}) \rightarrow \mathbf{A} \ \& \ \mathbf{B}$; or the assumption that (R3) is warranted will be hostage to the idea that there is a reason to believe that the only way in which \mathbf{A} may become warranted is by \mathbf{B} becoming warranted too, *viz.* by the first document proving to be genuine after all. If there are reasons of either kind however, then, at least for the anti-realist, there is a reason to assert $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$. For the sake of argument, (8') may therefore be considered as in good standing.

The warrants for $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ are again taken to be available no matter which case out of (4) to (9) it is that obtains. By the same token, it is suggested that $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ may now be used in a *modus tollens* step because the warrants for $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ are considered to be such as to have been available before \mathbf{B} became warrantably deniable.

Next consider (9), *i.e.* where \mathbf{A} is deniable and \mathbf{B} is undecided. Just as in case (8), the assertibility of $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ will not solely be due to the deniability of \mathbf{A} , nor will it be due to the fact that \mathbf{A} is deniable *and* \mathbf{B} is undecided: rather it will be due to the systematic link between assignments of values to \mathbf{A} and \mathbf{B} which rule out (1) to (3). This means that there are warrants to believe that even if \mathbf{A} were to become warrantably assertible, $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ would remain to be so—provided, that is, \mathbf{B} would not then fail to be warrantably assertible. Otherwise either (1') or (2') would apply; and $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ would cease to be warrantably assertible anyway. By the same token, there will be warrants to believe that even if \mathbf{B} were to become deniable, $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ would remain assertible—provided, that is, \mathbf{A} would then be deniable too. Otherwise, either (1') or (3') would apply; and $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ would cease to be assertible. Thus:

(9') $n(\mathbf{A}), u(\mathbf{B}), y(\mathbf{R3}), y(\mathbf{R4}); \text{ ergo } y(\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}).$

Again, $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ is taken to be assertible on the basis of warrants which are considered to be available no matter which case out of (4) to (9) it is that obtains. What goes for (7) to (9) goes for (4) to (6):

(4'') $u(\mathbf{A}), y(\mathbf{B}), y(\mathbf{R3}), y(\mathbf{R4}); \text{ ergo } y(\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B})$

(5'') $n(\mathbf{A}), y(\mathbf{B}), y(\mathbf{R3}), y(\mathbf{R4}); \text{ ergo } y(\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B})$

(6'') $y(\mathbf{A}), y(\mathbf{B}), y(\mathbf{R3}), y(\mathbf{R4}); \text{ ergo } y(\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}).$ ⁵³

⁵³ Strictly speaking, $y(\mathbf{R3})$ already follows from $y(\mathbf{A})$ and $y(\mathbf{B})$. Again, we should replace (R3) by (R3*) throughout so as to avoid trivialisation:

In contrast to (6'), the applicability of (6'') will be such as to allow for the use of $A \rightarrow B$ in a *modus ponens* step.

As before, the question arises of what it is for (R3) and (R4) to be warranted. Yet here we have at least a rough idea of what an answer might look like. Sometimes conditionals inherit their warrants inferentially, where these warrants are available no matter which values antecedent and consequent take as long as they do not take the values assigned in (1), (2) or (3).⁵⁴

Once we have explained what such inferential warrants may consist in, we are in a position to account for the warrantedness of (R1) and (R2) in terms of the *absence* of such inferential warrants for any of the following conditionals:

$$\begin{array}{ll} A \rightarrow \sim B & B \rightarrow A \\ W(A) \rightarrow \sim B & W(B) \rightarrow A \\ A \rightarrow \sim W(B) & B \rightarrow W(A) \\ W(A) \rightarrow \sim W(B) & W(B) \rightarrow W(A).^{55} \end{array}$$

Before I shall discuss what such inferential warrants may be, let us briefly pause so as to reflect on how the assertibilist may prove able to account for the difference in assertibility and deniability conditions between instances of (c1) and (c2), and between instances of (c3) and (c4), respectively:

$$(c1) \quad A \rightarrow B$$

$$(c2) \quad W(A) \rightarrow B$$

$$(c3) \quad B \rightarrow A$$

$$(c4) \quad B \rightarrow W(A).$$

(R3*) if A were to become *or remain* warrantably assertible, then B would become *or remain* warrantably assertible, too.

⁵⁴ Price points to the related difficulty of accounting for the deniability conditions of conjunctions and the assertibility conditions of disjunctions, when he writes: "there may be inferential grounds for asserting 'S or T' (or denying 'S and T'), which are not grounds for asserting either 'S' or 'T' (or denying either 'S' or 'T')"; [SAD]: 168-69.

⁵⁵ Recall that the absence of reasons for a claim constitutes a reason for the claim that there are no such reasons. For, (A4) holds:

(A4) "It is *not* warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible iff it is *not* warrantably assertible that P.

The differences will most clearly emerge if we restrict attention to those cases in which **A** receives the value *undecided* and **W(A)** accordingly receives the value *no*. Instances of (c3) and (c4) will differ if **B** receives the value *yes*: $\mathbf{B} \rightarrow \mathbf{A}$ will then be undecided while $\mathbf{B} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ will be deniable. If both **B** and **A** are undecided, $\mathbf{B} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ will be undecided too, whereas $\mathbf{B} \rightarrow \mathbf{A}$ may be assertible. In the same vein: if **B** is deniable and **A** is undecided, instances of (c1) will be undecided, whereas instances of (c2) may not be. Whether the assertibility conditions of instances of (c1) and (c2) and instances of (c3) and (c4) differ in all other cases, will accordingly depend on whether there are inferential warrants for $\mathbf{W(A)} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ whenever there are inferential warrants for $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$, and whether there are such warrants for $\mathbf{B} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ whenever there are such warrants for $\mathbf{B} \rightarrow \mathbf{A}$. In the remainder of this section and towards the end of the next I shall argue that this will not in general be the case.

Since the following rules of inference are warrant-preserving, the assertibilist will have to treat them as deductively valid:

$$\frac{\mathbf{A}}{\mathbf{W(A)}}$$

$$\frac{\mathbf{W(A)}}{\mathbf{A}}$$

It would now seem that the assertibilist is bound to treat both (c5) and (c6) as valid schemata:

$$(c5) \quad \mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$$

$$(c6) \quad \mathbf{W(A)} \rightarrow \mathbf{A}$$

whence by the transitivity of the conditional any inferential warrant for (c1) could automatically be transformed into a warrant for (c2) and any inferential warrant for (c3) could automatically be transformed into one for (c4).

We have already seen though that (c5) will be undecided if **A** is undecided. This means that according to assertibilism, the so-called *Deduction Theorem* will fail:

$$(DT) \quad \text{If } [\Gamma, \mathbf{A}; \text{ergo } \mathbf{B}] \text{ then } [\Gamma; \text{ergo } \mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}].$$

(DT) states that a conditional follows from other premisses if its consequent follows from those other premisses in conjunction with its antecedent. The standard

demonstration of (DT) relies on a transformation that prefixes every line in the original derivation with " $A \rightarrow$ ". From an assertibilist standpoint this transformation ought to do justice to the fact that the premisses are taken to be available, hence ought to yield $A \rightarrow W(A)$ when applied to premiss A . If $W(A)$ is substituted for B however, then (DT) can be proved only if $A \rightarrow W(A)$ is already taken to be established—which, from the assertibilist's standpoint, it is not.⁵⁶ There is accordingly no route from the validity of the first rule to the general assertibility of instances of (c5).

But won't instances of (c5) nonetheless have to count as assertible whenever their antecedent is other than undecided? The answer to this question will lead to an important addition to the account canvassed so far that mainly dealt in sufficient conditions for the assertibility of conditionals. This addition will at the same time furnish us with a reason why it is not the case that instances of (c6) are automatically assertible.

As already indicated, the *raison d'être* of conditionals in our language relates to their use in certain inferences effected by means of *modus ponens* and *modus tollens*. It is this feature of conditionals—their utility in inferences of these kinds—that gives rise to two requirements which will ultimately render intelligible why neither (c6) nor, if A is other than undecided, (c5) is automatically assertible. Of course they may, on occasions, still be assertible; but their assertibility will then be a matter of the availability of inferential warrants for them.⁵⁷

We sometimes establish the assertibility of an atomic sentence or its negation indirectly, that is we sometimes employ inferences in order to do so. As far as conditionals are concerned, we may for example establish B by means of *modus ponens*:

$$\frac{A \rightarrow B \quad A}{B}$$

⁵⁶ On the other hand, the assertibilist has no problem at all with the following principle of conditionalisation:

(DT*) If $[\Gamma, A; \text{ergo } B]$ then $[\Gamma; \text{ergo } W(A) \rightarrow W(B)]$.

(DT*) renders the assertibilist's reading of "ergo" explicit: it indicates a warrant-preserving inference. Thanks to Patrick Greenough for helpful discussions on this point.

⁵⁷ Note, though, that the material conditional $W(A) \supset A$ will always be assertible, even if A is taken to have objective truth conditions: if A is warrantably assertible, then there are warrants for asserting its consequent which, *ex hypothesi*, is sufficient to warrant its assertion; if A is not warrantably assertible, then there are warrants for denying its antecedent which, *ex hypothesi*, is sufficient to warrant its assertion; but either A is warrantably assertible or it is not; hence $W(A) \supset A$ will always be warrantably assertible. This is another indication that $W(A) \supset A$ and $W(A) \rightarrow A$ have different assertibility conditions.

Or we may establish $\sim A$ by means of *modus tollens*:

$$\frac{A \rightarrow B \quad \sim B}{\sim A}$$

At least if **A** and **B** are empirical claims, the viability of indirect vindications of this kind imposes two constraints: first, such vindications will work only if both premisses can be warranted independently from each other; secondly, in order for vindications of this kind to be of any use, it must furthermore be possible that the premisses can be warranted independently from each other in the specific sense that there may be states of information which warrant one but not the other and do not warrant the conclusion either. In other words, insofar as it is an essential feature of our use of conditionals $A \rightarrow B$ that they may be employed in *modus ponens* or *modus tollens* steps, then, if it is both logically possible that $\sim A$ may be vindicated and logically possible that **B** may be vindicated, it should also be logically possible that $A \rightarrow B$ is warranted in states of information that do as yet neither prejudice the outcome that an application of *modus ponens* would establish, nor prejudice the outcome that an application of *modus tollens* would establish.⁵⁸ If every possible state of information fails to satisfy one of these requirements, the conditional is not, typically, assertible: in such a case, one should instead assert the outcome of what an application of either rule of inference would yield—or if this is undecided then say so.⁵⁹ These considerations may, however, be

⁵⁸ Since we are here concerned with empirical discourse, the condition that it is logically possible that $\sim A$ may be vindicated and logically possible that **B** may be vindicated, will virtually always be met. By contrast, if either both vindications of **A** and vindications of **B** are logically impossible or both vindications of $\sim A$ and vindications of $\sim B$ are logically impossible, then $A \rightarrow B$ will both be assertible and of use in *a priori* reasoning, e.g. in a *reductio ad absurdum*. For example, both $(C \ \& \ \sim C) \rightarrow (C \ \& \ \sim C)$ and $\sim(C \ \& \ \sim C) \rightarrow \sim(C \ \& \ \sim C)$ are assertible. Such conditionals will be warranted inferentially on purely logical grounds; for a discussion of such inferential warrants see section (3.5). The assertibilist will accordingly have to deny that there are any such logical grounds for (c5) or (c6); all she undertakes here is to show that no such grounds can be squeezed out of the account of conditionals given thus far. (Recall that, throughout this chapter, Moorean sentences have to be ignored.)

However, since a conditional with a logically necessary antecedent is equivalent to its consequent and since a conditional with a logically impossible consequent is equivalent to the negation of its antecedent, the restriction to empirical discourse will not yet do. Therefore, we should furthermore require that, if it is logically possible that $\sim A$ may be vindicated but logically impossible that **B** may be vindicated, then unless it is also logically impossible that **A** may be vindicated, $A \rightarrow B$ will not be assertible: otherwise the outcome of a *modus tollens* step with an empirical conclusion will always be prejudged. Similarly, if it is logically impossible that $\sim A$ may be vindicated but logically possible that **B** may be vindicated, then unless it is also logically impossible that $\sim B$ may be vindicated, $A \rightarrow B$ will not be assertible: otherwise the outcome of a *modus ponens* step with an empirical conclusion will always be prejudged.

⁵⁹ Again, someone might object that such considerations merely bear on the conversational appropriateness of an assertion rather than its warrantedness. It should be clear by now that there is a plausible rejoinder to this objection: rational enquiry is a social enterprise; and insofar as 'conversations' between rational enquirers serve the purpose of passing on warranted claims that may subsequently be used in inference so as to make epistemic gain, it would be a violation of epistemic norms to assert a

overridden by additional inferential warrants of sufficient strength.⁶⁰ But recall that all the assertibilist has to forestall is the conclusion that just because the inferences from **A** to **W(A)** and from **W(A)** to **A** are, on her view, deductively valid, both (c6) and, if **A** is other than undecided, (c5) are automatically assertible.

As we are here concerned with empirical discourse, let us assume that it is possible for the denial of the antecedent to become warranted and also possible for the assertion of the consequent to become warranted. We now see why both instances of (c5) and instances of (c6) are not automatically assertible. We have already noted that $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ is not assertible if **A** is undecided. As regards (c5), there are thus only two cases left to consider: **A** is assertible or **A** is deniable. If **A** is assertible, then according to the first requirement, $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ will only be assertible if there are possible states of information in which **A** is not assertible while $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ nonetheless is. For, any state of information that warrants **A** and $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ will be one in which the premisses of an application of *modus ponens* will both be warranted—to the effect that the outcome of this application is. Since $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ is not assertible if **A** is undecided, it must accordingly be possible that $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ is assertible if **A** is deniable. But then, any state of information that warrants $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ and $\sim\mathbf{A}$ will do so only to the extent that it likewise warrants the outcome of a potential *modus tollens* step. Since these cases exhaust all possibilities both requirements can never be met together. Therefore, $\mathbf{A} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ is not automatically assertible—one should rather assert either $\sim\mathbf{W(A)}$ or **A** or $\sim\mathbf{A}$.

Next consider (c6), *i.e.* $\mathbf{W(A)} \rightarrow \mathbf{A}$. There are three possibilities: both **A** and **W(A)** are assertible, both **A** and **W(A)** are deniable, or **A** is undecided and **W(A)** is again deniable. If a state of information warrants **W(A)** then the outcome that an application of *modus ponens* would establish, already is established. If a state of information warrants $\sim\mathbf{W(A)}$ then the outcome that an application of *modus tollens* would establish, already is established. Since $\sim\mathbf{W(A)}$ is warranted if **A** is deniable or undecided, all possible states of information will fail to satisfy the second requirement. Hence, typically, $\mathbf{W(A)} \rightarrow \mathbf{A}$ will not be assertible either: one should rather assert either $\sim\mathbf{W(A)}$ or **A** or $\sim\mathbf{A}$.

Again, it might be objected that these constraints are motivated by considerations bearing on the conversational appropriateness of an assertion rather than its epistemic status. But as I have urged, the role of conditionals in the acquisition of inferential knowledge already suggests that the distinction between norms of warranted

conditional when no such gain can be made. However, see the qualifications made in the previous footnote.

⁶⁰ For example, both $\mathbf{W(A)} \rightarrow \mathbf{WW(A)}$ and $\mathbf{WW(A)} \rightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ will be assertible nonetheless because $\mathbf{W(A)} \leftrightarrow \mathbf{WW(A)}$ is a meaning postulate for $\mathbf{W(\rightarrow)}$. It was the lesson to be learnt from Wright's argument that $\mathbf{A} \leftrightarrow \mathbf{W(A)}$ is not analytic, not even according to the assertibilist.

assertion and those norms of conversational appropriateness that would be relevant here becomes blurred, once it is acknowledged that rational enquiry essentially involves an epistemic division of labour: making an assertion is to present oneself as being in possession of warrants for doing so, hence to present oneself as someone on whose testimony others can rely; but the way in which others rely on such testimonies is *inter alia* by using the asserted sentence as a premiss in inferences intended to increase their knowledge. Thus if the assertion is obviously based on considerations that would render such inferences either pointless or unjustified, without it being indicated, however, what in particular these considerations are, it will not only be a case of withholding valuable information, it will sometimes positively mislead the audience into thinking that there are warrants strong enough to render this assertion, rather than any more informative one, nonetheless worthwhile. This is clearly so in the case of (c5): asserting $A \rightarrow W(A)$ instead of either A or $\sim W(A)$ suggests that there are warrants for (R4), *viz.* a license to believe that A would be deniable rather than undecided if $W(A)$ became (or remained) deniable. Admittedly, it is not so clear whether asserting (instances of) (c6) is prone to be misleading in analogous ways, as it would be if it suggested that there is an *a priori* warrant for a set of meaning postulates from which (c6) can be derived. It seems that, at most, someone who asserted $W(A) \rightarrow A$, instead of either A or $\sim W(A)$, would withhold valuable information and thus fail to cooperate.

Even so it is far from clear whether this concession already proves the assertibilist's account of the unassertibility of $W(A) \rightarrow A$ *empirically inadequate*. As a matter of fact, speakers typically comply with conversational norms such as informativeness; thus in giving an account of assertibility conditions on the basis of actual linguistic usage we may take speakers to conceive of such norms either as informing what counts as a warranted assertion or, alternatively, as additional norms with which they comply. The possibility to identify an assertion as being rejected as inappropriate although warranted, or just as being rejected as unwarranted, would turn on whether it is both appropriate and warranted to assert that this assertion is warranted even if inappropriate. Now, even if there was room for such a possibility of manifesting the difference between norms of conversational appropriateness and norms of warranted assertion on the basis of assertoric practice alone, both the assertibilist and the truth conditional semanticist will agree that $W(A) \rightarrow A$ will not be considered as warranted. Of course, the truth conditional semanticist who conceives of the assertibility conditions for conditionals in terms of conditional probabilities wishes to say that the speakers' refusal to assert instances of $W(A) \rightarrow A$ is a function of the objective content of A . The assertibilist, on the other hand, will regard this refusal as confirming her claim that informativeness is sometimes necessary for warranted assertibility. There would appear

to be no principled way of adjudicating between these different accounts on the basis of the speakers' assertoric practice alone.

At this point one might object that we ought to distinguish between warranted assertibility and *warranted acceptability*: asserting a given claim may be improper for all sorts of reasons, including those that derive from the epistemic division of labour; but one may nonetheless be warranted in accepting this claim—asserting it to oneself silently, as it were. Thus it might be suggested that, from the very beginning, we have worked with the wrong notion of warrantedness: instead of asking for a systematic account of assertibility conditions we should have asked for a systematic account of acceptability conditions.⁶¹ However, it is doubtful whether we can here appeal to this distinction without, at the same time, relinquishing the methodology which we adopted right from the start, *viz.* that of explaining content on the basis of publicly observable features of language use. At the very least, the question would then have to be addressed what kind of use-facts, if not assertions, must be accounted for and serve as evidence for theories of meaning. In particular, the anti-realist's Manifestation Argument would have to be reformulated, as it proceeds from the assumption that the speakers' participation in assertoric practice discloses their grasp of objective truth conditions. For these reasons, I won't pursue the present suggestion any further.

With the proposed constraints on the assertibility of conditionals being in place, the assertibilist at least proves able to block the immediate objection that her semantics cannot account for the speakers' unwillingness to assert conditionals which would have to be assertible if (c5) and (c6) were valid. In the next section I shall address the hitherto unresolved problem of how conditionals can inherit warrants inferentially, even if both their antecedents and consequents are undecided, *i.e.* the problem of how warrants for conditionals can underwrite (R3) and (R4). Towards the end of the next section it will become clear in which sense there may be such inferential warrants for $A \rightarrow B$ and $B \rightarrow A$ without there being inferential warrants for $W(A) \rightarrow B$ or $B \rightarrow W(A)$.

3.5 Inferential Warrants for Conditionals

In discussing inferential warrants for $A \rightarrow B$ whose availability justifies (R3) and (R4), I shall concentrate on cases in which both A and B receive the value *undecided*. This will ensure that we do not smuggle in any considerations that essentially rely on either the assertibility of B or the deniability of A .

There are (at least) three kinds of cases in which $A \rightarrow B$ will come out as warrantably assertible, although both A and B are neither warrantably assertible nor

⁶¹ If the notion of acceptability is thought to rehabilitate the interpretation of $A \rightarrow B$ in terms of $A \supset B$, then it would appear that $W(A) \rightarrow A$ turns out to be acceptable after all; see footnote 57.

warrantedly deniable. These different cases are illustrated by the following three examples:

- (α) if Martha is drunk, then Martha is drunk or George is tired
- (β) if this is a swan, then this is white
- (γ) if Jones did not murdered Cresswell, then Smith did.

Even if both subsentences of (α) happen to be undecided, (α) will still be warrantably assertible: this is supposed to be known by anyone who has mastered the use of the conditional and disjunction. Insofar as in sufficiently many cases, conditions under which "This is a swan" was warrantably assertible proved to be conditions under which "This is white" was too, and there are so far no cases in which "This is a swan" proved to be warrantably assertible while "This is white" did not, (β) will be at present warrantably assertible despite the fact that both of its subsentences are presently undecided. Given a body of evidence that warrants the assertion of "Jones and Smith are the only suspects", (γ) may be warrantably assertible although both of its subsentences are undecided.

Prima facie, these cases present a challenge to the assertibilist because the warranted assertibility of (α), (β) and (γ) is not yet determined by the values their respective subsentences take.⁶² Accordingly, whatever account the assertibilist will be able to offer, this account will not be fully compositional. But then for the assertibilist this is a feature of the language she seeks to model. Even a proponent of truth conditional semantics must be able to explain—or at least agree that it must be possible to explain—how speakers can rationally arrive at the endorsement of conditionals such as (α), (β) or (γ) despite the fact that they refuse to assert or deny any of their subsentences.⁶³ As already indicated, a recursive specification of the truth conditions of conditionals will not yet deliver the desired result; and there will be no recursive specification of their warranted assertibility conditions on that basis either. In this

⁶² The conditional is thus not 'assertibility-explicable' in Brandom's sense; [TA]: 141. Price, who is aware of this breakdown of compositionality (see footnote 54 above), does nothing to meet the challenge. It is not even clear whether he is aware of this posing a challenge, for nowhere does he address the question of what the inferential grounds are on the basis of which a compound may be other than undecided despite that fact that all of its subsentences are. Therefore, it is hard to see on which grounds he can take himself to have defended a *recursive* theory of sense in terms of assertibility and deniability conditions; see [SAD]: 162.

⁶³ This merely echoes Dummett's remark (quoted earlier) that a proponent of truth conditional semantics must account for the connection between knowledge of truth conditions and knowledge of assertion conditions; see [WTM/II]: 92-93; cf. as well [LBM]: 307-308; and [TOE]: xxi.

respect, assertibilists and truth conditional semanticists would appear to be in the same boat.⁶⁴

The characterisation of the three deviant cases mentioned already suggests ways in which the assertibilist might meet the present challenge. Consider (α) first:

(α) if Martha is drunk, then Martha is drunk or George is tired.

The conditional (α) is an instance of the axiom schema:

$$A \rightarrow A \vee B.$$

All instances of an axiom schema must count as *a priori* warranted. More generally, the assertibilist may say that any sentence that can be derived from instances of axiom schemata by means of warrant-preserving rules of inferences will have to count as *a priori* warranted.⁶⁵ Now consider (β):

(β) if this is a swan, then this is white.

The conditional (β) is an instance of an empirical generalisation which is confirmed by a sufficiently large number of other instances that form its inductive basis. The confirming instances however, will be instances whose antecedents and consequents are both warrantably assertible. If a given universally quantified conditional is warrantably assertible on the basis of sufficiently many warranted instances, then the instances that form this inductive basis will confer warranted assertibility onto those instances whose antecedents and consequents are both undecided. Thus (β) may be warrantably assertible although both of its subsentences are undecided, given that there is a sufficiently large number of conditionals of the form "If x is a swan, then x is white" that are warrantably assertible with both subsentences being assertible too. We can represent this as an inductive warrant-preserving inference from particulars to particulars, leaving the generalisation out of the picture:⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Thus when Brandom argues that since English is not assertibility-explicable, "some auxiliary notion must be introduced to generate the assertibility conditions of compound sentences", he fails to see that, even after such an auxiliary notion—*viz.* truth—has been introduced, it may not be possible either "to generate in a uniform way the assertibility conditions of compound sentences" by means of the assertibility conditions and the truth conditions of the embedded sentences; [TA]: 142-43.

⁶⁵ Warrant-preserving inference rules correspond to conditionals stating that if the premisses are warrantably assertible, so is the conclusion. Since the antecedents of such conditionals never take the value *undecided*, while in the cases under consideration both antecedent and consequent take this value, the speakers' grasp of warranted-preserving inference rules poses no further problem.

⁶⁶ The problem of giving an account of universally quantified statements will be addressed in section (3.6).

if a_1 is a swan, then a_1 is white
 if a_2 is a swan, then a_2 is white
 \vdots
 if a_n is a swan, then a_n is white

if a_{n+1} is a swan, then a_{n+1} is white

Here, for all a_i with $1 \leq i \leq n$ both " a_i is a swan" and " a_i is white" are decided. The conditionals which form the set of premisses will themselves be arrived at as follows:⁶⁷

a_1 is a swan a_1 is white
 a_2 is a swan a_2 is white
 \vdots \vdots
 a_n is a swan a_n is white

if a_1 is a swan, then a_1 is white
 if a_2 is a swan, then a_2 is white
 \vdots
 if a_n is a swan, then a_n is white

What counts as a sufficiently large number of such confirming instances will be a matter of discourse and institutionalised practice. Roughly speaking, a number of confirming instances is sufficiently large if it is treated as sufficiently large by the speech community; and this will vary according to the area of discourse. In other words, what a speaker is represented as having to grasp in order to fully master the use of the conditional includes abilities to recognise and manipulate syntactical patterns as well as an appropriate training in inductive inference.

The proposed account of the warranted assertibility conditions of (α) and (β) reflects the inferential liaisons between these conditionals and sentences involving some of their constituents. Thus even though full compositionality could not be achieved, *i.e.* no recursive specification of the warranted assertibility conditions of (α) and (β) was possible, still (IC) has been met. This leaves the assertibilist with the task to account for (γ):

(γ) if Jones did not murder Cresswell, then Smith did.

⁶⁷ This accounts for the fact that "if a_i is a swan, then a_i is white" is not yet assertible if both " a_i is a swan" and " a_i is white" are assertible.

The envisaged situation is one in which speakers are in a state of information that warrants at least the following three sentences:

- (γ 1) Cresswell was murdered
- (γ 2) Jones is a suspect
- (γ 3) Smith is a suspect.

But it would appear that this will not yet do; and whatever else is needed it will not consist in inductive grounds for a generalisation of which (γ) is an instance, for there are no such grounds. Nor is it likely to consist in inductive grounds for a generalisation involving descriptions that Cresswell, Jones and Smith happen to satisfy. Such a generalisation would have to be something like: "If the one without alibi did not murder the victim, then the one with a criminal past did". Not only may there be more than one person without an alibi or with a criminal past besides Jones and Smith, but there may be so many defeaters of this generalisation that it can hardly count as well-confirmed. Detectives are more likely to engage in hypothetical induction than in enumerative induction.

It would appear that the state of information that warrants (γ), while leaving both subsentences undecided, will furthermore have to warrant something like (γ 4):

- (γ 4) Jones and Smith are the only suspects.

(γ 4) is a concealed quantified sentence involving a further occurrence of the conditional. The question accordingly arises how (γ 4) may be warranted; and here we seem to face a difficulty: the claim that Cresswell's murderer is either Jones or Smith cannot but be thought to be established by facts about Jones and Smith; but if these facts fall short of singling out one rather than the other as Cresswell's murderer, how can these facts themselves so much as preclude that neither of them murdered Cresswell? It would appear that we must, as Russell urged, know in addition that no one non-identical with either Jones or Smith murdered Cresswell. But how could we ever know, of every other person, that this person did not murder Cresswell, unless we had reason to assert a universally quantified sentence some of whose instances have undecided antecedents and consequents just like (γ)? There seems to be no single such sentence, or set of sentences, which may feature as an inductively confirmed generalisation about murderers.

Even so, the assertibilist has resources to avoid any appeal to further conditionals with undecided constituents. Call a predicate Φ *epistemicised* if and only if, for all x , ' Φx ' is not warrantably assertible just in case ' Φx ' is warrantably deniable. The

assertibilist argues, quite plausibly, that "is a suspect" is an epistemicised predicate in this sense. If in a given state of information it is not warrantably assertible that Paul is a suspect, then *in this state* it is warrantably assertible that he is not: in order for Paul to qualify as a suspect he must be suspected.⁶⁸ If this is so, the assertibilist may invoke the following warrant-preserving rule of inference linking the use of "is a suspect" to the use of "is a culprit"; let 'W ϕ ' be short for 'it is now warranted that ϕ ', then:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 a_1 \text{ is a suspect} \\
 \vdots \\
 a_{n-1} \text{ is a suspect} \\
 a_n \text{ is a suspect} \\
 \hline
 W(x \text{ is a suspect}) \rightarrow [W(x = a_1) \text{ or } \dots \text{ or } W(x = a_n)] \\
 \hline
 \sim(a_1 \text{ is a culprit or } \dots \text{ or } a_{n-1} \text{ is a culprit}) \rightarrow a_n \text{ is a culprit}
 \end{array}$$

It might be objected that, as experience teaches, the culprit will not always be one of the current suspects; so why should we always be warranted in asserting that (s)he is? On behalf of the assertibilist we may reply that this objection is misguided: the warrants that lead us to select individuals as current suspects are of course defeasible, just as more individuals may be suspected in future states of information; and whoever is eventually identified as a culprit will *a fortiori* be suspected.

The assertibilist will accordingly contend that, insofar as the above rule is recognised as valid, a state of information which warrants (γ_1) and no other (atomic) ascriptions of "is a suspect" than (γ_2) and (γ_3) will likewise warrant (γ).⁶⁹ The assertibilist may thus succeed in accounting for cases such as (γ) by means of rules like the one mentioned.

However, there is no guarantee that the number of rules of such a kind is finite if the vocabulary is. Nor is there any guarantee that the examples considered so far, *i.e.* (α), (β) and (γ), exhaust all problematic cases: there may be others that cannot be dealt with in just the same ways. Still as far as these examples are concerned, the assertibilist has done what she was expected to do. There is accordingly no compelling reason to deny that she can comply with (IC) in other cases. The cases we discussed were such that neither the antecedent nor the consequent nor their respective negations were

⁶⁸ Notice that the present warranted assertibility or deniability of a given claim depends on the sum total of information presently available and not just on personal shares. I may be ignorant of whether I am on the current list of suspects: but insofar as there is a current list of suspects, where this list has been compiled in accordance with norms of warrantability, I will either be on this list or not; if not then, relative to the current state of information, I am not a suspect.

⁶⁹ Of course, (γ_2) and (γ_3) have to be related to the murder case under consideration, *i.e.* to the one reported by (γ_1), in appropriate ways.

available as premisses; and in all such cases in which the warranted assertibility of a conditional could be seen to rest on inferential relations to other sentences involving some of its constituents—that is (α) and (β)—the recognition of their obtaining could be explained in terms of abilities that can be learnt in a finite amount of time: the ability to recognise and manipulate syntactic patterns and the ability to engage in inductive reasoning.⁷⁰ The case presented by (γ) was not of this kind. We had to invoke a warrant-preserving rule of inference linking (γ) to vocabulary not contained in (γ).

The fact that the number of rules of such a kind cannot be guaranteed to be finite, hence that there is no guarantee either that grasp of warranted assertibility conditions can be represented as a finite body of knowledge from which mastery of these conditions may be seen to flow, should give no comfort to the assertibilist's opponent. For as I shall argue in the next two paragraphs, even the truth conditional semanticist—if she is to give an account of warranted assertibility conditions in order to anchor her recursive theory of truth conditions in pragmatics—will be at a loss to give such a guarantee. This observation is crucial since all we have to do in order to substantiate the assertibilist's challenge is to show that, as far as meeting (IC) is concerned, truth conditional semantics does not fare any better than assertibilism.

Thus suppose that the truth conditional semanticist takes $A \rightarrow B$ to be assertible if $P(B/A)$ is high. The first thing to ask is whose probability assignment does matter so as to determine the assertibility of $A \rightarrow B$. It cannot be just anyone's: for example, we should not regard the innocent as having any say on the matter.⁷¹ But suppose that the assertibility of $A \rightarrow B$ is determined by the conditional probability assigned by an expert on matters to which A and B relate. As the holistic nature of empirical justification suggests, it is highly likely that this expert's calculation of $P(B/A)$ will presuppose that certain conditionals other than $A \rightarrow B$ are warrantably assertible, with respect to some of which, however, she herself lacks the required expertise. Accordingly, her expertise, hence the assertibility of $A \rightarrow B$, is likely to depend on that of others. But unless all these experts can be shown to follow certain specifiable rules in reaching their verdicts, there is no guarantee that this collectively shared candidate knowledge will not just collapse into the total set of empirically confirmed beliefs hitherto acquired by the scientific community; and there will then be no guarantee either that linguistic competence can be represented as a finite stock of knowledge as whose exercise the assertion of warranted conditionals can be conceived. This problem besets any attempt to explain norms of warranted assertibility in terms of speakers' actual verdicts: the competence/performance-distinction will be lost and with it the idea that our verdicts are the result of two interlocking factors, our conceptual abilities and our

⁷⁰ Quine even argues that the propensity to generalise from some to all is innate; [NK]: 123-28.

⁷¹ Cf. Williamson [V]: 221.

receptivity to empirical input. On the other hand, if experts are thought to follow certain warrant-preserving rules in reaching their verdicts, then what guarantee is there that grasp of these rules can be represented as a finite body of knowledge? If such a guarantee can be given after all, however, then it would seem that the assertibilist is likewise entitled to it.

What is equally important is that it has not been made clear how, if the assertibility of conditionals is determined by the conditional probability assigned to them by experts, one expert may rationally rely on the expertise of another if all she has to go for are this other expert's verdicts. It should at least in principle be possible for her to come in a position to certify that the speaker on whose expertise she relies actually has this expertise; and in order to do so she must not only be able to ascertain that this speaker is reliable but also to follow the rational procedures by which this speaker arrives at his verdicts. This is all the more so if these verdicts involve assertions of logically complex sentences such as conditionals. In other words, then, it should be possible for one speaker to recognise whether and how another speaker calculates conditional probabilities. However, it is highly likely that, in order to leave room for this possibility, we already have to countenance linguistic performances that are not assertions, *viz.* assumptions: it is by assuming **A** and then concluding how likely **B** would be that the value of $P(\mathbf{B}/\mathbf{A})$ is arrived at.⁷²

But this is already to change the rules of the game in which the assertibilist was ready to engage: the assertibilist's challenge was that insofar as we bring to bear no more than the assertoric performances of speakers, an account of warranted assertibility conditions for compounds will be available that makes no mention of objective truth conditions, yet meets (IC) to just the same extent as an account based on (O1) and (O2). The Manifestation Argument rested on the claim that this is incorrect, *viz.* that assertoric use alone will display the speakers' grasp of objective truth conditions. Of course, it may now turn out that knowledge of objective truth conditions is after all necessary for giving a sufficiently systematic account of the assertibility conditions for conditionals in regions where assertibilism has nothing to say. But if this account needs further backing by appeal to the non-assertoric use of sentences, then it is no longer straightforward to conclude that what is thus manifested is knowledge of conditions whose obtaining we must be able to come in a position to recognise: no reason has as yet been given for thinking that speakers cannot intelligibly assume sentences to be true whose truth it may lie beyond their ken to ascertain. Indeed, it will be my main contention, to be developed in chapters four to six, that acknowledging the role sentences play in assumptions provides the starting point both for a successful defence of our minimalist conception of objective truth and a justification for demurring from the anti-realist's conclusion. In

⁷² Cf. Edgington [DCH]: 177-78, 200.

section (3.8) of the present chapter I shall furthermore argue that our minimalist conception of objective truth should already be recoverable from the use of atomic sentences and thereby suggest that Dummett's attempt to locate the pragmatic basis for this conception in the assertoric use of compounds does not get to the heart of the matter.

For the sake of argument, let us therefore assume that, given the restriction to the assertoric use of language, the assertibilist has done all she could be expected to do in devising an account of the warranted assertibility conditions of conditionals. At least, the truth conditional semanticist has not been shown to fare any better. Thus it would appear that the assertibilist's challenge still stands.

Once we have an account of the warranted assertibility of conditionals whose antecedents and consequents are both undecided, we are in a position to account for the assertibility and deniability conditions of sentences formed by means of other sentential connectives. For example: the assertibility and deniability conditions of conjunctions **A & B** pose no problem apart from those cases in which both **A** and **B** are undecided, but **A & B** ought nonetheless to be denied:

B	A & B			
A	<i>y</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>n</i>	
<i>y</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>n</i>	
<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u/n</i>	<i>n</i>	
<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	

The deniability conditions of disjunctions **A ∨ B** can be thought to be determined by the assertibility conditions of **~A & ~B**. Insofar as disjunctions are essentially used in applications of *modus tollendo ponens*, their assertibility conditions can accordingly be thought to be determined by those of **~A → B** and **~B → A**.⁷³

The assertibilist may now explain why there may in general be inferential warrants for (c1) and (c3) without there being any warrants for (c2) or (c4):

(c1) **A → B**

(c2) **W(A) → B**

(c3) **B → A**

(c4) **B → W(A)**.

⁷³ Cf. Dummett [SCT]: 194.

Consider inductive inferences like the ones appealed to in our discussion of (β). An inductive inference from n instances of a generalisation to the $n+1$ st instance will be undermined by a deniable instance whose antecedent is warranted, but whose consequent is deniable. However, it will not yet be undermined by an instance whose antecedent is warranted and whose consequent is undecided. Given the way our scientific reasoning actually proceeds, instances of the latter kind will not in general be considered as mandating revisions of theory. Therefore, it is to be expected that there is typically no place for conditionals like (c4) within scientific discourse: conditionals like (c4) will not be used for *modus tollens* steps, yet conditionals like (c3) will feature in such inferences. Of course, this is not to say that there may not after all be conditionals like (c4) that have their place even in scientific discourse: for example, conditionals of this kind may feature in psychology. But recall that, in the present context, all the assertibilist has to show is that inferential warrants for conditionals like (c3) will not always be transformable into inferential warrants for conditionals like (c4) and *vice versa*.

Scientific theories are intended to yield an interlocking account of generalities. Thus where possible, the antecedent condition of one generalisation will form the consequent condition of another. Therefore, where we aim at such an interlocking account or wish to leave room for it, we usually do not have use for conditionals like (c2) either: any generalisation satisfaction of whose consequent condition is formulated in the antecedent of (c2) will already be refuted if **B** is assertible and **A** is undecided; and as already remarked, we typically have no use for such generalisations in scientific discourse. Again, we have to keep in mind that the assertibilist is not bound to rule out that there may be inferential warrants for (c2), but only that all inferential warrants for (c1) are *eo ipso* inferential warrants for (c2).

In order to assess, amongst other things, whether the assertibilist proves able to explain the role of negation within compound sentences on the basis of (N1) and (N2), we were led to a consideration of her account of the indicative conditional. Contrary to what Dummett and Wright suggested, it was possible to explain the warranted assertibility conditions of sentences built up from less complex ones by means of sentential connectives, without yet taking recourse to objective truth conditions. In meeting (IC) however, the assertibilist had to appeal to the quantificational structure of sentences as well as a rule of substitution applied to schemata. We must therefore demand that the assertibilist give an account of quantification. This account is the topic of the next section which will bring our discussion of assertibilism and its resources to a close. By then it ought to have become clear that assertibilism is much more powerful than expected when it comes to an account of complex sentence-forming devices. Section (3.7) will give a diagnosis of why both Dummett and Wright have

underestimated its strength. In section (3.8) I shall try to clarify why assertibilism is nonetheless unacceptable. Finally in section (3.9), I shall argue that in order to prove the assertibilist wrong, we should move beyond a consideration of the assertoric use of sentences, thereby rejecting the premisses on which the anti-realist's Manifestation Argument rests.

3.6 An Assertibilist Account of the Quantifiers

In a first bold step, the assertibilist might try to account for the speakers' use of quantifiers in the following way:

- (\forall) $\forall x\Phi x$ is warrantably assertible $\leftrightarrow \Pi n(\Phi n$ is warrantably assertible)
 $\forall x\Phi x$ is warrantably deniable $\leftrightarrow \exists x\sim\Phi x$ is warrantably assertible
- (\exists) $\exists x\Phi x$ is warrantably assertible $\leftrightarrow \Sigma n(\Phi n$ is warrantably assertible)
 $\exists x\Phi x$ is warrantably deniable $\leftrightarrow \forall x\sim\Phi x$ is warrantably assertible.

However, there are several objections to (\forall) and (\exists) that come to mind. For example, the conditional from left to right across the first clause of (\forall) might be objected to on the grounds that in inductive reasoning, we do not establish the validity of generalisations by way of showing first, of each instance of such a generalisation, that it is warrantably assertible. This objection has no force however: *treating* a universally quantified sentence as warrantably assertible implies treating any one instance of that generalisation as warrantably assertible. It is no objection to the assertibilist account that we tend to treat each instance of such a generalisation as warrantably assertible on the basis of the warranted assertibility of some. On the assertibilist account, this is just what distinguishes the warranted assertibility conditions of the universally quantified sentence from the warranted assertibility conditions of the specific conjunction which serves as its inductive basis: to generalise is to generalise from some to all; and since different sets of instances may serve as the basis from which such generalisations proceed, the warranted assertibility conditions of generalisations can at no point be identified with those of a given set of instances. Any form of scepticism with respect to the validity of inductive reasoning threatens the assertibilist account, if at all, to the very same extent to which it threatens truth conditional semantics. For the assertibilist, the speakers' ability to conceive of the warranted assertibility of each instance on the basis of the warranted assertibility of some, plays exactly the role which the speakers' ability to conceive of the truth of all instances on that same basis plays for a proponent of truth conditional semantics.

The question of when a universally quantified statement ought to be treated as warrantably assertible will be answered by appeal to warrant-preserving rules of induction, this time leading from particular to universal:

$$\begin{array}{c} \Phi a_1 \\ \Phi a_2 \\ \vdots \\ \Phi a_n \\ \hline \forall x \Phi x \end{array}$$

What does count as a sufficiently large number of confirming instances will again be settled, relative to the area of discourse at hand, by what is instituted as being such a sufficiently large number.⁷⁴

Another *prima facie* more powerful objection that can be levelled against (\forall) concerns the conditional from right to left across the first clause: in mathematics, warrants to assert ' Φn ' for each n will not normally suffice for warranting ' $\forall x \Phi x$ '. But it would appear that in order to find fault with this conditional, we do not have to resort to mathematics in which, arguably, all warrants are conclusive such that (O2) fails:

(O2) S may (actually) fail to be true, even if S is at present warrantably assertible.

Firstly, even in empirical discourse we frequently quantify over a domain of objects whose number may exceed the number of singular terms currently in use; and often we do not regard it as appropriate to assert ' $\forall x \Phi x$ ' on the basis of the assertibility of all instances that we can, at present, formulate. For example, ' $\forall x(x$ is not an extraterrestrial)' will not already be assertible just because, for each ' n ' having an established usage, ' n is not an extraterrestrial' is assertible.⁷⁵ Secondly, even if there is an ' n ' for each object in the domain and we have warrants to assert ' Φn ' for each such ' n ', we may still lack warrants for ' $\forall x \Phi x$ ' because we have no warrants to assert that each object in the domain has been considered. Thus, it might well be that we have reason to assert, of every object in the domain, that it is not an extraterrestrial, again without having reason to assert ' $\forall x(x$ is not an extraterrestrial)'.

⁷⁴ Note that in accounting for the case presented by (β) we did not have to rely on (\forall) being already understood. For the warranted assertibility of (β) could be seen to be derived, by virtue of principles of induction, from the warranted assertibility of other conditionals of the same logical form. In order for this to be so, we did not need to rely on the warranted assertibility of the empirical generalisation which (β) was said to be an instance of.

⁷⁵ I owe this nice example to Timothy Williamson.

In response to the first part of the objection, the assertibilist should argue that the substitutional quantifier is meant to range not only over those ' n ' that are actually in use, but also those that may come into use, being constructible out of whatever linguistic material the object language provides. In response to the second part of the objection, she should suggest interpreting (\forall) in accordance with her account of the conditional: the conditional from right to left across the first clause of (\forall) is assertible insofar as we are warranted in believing that we would be warranted to assert ' $\forall x\Phi x$ ' if our state of information was augmented by no more information than is necessary to warrant ' $\Pi n(' \Phi n$ is warrantably assertible)'. The assertibilist should then adapt the intuitionist's rule for \forall -introduction and claim that ' $\Pi n(' \Phi n$ is warrantably assertible)' is warrantably assertible only in such states of information of which it can warrantably be said that they would warrant ' Φn ', for an arbitrary n , if augmented by no more information than is necessary to warrant the assertion that there is this n .⁷⁶ Taken together these lines of response should then allow her to explain why ' $\forall x(x$ is not an extraterrestrial)' is not assertible: it cannot warrantably be said of our present state of information that it would warrant ' n is not an extraterrestrial', for an arbitrary n , if augmented by no more information than is necessary to warrant the assertion that there is this n . Pending further argument, there is accordingly no compelling reason for her to abandon the first biconditional of (\forall) in favour of the conditional going from left to right.

Let us now turn to (\exists) . Whereas the conditional from right to left across the first clause of (\exists) is uncontroversial, the converse conditional is plainly wrong: we may be warranted in asserting $\mathbf{A} \vee \mathbf{B}$ without being warranted in asserting \mathbf{A} or being warranted in asserting \mathbf{B} ; and since existentially quantified statements are equivalent to potentially infinite disjunctions, ' $\exists x\Phi x$ ' may be warrantably assertible while there is no n such that ' Φn ' is warrantably assertible. In the last section, we have already seen how the assertibility of disjunctions with finitely many disjuncts can be accounted for. Thus, the conjunction of the following conditionals:

if Jones did not stab Cresswell, then Smith did
if Smith did not stab Cresswell, then Jones did

is equivalent to

either Smith stabbed Cresswell or Jones did.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Cf. Dummett [EI]: 12-13.

⁷⁷ This equivalence will depend on the assertibility of principles of classical logic, hence is at odds with intuitionism; cf. footnote 38.

However, sometimes we have no means of delimiting the number of disjuncts. For example, I may be warranted in asserting that there is a victim of the recent earthquake without being warranted in asserting of any individual that it is a victim of this earthquake or, for that matter, of any given collection of individuals that at least one of these individuals is a victim of this earthquake.

Therefore the first biconditional of (\exists) should rather be replaced by the following conditional:

$$\Sigma n(' \Phi n' \text{ is warrantedly assertible}) \rightarrow ' \exists x \Phi x' \text{ is warrantedly assertible.}$$

And (\exists) should accordingly give way to (\exists^*) :

$$(\exists^*) \quad \Sigma n(' \Phi n' \text{ is warrantedly assertible}) \rightarrow ' \exists x \Phi x' \text{ is warrantedly assertible} \\ ' \exists x \Phi x' \text{ is warrantedly deniable} \leftrightarrow ' \forall x \sim \Phi x' \text{ is warrantedly assertible.}$$

Thus it would appear that the assertibilist can specify a sufficient condition for the warranted assertibility of $' \exists x \Phi x'$, but fails to give a systematic account of cases in which $' \exists x \Phi x'$ is assertible despite the fact that this condition is not met. However, this seems to be a premature conclusion: given that assertibilism is conservative in that it preserves the *a priori* assertibility of classical principles, $' \exists x \Phi x'$ may be warrantedly assertible in virtue of the fact that $' \forall x \sim \Phi x'$ is warrantedly deniable.⁷⁸ Now, $' \forall x \sim \Phi x'$ may be deniable because it has deniable consequences, even if the warranted deniability of these consequences does not yet furnish us with a warrant to assert $' \Phi n'$ for some specific n .⁷⁹ To further substantiate this suggestion we would of course need to list assertibilist reconstructions of classical rules of proof; however, I shall not here undertake to do so. The question of whether assertibilism is after all at odds with our practice of drawing deductively valid inferences will be discussed in chapter four.

Pending further argument to the contrary, we may thus conclude that the assertibilist has not been shown not to meet (IC) in cases in which her anti-realist opponent nonetheless can. Again, it would appear that her challenge still stands.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Given the *a priori* assertibility of double negation elimination, as licensed by the assertibilist's account of negation, the inference from the deniability of $' \forall x \sim \Phi x'$ to the assertibility of $' \exists x \Phi x'$ is already ensured by the second clause of (\forall) .

⁷⁹ This indirect validation of $' \exists x \Phi x'$ is for instance exemplified by the classical solution to the Sorites.

⁸⁰ Let me add a final note on the assertibilist's use of substitutional quantification. Her treatment of the disquotational truth-predicate as well as of logically valid sentences like (α) required that the speakers themselves be able to employ substitutional quantification. A standard objection to the employment of substitutional quantification in deflationists' accounts of truth runs as follows: in order to explain what a substitutionally quantified sentence conveys, one is bound to say that it conveys that all its instances are true—or if the quantifier is existential, that it has at least one true instance. We thereby have to appeal to a notion of truth that has not yet been accounted for by the radical deflationist, who explains truth in

3.7 Semantic Theory and Object Language

To the extent that it proved feasible at all, assertibilism managed to explain how the warranted assertibility conditions of complex sentences systematically depend on the warranted assertibility and deniability conditions of their constituents—just as (IC) required. It therefore proved unnecessary to invoke objective truth conditions in order to explain this dependence, hence in order to meet (IC). Why then was it ever thought to be necessary to do so? The assumption underlying Dummett's as well as Wright's reasoning seems to be that, given (DS):

(DS) "P" is true iff P

—or, for that matter, the *Equivalence Schema*:

(ES) It is true that P iff P,

sentences of the object language are equivalent to sentences of semantic theory that ascribe to the former a *semantic value*. If this were the case however, then (DS) and (ES) would indeed force a theory of understanding that incorporated a truth conditional semantics, for in asserting sentences of their repertoire, speakers would then have to be seen as claiming these sentences to have the semantic value *true*; and in using them as antecedents of conditionals, speakers would have to be seen as predicting the consequent on condition of their having that value.⁸¹ But it makes all the difference whether speakers can be said to use the left-hand side of (DS) or (ES) in just the same way they use their right-hand side and given (NE), use both in a way other than they use

terms of a substitutionally quantified version of (DS); cf. Horwich [Tr]: 26-28. It might now be thought that the same objection can be levelled against the assertibilist who credits speakers with the grasp of a disquotational truth predicate. This objection is misguided however—the assertibilist can account for the speakers' employment of substitutional quantification without crediting them with a grasp of objective truth. The assertibilist will explain the import of substitutionally quantified sentences of the object language, such as

$\Pi P(\text{if Paul said that } P, \text{ then } P),$

in terms of warranted assertibility and deniability: the above sentence is treated as warrantably assertible only if all its instances are, and it is treated as warrantably deniable if it has a warrantably deniable instance.

⁸¹ If it was a datum that sentences are understood to be apt for taking a certain kind of semantic value, then any semantic theory that subserves a theory designed to account for that understanding must interpret those sentences as taking values of this kind: this just is what it is for a semantic theory to subservise a theory of understanding.

As already argued in section (2.1) of chapter two, the theory of understanding we are after does not claim to account for all aspects of meaning, where "meaning" is taken in the loose sense it has in ordinary language.

"It is warrantedly assertible that P", or whether they can be said to ascribe to the sentences they use the value *true*. As the semantic paradoxes already show, the language of semantic theory and the language this theory takes as its object language have to be kept apart. And the radical deflationist, on whose behalf the assertibilist semantics was being devised, precisely denied that "is true" could be used to ascribe a semantic value, with the effect that the left-hand side of (DS) could no longer be regarded as a statement of semantic theory. This is perfectly coherent as long as we keep in mind that in using their language, speakers do not themselves already engage in a theory about their use of that language.⁸²

Violations of this principle can be found in Wright's characterisation of radical deflationism as well as in Dummett's argument as to why the content of antecedents of certain conditionals must be construed in terms of truth conditions. Thus when Wright talks about "the explanatory biconditional link effected by the Disquotational Schema between the claim that a sentence is [true] and its proper assertoric use", he not only begs the question against the radical deflationist by conceiving of the left-hand side of (DS) as pertaining to the level of semantic theory, but furthermore misconceives the right-hand side as containing information about how it is properly used.⁸³ And when in discussing certain conditionals, Dummett remarks that "the event stated in the consequent is predicted on condition of the truth of the antecedent [...], not its justifiability", he either regards the fact that conditionals like $A \rightarrow B$ and $W(A) \rightarrow B$ differ in assertoric content as already establishing that their antecedents not only may take different semantic values, but take values of a certain kind, *i.e.* truth values; or else he goes beyond the task he set himself, *i.e.* to give an account of how the assertoric content of conditionals is being determined.⁸⁴ Thus it would appear that Dummett merely appeals to our willingness as competent speakers to substitute 'It is true that A' for A in $A \rightarrow B$, thereby conflating the level of semantic theory with the object language level.

The same kind of mistake seems to be at work when Dummett argues that (ES) is at odds with the assumption of truth value gaps.⁸⁵ Dummett simply assumes that the left-hand side of (ES) ascribes a semantic value to a given sentence such that, if this sentence is neither true nor false, the right-hand side comes out neither true nor false,

⁸² Cf. Price [SAD]: 163-64.

⁸³ Wright [TO]: 17. According to the assertibilist, "P" is never used in the semantic theory to state its own meaning; cf. Price [SAD]: 163-65. For instance, if the content of a sentence was understood to consist in its conceptual role, then if we had a canonical way of describing this role, the statement "'P" has the conceptual role *m* iff P" would not be part of the semantic theory in question. As already noted in footnote 36 above, the failure to realise that according to deflationism truth has no role to play in semantic theory underlies both Rumfit's reply to Wright's 'inflationary argument' and Wright's answer.

⁸⁴ Dummett [SCT]: 193.

⁸⁵ See Dummett [T] 4-5; and [PBI]: 233.

while the left-hand side comes out false. But someone who endorses a semantic theory according to which sentences of the object language may lack a semantic value, can reconcile her theory with both (DS) and (ES) by regarding them as principles which belong to the object language rather than the language of semantic theory, and which allow for an expansion of that object language *from within*.⁸⁶ Insofar as a proponent of such a view takes it that in the language of semantic theory the principle of *Tertium non datur* nonetheless holds good, she can likewise agree that (DS) and (ES) are valid principles of that theory. But then she will refuse to regard either principle as allowing for a substitution of "P" by sentences of the very object language for which her theory is intended to be a semantic theory.⁸⁷

In the context of the present enquiry into the manifestability of understanding the distinction between object language and language of semantic theory is of crucial importance: since we aim to show that semantic principles hold in virtue of the representational content we understand our sentences to have and that this understanding is manifested in our use of these sentences, we must resist any tendency to regard the endorsement of such principles as a way of using the sentences to which they apply that would already provide us with evidence for their validity.

When we discussed the difference between objective truth and warranted assertibility in section (2.3) of chapter two, we presupposed an understanding of the object language. It might now be objected that, by the standards demanded here, this procedure proves illegitimate. But this objection misconceives the nature of our enquiry: we *know* that objective truth differs from warranted assertibility and that these differences are reflections of the representational content we understand our sentences to have. It is only on the basis of this knowledge that we can perceive assertibilism as a position that must be overcome. Our discussion in section (2.3) was meant to bring out what the differences between objective truth and warranted assertibility are; but it did not yet indicate how they are manifested in the use of the sentences to which these notions apply. The assertibilist concedes that "is true" and "is warrantably assertible" are used differently, yet denies that this is a reflection of the representational dimension of the sentences we use; thus merely laying down principles such as (O1) and (O2) will not do in order to answer the assertibilist's challenge.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Interestingly, this way of putting it stems from Dummett himself; see [LBM]: 67-69.

⁸⁷ A proponent of this view may nonetheless give a homophonic semantics for the very language in which her theory is couched; but this semantics will then differ from the one devised for the object language previously considered. No justification for this view has been offered here.

⁸⁸ In getting her challenge off the ground, the assertibilist did not have to presuppose a prior understanding of the object language whose use we consider: for this purpose, it was sufficient to identify pairs of sentences S and R such that (i) S is assertible iff R is assertible, (ii) S is deniable iff S is not assertible, and (iii) S is not assertible iff R is either deniable or undecided.

According to the assertibilist, both the assertoric content of a sentence and its ingredient sense are jointly determined by the conditions under which this sentence is warrantably assertible, and those under which it ought to be denied. Since there may be conditions under which such a sentence is neither warrantably assertible nor warrantably deniable, any identification of warranted assertibility with truth and warranted deniability with falsity will give rise to truth value gaps. Insofar as the assertibilist is a radical deflationist who denies the concept of truth any role to play in semantics, she will resist any such identification.⁸⁹ As we have seen however, her endorsement of (DS) does not force an explanation of ingredient sense in terms of truth conditions. Indeed radical deflationism is inconsistent with such an explanation. For example, on the radically deflationist view, the standard recursive clause for disjunction, the disjunction equivalence:

(DE) "P or Q" is true iff "P" is true or "Q" is true

will not be conceived of as registering a significant fact about our use of "or", but merely as being derivable from the following three instances of (DS) that are considered to be conceptually necessary equivalences governing our use of the truth predicate:

"P or Q" is true iff P or Q

"P" is true iff P

"Q" is true iff Q.

As already stressed, insofar as instances of (DS) are partial stipulations determining the use of the truth predicate, they cannot, at the same time, function as principles that enlist contingent semantic features of truth-apt sentences in our repertoire and in terms of which our use of these sentences or their compounds can then be explained.⁹⁰

The assertibilist proved able to devise a semantics for negation and the conditional that reflected all the inferential liaisons between complex sentences and

⁸⁹ Recall that the radical deflationist will not tolerate the introduction of a higher level truth predicate that does not satisfy (DS). As Patrick Greenough has pointed out to me, the assumption of truth value gaps can be reconciled with the gist of (DS) by replacing (DS) by a set of inference rules. These rules do not license the conditional from left to right across (NE), hence allow for a distinction between a sentence not being true and the truth of its negation. The same line of thought underlies Wright's proposal to weaken the biconditional link effected by (DS) so as to allow for truth value gaps; see [TO]: 63-64. This merely shows that the assertibilist need not opt for radical deflationism in Field's sense. If she does not, then she may well identify truth with warranted assertibility and falsity with warranted deniability. I here assume that whatever Field has to say about the biconditional, it will be in accordance with the validity of the negation introduction rule Wright invokes, *i.e.* the rule that allows us to infer $\sim A \leftrightarrow \sim B$ from $A \leftrightarrow B$.

⁹⁰ Field [DVM]: 256-60.

their constituents which an account of ingredient sense was supposed to capture.⁹¹ She not only opposed Dummett's conception of ingredient sense, but also his conception of assertoric content. For Dummett, the assertoric content of a sentence is already determined by the conditions under which it is acceptable to assert this sentence, hence under which it counts as warrantably assertible. The distinction between those conditions under which a sentence ought not to be asserted and those under which it ought to be denied played no part at all in Dummett's characterisation of assertoric content. Rather, Dummett conceived of the latter as those conditions under which its negation is warrantably assertible, thereby appealing to a prior grasp of negation; negation had accordingly to be explained by other means. It is therefore not at all surprising that Dummett was driven towards endorsement of the doctrine that a compositional account of the operators required an appeal to truth conditions, for otherwise the relation between the conditions under which a given sentence ought not to be asserted and those under which its negation ought to be asserted would have been left unexplained: it was precisely the task to explain this relation that forced the assertibilist to reverse the order of explanation and invoke the notion of warranted deniability.⁹² Since Dummett is bound to concede that once the speaker has grasped the concept of negation, she will be able to distinguish between those conditions under which a sentence ought not to be asserted and those under which it ought to be denied, it is then not open to Dummett to object that the notion of warranted deniability has no basis in use. Indeed, it would appear that Dummett and the assertibilist agree on what constitutes the facts of language use on whose basis a theory of meaning is to be devised. Their conceptions of assertoric content, though different, are in mutual harmony.

Nevertheless, Dummett intended to account for our grasp of truth conditions on that same basis—by means of drawing the distinction between assertoric content and ingredient sense. But here the assertibilist proved Dummett wrong.⁹³ The distinction between the assertoric content of a sentence and the contribution this sentence makes to the determination of the assertoric content of complex sentences in which it occurs, is simply no help in showing that sentences have truth conditions. Whether they do or do not have truth conditions is thus far purely a matter of whether a disquotational truth predicate has been introduced into the language under study. This is not the sense in

⁹¹ Recall that the ingredient sense of a sentence was supposed to be the systematic contribution this sentence makes to the determination of the warranted assertibility conditions of complexes in which it occurs.

⁹² Williamson makes essentially the same point; see [ADC]: 307-308.

⁹³ Williamson writes: "[a] claim often made [...] is that the truth-condition of a sentence is determined by its compositional structure as well as by its assertibility- and deniability-conditions; that may be so, but as a bare claim it hardly comes to grips with the problem for it does not explain what determines the effect of a compositional device other than the conditions for the assertion and denial of the sentences which serve as its arguments and values"; [ADC]: 313. We can now see that this pessimism is, after all, well-motivated.

which Dummett intended to be understood though.⁹⁴ As the next section will show however, there are independent grounds to hold that both Dummett and the assertibilist misconstrue the assertoric content we take some sentences to have.

3.8 *The Role of Truth in Corrections*

The history of our epistemic endeavours reveals that very often, what we have been warranted in asserting at some point in time ceases to be so assertible at another. From our present standpoint, our ancestors or past selves got some things right and others wrong. But in saying that they got things wrong, we do not generally wish to blame them as irrational for having asserted what they did. Rather, given the information they had access to at that time, we often think it perfectly rational for them to have asserted what they did on the basis of that information. Thus we concede that what they asserted at that time was warrantably assertible at that time, but hold that it is no longer so assertible today.⁹⁵ Still we want to say that they got things wrong, but what are our grounds for saying so? No doubt they are based on the information we now possess, yet which they had no access to. But then in what sense does this information provide us with grounds for attributing to them a shortcoming if at the same time we do not wish to blame them for not having taken into account the very information they had no access to? That is: why does the information we possess today license more than our refusal to assert what they asserted in the past, *viz.* the diagnosis that they got things wrong?

No answer to this question will be forthcoming as long as we conceive of our ancestors as having laid claim in asserting what they did, to no more than that what they asserted was warrantably assertible at the time they asserted it—there would then be nothing for them to have been wrong about. For example, if they dated an ancient document back to 2000 BC on the basis of the historical information they possessed at that time, then their claim that it is warrantably assertible on the basis of this information alone that the document dates back to 2000 BC, cannot be wronged by the fact that on the basis of the historical information we now possess, this is no longer warrantably assertible. Accordingly, if sense can be made of our practice of retrospectively attributing cognitive failures while still granting the blamelessness of

⁹⁴ Thus in discussing (DS), Dummett writes: "[...] the meaning-theory itself must make no appeal to our prior understanding of the object-language; it would not, for example, impair its adequacy as a meaning-theory if it were translated"; [LBM]: 68.

⁹⁵ In [KA], Williamson has argued that reasonable belief ought to be distinguished from what is expressed by a warranted assertion. He claims that all warrants for the assertion of a given sentence are factive—to the effect that warranted assertibility entails truth. As I argued in section (2.3) of chapter two, this constraint on assertoric practice is too restrictive and blurs the distinction between the goal we intend to attain in laying claim to the truth and the norms compliance with which is conducive to the attainment of this goal. Williamson's argument has furthermore been shown to rest on the so far unjustified assumption that an account of the rules constitutive of assertion be simple.

those we attribute these failures to, then this must be due to the fact that we take our ancestors to have laid claim to more than just that what they asserted was warrantably assertible at the time they asserted it, while we nonetheless regard them as having been warranted in doing so. What more can be involved?

It might be suggested that what they must be said to have laid claim to is that the reasons they had would bear them out in future. This suggestion is misleading however. For sometimes what has been warrantably assertible in the past becomes warrantably deniable at some point, only to be reinstated as warrantably assertible at a later stage. In such cases, we want to say that our fathers got things wrong which our grandfathers got right. But in saying so we do not necessarily commit ourselves to the further claim that the reasons our grandfathers had for asserting what they did, survive closer scrutiny. Thus, we may still want to say that although our grandfathers got things right, they got it right for the wrong reasons, for these reasons may have been undermined once and for all by the reasons our fathers brought to bear. From our present standpoint, neither did our grandfathers' reasons bear our grandfathers out, nor did our fathers' reasons bear our fathers out. Hence, the sense in which our grandfathers got things right, which our fathers got wrong, has not yet been identified.

It might be replied that what our grandfathers must be said to have laid claim to is not that the very reasons they had for asserting what they did would bear them out, but rather that there were some reasons, not necessarily the ones they had, that would so bear them out. Indeed, if this was what they laid claim to, then there is a clear sense in which from our present standpoint, they got things right, which again from our present standpoint, our fathers got wrong, for we are right now in possession of reasons that bear our grandfathers out, but not our fathers. However, it is hard to see how anyone could ever be said to have a reason to believe that there are other reasons to be had that survive future assessment, which the very reason one presently has may not do. Rather, it would appear that one can only claim to have a reason for believing that there is a reason which will never be defeated if one takes the very reason which one claims to possess to be of such a kind. But then we must be able to distinguish what they laid claim to from this further assumption—and we must be able to do so on the basis of a manifest difference between their making that claim and their making this assumption. Unless we prove capable of doing so, we are back to our original question, *viz.* in which sense our grandfathers got things right, although their reasons did not bear them out, as all that had then been identified would be a sense in which they got things wrong: they were mistaken in thinking that their reasons would never be defeated.

The answer we seek to give relates to a goal we set ourselves to attain: truth. As far as our example is concerned, we want to say that our fathers did not attain this goal, while our grandfathers did. An account of what it takes to comply with norms of

warranted assertion will not yet provide us with an insight into the nature of this goal. All that norms of warranted assertion impose is that one ought to strive not to make unwarranted assertions: they do not impose that one ought to arrive at assertions which are warranted.⁹⁶ Thus they remain silent as to why one ought to make warranted assertions at all. It is our pursuit of truth that renders intelligible why we strive to make warranted assertions.

If it is truth we lay claim to in making assertoric moves, then what we lay claim to in every single case will be determined by the conditions under which the move we make qualifies as true, and those will of course differ depending on the particular move we make; otherwise there would be no reason to make this move rather than another. If we intend to do justice to our conception of what we do in assessing our epistemic past, as has been outlined above, then we must hold that the content of our assertoric moves is not only determined by their truth conditions, but in such a way that those conditions do neither coincide with nor are wholly determined by the multifarious conditions under which these moves qualify as defeasibly warranted. Otherwise corrections of past moves would be pointless if accompanied by the concession that these moves could then warrantably be made. The rationale underlying such corrections is that what our ancestors laid claim to is something whose obtaining we at present deny, or conversely, that the obtaining of what we lay claim to today was something they then denied. In other words, in correcting them we take it that they related to something we relate to; and in nonetheless conceding the reasonableness of the moves they made, we conceive of what they related to as independent from the epistemic predicament they happened to be in. The fact that every now and then, claims are reinstated that had in between been abandoned, reveals that we want to be understood as laying claim to something that is likewise independent from our present epistemic state. Otherwise we could not sensibly hold that our ancestors believed what we now believe, even though they had no idea of what our present epistemic state would be like.

We thereby arrive at a conception of truth conditional content that is objective: in making truth claims, we seek to latch onto an objective reality whose nature can be assessed from different points of view and is conceived to be independent from any particular point of view, in the sense that whether or not it is assessed correctly will be settled, if at all, across the board.⁹⁷ It is for this reason that the assertibilist must be considered to do no more than record patterns of the use we make of sentences in our

⁹⁶ This holds good even if warrants are mandatory. Norms of warranted assertion dictate that one make assertions, if there are mandatory warrants for them—in the sense that the refusal to make them in the presence of such warrants would be unwarranted. But the intention to comply with these norms never provides for an incentive to arrive at a position in which there are such warrants.

⁹⁷ This is not to say that the correctness of such assessments cannot be settled from any particular point of view, nor to say that the nature of reality is independent from the fact that we can attain a point of view from which we may assess it correctly. Thus, anti-realism is still with us.

repertoire. How we conceive of what we do—our understanding of what we say—has not yet been addressed: it is to this conception that truth conditional semantics answers. But once this concern is taken to heart, then both the assertoric content and the ingredient sense of a sentence must be conceived of in terms of its truth conditions, and the distinction between assertoric content and ingredient sense collapses.

3.9 *The Manifestation Argument Reconsidered*

The question of what it is for a sentence to have the meaning that it does, may be answered in (at least) two systematically different ways. Either it is understood as a question about what the meaning of a sentence consists in. Here it may be appropriate to answer that for a sentence to have the meaning that it does is for this sentence to have a specific set of truth conditions, or a specific conceptual role, or a contrast class. There are doubtless just as many answers to this question as thus understood, as there are theories of meaning. Alternatively, the question may be regarded as arising only after such an answer has been given. Thus, once we have identified the meaning of a sentence with its truth conditions, we may still want to know what it is for a sentence to have the truth conditions it does.⁹⁸ In other words, we may agree on what the nature of meaning is, and yet be at a loss to say which facts determine whether a given sentence has this rather than that meaning. Theories of meaning attempt to give answers to both these questions. Just as the question with which we began oscillates between these two readings, so does the term "meaning" itself: the meaning of a sentence may either be understood as what it is this sentence means, or as consisting in the fact that this sentence means what it does.

Following Wittgenstein, Dummett has famously argued that meaning—in the sense of *having* a specific meaning—is determined by facts of how language is being used.⁹⁹ It is only on the basis of observable features of use that we can come to know what a given sentence means, and insofar as communication is possible, there must be such features of use on whose basis we can attain this knowledge. The justification we have for ascribing a certain meaning to a given sentence will accordingly consist in our ability to adduce facts about how this sentence is being used. Once we know these facts, we know how to use this sentence ourselves in such a way that others thereby become

⁹⁸ This question again differs from the question of *which* truth conditions a given sentence actually has. Although it must be possible to answer the latter on the basis of an answer to the former, theories of meaning do not attempt to give an answer to the latter question. If at all, this will be the task of a linguist, and not a philosopher of language.

⁹⁹ If Dummett had in mind that meaning—in the sense of what it is that a sentence means—was so determined, then the following quote would be rather puzzling: "since meaning depends, ultimately and *exhaustively*, on use, what [is] required [is] a uniform means of characterising the use of a sentence, *given* its truth conditions"; [TOE]: xxi (my emphases).

entitled to ascribe to us knowledge of its meaning. Accordingly, we may say that knowledge of the meaning of a sentence resides or is manifested in a practical ability to use that sentence.

If no answer can be given to the question of which facts about its use determine which meaning a given sentence has, in particular none that yields a criterion for sameness of meaning, then this will backfire and call into question whether we have properly identified the nature of meaning in the first place. Accordingly, if we identify the assertoric content of a sentence with its truth conditions, then there must be aspects of the use of that sentence which determine that it has a specific set of truth conditions which are such that any sentence used in the same way can be shown to have the same set of truth conditions. Otherwise the assertoric content of a sentence cannot be identified with its truth conditions. We called this constraint on theories of meaning the Manifestability Requirement.

The Manifestability Requirement is to be distinguished from the anti-realist's Manifestation Argument. The Manifestation Argument is intended to show that knowledge of truth conditions whose obtaining is potentially recognition-transcendent cannot be manifested in use. In other words, it infers verificationism about matters of fact from verificationism about meaning. Let us recall, the argument runs as follows:

- (i) the ability to engage in assertoric practice, *i.e.* the practice of expressing verdicts or giving answers to questions, solely requires the ability to recognise the obtaining of those conditions under which the assertion of a given sentence qualifies as correct, and of those under which it does not—and the ability to act upon the recognition of their obtaining
- (ii) knowledge of truth conditions is already fully manifested in the ability to engage in assertoric practice
- (iii) the only conditions knowledge of which we fully display in assertoric practice are conditions whose obtaining we are able to recognise
- (iv) hence, truth conditions will be amongst those conditions whose obtaining we are able to recognise—and knowledge of truth conditions is accordingly manifested in the ability to recognise that they obtain, if they do obtain.

Leaving Moorean sentences to one side, we have received further unexpected support for (iii). On the same grounds, we have to acknowledge that the conjunction of (i) and (ii) is untenable: the ability to recognise the obtaining of assertibility conditions does

not yet license the ascription of knowledge of truth conditions, unless knowledge of truth conditions is explained in terms of a grasp of (DS). But knowledge of truth conditions can then no longer be regarded as explanatory of what it is to understand one's language. On the other hand, our practice of making corrections already seemed to undermine any attempt to deflate knowledge of truth conditions in this way. Thus, it would appear that either (i) or (ii) has to go.

The anti-realist might try to adjust her argument accordingly, replacing (ii) by (ii*):

(ii*) knowledge of truth conditions is already fully manifested in the ability to engage in the practice of making corrections.

She might then draw attention to the fact that the conditions under which it is acceptable to correct what others have claimed are essentially conditions we can recognise to obtain, and replace (i) by (i*):

(i*) the ability to engage in the practice of making corrections solely requires the ability to recognise the obtaining of those conditions under which such a correction qualifies as correct, and of those under which it does not.

The trouble is that assertions qualify as corrections (in the intended sense) only in virtue of the content that they have. It is only if a sentence can be assigned truth conditions that diverge from the conditions under which it is warrantably assertible, that we are able to identify an assertion of this sentence as a correction, which is not the ascription of a failure to meet standards of warranted assertion. There is, in other words, no institution of making corrections over and above the institution of making assertions. In particular, if what a speaker has stated is in the process of being corrected, while the concession is nonetheless made that she was warranted in stating what she did, then this speaker will not be sanctioned for what she did. The failures we highlight by making corrections of the intended kind are essentially blameless.

If all we had to go for was our own conception as competent speakers, of what we do in correcting each other, then assertibilism would prove us guilty of not meeting the Manifestability Requirement. We would then leave it entirely open how someone might learn, by observing what we do, that some of our assertions are corrections while others are not: whether sentences have objective truth conditions and, if so, which these are, cannot be discerned from their warranted assertibility conditions.

The constraint that a theory of meaning give a semantics for logical operators was supposed to rule out the rival of truth conditional semantics, *i.e.* assertibilism. It

was then thought to be a matter of whether our assertoric practice—the use we make of sentences in making assertions—could or could not license ascriptions of realistically conceived truth conditions. Since assertibilism could provide for an account of logical operators which reflected the inferential dependencies between sentences that contain these operators and sentences that do not however, we are now bound to conclude either (a) that knowledge of objective truth conditions must be manifested other than by the ability to recognise those conditions under which the assertion of a given sentence is acceptable and those under which it is not, or (b) that our conception of corrections is after all ill-founded. As long as we deny (b)—as it is incumbent upon us to do—the Manifestation Argument proves to rest on crumbling foundations.¹⁰⁰ For if (ii) has to be dropped as long as (i) is retained—and if (i) and (ii) cannot be replaced by (i*) and (ii*) either—the anti-realist will not then establish what she sought to establish on the basis of these premisses.

The realist may well concede that in knowing that a given sentence has specific truth conditions, a speaker has to know the conditions under which this sentence is warrantably assertible and those under which, given the evidence, it ought to be denied. These conditions may be thought to partially determine *which* truth condition this sentence has. Both the realist and the anti-realist, however, will have to claim that to know no more than this is not yet sufficient for knowledge of truth conditions.¹⁰¹ Whatever else is needed though, it will not—or at least not necessarily—consist in the recognitional abilities the anti-realist is after, for the attribution of recognitional abilities would appear to be licensed only by our practice of reaching verdicts which are warranted. Accordingly, it is thus far an open question whether knowledge of realistically conceived truth conditions can be manifested in use: the Manifestation Argument fails.

¹⁰⁰ As I have argued at the end of chapter two and the beginning of the present chapter, anti-realism does not collapse into assertibilism; cf. as well Dummett [TOE]: xxii. Even if this assumption proved wrong however, the subsequent chapters will show how assertibilism can be overcome without violating the Manifestability Requirement.

¹⁰¹ Thus, when Wright argues that it seems quite unclear how knowledge of warranted assertibility conditions might "provide the basis for forming an understanding of the truth-condition itself" just as "confrontation with camels is not a good route to grasp of the concept of an antelope", he overlooks the possibility that to know the warranted assertibility conditions of a given sentence may be to know part of what determines which truth condition that sentence has; [RMT]: 14. Insofar as Dummett's circularity objection against a realist account of knowledge of truth conditions is not already hostage to the validity of (EC*), it is subject to essentially the same complaint; see [LBM]: 307-16. In [WTM/II]: 88-93, Dummett correctly remarks that insofar as a realist theory of meaning has trouble to explain how knowledge of the truth conditions of a given sentence relates to or yields knowledge of what constitutes a defeasible ground for asserting this sentence, then so has an anti-realist theory of meaning that takes verification or falsification as its core concept. If knowledge of the latter forms an integral part of the former however—in the sense that the warranted assertibility conditions of a sentence are known to determine *which* truth conditions this sentence has—then this problem disappears not only for the anti-realist, but for the realist as well.

Of course, this is not to say that there is no alternative argument to be had that is suited to vindicate (EC*). But whether or not there is such an argument is a question which will have to wait to be answered, until we are in a position to say how a grasp of truth conditions which diverge from conditions of warranted assertibility is manifested in use. Indeed, it will not be until the final chapter that we return to the question of whether (EC*) can be shown to hold *a priori*. In the meantime, we shall instead be concerned with the task of meeting the assertibilist's challenge.

The anti-realist intended to explain the unrecognisability of Moorean sentences in terms of the difference between the truth and the warranted assertibility conditions of their constituents, while retaining the idea that for any non-Moorean sentence *S*, if *S* is true, then there is a state of information which we may attain and which will furnish us with warrants on whose basis we may recognise that *S* is true. She accordingly had to render intelligible how the understanding of sentences apt for objective truth can be manifested in the mastery of their assertoric use, although they share their warranted assertibility conditions with other sentences whose truth coincides with their warranted assertibility. Dummett suggested that this could be done by way of identifying the truth conditions of a sentence with the systematic contribution this sentence makes to the determination of the warranted assertibility conditions of sentences in which it occurs as a constituent. If this construal of truth conditions had been successful, we would now be in a position to account for the difference in truth conditions between "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P", without at the same time undermining the thought that mastery of warranted assertibility conditions is sufficient for knowledge of truth conditions. In the same vein, it would then have been utterly mysterious how we could ever be justified in ascribing knowledge of potentially recognition-transcendent truth conditions: even if it is not the case that a sentence is true whenever assertible, all the conditions of use whose grasp is displayed in assertoric practice are by their very nature recognisable. Rather, it would then be more adequate to view the use we make of sentences as constituents of other more complex ones, as effecting a division between those assertibility-conferring states which render these sentences true and those which do not.

But it turned out that to the extent that a systematic account of warranted assertibility conditions is possible at all, ascribing knowledge of objective truth conditions is unfounded as long as we restrict attention to assertoric use—however holistic in nature. Assertibilism could account for this aspect of language use, paying due weight to the inferential links between complex sentences and their constituents, without yet invoking objective truth conditions. All that could be established was that speakers use "is warrantably assertible" and "is true" differently in certain contexts. But this in itself is no significant fact that takes us anywhere near a vindication of our

objectivist conception of truth, unless it can be shown in addition that speakers conceive of their assertions as representing how things are independently from how matters stand with respect to the current and defeasible propriety of making them.

Assertibilism remains in play as long as we are concerned with no more than what is manifested in assertoric practice. If we are to display how knowledge of objective truth conditions is manifested in use, we must accordingly go beyond the merely assertoric. In meeting the Inferentiality Constraint (IC), the assertibilist not only availed herself of warrants for asserting, but also of warrant-preserving rules of inference. It might now be suggested that there is more to our inferential practice than the application of such rules. Rather, this practice may be said to disclose what the assertibilist cannot account for, *viz.* that the rules we apply preserve objective truth rather than warranted assertibility. We are thus invited to shift attention from grounds for assertions to their consequences: it may be our practice of drawing conclusions that ultimately manifests in which sense the assertibilist misconstrues the content of our assertions.

In the next chapter I shall follow this line of thought and discuss Brandom's recent proposal as to how mastery of inferential practice may be shown to issue in knowledge of objective truth conditions. My conclusion will again be negative: Brandom fails to invalidate certain inference rules which take us from the truth of a sentence to its current assertibility or *vice versa*. This is ultimately due to the fact that he is solely concerned with the pragmatic consequences which asserting the premisses of a valid inference is bound to have.

I do not intend to leave matters there however. Rather, I shall suggest how we may eventually arrive at a manifestation of our minimalist conception of objective truth by way of combining Brandom's overall strategy with the outcome of the present chapter: instead of giving the pragmatics of valid inference in terms of the consequences of assertions, we should conceive of inferential processes as proceeding from the assumption of the premisses, and not their endorsement. This procedure will pave the way to a reconciliation of our objectivism about truth with the constraints imposed by the Manifestability Requirement—or so I shall suggest in the final section of the following chapter. The penultimate chapter will accordingly be designed to put this idea to work.

Chapter Four

In the last chapter we were concerned with a semantic theory—assertibilism—according to which the designated semantic value of a sentence consists in its being warrantably assertible. If we conceive of deductive validity in terms of the preservation of designated value from the set of premisses to the conclusion, then according to this theory the following inferences come out as deductively valid:

$$\begin{array}{c} P \\ \hline \text{It is warrantably assertible that } P \\ \\ \text{It is warrantably assertible that } P \\ \hline P \end{array}$$

Although assertibilism was revealed to be at odds with our conception of corrections without sanctions, it was not shown to be empirically inadequate, for corrections of the intended kind are assertions which qualify as such only in virtue of the content that they have. Calling an assertion a correction of this kind is therefore to imply that it does have objective truth conditions. But we wanted to know how the latter claim might be justified in the first place—where such a justification was supposed to be based on facts about language use. As should be clear by now, the observation that sentences with objective truth conditions can be used so as to make assertions by their means is of no help here because such sentences share their assertibility conditions with sentences not apt for objective truth.

Accordingly, the assertibilist's challenge is: how can it be vindicated by appeal to the use we make of the sentences in our repertoire that, in general, their designated value ought rather to be taken to consist in their being objectively true? What we ultimately have to show is that given the way speakers use their language, they conceive of some of the sentences *S* in their repertoire as satisfying the following objectivity constraints:

- (O1) *S* may (actually) be true, even if *S* fails to be at present warrantably assertible
- (O2) *S* may (actually) fail to be true, even if *S* is at present warrantably assertible.

It would indeed be a first step in this direction if we proved able to identify publicly observable features of use which demonstrate that it would be inadequate to ascribe to

speakers a conception of deductive validity according to which the aforementioned inferences turned out deductively valid. To vindicate a semantic theory according to which the designated value of a sentence does not consist in its being warrantably assertible—to the effect that the aforementioned inferences turn out deductively invalid—is only a first step in this direction however: even if "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" can be said to entail different sentences, this much does not yet demonstrate that (O1) and (O2) hold, for even if (O1) and (O2) cannot be wronged on purely conceptual grounds, it may nonetheless be ruled out *a priori* that they are satisfied.

In this chapter I intend to do three things. First, I shall review and ultimately dismiss two recent proposals of how the notion of truth-preserving inference may be recovered from an account of language use (sections 4.2 to 4.4). Both proposals are due to Robert Brandom.¹ He suggests two alternative accounts of deductive validity or entailment.² According to the first of these, deductively valid inferences ought to be explained in terms of the norm-governed practice of drawing commitment-preserving inferences. According to the second proposal, deductively valid inferences ought rather to be understood in terms of the pragmatic notion of incompatibility. I shall argue that both proposals fail and offer a diagnosis as to why they are bound to do so.

Secondly, I shall give a first sketch of how the highlighted problems may be circumvented (section 4.5). I shall suggest that deductive validity may be seen to be manifested in what speakers who engage in hypothetical reasoning are committed to. This construal as yet falls short of demonstrating however, that speakers who follow these rules conceive of the assertoric content of some of the sentences in their repertoire as licensing (O1) and (O2).

Thirdly, I shall therefore be concerned with the question of what else is needed in order to connect the practice of hypothetical reasoning with the manifestation of (O1) and (O2) (section 4.6). Here my main contention will be that in certain contexts hypothetical reasoning may already be seen to manifest an objectivist conception of

¹ Brandom [MIE].

² Brandom opposes the view according to which all deductively good inferences are formally valid inferences, or formally valid inferences with suppressed premisses; [MIE]: 97-105. Thus, he intends to include materially good inferences such as

$$\frac{x \text{ is a bachelor}}{x \text{ is male}}$$

and treat them as primitive(ly good). For his account of formal validity, see for instance [MIE]: 135. My own proposal—as sketched in section (4.5)—will likewise be concerned with the broader notion of analytic consequence or entailment rather than logical consequence. Nevertheless, I shall continue to use the term "deductive validity" (rather than "goodness") in order to characterise the inferences both Brandom and I seek to account for.

truth, provided we can render intelligible why it occurs in these contexts at all. In order to do so we must reassess what it is to strive for objective truth and what it is to commit oneself to its obtaining. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

4.1 *Truth and Inference*

The position developed and defended by Brandom belongs to a family of views which try to ground semantics in a theory of linguistic practice. According to these views semantic facts are ultimately determined by, or just consist of, facts about the proper use of language. This general claim is based on the observation that what we say by means of a sentence depends on how we actually use this sentence. On the other hand, this claim is answerable to the fact that the use we make of a given sentence is constrained by norms which we may now and then fail to satisfy, hence its appeal to the *proper* use of language. Still such norms are not conceived to be independent from our actual practice either, for we cannot be said to be bound by norms no one ever tries to satisfy. In other words, Brandom unconditionally accepts the Manifestability Requirement.

At the same time however, Brandom's theory of meaning is meant to mark a departure from the traditional picture of how semantics and pragmatics are related to each other. The orthodox set-theoretic view of semantics takes truth (or satisfaction) as its fundamental notion and defines others in its terms. The task of pragmatics accordingly becomes to devise an account of how speakers may use a given sentence in such a way that this sentence is being endowed with a specific set of truth conditions. Brandom's position on the other hand, rests on an inferentialist conception of semantics in which the notion of goodness of inference plays the key role: it is ultimately by appeal to this notion that other semantic concepts such as truth are to be explained. His pragmatics is correspondingly designed to ground this notion in inferential practice.

Just as a proponent of the traditional view is bound to give an account of goodness of inference, so too is a proponent of inferentialist semantics bound to give an account of truth (or satisfaction) conditions. Consequently, Brandom sets himself the task to devise an account of propositional content—or what Frege termed 'judgeable content'—without yet invoking the concept of truth.³ According to his proposal, such contents ought rather to be conceived of in terms of the inferential roles those sentences play which are supposed to express them.⁴

Inferential roles are in turn understood in terms of proprieties of inference. Roughly speaking, two sentences have the same inferential role only if substituting one for the other in a given inference never turns that inference from a good one into a bad

³ [MIE]: 93-94, 202.

⁴ [MIE]: chapter two.

one.⁵ Here the notion of goodness of inference serves as a primitive of semantic theory which receives its interpretation within pragmatics. Ultimately, proprieties of inferences are supposed to be explained in terms of the practice of assessing such inferences as correct or incorrect. In Brandom's own words:

[e]xpressions come to mean what they mean by being used as they are in practice [...]. Content is understood in terms of proprieties of inference, and those are understood in terms of the norm-instituting attitudes of taking or treating moves as appropriate or inappropriate in practice. A theoretical route is accordingly made available from what people *do* to what they *mean*, from their *practice* to the *contents* of their states and expressions. In this way a suitable pragmatic theory can ground an inferentialist semantic theory; its explanations of what it is in practice to treat inferences as correct are what ultimately license appeal to material proprieties of inference, which can then function as semantic primitives.⁶

The basic idea underlying this proposal seems to be that the goodness of inferences can be assessed by speakers quite independently from an assessment of either their premisses or conclusions. This would appear to have the following advantage: if propositional content can be explained independently of truth, then truth can be defined in terms of sameness of propositional content along familiar lines:

$$\forall S[S \text{ is true} \leftrightarrow \Sigma P(S \text{ says that } P \ \& \ P)].^7$$

At the same time however, proprieties of inference—hence ultimately propositional contents—may well be determined by the speakers' treatment of inferences as correct, while truth can nonetheless remain objective and independent from any such assessment.⁸ In fact Brandom intends to show

how, starting with the sort of norms [...] about which the community's all-inclusive practical assessment cannot be mistaken [...] genuine, and therefore *objective*, conceptual norms can be elaborated. These bind the community of concept-users in such a way that it is possible not only for individuals but for the whole community to be mistaken in its assessments of what they require in particular cases.⁹

⁵ See Brandom [MIE]: 347. A more accurate formulation of this inferentialist account of sameness of content will be discussed in section (4.4) below.

⁶ [MIE]: 134.

⁷ [MIE]: 299-305; cf. as well Brandom [PPT]: 84-92. The definition presented here differs however from Brandom's adaptation of the prosentential theory of truth in several respects. Most notably, "true" is here used as a proper predicate. Still this definition is minimalist in spirit, and the syntactic classification of "true" a minor issue. Note that the use of substitutional quantification allows us to construe "S says that P" as "S has the same content as 'P'". Accordingly, the former locution can be explained in terms of sameness of inferential role without any recourse to truth conditions.

⁸ [MIE]: 62-64, 136-40.

⁹ [MIE]: 54.

This passage indeed suggests that Brandom conceives of proprieties of inference as something about which the speech community's "all-inclusive practical assessment cannot be mistaken".¹⁰ Brandom argues however, that

[a] semantically adequate notion of correct inference must generate an acceptable notion of conceptual content. But such a notion must fund the idea of *objective* truth conditions and so of *objectively* correct inferences. Such proprieties of judgment and inference outrun actual attitudes of taking or treating judgments and inferences as correct. [...]

"This means that although the inferentialist order of explanation may start with inferences that are correct in the sense that they are accepted in the practice of a community, it cannot end there. It must somehow move beyond this sense of correctness [...]. Pursuing the inferentialist order of explanation [...] accordingly requires explaining how—if actual practical attitudes of taking or treating as correct institute the normative statuses of materially correct inferences, and these material proprieties of inference in turn confer conceptual content—that content nonetheless involves objective proprieties to which the practical attitudes underlying the meanings themselves answer."¹¹

Thus Brandom contends that in order to make room for the objectivity of truth, we have to invoke a notion of correctness of inference that is likewise objective. But why should the idea that we cannot all be mistaken about what follows from a given set of premisses be in tension with the idea that we may all be mistaken about whether these premisses are true? By the same token: why should the fact that the correctness of inferences is determined by our taking them to be correct leave no room for the fact that our taking the premisses to be true does not determine their truth?¹² In raising these questions I do not wish to suggest that deductive validity, say, is indeed determined by what we actually take to be deductively valid. I do wish to call attention however to the fact that whether or not this is so is not yet settled by the aptness of premisses and conclusions for objective truth.¹³

¹⁰ Cf. as well [MIE]: 133-34; and Brandom [A]: 640-41, 644-45.

¹¹ [MIE]: 137.

¹² These questions may be seen to provide the starting point for Wittgenstein's renunciation of Frege's view of logical reasoning. In [GG/I]: xiv-xix, Frege described logical laws as a means to attain the truth, rather than as a means to preserve it once recognised. Logical reasoning would then have to be regarded as an exercise of our *noûs*: its model is the recognition of logical truths, rather than the application of a technique operating on the objects of recognition. Given Frege's conception of truth as objective—hence independent from any such exercise—our logical reasoning would thus be liable to error or cognitive shortcoming, in just the same sense in which our recognition of the truth of the premisses of an inference is. Obversely, what we ought to infer would be determined by the way things are to the same extent to which what we ought to hold true is so determined. Wittgenstein on the other hand, conceived of our logical reasoning as the application of a technique for whose evaluation the notion of objectivity seems to be just as inappropriate as for the evaluation of exercises of other practical skills (such as driving a car or dancing the Tango); cf. e.g. [RFM]: III § 5, IV §§ 18, 50, V §§ 1-5, 14-15, 23-24, 36, 45-46.

¹³ Note that only the first paragraph quoted speaks to the idea that the objective truth of premisses and conclusions calls for a sense in which inferences are objectively correct. The second paragraph merely states that an inferentialist notion of judgeable content must leave room for the idea that premisses and conclusions of an inference may be objectively true.

The obligation to leave room for a standard of objective correctness which inferences have to meet may indeed cast some doubt on the prospects of Brandom's overall pragmatist programme according to which norms are to be conceived of as instituted by attitudes.¹⁴ But for present purposes we can leave these worries to one side. Even if a distinction can somehow be drawn between what speakers *ought* to treat as a correct inference and what they *actually* treat as such, Brandom still owes us an account of what it is to treat an inference as correct which does not appeal to a prior notion of objectively correct, *viz.* deductively valid, inference. Otherwise he would not have shown how semantic facts are determined by facts about proper use.¹⁵ As I shall argue however, on both his accounts of what it is to treat an inference as deductively valid, it follows that speakers ought to treat inferences as deductively valid which are not in fact so.

According to Brandom, a conceptual norm is objective only if we may all be mistaken about whether or not a given object falls under the concept which records that norm. Concepts essentially form part of judgeable contents which may be true or false. Given the Equivalence Schema:

(ES) it is true that P iff P,

we may accordingly say that the concept of truth itself records an objective norm provided there are claims about whose truth-value we may all be mistaken.¹⁶

This independence of truth from our actual attitudes towards it—what Brandom calls its 'attitude-transcendence'¹⁷—is surely not all there is to truth's objectivity. At least with respect to discourses in which warrants to assert tend to be non-factive, we wish to hold that there are some sentences, notably empirical ones, which satisfy (O1)

¹⁴ [MIE]: 133-34.

¹⁵ On the orthodox view of the relation between semantics and pragmatics, the Manifestability Requirement does not necessarily force an account of truth in terms of what speakers ought to hold true, where the latter notion is independently available. On this view, what has to be explained in pragmatic terms is that a given sentence has a specific set of truth conditions, not that it has a particular truth-value. Still it seems likely that such an explanation will be forthcoming only if we have an independent grasp of what it is to strive for, and commit oneself to, the truth.

¹⁶ In saying so, I am well aware of the fact that Brandom denies that "true" denotes a property; [MIE]: 325-27. His reason for this denial is ultimately that in the version of deflationism he favours, "true" does not even function as a predicate. Whatever the merits of these syntactic considerations, it is nonetheless clear that one cannot on the one hand talk about conceptual norms (sharing the property of) being objective, and deny on the other that it makes sense to speak of truth conditions *whose obtaining* we may all be mistaken about, have no reason to believe in, *etc.* It is in this more or less formal sense that I intend my use of "objective truth" to be understood. If this is in tension with deflationism as Wright has argued in chapter one of his [TO], then so much the worse for Brandom.

¹⁷ Brandom [ONR]: 6-7; cf. as well [MIE]: 78.

and (O2). Even an anti-realist will concede that there are such sentences. Given that this is a conception of objectivity Brandom shares—and the way he sets things up strongly suggests that he does ¹⁸—it is incumbent upon him to show, by appeal to the way speakers behave or ought to behave, that they can be said to conceive of the content expressed by a sentence in such a way that both (O1) and (O2) hold good. In particular then Brandom must show on the basis of his account of what it is to treat an inference as deductively valid, that speakers ought not to treat either of the aforementioned inferences as deductively valid (or even ought to treat them as deductively *invalid*):

P
—————
It is warrantably assertible that P
It is warrantably assertible that P
—————
P

I shall argue however that Brandom lacks the resources to invalidate either inference in that on both of his accounts of what it is to treat an inference as deductively valid, speakers are rationally compelled to treat both inferences as deductively valid.

4.2 *Warrants to Assert*

The arguments to be presented in sections (4.3) and (4.4) rest on two principles which have already been introduced and motivated in chapter two. Before I embark on showing that Brandom lacks the resources to invalidate either of the aforementioned inferences, it will therefore be necessary to say which principles these are, and to briefly show that Brandom himself is prepared or even compelled to endorse them.

The objection I shall raise against Brandom's first proposal, as to how deductive validity may be construed in purely pragmatic terms, rests on principle (A1) with which we are by now only too familiar:

- (A1) "P" is warrantably assertible iff
 "It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible.

¹⁸ Brandom [TA]: 138; [MIE]: 121; and [ONR]: 17-25.

Brandom explicitly endorses (A1) when he contrasts truth conditions with conditions of warranted assertibility. He writes:

[w]henever

1) "The [watch] is red'

is appropriately assertible, it is equally appropriate to assert

2) 'The claim that the [watch] is red is properly assertible by me now.'

For the latter just makes explicit, as part of the content that is asserted, what is implicit in [...] what one is doing in [...] asserting [the former]. And yet, we want to say that the contents are different. Though the two claims have the same *assertibility* conditions, they have different *truth* conditions.¹⁹

Thus it will not be inappropriate to appeal to (A1) in assessing Brandom's theory of meaning because this theory does not presuppose that (A1) fails.

Let us now turn to the second principle on whose acceptance I shall rely. As already mentioned in section (2.3) of chapter two, warrants for claims can be classified according to whether they are *mandatory* or *purely permissive*. Whether a warrant is mandatory at a given time depends on the sum total of warrants available at that time. We may therefore say that a warrant mandates endorsement of "P" relative to a state of information *j* just in case, for all speakers *x*, if *x* is in *j*, *x*'s refusal to endorse "P" (or her readiness to endorse "~P") in face of that warrant, ought not to be tolerated. No state of information will contain mandatory warrants for both "P" and its negation. Otherwise, it would be mandated to hold contradictory beliefs. By contrast, a warrant is a purely permissive warrant for "P" relative to *j* just in case, for all speakers *x*, if *x* is in *j*, it is not the case that *x*'s refusal to endorse "P", despite the existence of this warrant, ought not to be tolerated. Purely permissive warrants for "P" can co-exist with purely permissive warrants for its negation.

One part of the objection I shall raise against Brandom's second proposal proceeds from the assumption that there is a class of sentences the warrants for whose assertion are mandatory in the sense explained. Even so, rejecting this assumption as incorrect does not salvage this second proposal from succumbing to the other part of the objection, but merely makes its failure less dramatic.

If, in general, the warranted assertibility of a sentence was solely a matter of whether it can consistently be asserted, then this assumption could not be made.²⁰ For either "P" is consistent with what else one believes and so is its negation, or only "P" is

¹⁹ [ONR]: 18; cf. as well [MIE]: 121, 604; and [TA]: 139-49.

²⁰ In some places Brandom does indeed suggest this reading of what he terms "entitlement", where entitlement to P is meant to imply the warranted assertibility of P; [MIE]: 160, 606.

consistent with what else one believes, but the warranted assertibility of its negation could always be established by fiddling with what else one believes: *ex hypothesi*, one's background beliefs have no privileged status, but must merely cohere with what else one believes, *e.g.* the negation of "P".

The idea that warranted assertibility is solely a matter of consistency however, is anyway a bad one. Consider the case in which someone gathered overwhelming inductive evidence for the claim that all crows are black—say she has observed a million black crows, but not a single non-black crow. It would still be consistent with this evidence that there was a thus far unobserved non-black crow. But surely this alone will never entitle the speaker to a commitment to the claim that there was such a crow. It is of no use here to reply that given the evidence, commitment to certain principles of rational belief formation precluded entitlement to the claim that there was such a crow. Nor are these principles inconsistent with the conjunction of both this claim and the given evidence, nor is there *ex hypothesi* anything in virtue of which the speaker *ought* to commit herself to these principles.

What goes for the suggestion that entitlement is solely a matter of consistency, goes for the more general idea that warrants are never mandatory, but always purely permissive. A warrant is purely permissive just in case it does not rationally compel endorsement of what it warrants—this just means that this warrant would permit endorsement of the negation of what it is a warrant for, or at least the suspension of judgement on the matter. If all warrants were purely permissive however, the notions of rational disagreement and correction would be empty.²¹

Indeed, Brandom himself concedes that some claims such as observation reports have the status of being justified by default, and that any challenge of this status must itself be backed up by warrants.²² He says of such claims:

[t]hey are not immune to doubt in the form of questions about entitlement, but such questions themselves stand in need of some sort of warrant or justification.²³

Brandom argues that quite generally the responsibility to *demonstrate* one's entitlement to an assertoric commitment

is conditional on the commitment's being subject to a challenge that itself has, either by default or by demonstration, the status of an entitled performance. Indeed, the simplest way to implement such a feature of the model of asserting is to require that the performances that have the significance of challenging entitlements to assertional commitments

²¹ On the unintelligibility of a purely permissive discourse, see Wright [TO]: 97-99; on the presumptive acceptability of observation reports, see [TO]: 161-68.

²² [MIE]: 176-80, 204-206, 213-29.

²³ [MIE]: 177.

themselves be assertions. [...] Then challenges have no privileged status: their entitlement is on the table along with that of what they challenge.²⁴

It follows that in the absence of defeating warrants, the refusal to endorse what enjoys the status of being justified by default will be liable to penalty. For instance, as long as there are warrants for observation reports these warrants will mandate endorsement of what is being reported, and if they do not, the reports will no longer qualify as warrantably assertible because they have been defeated.

I shall therefore assume that Brandom not only subscribes to (A1), but furthermore concedes that the class of mandatory warrants is not empty. With these two theses being in place, let me now turn to his first proposal of how deductive validity may be construed in purely pragmatic terms.

4.3 *Deductive Validity and Commitment-Preserving Inferences*

In Brandom's view, deductive validity is to be conceived of in terms of what speakers ought to treat as a deductively valid inference where the notion of treating an inference as deductively valid is independently available.²⁵ If it turns out that given Brandom's account of this notion, speakers are rationally compelled to treat an inference as deductively valid although it is deductively invalid, deductive validity cannot then be determined by what speakers ought to treat in this way.

According to Brandom's first proposal speakers treat an inference as deductively valid if and only if they take anyone committed to its premisses as being committed to its conclusions. In other words, deductive validity is explained in terms of the propriety of commitment-preserving inferences which is in turn determined by what speakers ought to do who attribute such commitments (to themselves or to others).²⁶

In Brandom's view, assertoric commitments just as commitments in general have to be conceived along two normative dimensions: *authority* and *responsibility*. Thus, an agent incurs a commitment just in case (i) others are authorised to attribute this commitment to her, and (ii) others are authorised to rely on her future performance and to sanction non-performance. Indeed, (ii) explains what it means for someone to be authorised to attribute a commitment to others—*i.e.* (ii) explains the practical significance of (i). Responsibility enters in the following way: in authorising others to attribute a commitment to oneself, one authorises them to hold one responsible for performing in a certain way, hence undertakes the responsibility to perform in that

²⁴ [MIE]: 178.

²⁵ [MIE]: xvi, 83-84, 132-34, 143-45.

²⁶ [MIE]: 168, 189.

way.²⁷ For instance, if I promise to do x , then I authorise others to treat me as having promised to do x . Thereby I authorise them to rely on my actually doing x , hence to impose sanctions in case I do not. In this way I undertake the responsibility to do x since I authorise others to hold me responsible for doing x .

The kind of performance associated with a given commitment varies depending on the kind of commitment undertaken. Brandom argues that in the case of assertoric commitments, *i.e.* commitments to claims, these performances include (a) undertaking commitments to further claims which others ought to treat one as being committed to in treating one as being committed to the original claim, (b) showing one's readiness to offer, or accept, the original claim as a reason for other claims and finally, (c) demonstrating one's entitlement to the original claim if challenged.²⁸

I shall now argue that it can be shown, on the basis of Brandom's conception of assertoric commitments alone, that the following inference must be treated as commitment-preserving:

P

It is warrantably assertible that P

In order to assess whether this inference indeed comes out as deductively valid on Brandom's view, we merely have to check whether anyone who is treated as being committed to the premiss ought to be treated as being committed to all claims entailed by the conclusion. In other words, we have to check whether anyone asserting "P" must be considered as being committed to the analytic consequences of "It is warrantably assertible that P".²⁹

To begin with, if in committing myself to the claim that P I authorise others to sanction my inability to demonstrate my entitlement to this commitment, I thereby authorise them to sanction my inability to demonstrate my entitlement to the claim that it is warrantably assertible that P. For if I fail in my attempt to display that I have a warrant for the latter, I thereby fail in my attempt to display that I have a warrant for the former and *vice versa*. According to (A1), the warrants for either claim are the same.

But not only is a vindication of the premiss a vindication of the conclusion. The conclusion states that such a vindication is possible. Now, if others are at all to rely on

²⁷ [MIE]: 159-75.

²⁸ [MIE]: 168-80, 188, 196.

²⁹ The analytic consequences of a sentence S comprise more than those sentences which S entails already by virtue of its logical form, *i.e.* its logical consequences. For instance, "Paul is unmarried" is an analytic consequence of "Paul is a bachelor": the latter entails the former, albeit not solely by virtue of its logical form. The discussion will proceed in terms of analytic rather than logical consequence, because Brandom has the broader notion in mind when he speaks of the propriety of deductive inferences. See footnote 2.

my ability to demonstrate my entitlement to P—say in endorsing P on the basis of my testimony—then they must take me as being committed to there being a warrant for P. In other words, they must take me as being committed to the claim that it is warrantably assertible that P. If I were not so committed, I would lack the authority to make others rely on my ability to vindicate P. Thus, if I left it entirely open whether it was warrantably assertible that P or even denied that it was, then no one would ever give anything on my undertaking the obligation to vindicate P, hence neither on my commitment to P.³⁰

Since *ex hypothesi* in committing oneself to a given claim one commits oneself to all its analytic consequences, anyone who is treated as being committed to the claim that P ought therefore to be treated as likewise being committed to every analytic consequence of the claim that it is warrantably assertible that P. Accordingly, the above inference proves to be commitment-preserving.

Let us now have a look at whether the following inference comes out as deductively valid too, if deductive validity is taken to consist in the propriety of commitment-preserving inferences:

It is warrantably assertible that P

P

In committing oneself to its premiss one commits oneself to the existence of a warrant for it. According to (A1), this warrant will likewise be a warrant for the conclusion. Whether commitment to there being such a warrant for the conclusion already engenders commitment to the conclusion itself depends on the nature of that warrant. If P is a claim, warrants for which mandate its endorsement, the above inference must be treated as commitment-preserving: if one treats someone as being committed to there being a mandatory warrant for the claim that P, then one ought to treat her as thereby being committed to the claim that P.³¹

Even if the class of claims, warrants for which are mandatory, was empty however, the proof that the first inference ought to be treated as commitment-preserving is already enough to undermine Brandom's suggestion that the propriety of commitment-preserving inferences captures deductive validity. Clearly this inference is not deductively valid, hence ought neither to be treated as such. This finding, rather than dealing a death blow to Brandom's whole project, suggests how one might try to amend

³⁰ Brandom [A]: 641.

³¹ Note that Brandom himself distinguishes between the commitments undertaken by a speaker and the commitments this speaker acknowledges as having undertaken; [MIE]: 194. Thus, a speaker who is in state *j* may be committed to there being a mandatory warrant for P in *j*—hence to P—without herself acknowledging the fact.

it: given that Brandom proves able to give an adequate account of inconsistency, he has the resources to define deductive validity in terms of inconsistency.

4.4 *Inconsistency and Incompatibility*

As already pointed out, Brandom rejects the orthodox account of deductive validity in terms of preservation of truth. Rather, he reverses the order of explanation and defines truth along deflationist lines thereby drawing on a notion of sameness of content which is to be understood in terms of preservation of goodness of inference under intersubstitution.³² Deductive validity is here treated as a primitive of semantic theory.

By the same token, Brandom inverts the strategy of defining inconsistency in terms of deductive validity and negation. Rather, he defines the negation of a given sentence ϕ to be that sentence φ for which it holds that for any sentence ψ inconsistent with ϕ , there is a deductively valid step from ψ to φ .³³ Accordingly, he is bound to treat inconsistency as another primitive notion of his semantic theory.³⁴

As soon as the notion of inconsistency is available however, we no longer have any reason to treat deductive validity as primitive. We can then define the deductive validity of a given inference

$$(1) \quad \frac{P}{Q}$$

as follows: (1) is deductively valid just in case, for any sentence φ inconsistent with "Q", φ is likewise inconsistent with "P". Indeed according to Brandom's second proposal, this is the way to go.³⁵

Brandom explains inconsistency in terms of incompatibility: two sentences ϕ and φ are *incompatible* just in case commitment to (the claim effected by the assertion of) ϕ precludes entitlement to (a commitment to the claim effected by the assertion of) φ and *vice versa*.³⁶ We may therefore say with Brandom that ϕ and φ are mutually inconsistent

³² [MIE]: 347-48.

³³ [MIE]: 115, 160.

³⁴ [MIE]: 132-34.

³⁵ Since Brandom conceives of inconsistency as yielding an account of strict implication, one may wonder why he advertises the propriety of commitment-preserving inferences as capturing deductive validity in the first place; [MIE]: 132.

³⁶ [MIE]: 160, 196.

just in case speakers ought to treat anyone committed to ϕ as not being entitled to ϕ and ought to treat anyone committed to ϕ as not being entitled to ϕ .

By the same token, it would appear that the notion of analytic consequence can now be defined in terms of *incompatibility-entailment* where ϕ incompatibility-entails ψ if and only if any sentence incompatible with ϕ is incompatible with ψ .³⁷ Thus ψ is an analytic consequence of ϕ just in case for any sentence ν for which it holds that speakers ought to treat anyone committed to ν as not being entitled to ϕ and *vice versa*, speakers likewise ought to treat anyone committed to ν as not being entitled to ψ and *vice versa*. In the same vein, ϕ can be said to be logically equivalent to ψ just in case ϕ incompatibility-entails ψ and ψ incompatibility-entails ϕ . The negation of ϕ can be defined as that sentence which is incompatibility-entailed by any sentence incompatible with ϕ .³⁸ Brandom even suggests defining sameness of content in terms of sameness of incompatibles.³⁹

Brandom's account of inconsistency rests on the idea that commitment to a given claim *precludes* entitlement to others. However, it is hard to see how, apart from very special cases, this might be so. Such special cases may include avowals like "I am in pain", or observation reports made by an appropriately situated cognitively unimpaired and reliable perceiver. Thus the very fact that someone asserts "I am in pain" may be taken to undermine any entitlement to the claim that she is not. But generally the fact that someone asserts that P or is committed to the claim that P, does not in itself bereave any claim to the contrary of its warranted assertibility.⁴⁰ In order to give sense to Brandom's idea of a preclusion of entitlements by commitments, we must accordingly seek an appropriate notion of entitlement that may after all fill the bill.

To begin with, entitlement to a given claim understood as a status of speakers, will not solely consist in the existence of warrants for the assertion of that claim.⁴¹ Rather it will furthermore depend on whether the speaker can avail herself of such warrants. For instance: even if it is warrantably assertible that Paul is in pain, because Paul has sincerely asserted "I am in pain", still someone who held that Paul is completely neurotic would be debarred from justifying her claim that Paul is in pain by means of referring to his avowal. In this sense commitments might be said to preclude entitlements.

³⁷ [MIE]: 132, 160.

³⁸ [MIE]: 114-15.

³⁹ [MIE]: 160.

⁴⁰ Cf. Wright [CoB]: 7-8.

⁴¹ [MIE]: 190-91.

Obviously the case at hand yields no example of two inconsistent sentences: "Paul is a complete neurotic" and "Paul is in pain" are perfectly consistent. The incompatibility of two sentences ϕ and φ does not just require that commitment to ϕ precludes entitlement to φ , but also that commitment to φ precludes entitlement to ϕ . Accordingly, what we would have to show in order to present a counterexample to Brandom's analysis of inconsistency is that commitment to "Paul is in pain" precludes entitlement to "Paul is a complete neurotic".

So far this has not been our intention however. All we tried to do was give sense to the idea that commitments might preclude entitlements. Until now, we could give sense to this idea only by appeal to pairs of sentences, one of which related to the pedigree of the evidence that could be adduced in support of the other. It might accordingly be objected that generally, inconsistent sentences do not stand in this relation to each other. This objection to Brandom's account of inconsistency is certainly misguided, for the following inferences *are* deductively valid:

P
—————
Any evidence suggesting that \sim P is misleading
\sim P
————— ⁴²
Any evidence suggesting that P is misleading

Still there is a general difficulty with Brandom's analysis of inconsistency that bears on the way in which a preclusion of entitlement can be manifested in the practice of treating each other's moves as correct or incorrect. Any argument to the effect that for some ϕ and φ not entailing each other and any ψ inconsistent with ϕ , rational speakers cannot help but treat anyone committed to φ as not being entitled to ψ and cannot help but treat anyone committed to ψ as not being entitled to φ either, will eventually undermine Brandom's account of inconsistency. And such arguments can be given.

As we have seen in section (4.3), anyone committed to (the claim effected by the assertion of) ϕ is bound to undertake a commitment to there being warrants for asserting ϕ . Let ' $W\phi$ ' abbreviate ' ϕ is warrantably assertible' and let ' $C\phi$ ' be short for

⁴² Cf. Cargile [JMD]: 218. Here, "misleading" merely means "pointing away from the truth". The evidence quantified over in the conclusions is evidence that can actually be attained: "P" would not entail the subjunctive conditional "If there was evidence suggesting that \sim P, it would nevertheless be true that P". For, the nearest possible worlds in which evidence for \sim P is available may be worlds in which P fails to be true.

'an assertoric commitment to ϕ is undertaken'; then we can express this feature of assertoric commitments by saying that the following principle should hold:

(CO) $C\phi \rightarrow CW\phi$.

By the same token however, one can only be said to be entitled to one's commitment to the truth of ϕ if one is also entitled to one's commitment to there being warrants for ϕ .⁴³ Let 'E ϕ ' be short for 'one is entitled to asserting ϕ '; then we can express this by saying that the following principle should hold:

(EN) $E\phi \rightarrow EW\phi$.

Let us assume that there are some ϕ warrants for whose assertion are mandatory: they will cease to warrant ϕ as soon as ' $\sim\phi$ ' becomes warranted. In these cases the following principles should also hold:

(M₁) $EW\phi \rightarrow E\sim W\sim\phi$

(M₂) $EW\sim\phi \rightarrow E\sim W\phi$.

Whatever Brandom has in mind when he suggests that commitment to ϕ *precludes* entitlement to ' $\sim\phi$ ' and *vice versa*, it seems fair to interpret him in such a way that, according to him, the following principles come out true:

(B₁) $\sim(C\phi \ \& \ E\sim\phi)$

(B₂) $\sim(C\sim\phi \ \& \ E\phi)$.

However, even if one might reasonably argue that Brandom is not committed to (B₁) and (B₂)—say, because neither ' $C\phi \ \& \ E\sim\phi$ ' nor ' $C\sim\phi \ \& \ E\phi$ ' is contradictory—it must be acknowledged that he is at least committed to the claim that both ' $C\phi \ \& \ E\sim\phi$ ' and ' $C\sim\phi \ \& \ E\phi$ ' describe states of affairs which, in some sense of "ought", ought not to be tolerated. Whatever this sense of "ought" is ultimately thought to be, it will be shown that there are mutually consistent sentences ϕ and ψ such that, in the very same sense, both ' $C\phi \ \& \ E\psi$ ' and ' $C\psi \ \& \ E\phi$ ' describe states of affairs which ought not to be tolerated. For expository purposes, I shall nonetheless assume that (B₁) and (B₂) hold:

⁴³ Cf. Brandom [TA]: 139-49; [MIE]: 121, 604; Wright [TO]: 18-19.

the results we are going to arrive at may then be reinterpreted accordingly without yet losing their force.

With (CO), (EN), (M₁), (M₂), (B₁) and (B₂) being in place, we can prove that, for any sentence ϕ warrants for whose assertion are mandatory, ϕ and 'W ϕ ' incompatibility-entail each other—with the undesirable effect that, according to Brandom's account of entailment in terms of incompatibility-entailment, ϕ and 'W ϕ ' turn out to properly entail each other. Thus, it can be shown that instead of refuting the assertibilist, Brandom rather works into her hands.

In order to prove that ϕ and 'W ϕ ' incompatibility-entail each other, we have to show that any sentence incompatible with ϕ is incompatible with 'W ϕ ' and that any sentence incompatible with 'W ϕ ' is incompatible with ϕ . Accordingly, we have to show that

- (i) commitment to ϕ precludes entitlement to anything incompatible with 'W ϕ '
- (ii) commitment to anything incompatible with 'W ϕ ' precludes entitlement to ϕ
- (iii) commitment to 'W ϕ ' precludes entitlement to anything incompatible ϕ
- (iv) commitment to anything incompatible with ϕ precludes entitlement to 'W ϕ '.

Recall that Brandom defines the negation of a given sentence ϕ as that sentence which is incompatibility-entailed by any sentence incompatible with ϕ . Thus, in order to prove (i) to (iv) it will suffice to show that the following four possibilities are ruled out:

- (a) $C\phi \ \& \ E\sim W\phi$
- (b) $C\sim W\phi \ \& \ E\phi$
- (c) $CW\phi \ \& \ E\sim\phi$
- (d) $C\sim\phi \ \& \ EW\phi$.

We can show that (a) to (d) are ruled out on the basis of the following four proofs. Let p be an arbitrary sentence warrants for whose assertion are mandatory; then:

1	(1)	$Cp \ \& \ E\sim Wp$	Ass. (a)
1	(2)	Cp	1, &-E
1	(3)	CWp	2, CO, modus ponens
1	(4)	$E\sim Wp$	1, &-E
1	(5)	$CWp \ \& \ E\sim Wp$	3, 4, &-I
1	(6)	\perp	5, B ₁ , \sim -E
	(7)	$\sim(Cp \ \& \ E\sim Wp)$	1, 6, \sim -I

1	(1)	$C\sim Wp \ \& \ Ep$	Ass. (b)
1	(2)	Ep	1, &-E
1	(3)	EWp	2, EN, modus ponens
1	(4)	$C\sim Wp$	1, &-E
1	(5)	$C\sim Wp \ \& \ EWp$	3, 4, &-I
1	(6)	\perp	5, B ₂ , \sim -E
	(7)	$\sim(C\sim Wp \ \& \ Ep)$	1, 6, \sim -I
1	(1)	$CWp \ \& \ E\sim p$	Ass. (c)
1	(2)	$E\sim p$	1, &-E
1	(3)	$EW\sim p$	2, EN, modus ponens
1	(4)	$E\sim Wp$	3, M ₂ , modus ponens
1	(5)	CWp	1, &-E
1	(6)	$CWp \ \& \ E\sim Wp$	4, 5, &-I
1	(7)	\perp	6, B ₁ , \sim -E
	(8)	$\sim(CWp \ \& \ E\sim p)$	1, 7, \sim -I
1	(1)	$C\sim p \ \& \ EWp$	Ass. (d)
1	(2)	$C\sim p$	1, &-E
1	(3)	$CW\sim p$	2, CO, modus ponens
1	(4)	EWp	1, &-E
1	(5)	$E\sim W\sim p$	4, M ₁ , modus ponens
1	(6)	$CW\sim p \ \& \ E\sim W\sim p$	3, 5, &-I
1	(7)	\perp	6, B ₁ , \sim -E
	(8)	$\sim(C\sim p \ \& \ EWp)$	1, 7, \sim -I.

Hence, p and ' Wp ' incompatibility-entail each other and, according to Brandom, thus properly entail each other.

Now, even if it is not assumed that the warrants for p are mandatory—say, because there are no mandatory warrants at all⁴⁴—the first two proofs will still go through, with the effect that p incompatibility-entails ' Wp ' and, according to Brandom, p properly entails ' Wp '. Thus, in any case, Brandom is forced to deny that there are sentences ϕ that are apt for objective truth; hence Brandom's pragmatic account of inconsistency, entailment and negation ought to be rejected.

⁴⁴ This is indeed suggested by Brandom [MIE]: 160, 606.

4.5 Hypothetical Reasoning

Brandom's normative pragmatics failed because it could not tell apart the pragmatic consequences of commitments to claims which are due to the analytic consequences of these claims, from those which are not.⁴⁵ The basic idea underlying Brandom's semantics was that a substantive account of what it is for the premisses of an inference to be objectively true might be avoided by way of shifting attention to the proprieties of such inferences. The implementation of inferential role semantics into a normative pragmatics however, seemed to force an account of such proprieties that undermined this very idea: the propriety of a deductive inference had to be assessed on condition of a speaker's commitment to its premisses.⁴⁶ But the claims that follow from the objective truth of P do not coincide with those claims, commitment to which is a consequence of one's commitment to P. Nor do the claims inconsistent with the objective truth of P coincide with those claims, lack of entitlement to which is a consequence of one's commitment to P.

Brandom's lack of awareness of this difficulty may be due to his belief that logical operators such as the conditional make explicit what is implicit in inferential practice.⁴⁷ If the conditional made explicit what is implicit in inferential practice, then "If P, then it is warrantably assertible that P" would have to count as correct just in case the inference from "P" to "It is warrantably assertible that P" was treated as good. Since this conditional does not count as correct, Brandom concludes that neither can the inference be treated as good.⁴⁸ But if the conditional is merely a device to express the propriety of inferences, then the propriety of inferences must be explained without recourse to our prior grasp of the conditional. Brandom's account of what counts as a good inference however, validated the inference in question. But then either there is more to our understanding of the conditional than what is embodied in our inferential practice—the Deduction Theorem fails—or else Brandom has misidentified the practice engagement in which is sufficient for a grasp of the conditional. Either way Brandom's account is defective.

Whereas in asserting a conditional, a speaker does not yet commit herself to the antecedent of this conditional, the application of a rule of inference will always require a commitment to its premisses. Accordingly, if others assess whether such an application is good or bad, their assessment will bear on what the speaker is allowed or forced to do

⁴⁵ Contrary to what Brandom insists on; see for instance his appeal to the distinction between pragmatic and semantic equivalences in [MIE]: 604.

⁴⁶ [MIE]: 186.

⁴⁷ [MIE]: xviii-xx, 105-16, 381.

⁴⁸ [MIE]: 121-22.

given her commitment to the premisses.⁴⁹ If we want to give an account of the propriety of inference rules in terms of their being treated as good or bad by participants in inferential practice, then we must accordingly explain how they can be so assessed independently from an assessment of their applications. But then neither the notion of commitment-preserving inferences nor the notion of preclusion of entitlement by commitments will be of any help. This challenge may be met by shifting attention to inferences drawn given the *assumption* rather than the endorsement of their premisses. In other words, I suggest that the practice of *hypothetical reasoning* may provide the basis on which a pragmatic account of deductive validity can be given: it may rather be this practice which is made explicit by the use of conditionals.

I here presume that reasoning under an assumption is not yet the assertion of a conditional. In other words, I take it that there is a distinctive speech act or cognitive state of *assuming that P*. Consider the case in which the assumption made is a working assumption, a heuristic which guides our investigations. It is only by dint of an excessive logicism that we can deny that a working assumption effected by the use of a sentence qualifies as a freestanding use of that sentence. We can only do so by way of stretching the arrow as it were: it requires a long breath to begin by uttering "If P...", to subsequently conduct an investigation however long it may take, and finally to complete one's assertoric performance by uttering "...then Q". Indeed if this was correct and assertions were all we had to go for in hypothetical reasoning, then we could not be said to have made any linguistic move at all before uttering "...then Q", hence before our investigation had come to an end. This would leave us with no explanation of why the investigation takes the route it does—in fact, not even of why it is undertaken at all. Nor could we account for the use of "P" as a working assumption if the investigation turned out to lead nowhere and was therefore cancelled: an incomplete utterance such as "If P..." accomplishes nothing but rather counts as ill-formed. Hence I conclude that there is no reason to deny that assumptions need not be made by asserting conditionals, but can rather be effected by making a freestanding use of sentences which are *assumed* to be true. I take it that assumptions can ultimately be identified in terms of the speaker's systematic use of speech act indicators such as "I assume", "I suppose", or nonverbal analogues thereof.⁵⁰

Assumptions initiate inferential thought processes which terminate in conclusions. Conclusions are understood to be just that: the end-points of inferential processes set off by assumptions. In particular then, conclusions do not have the status of assertoric commitments, hence do not engender the obligation to demonstrate entitlement to what is being concluded. Nor are assumptions subject to norms of

⁴⁹ Brandom [A]: 645.

⁵⁰ Cf. Dummett [FPL]: 308-10.

warranted assertion: the assumption of P will be permitted even if one lacks a warrant sufficient for asserting P, indeed it will be pointless otherwise. Rather, what can be a matter of dispute is the result one ought to arrive at by reasoning under such an assumption, *i.e. which* conclusions one ought to draw. But whether a particular conclusion is permitted or not will not in turn depend on the warrantedness of the corresponding assertion either.

Assumptions are very basic attitudes. For instance, they are essential to the most primitive of logical reasoning. Therefore a reductive account of assumptions is most likely not to be had. Here it seems we are in precisely the same predicament we are in as soon as we attempt to explain what an assertion or judgement is. Nevertheless there are certain platitudes that make plain what an assumption does and does not involve.

For instance, in assuming P one does not envisage a situation in which oneself is in a position to warrantably assert it—which is of course not yet to deny that one thereby envisages a situation in which one may get into that position.⁵¹ In the same vein, nor does the assumption of P involve the assumption that P is being assumed: I may assume that mankind is extinct. Nor are assumptions anything like fictitious assertions, as they are performed on stage: in assuming P I do not pretend to be able to satisfy whatever an assertion of P commits me to. Nor does one's assumption of P necessarily lead to one's acting as if P was true: if I suppose that I can speak Italian, I do not as a consequence behave as if I spoke Italian. Sometimes however, this is the case: if the assumption of P is a working assumption, then the thought process it initiates may be accompanied by experimental set-ups which are likely to deliver results only if P.

In assuming P I am committed to draw some conclusions and not others. But that I am so committed will not itself be amongst the things which I am committed to conclude. I may be committed to believe that I am bound to draw certain conclusions, but I will not in general be committed to conclude this. This thought generalises to all assertoric commitments I may be bound to undertake whenever I make an assumption, *e.g.* that I am making this assumption, that my doing so is not pointless, hence that what I assume fails to be warrantably assertible now. Similarly, none of these claims are such that I must be taken to assume them in virtue of the fact that I assume P—that is, unless they are entailed by P.

These features of hypothetical reasoning render it likely that a problem of the kind which beset Brandom's account will not arise once we conceive of analytic consequence in terms of what a speaker is committed to conclude from a given assumption. It was essential to Brandom's pragmatist programme that semantic relations

⁵¹ The anti-realist should agree: to assume that it is knowable that P is not yet to assume that we possess warrants which allow us to assert P. Rather, it is to assume that we may attain such warrants. Recall that the warranted assertibility of P will consist in our actually having warrants for a potential assertion of P and not in the mere possibility of having warrants for asserting P.

between contents be captured by normative relations between relations speakers bear to these contents. In his attempt to cash out analytic consequence as well as inconsistency Brandom identified at least one of the relevant relations between speakers and contents as assertoric commitments. The problem arose because one could tell from the nature of assertoric commitments alone that if a speaker undertakes an assertoric commitment to P, she ought to bear the respective other relation to a specific content Q which is neither logically entailed by nor inconsistent with P.

In contrast, all the relations which, in virtue of the nature of assumptions alone, a speaker who assumes P ought to bear to a specific content Q, will neither be assumptions nor conclusions. In other words, it cannot be established by the nature of assumptions alone what a speaker who assumes P is bound to conclude. Nor can it be determined in this way what else she must be taken to assume in assuming P. Rather, this will have to be determined by the very content of that assumption. Since the present suggestion is precisely to conceive of analytic consequence in terms of what a speaker is bound to conclude from a given assumption, there is accordingly no reason to expect that the resulting account will be undermined in the way Brandom's account is.

What remains to be shown however, is that whatever a speaker ought to conclude from the assumption of P will indeed comprise no more than the analytic consequences of P. Here we face a difficulty: usually hypothetical reasoning is undertaken for a purpose that goes beyond the purpose of arriving at all the analytic consequences of what is being assumed, thus we engage in hypothetical reasoning in order to arrive at the best explanation of witnessed phenomena. We may for instance assume that it was Jones rather than Smith who killed Cresswell, and then enquire how best to explain the clues that nonetheless make Smith a suspect. Accordingly, in some contexts the conclusions which one is *permitted* to draw from the assumption of P will comprise more than what P entails. Likewise however, there is no guarantee either that in a given context the conclusions one is *obliged* to draw from the assumption of P will not comprise more than the analytic consequences of P. It would therefore be premature to identify the two.

In order to avoid the present difficulty, we may define the analytic consequences of P as the conclusions that one is committed to draw from the assumption of P *in any context*. Contexts can here be identified with informational states. Since one may engage in hypothetical reasoning even if there are no witnessed phenomena which stand in need of explanation, the aforementioned problem does not arise. This is how it should be since drawing deductively valid inferences is not answerable to any empirical evidence, but is rather an *a priori* matter.

4.6 *Objective Truth as Designated Value*

Deductively valid inferences preserve the designated value from their premisses to their conclusions. Accordingly, if the proposed account of analytic consequence is to subserve a semantic theory according to which the designated value of a sentence consists in its being objectively true—where this is understood in terms of (O1) and (O2)—then this account should be shown to be in line with the idea that what is being preserved in an inference from this sentence to its analytic consequences is objective truth.

This does at least require that what is being assumed in hypothetical reasoning may be apt for objective truth as thus understood, and that if it is, it is being assumed to *be* objectively true. Otherwise the proposed account of deductively valid inference, even if correct, will not be shown to capture preservation of objective truth, for there would then be no objective truth to be preserved. At the same time we must ensure that in those contexts in which it is manifest that what is being assumed is assumed to be objectively true, there will be no claim amongst its conclusions that is not apt for objective truth. Otherwise what is considered to manifest a grasp of conditions of objective truth controverts the adequacy of the proposed account of analytic consequence.

On the other hand, the assumption's aptness for objective truth cannot yet be demonstrated by way of showing that it has no analytic consequences which fail to be so apt. For even if (O1) and (O2) cannot be wronged on purely conceptual grounds, it may nonetheless be ruled out *a priori* that there are sentences S such that

(O1) S may (actually) be true, even if S fails to be at present warrantably assertible

(O2) S may (actually) fail to be true, even if S is at present warrantably assertible.

In other words, "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" may not entail each other and still neither may actually be true without the other being so.

All this seems to make the prospects of the idea that grasp of conditions of objective truth is manifested in hypothetical reasoning, look dim. As I shall argue in the remainder of this chapter as well as in chapter five however, all we need to do is give hypothetical reasoning a proper context and purpose. There are contexts for which it holds that if we can provide an answer to the question why and to which end such reasoning is undertaken in these contexts, then its occurrence as well as its pragmatic consequences will become intelligible only insofar as the sentence being assumed is taken to satisfy (O1) and (O2). The prospects of this enterprise can best be appreciated

if, for the time being, we restrict attention to (O1). This objectivity constraint says that there are sentences *S* such that

(O1) *S* may (actually) be true, even if *S* fails to be at present warrantably assertible.

Counterfactual reasoning is reasoning under an assumption that is regarded as known to be false.⁵² Thus insofar as *S* allows for neutral states of information, reasoning under the assumption of the truth of *S* in such states will not be counterfactual.

The intent to comply with norms of warranted assertion will do nothing to motivate the attempt to overcome states of informational neutrality. In other words, if all we went in for was claiming what is and what is not warrantably assertible, our feat would be accomplished once we acknowledged the fact that neither *S* nor its negation is warrantably assertible. We may express this by saying that compliance with norms of warranted assertion merely requires that we do not make assertions unless they are warranted; it does not require however that we arrive at warranted assertions. As I shall suggest, it is the striving for truth—where the truth of a given sentence is not yet ruled out by the current lack of any warrants for its assertion—which fuels our attempt to move from a state of informational neutrality to a state in which either *S* or its negation is warrantably assertible.

If hypothetical reasoning under an assumption that is presently undecided can be identified as something we undertake in order to overcome states of informational neutrality, then this assumption cannot be regarded as being ruled out and reasoning under this assumption will be revealed not to be counterfactual. Whether a piece of hypothetical reasoning is undertaken with this purpose in mind will depend on whether it can be regarded as a rational response to a dissatisfaction with the present epistemic situation and whether it may, in favourable circumstances, be regarded as part of a rational deliberation process leading up to the assertion of the sentence by the use of which the assumption was effected. If it can be regarded as the latter, then it is hard to see how the subject might have conceived of her reasoning as counterfactual. Both intellectual dissatisfaction and the assertion of sentences are publicly observable phenomena and their causal links to the piece of reasoning a matter that is open to empirical investigation.

It would appear that the assertibilist cannot render intelligible why such hypothetical reasoning may play this causal role, without, at the same time, compromising its rationale. If she interpreted the assumption of *S* as the assumption that *S* is presently undecided, she would represent the subject's reasoning as utterly futile unless she regarded it as the teasing out of the assumption's analytic consequences:

⁵² The intended notion of counterfactual reasoning will be further specified below; cf. footnote 58.

given the intended interpretation however, these consequences should be the same as those following from the assumption effected by the use of ' $\sim S$ '; but they clearly are not. On the other hand, if the assertibilist interpreted the assumption of S as the assumption that S can at present be asserted or denied, she would construe the hypothetical reasoning as counterfactual. But if the reasoning was counterfactual it could neither be a rational response to one's dissatisfaction with the present epistemic state nor could it be both rationally and causally relevant for the subsequent endorsement of S .⁵³

Alternatively, the assertibilist may interpret assumptions of S as assumptions that S *becomes* warrantably assertible—to the effect that reasoning under this assumption would no longer be counterfactual if undertaken in neutral states of information. She would then construe the hypothetical reasoning, not as undertaken in order to overcome neutrality, but as undertaken in order to anticipate potential changes in informational state. By the same token however, it would seem mysterious how, in general, such an anticipation could bring about an endorsement of S . The reasoning would typically be doxastically inert, as it were, because it could itself never yield a warrant for asserting S : the assertibility of the conclusions would be presented as being hostage to an enlargement of the present state of information to which the reasoning itself would make no contribution.⁵⁴

Of course this amounts to a rejection of assertibilism only if we can furthermore show that in taking S to be apt for objective truth, we can explain why the piece of hypothetical reasoning effected by its means plays the causal role it does. The present view of the matter rests on the idea that hypothetical reasoning may have a pay-off for

⁵³ Of course, counterfactual reasoning plays an important role in testing causal claims about the actual world and thus may lead to their endorsement: assume that a given event E had not occurred; then consider what else would not have happened in consequence, *e.g.* E^* ; given that both E and E^* have occurred, you may arrive at the claim that E is a cause of E^* . Obviously, in such cases the causal claims will not themselves feature as assumptions from which the reasoning proceeds: insofar as it is meant to be counterfactual, what is being assumed in the course of this reasoning will not be something it may lead one to endorse.

⁵⁴ Arguably, anticipations of this kind may sometimes make such a contribution. Thus, Timothy Williamson has suggested to me the following example: if I had reason to believe that if it becomes warrantably assertible who got the job there will be a commotion, I may arrive at the warranted conclusion that John got the job by reasoning under the assumption that it becomes warrantably assertible that he got the job—say, because I have reason to believe that no other candidate's appointment would give rise to a commotion if it was announced. The force of this example of course depends on my having a reason to believe that if it will be announced who got the job there will be a commotion; and it is not clear how I might acquire such a reason if not through the testimony of the better informed who is already warranted in believing that John got the job. However, the cases of neutrality spoken to in the text are supposed to result, not from the ignorance of individual enquirers, but from the ignorance of the collective that prevails even after all presently available information has been pooled. The case envisaged is not of this kind. This may be a feature of the particular example chosen. It suffices to point out, however, that in cases where S does not relate to human responses to changes in informational state, reasoning under the assumption that S becomes warrantably assertible will be doxastically inert in the sense adumbrated. This alone should cast doubt on the cogency of the assertibilist's proposal.

the question of what ought to be asserted or believed. It will be the subject of the next chapter to explain what this pay-off might be. Part of this explanation will consist in a reassessment of what it is one strives for in striving for objective truth.

Thus far we have exclusively been concerned with the prospects of a vindication of (O1). Matters seem more intractable with regard to (O2) though. For here we cannot by any chance exploit anything analogous to the way in which neutral states of information allow for a difference in semantic value between "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" which is reflected in the speakers' verdicts. According to this second objectivity constraint, there are sentences S such that

(O2) S may (actually) fail to be true, even if S is at present warrantably assertible.

In any state of information in which S is warrantably assertible however, S will be presented as actually true, and *a fortiori* not as potentially failing to be actually true.⁵⁵

If hypothetical reasoning is supposed to manifest (O2) then the idea must be that reasoning under the assumption of the negation of S is called for and serves the pursuit of objective truth, even in states of information that warrant the assertion of S. Once it is conceded that hypothetical reasoning may effect the endorsement of a claim not previously warranted, then it would appear to be likewise intelligible that hypothetical reasoning may effect a change of mind. But how can it do so if it is considered to be counterfactual? And how can it be called for if there is no dissatisfaction with the present epistemic situation *vis-à-vis* our intention to arrive at warranted claims?

The fact, if it is a fact, that reasoning under the assumption of the negation of S may be called for in a given state of information although S is warrantably assertible in this state, can only be explained in terms of the commitment one undertakes in committing oneself to the objective truth of S. It is because in committing oneself to the objective truth of S, one commits oneself to more than its warrantable assertibility, that one is bound to be ready to conceive of the truth of its negation as a possibility that stands in constant need of being ruled out. Why hypothetical reasoning of the intended kind may qualify as something one is bound to do in having incurred this obligation must still be rendered intelligible in terms of the nature of this obligation. But antecedently it must be explained how this kind of reasoning can possibly play this role, for it would appear that if it is counterfactual, then it cannot possibly do so.

If (O1) and (O2) are to hold, a subject's commitments to objective truth even when undertaken in states which warrant them, must be regarded by her as, in a certain sense, 'adventurous' in that the content of these commitments exceeds what is given by the evidence: from the subject's perspective, the falsehood of the claims to which she

⁵⁵ This is most obviously so if the available warrants *mandate* the assertion of S.

has committed herself is consistent with all the warrants she may, at present, have for them. This does not mean that she is bound to take a sceptical attitude towards these commitments: all it means is that insofar as she acknowledges the fallibility of her claims, she is bound to concede that it is an epistemic possibility, however unlikely to be actualised, that despite their present confirmation these claims may turn out to be false. It is for this reason that I prefer to conceive of commitments to objective truth as *conjectures*.⁵⁶ In contrast, commitments to warranted assertibility—hence to the truth of sentences such as "It is (at present) warrantably assertible that P"—are not conjectures: if undertaken their falsity is considered as inconsistent with the sum total of the presently available information on which they are based. Commitments to non-objective truth should rather be regarded as *reports*. Reports can be understood in broadly response-dispositional terms: if cognitively unimpaired properly situated and attentive speakers make these reports, then there is no further question as to whether what they report is in fact true. Conjectures on the other hand lack this feature: by their very nature the content of conjectures goes beyond what can here and now conclusively be established. Still it holds that the report that it is warrantably assertible that P ought to be made just in case it ought to be conjectured that P. This is just the complement to the thought that assertions or beliefs whose content is determined by the conditions under which they qualify as objectively true, are based on evidence that is defeasible and non-factive.⁵⁷

If the assertion of a sentence apt for objective truth is the expression of a conjecture in the sense laid down, then even if making this conjecture is mandated by the presently available evidence, reasoning under the assumption that what is being conjectured fails to be true will not be regarded as counterfactual, in the sense that it can be ruled out, merely by reflecting on this evidence, that it is epistemically possible for the assumption to be actually false. By contrast, reasoning under the assumption that S was not now warrantably assertible would have to be taken to be counterfactual in this sense.⁵⁸ To argue that hypothetical reasoning under the assumption of the negation of S must be conceived to be counterfactual whenever S can at present warrantably be asserted is just to deny that speakers are capable of drawing the very distinction between the truth of S and its warranted assertibility which (O2) encapsulates. Once commitments to the objective truth of S are understood as conjectures and not as reports, there is accordingly no reason to deny that reasoning under the assumption that

⁵⁶ As I intend to use the term here, "conjecture" does not refer to mere hunches or guesses for which there are no rational grounds at all. Insofar as this is in tension with the resonance this term has in common usage, I am happy to concede that it is here employed as a theoretical term.

⁵⁷ Recall that throughout we are concerned with empirical discourse.

⁵⁸ In what follows I shall continue to use "counterfactual" in this epistemic sense, for it is ultimately this sense that is relevant for the contrast between counterfactual reasoning and rational deliberation processes whose end consists in re-evaluating the epistemic status of the assumption being made.

S fails to be objectively true can be part of a deliberating process that leads to a change of mind.

What remains to be done though is to show why reasoning under the assumption that S fails to be true may be called for in states which warrant the assertion of S. This cannot be explained in terms of striving for truth, *i.e.* the intention to overcome neutrality. Rather it will have to be explained in terms of the obligation one undertakes in committing oneself to the objective truth of what one asserts. If these ideas can be made to work, then again we have hit on possible causal chains of observable phenomena whose occurrence cannot be rendered intelligible along assertibilist lines, but can be rendered intelligible once (O2) is taken to hold: neither the assumption that S is not at present warrantably assertible nor the assumption that its negation will become warrantably assertible can be regarded as a starting-point for inferential thought processes which may lead to the refusal to assert S or the endorsement of its negation. The next chapter will accordingly be concerned with an explanation of how reasoning under the assumption that S fails to be true may be a rational consequence of one's commitment to the objective truth of S, and how such reasoning may rationally lead to one's endorsement of ' \sim S'. This explanation will comprise a reassessment of what it is to commit oneself to objective truth, in particular of the obligation one undertakes in doing so.

What these preliminary reflections at least show is that in trying to vindicate our objectivist conception of truth we do not only have to increase the data base for our semantic theory so as to include features of use assertibilism cannot explain, but must at the same time reassess our theory in order to show how it might rationalise these features. As already stated, the next chapter is designed to provide this theoretical framework.

In this chapter we have been concerned with the question of whether the assertibilist's challenge can be met by shifting attention from assertoric to inferential practice—the idea being that facts about this practice disclose that we treat inferences as deductively valid only if we take them to preserve objective truth. I have argued that Brandom's account of this practice falls short of adducing such facts. The diagnosis of this failure led us to a consideration of hypothetical reasoning which was conceived of in terms of inferential thought processes relating assumptions to conclusions. It was suggested that our practice of hypothetical reasoning may ultimately show that we regard inferences as deductively valid only insofar as they preserve objective truth from assumptions to conclusions. In order for this idea to work, a context had to be provided in which such reasoning may occur so as to be intelligible only if (O1) and (O2) hold.

The assertibilist's challenge has to be met by realists and anti-realists alike, for at least with respect to empirical discourse (O1) and (O2) record the absolute minimum of

what the objectivity of truth requires. The present suggestion to account for the manifestation of (O1) and (O2) in terms of hypothetical reasoning is as yet neutral with respect to the question of whether objective truth is furthermore epistemically constrained. Accordingly we may view this idea, to be developed and refined in the next chapter, as being pursued by both realists and anti-realists in their attempt to overcome assertibilism. Only then will it emerge whether on that common ground objective truth can be shown to be limited by what we are able to know.

Chapter Five

In chapter three it was argued that identifying the assertoric content of all the sentences in our repertoire with their warranted assertibility conditions is at odds with our conception of corrections. Since the assertoric content of a sentence is determined by the conditions under which it has and those under which it lacks the designated value, this comes down to saying that if we are to make sense of this conception, we must not in general identify the designated value of a sentence with its warranted assertibility. Indeed, our conception of corrections requires, if it is to be coherent, that there be sentences *S* in our repertoire whose assertoric content is determined by their truth conditions where

(O2) *S* may (actually) fail to be true, even if *S* is at present warrantably assertible.

For if what one asserts by asserting *S* cannot fail to obtain if *S* is at present warrantably assertible, then one's warranted assertion of *S* cannot subsequently be corrected by means of an assertion of its negation as soon as *S* becomes warrantably deniable.

Corrections presuppose that someone got something wrong. The refusal to do something may still be seen to be something that one does. The refusal to assert either *S* or its negation however, is undertaken with the intention not to get things wrong at the expense of not getting them right either. It would therefore be inappropriate to conceive of warranted assertions of *S* as corrections of what someone did who remained agnostic about the truth-value of *S*, when neither were there any warrants for *S* nor were there any warrants for its negation. Still insofar as we strive for objective truth, not to endorse such a truth will at least have to be considered as a shortcoming. The idea that one may attribute such a shortcoming by means of an assertion of *S* is just as much part of our conception of assertoric practice as is the idea that one may thereby correct someone who asserted its negation. Both to be corrected and to be convicted of the shortcoming not to have endorsed what is objectively true will be to incur no blame if one's epistemic rationality is not in question: the failure to endorse a truth in states in which one is not warranted to do so is an understandable failure just as the mistake to endorse a falsehood in states in which one is warranted to do so is an understandable mistake.

But if what one asserts in asserting *S* cannot obtain whenever *S* fails to be at present warrantably assertible, then one's warranted refusal to assert *S* cannot subsequently be epitomised as a shortcoming by means of asserting *S* as soon as *S*

becomes warrantably assertible. Accordingly, if the latter is a possibility then there must be sentences S such that

(O1) S may (actually) be true, even if S fails to be at present warrantably assertible.

To speak of a failure to attain truth makes sense only in the presence of a conception of truth as a desirable goal. Since to endorse a falsehood is *eo ipso* a failure to attain truth, corrections too make sense only in the presence of such a conception. By the same token however, corrections only make sense in the presence of a conception of what it is to commit oneself to the truth. For, to say that someone endorsed a falsehood is to say that she committed herself to the truth of what is actually false, not that she committed herself to a falsehood as being just that. If we follow Brandom and conceive of commitments as involving the undertaking of a certain responsibility or obligation, then we have to conclude that our conception of assertoric practice must be backed up by an account of both what it is one strives for in striving for truth and what the obligation is that one undertakes in committing oneself to the truth.

In chapter four it was suggested that (O1) and (O2) may be manifested in hypothetical reasoning provided that it can be rendered intelligible

- (i) why reasoning under the assumption effected by the use of S (or its negation) may be called for in informational states which are neutral with respect to both S and its negation, and
- (ii) how the outcome of such reasoning may provide a reason to assert S (or its negation)
- (iii) why reasoning under the assumption effected by the negation of S may be called for in informational states that license the assertion of S, and
- (iv) how the outcome of such reasoning may provide a reason to assert the negation of S (or to refuse to assert S).

For, if this can be done and if hypothetical reasoning does occur in these contexts, there are facts about the use of language which can be rendered intelligible on the basis of our objectivist conception of truth and assertoric content, but cannot be rendered intelligible if assertibilism is true.

In order to rationalise (i) and (ii), we must say more about what one strives for in striving for the objective truth of such a sentence. It is only if one strives for more than

compliance with norms of warranted assertion that in states of informational neutrality one may be driven to engage in hypothetical reasoning with the chance to attain a state that is no longer neutral; and it is only in light of what more one pursues that it becomes intelligible how hypothetical reasoning may be conducive to the satisfaction of this intention.¹ In order to rationalise (iii) and (iv) on the other hand, we must say more about the obligation one undertakes in committing oneself to the objective truth of a given sentence. It is only if one is answerable to norms that go beyond norms of warranted assertion that one may be bound to engage in reasoning under the assumption of the negation of a claim even in cases where that claim can warrantably be made; and such reasoning can effect a change of attitude towards that claim only if it may show that these norms cannot be met.

The present chapter is intended to yield an account of both the nature of objective truth as a goal of enquiry and the specific obligation that one undertakes in committing oneself to the objective truth of what one asserts—to the effect that (i) to (iv) can be rendered intelligible on its basis. If such an account can be given then we are in a position to claim that if speakers do engage in hypothetical reasoning in the contexts in question, (O1) and (O2) will be grounded in the way these speakers use their language. If this account can furthermore be motivated by reflections upon what we actually do, we are justified to conclude that in these contexts speakers ought to display the kind of behaviour that grounds (O1) and (O2).

The strategy pursued in this chapter is an indirect one though. In the beginning we will simply assume that truth is a goal of enquiry distinct from warranted assertibility and that (O1) and (O2) hold good. We will then have to address the problem to explain why, if this is so, one should nonetheless make truth claims according to whether they qualify as warrantably assertible. This problem will be called the *Problem of Rational Belief Change* and is the topic of section (5.1).

In an attempt to solve this problem I shall reassess in section (5.2) what one is obliged to do in committing oneself to the objective truth of what one asserts. I shall argue that this obligation is the obligation to causally explain the available evidence. At the same time this will furnish us with an account of what we strive for in striving for

¹ One might be tempted to say that in trying to overcome neutral states of information, one merely strives for warranted assertibility. But, in such states, there will be sentences of the form " \sim WP" and " \sim W \sim P" which *are* warrantably assertible. Why, then, should one strive for the warranted assertibility of "P" and "WP" at the expense of the warranted assertibility of " \sim WP"? It might be suggested that if one's interest is in warranted assertibility one will want the class of assertible sentences to be as large as possible, hence prefer being in a state in which three sentences are assertible (*i.e.* "P", "WP" and " \sim W \sim P") to being in a state in which, by comparison, only two sentences are assertible (*i.e.* " \sim WP" and " \sim W \sim P"). However, this is at best misleading because, on the assertibilist's view, assertions of "P" and "WP" express the very same state of affairs; and if one's interest was really in increasing the number of decided *sentences*, regardless of whether they have the same assertoric content, then one way in which one could get satisfaction would be by learning foreign languages. This is obviously not what was intended.

objective truth: in pursuing objective truth we do *inter alia* aim to give best explanations of all available data. Sentences apt for objective truth, but not their non-objective co-assertibles, are apt to feature as best explanations of the data that license their assertion.

In section (5.3) the proposed account will be defended against the objection that it conflates description with explanation. In section (5.4) I shall attempt to reconcile this account with the observation that generally the objective truth of a claim cannot itself be taken to causally explain the evidence on whose basis it may be asserted. Sometimes we arrive at warranted claims by getting to know facts which relate to something that occurred before these claims were made true; and sometimes we arrive at warranted claims on the basis of evidence for generalisations of which these claims are instances. I intend to account for these cases by way of saying more about the nature of empirical knowledge and the role which generalisations play in causal explanations.

After these objections have been answered I shall then in section (5.5) address the question of how an understanding of sentences which are apt for objective truth in this sense may be manifested in linguistic practice. There I shall argue that inferences to the best explanation go hand in hand with heuristic reasoning, *i.e.* reasoning under working assumptions. This paves the way to a vindication of (O1) and (O2) as needed.

In section (5.6) I shall attempt to motivate the proposed account according to which we engage in assertoric practice with the aim to attain knowledge-*why*. I shall do so on the basis of two considerations: first I argue that the content-determining role of warranted assertibility conditions can only be rendered intelligible if assertions are conceived of as expressions of knowledge claims; secondly I argue that viewing such claims as claims to know why certain data are available is faithful to our attempt to objectify our epistemic states by means of statements that are objectively true.

Finally in section (5.7) I shall address what we referred to in the introduction as the *Problem of Understanding* and show that the proposed account offers a solution. The chapter closes with an explanation of how speakers, by exercising the very abilities ascribed to them in the course of this account, can arrive at this account themselves.

The final chapter will then be concerned with the question of whether on the basis of the proposed account (EC*) can or cannot be vindicated. If it cannot be vindicated on this basis, then—pending a proof that this account is incoherent and pending an alternative to the Dummettian Criterion—this much will suffice for driving the moderate realist's point home: if it can be explained how communicating objectively true thoughts is possible without the conclusion being forced that truth is epistemically constrained, then any account that entails, or otherwise gives rise to, (EC*) would appear to unduly restrict our intellectual powers.

5.1 The Problem of Rational Belief Change

Corrections of assertions that fail to be true as well as attributions of the shortcoming not to have asserted what is true, provide the best model we have yet for the pattern objective truth must make. For the time being let us take it for granted that contents are objective in the sense required in order to get clearer about what is involved in our objectivist conception of truth. Only then will we be in a position to address the question of how this conception is manifested in practice.

Corrections as they have been described in chapter three, are more than changes in doxastic states. Quite generally, if one corrects one's course, one does not just go in another direction however reasonable it may be to do so. One furthermore regards the course taken till the change occurred as having been leading in the wrong direction. In the zig-zag of rational enquiry as it were, there is at most one direction which is taken to be what the enquirer's belief must be in line with in order to be 'in line with the facts':

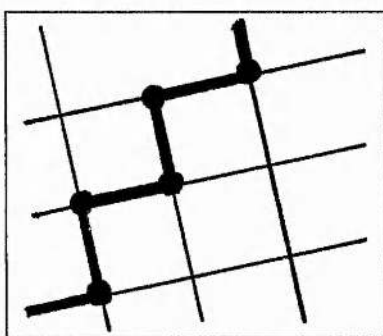


figure 1

Here the line segments represent rationally mandated commitments either to P or to $\sim P$ depending on their direction, the points represent changes of belief or states of neutral information, and the directions represent truth-values.

This picture does not yet speak to the idea of truth as the final destination of rational enquiry, but rather to the idea that there is at most one way of getting things right. If fixed at all the direction of fit will be fixed for all courses taken whether past, present or future. For the time being, we can be agnostic about whether such a direction is fixed with regard to any pair of contents P and $\sim P$ independently of our capacity to tell how it is fixed; or whether there are more than two possible yet mutually exclusive directions in which the truth may lie. All that matters is that it is *taken* to be fixed in this way rather than another by anyone who lays claim to the truth. In doing so one lays claim to stability: if true, then true once and for all—and hence independently of the fact that different turns may be or may have been mandated at different stages of enquiry. It is ultimately this feature which highlights in which sense corrections involve

retrospective ascriptions of failure. In correcting one's beliefs one intends to say: even if mandated then, what I previously held to be true was not true, *i.e.* was not so at that time already and did not become false once its negation became mandated today.

How can the fact that one subjects oneself to a stable truth norm whose satisfaction is supposed to cut across all possible routes of rational enquiry be manifested in use? That in correcting one's beliefs one considers the course previously taken to have been leading in the wrong direction, cannot reasonably be manifested in the readiness to blame oneself for having taken it. Insofar as it was rational to endorse "It is warrantably assertible that P" on the basis of the previously available information, blaming oneself for having endorsed "P" on that same basis will just be irrational since both sentences share their conditions of warranted assertibility.

What we are looking for then is a certain retrospectively ascribable failure whose ascription is less than the accusation of lack of warrant, hence of irrationality or inattentiveness on the part of the claimant. The present difficulty is that we have as yet no clear grasp of what such a failure might consist in: we need to be clear about this before we can address the question of how ascriptions of such failures can be manifested in use.

Even though corrections are to be distinguished from mere changes in doxastic states, they clearly involve the possibility of such changes. But if in making an assertion one lays claim to this assertion's being in line with the facts—and if one is at some stage entitled to make such an assertion—then one is entitled to consider every course deviating from that line whether past, present or future, as wrong-headed:

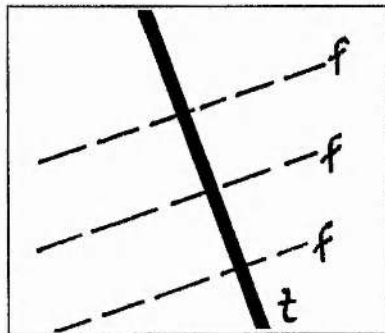


figure 2

Thus if one tries to give an account of how assertoric practice can be seen to be governed by a distinctive truth norm that complies with the idea that truth is objective and stable, one faces the difficulty of explaining how one can ever rationally come to change one's beliefs. For once it is conceded that the contestant cannot accuse the claimant of irrationality or inattentiveness—but has rather to agree that the claimant was entitled to undertake her commitment when doing so—then how can the claimant

subsequently be convicted of a shortcoming if she refuses to take the contest seriously? This suggestive thought needs elaboration.

Suppose someone argued as follows: if I am in a state of information j in which I am entitled to believe that it is true that P , then—by closure—I am entitled to believe in j whatever is entailed by P . In particular I am entitled to believe that for all states of information k , if " $\sim P$ " is warrantably assertible in k , then still P . Now assume that I enter a state of information $j+$ in which " $\sim P$ " becomes warrantably assertible. By *modus ponens* I can conclude that P holds nonetheless. Thus once entitled to believe that P , I am entitled not to change my mind irrespective of whether there is overwhelming evidence suggesting that $\sim P$.

This line of reasoning which has come to be known as the *Paradox of Dogmatism*, is certainly fallacious.² For once the subject enters $j+$, she loses her entitlement to believe that P is true, hence her entitlement to believe that for all states of information k , if it is warrantably assertible in k that $\sim P$, then still P . For if $j+$ confers warranted assertibility onto " $\sim P$ ", then in $j+$ it is no longer warrantably assertible that P . But if the subject loses her entitlement to the universally quantified conditional, she can no longer avail herself of it as a premiss in a *modus ponens* step either. Hence, neither is she entitled to conclude in $j+$ that P .³

Despite the obviousness of this reply, there is a residual problem to which our interlocutor has given only poor expression: how may she come to recognise $j+$ as conferring warranted assertibility onto " $\sim P$ " so as to mandate the withdrawal of her commitment to the truth of " P "? Setting aside areas of discourse which allow for purely permissive warrants, we may say that it is essential to norms of warranted assertion that for all states of information k , if " $\sim P$ " is warrantably assertible in k , then in k one ought to assert " $\sim P$ " rather than " P ". In the case at hand however, the subject sets out to be in a state of information in which she is entitled to believe as well that for all states of information k , if " $\sim P$ " is warrantably assertible in k , " P " will still hold. Now to the extent that she conceives of norms of warranted assertion to be of such a kind that complying with them is conducive to one's pursuit of truth, she cannot but take herself to be entitled to hold in j that there are no enlargements of j which contain information mandating the assertion of " $\sim P$ ".

It would be misleading to suggest that this attitude, even if not illegitimate in j , is already being undermined by the additional information becoming available in $j+$. For

² It first occurred in print in Harman's [TH]: 148. Both Harman and Lewis attribute it to Kripke; see Lewis [EK]: 564. It was commented upon by Ginet [KLM]: 151-61; and by Sorell [HP]: 557-75. Recently Sorensen [DJC] has sought to dissolve the paradox by means of Jackson's notion of robust conditionals. Jackson's account of robust conditionals can be found in his [AIC]. Cargile [JMD] has given yet another diagnosis of the problem.

³ Cf. Ginet [KLM]: 156-57.

this information—insofar as available to the subject at all—consists ultimately in potentials to alter the physical condition of the subject, which, though causally efficacious, do not by themselves exert a rational constraint on the subject's doxastic states. Rather, their bearing on rational belief formation is a matter determined by how they are responded to, and in the case at hand, the subject seems entitled not to show any response crediting the additional information with any such significance.

At this point it might be replied that it is simply part of the subject's linguistic competence that she responds to the information available in $j+$ by asserting " $\sim P$ " rather than " P ". In other words, if the subject refuses to respond in this way, she betrays a lack of understanding her language, hence will be corrected by her fellow speakers. But if this answer is at all satisfactory one may wonder why it was not given in the first place. The trouble is that we cannot rest content with an account of assertoric practice which leaves the rationale of engaging in that practice to one side. Thus even if a subject was trained to respond to the information available in $j+$ by asserting " $\sim P$ "—in that such a response is what compliance with rules of warranted assertion requires—she may still be incapable of seeing why playing by these rules is at all conducive to her pursuit of truth. In particular the subject may still concede that for all states of information k , if " $\sim P$ " is warrantably assertible in k , then in k one ought to assert " $\sim P$ " rather than " P ", and yet be at a loss to understand why acting on this rule in $j+$ is what she ought to do insofar as she strives for truth. In other words, she lacks a reason to retain the very conception of norms of warranted assertion which made her hesitant to view $j+$ as mandating endorsement of " $\sim P$ " in the first place. What we need then is an explanation of how the pursuit of truth can be coordinated with rules of warranted assertion in such a way that following the latter proves conducive to the former, despite the fact that what one strives for in striving for truth is something other than warranted assertibility.

We ought not to be misled by the fact that it is a platitude that in general warrants to assert a sentence issue in mandates to believe that sentence to be true. For the question is precisely: on which basis can the subject remain confident that the rules of correctness she was trained to comply with when learning her language are rules that deserve to be called rules of warranted assertion in this sense? And as assertibilism revealed, to assert may be no more than to present as warrantably assertible without there being any link to objective truth. Indeed when pressed to assert " $\sim P$ " in $j+$ by her fellow speakers, the subject may well do so and yet conceive of what she henceforth does as engaging in the practice which assertibilism so aptly describes. As regards the pursuit of objective truth, she considers the continuation of this practice as engagement in a mere game of acting-*as-if*. Call this the *Problem of Rational Belief Change*.

The Problem of Rational Belief Change can be put more succinctly as follows: if the subject is in a state of information j in which she is not only entitled to present " P "

as warrantably assertible but to believe that it is true that P , then j entitles her to believe that for all states of information k ,

if " $\sim P$ " is warrantably assertible in k , then it is true in k that P .

By her grasp of norms of warranted assertion, she also knows that

if " $\sim P$ " is warrantably assertible in k , then in k anyone who follows norms of warranted assertion ought to deny " P ".

Thus in j she is in a position to conclude that

if " $\sim P$ " is warrantably assertible in k , then in k anyone who follows norms of warranted assertion ought to deny " P " although it is true in k that P .

From this she infers the following disjunction:

either there is no such k , or there is such a k and following norms of warranted assertion in k is not conducive to one's pursuit of truth.⁴

When pressed to acknowledge that in $j+$ " $\sim P$ " is warrantably assertible, she does so only at the expense of no longer regarding her compliance with norms of warranted assertion as being conducive to her pursuit of truth. In drawing this pessimistic conclusion she avails herself of the above disjunction despite her transition from j to $j+$. Yet this can only be recognised by her as illegitimate if she can come to acknowledge that the additional information that has become available in $j+$ has any bearing—not only on what one ought to present as currently warranted—but on what one ought to believe to be true. In other words, she must come to acknowledge that in admitting " $\sim P$ " to be warrantably assertible she ought no longer to believe that P . But on the basis of which reasons should she come to acknowledge this given her epistemic history? The information available in $j+$ will not itself provide her with any reasons to this effect: it is only by already dropping her belief in the disjunction that she can come to see that in $j+$ she ought no longer to believe this disjunction. It seems that she is stuck.⁵

⁴ This inference is not intuitionistically valid. It is unobjectionable to the intuitionist however, if the discourse is effectively decidable. Suppose then that the discourse is effectively decidable.

⁵ Criticising Harman's solution to the Paradox of Dogmatism, Cargile correctly remarks that "what needs explaining is why the [subject] has to respect the [recalcitrant] evidence [...] when he started out knowing he was right. Harman's line is to get knowledge away from the [subject] so that then he has to [respect the evidence]. But it is [respecting the evidence] that undoes his knowledge claim"; [JMD]: 218.

In our attempt to overcome assertibilism, it will accordingly not yet do to adduce hitherto unaccounted-for aspects of linguistic practice which allow us to distinguish the assertoric contents of "P" and "It is (at present) warrantably assertible that P", without at the same time showing how these contents are related. For it is only if we know how they are related that we have the chance of arriving at an explanation of why one ought to believe that "P" is true under conditions under which it is mandated to assert "It is (at present) warrantably assertible that P"—and ought to stop believing "P" to be true under conditions under which it is no longer mandated to assert "It is (at present) warrantably assertible that P"—despite the fact that to assert either sentence is to lay claim to the obtaining of different kinds of conditions. This means that we must show in which sense commitment to the truth of "P" is answerable to the obtaining of those conditions under which "P" counts as warrantably assertible—without though describing these conditions in such a way that we already presuppose that their obtaining mandates commitment to the truth of "P". By the same token, we must show why these conditions—out of a wide range of conditions under which asserting "P" qualifies as conversationally appropriate—deserve to be described in this way.

5.2 *Entitlement and Explanation*

The Problem of Rational Belief Change considered in the last section made clear that while anyone committed to the truth of "P" has the obligation to withdraw this commitment once "P" ceases to be warrantably assertible, this obligation must be rendered intelligible to the speaker in terms of what she has committed herself to. On the other hand, our objectivist conception of truth entailed that while this obligation clearly is undertaken by committing oneself to the truth of "P", still what one has committed oneself to in doing so does not rule out that "P" fails to be warrantably assertible—contrary to what assertibilism requires. How can these insights be reconciled with each other?

Let us introduce a bit of terminology: call *warrants* for a sentence "P" those data which are positively relevant to the evaluation of the warranted assertibility of "P", and call *counter-warrants* against "P" those which are negatively so relevant. It is clear that all warrants for " \sim P" are counter-warrants against "P". But given the way in which I intend the notion of a counter-warrant to be understood the converse does not hold.⁶ For instance, evidence suggesting that an instrument has malfunctioned in the past may

⁶ Thus I do not wish counter-warrants to be understood in terms of what Rumfitt calls "anti-warrants"; [TW]: 103.

undermine entitlement to claims that are based on measurements executed by means of this instrument.

The warranted assertibility of a given sentence, or lack thereof, is very often no clear-cut affair but rather determined by the aggregation of diverse data which, considered on their own, suggest competing claims. Thus "P" may be warrantably assertible despite the fact that there are counter-warrants against it—including warrants for "~P" as the case may be—which are however, overruled by the warrants for it. In other words, the claim that "P" is warrantably assertible is a verdict to be reached after all warrants for and all counter-warrants against "P" have been aggregated, and the warrants for "P" prevail.⁷

It is important to recall that even if wary as to their bearing on what she ought to believe, the subject could not deny that in $j+$ counter-warrants against "P" became available. Insofar as she is not perceptually or cognitively deprived, she must acknowledge that the amount of available information has increased, and insofar as she is a fellow speaker, she must acknowledge that the additional pieces of information can be identified in terms of what they are counter-warrants against, *i.e.* assertions of "P". What she as yet lacks is an insight into why their presence can mandate withdrawal of her belief that it is true that P.

As I suggest then—and intend to explicate and defend in detail below—commitments to the objective truth of "P" engender the obligation to *explain* in terms of one's total belief set why counter-warrants against "P" become available. The point at which "P" ceases to be warrantably assertible marks the point at which this obligation can no longer be met. That this obligation is undertaken in the course of one's commitment to the truth of "P" is rendered intelligible on the basis of the further claim that assertoric commitments with objective contents are themselves inferences to the best explanation. According to this view participating in assertoric practice is essentially engaging in the business of giving causal explanations. As we shall see later on, this conception of assertoric commitments and their contents will provide us with the means to vindicate (O1) and (O2).

While sentences such as "It is warrantably assertible that P" are used to report that even if the present state of information contains counter-warrants against "P", the warrants for "P" nonetheless prevail, sentences of this kind are themselves ill-suited to contribute to an explanation of why there are counter-warrants against "P": the fact *that* a claim remains warranted relative to an enlarged body of information—even though this body of information contains recalcitrant data—does never help explain *why* any of

⁷ For example, we may have warrants that entitle us to ignore the past malfunctioning of an instrument we take to be reliable in the present case. These failures may be explained by the peculiarities of the quantities previously measured: their high temperature caused the instrument to expand, *etc.*

these data become available in the first place. Accordingly I will argue that the difference in assertoric content between "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P", hence in the kind of designated value they might take, is ultimately due to a difference in what one can *use* them for, what one can *do* with them: one but not the other can feature in explanations of a certain kind.

The subject who being in state *j* subsequently enters *j+* cannot ignore that counter-warrants against "P" have become available. Insofar as she is committed to the objective truth of "P" she is obliged to meet the charge to explain away these counter-warrants in terms of what else she is committed to. If she cannot fulfil this obligation, she must drop her belief that "P" is true.

The proposed account—intended as a joint solution to the Problem of Rational Belief Change as well as our original problem to tell apart the assertoric content of "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" in accordance with (O1) and (O2)—is open to at least four immediate objections which bring out that it is thus far insufficient:

- (1) Even if speakers give explanations of available data, it is hard to see why the obligation to give such explanations should be a *rational consequence* of their commitment to the truth.
- (2) It is certainly too strong a demand to require that one be able to explain away any recalcitrant datum in order to be entitled to a certain claim. For, this would have the discomfiting effect that one was bound to remain agnostic, although the overwhelming majority of data spoke in favour of "P", unless one proved able to account for the remaining data which would—as the case may be—confer warranted assertibility onto " \sim P" had the other ones been absent.
- (3) Insofar as the claimant's willingness to explain away recalcitrant data is supposed to reveal that "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" differ in assertoric content—in that the former but not the latter can feature in explanations of the intended kind—the explanation the claimant offers must essentially involve "P". But there is thus far no reason to believe that this is so: how can one ever explain the availability of warrants telling against "P" *in terms of* "P"? It would appear that "P" fails to serve this explanatory role to the same extent to which "It is warrantably assertible that P" does even if possibly for different reasons.

- (4) It is at least intuitively clear that there are better and worse explanations. Unless we have some quality control on explanations it would appear that a claimant might well meet the requirement by just invoking *ad hoc* explanations. To demand, as it seems reasonable to do, that whatever functions as the *explanans* must independently be warranted is most likely to lead into a circle or a regress: into a circle if "P" is said to be the *explanans* and into a regress if another sentence is supposed to do the work whose warranted assertibility must in turn be guaranteed.

These objections have some force; let us therefore draw some conclusions. Objection (1) calls attention to the fact that the claimant must already be in the business of explaining something before she attempts to explain away recalcitrant data. In particular, that "P" is at all suited to serve an explanatory purpose must be rendered intelligible even if those data cannot be explained away. Objection (2) reveals that not every counter-warrant must be said to stand in need of explanation, otherwise rational belief formation would be too severely constrained. Accordingly, we must be more explicit about which recalcitrant data can be said to undermine entitlement to "P" if they cannot be accommodated. Objection (3) points out that while "P" cannot itself explain away those data, the proposed explanation must not be wholly independent of it either. Objection (4) makes plain that we need criteria for the acceptability of such explanations where these cannot, it would appear, simply be laid down in terms of their warranted assertibility conditions.

Here now is the bold answer: in the absence of entitlement preempting evidence "P" itself must be taken to be part of—to be entailed by—the best explanation of all the data in face of which it is warrantedly assertible. This answers (1).

If more and more counter-warrants against "P" become available and cannot be explained in terms of anything else, say "Q", which is itself warrantedly assertible and co-assertible with "P", endorsement of "P" must be dropped. It is not required though that *every* recalcitrant datum be explained away. All that is required is that as the number of counter-warrants against "P" increases, there is a point at which it becomes obligatory to search for an explanation of why these counter-warrants become available, and that there is a point at which endorsement of "P" must be dropped if this search proves unsuccessful. This answers (2).

Since "Q" is part of the best explanation of such counter-warrants only if " \sim P" is not, "Q" will be *assigned* this role only if "P" is taken to be warrantedly assertible on the basis of the available evidence, for if neither "P" nor " \sim P" is taken to be warrantedly assertible on that basis, then nothing will as yet have been assigned this role: in neutral

states neither " $\sim P$ " nor "Q" is taken to explain why there are counter-warrants against "P". This answers (3).

As any such candidate other than " $\sim P$ " will be more comprehensive, its warranted assertibility will naturally be conditional on its explanatory power with respect to further data. These data may simultaneously be warrants for yet another less comprehensive claim "R" which—in the absence of entitlement preempting evidence—already serves as their best explanation. The explanatory pay-off of the more comprehensive claim "Q" will therefore lie in *unification by generalisation*: "Q" will explain the joint availability of the data that warrant "R" and the data that are counter-warrants against "P".⁸ In this sense the warranted assertibility of "Q" will depend on the warranted assertibility of "R".⁹ This answers (4).

The picture which emerges is accordingly this: suppose the claimant receives various data identified in terms of what they suggest, *i.e.* what they are warrants for. For argument's sake assume that all warrants are such that they carry equal justificatory weight.¹⁰ Say the claimant receives ten warrants for "P" and only three warrants for " $\sim P$ ", and accordingly regards "P" as warrantably assertible relative to all information currently available. In endorsing "P" she thereby considers the sum total of warrants for "P" to be available *inter alia* in virtue of its being the case that P. In the most basic cases she will identify the fact that P as their causal source. Now assume that the number of warrants for " $\sim P$ " gradually increases. There will then be a point at which the claimant is obliged to search for an explanation of why this is so, say when the number of warrants for " $\sim P$ " is seven. Suppose then that the claimant cannot accommodate these further data by appeal to another statement "Q" which she can independently be shown to be entitled to. There will then be a point at which she loses her entitlement to "P". *Ex hypothesi*, this point will be reached when three more warrants for " $\sim P$ " have become available.¹¹ Since her present informational state yields a stand-off between "P" and " $\sim P$ "—given that her explanatory resources are not sufficient for privileging "P"—she is bound to remain agnostic with respect to "P" and " $\sim P$ ". If yet another warrant for " $\sim P$ " becomes available she will again be entitled to a claim, *viz.* " $\sim P$ ", conditional on her

⁸ Cf. Lipton [ITB]: 119.

⁹ I shall come back to this suggestion in section (5.4).

¹⁰ This is usually not the case. Some warrants carry more weight because they have become available by what are considered to be more trustworthy or reliable means. See footnote 11 below.

¹¹ Although we have made this simplifying assumption, it should not be taken to suggest that the justificatory force of the incoming data is in some sense fixed independently of the deliberating process being described. In other words, the bearing these data have on whether one ought to regard "P" as true or remain agnostic about it is not independent from the success of one's search for an explanation. What counts as a stand-off between the warrants for "P" and the warrants for " $\sim P$ " if this search proves unsuccessful, may not count as such if this search is successful. In the present case, it is therefore essential that the claimant fails in her attempt to explain why counter-warrants against "P" become available.

ability to explain away the relatively strong evidence for "P". As the number of warrants for "~P" increases however, the ten warrants for "P" become negligible. The claimant accordingly becomes entitled to endorse "~P" even if she has as yet no explanation of why these ten warrants are available. In endorsing "~P" she now regards "~P" as being part of the explanation of why the warrants for it are available. In the most basic cases she will consider these warrants to be effects of its being the case that ~P.¹²

The retrospective ascription of failure undertaken in correcting one's assertoric move accordingly comes down to the claim that what one asserted was after all not part of the best explanation of the data identified as warrants for it. This ascription can be made, even if one lacks an alternative explanation of these data: with the number of warrants for the negation increasing, the pressure to explain away the warrants for the original claim decreases. Once one endorses the negation of what one previously asserted, one takes this negation to be part of the best explanation of the data on which one bases one's endorsement of it. And since the negation and the claim it negates cannot be co-assertible, one thereby rules out that the claim it negates is part of the best explanation of the data on which its previous endorsement was based.

The problem that one might fail in this respect because none of the data on which one based one's assertion turn out to stem from the state of affairs that one asserted to obtain, whilst that state of affairs nonetheless does obtain, needs careful consideration here. In such a case, it turns out that one believed the truth albeit for the wrong reasons. If this conclusion is reached after what one claimed has been rejected in between—*i.e.* in cases in which what one claimed is being reinstated—then the ascription of failure undertaken in the course of that intermediate rejection will likewise be considered to be correct albeit for the wrong reasons: it was based on the claim that the negation of what one previously asserted did serve as part of the best explanation of some data to the effect that what one previously asserted was ruled out as false.

The moral to be drawn from this is that the objective truth of a claim cannot be equated with that claim itself best explaining every set of data in terms of which it may at some point be regarded as warranted.¹³ Nor can it be *a priori* that a claim is true only

¹² It should be obvious that negated claims can feature in such explanations: "Why did he remain seated in the lounge although the dinner was served?" "Because he did not intend to join in"; "Why did she fall off the roof?" "Because there was no railing". More generally, we may follow a suggestion by Demos and argue that "~P" is true in virtue of a fact inconsistent with the truth of "P"; Demos [DNP]. Thus, it may be said to be true that I am not now sitting in the lounge in virtue of the fact that I am *standing* there or sitting in *the dining room*; cf. as well Dretske [CS]. We could then say that it is the fact in virtue of which "~P" is true that can serve as an *explanans*: his indifference explains why he remains seated although the dinner is being served; and there being air where there was expected to be a railing made her fall off the roof when she leaned over.

¹³ Recall that a claim is apt for objective truth only if its being true does not just consist in its being warrantably assertible. Thus the kind of claim alluded to is not of the form of "It is warrantably assertible that P". A sentence of the latter sort is true if and only if warrantably assertible.

if it contributes to the best explanation of such data. But we may say that it is nonetheless an *a priori* constraint on truth that a claim is objectively true only if it is an essential part of that belief set in terms of which *all data ever available* can best be explained.¹⁴ As we shall see in chapter six, realists and anti-realists disagree about when an explanation counts as best: unlike anti-realists, realists hold that an explanation is best only if it states the causes of its *explanandum* regardless of whether its doing so can in the end be detected.¹⁵ The issue of whether it is ruled out *a priori* that speakers are debarred from telling whether a given belief set qualifies as such will also be raised in chapter six.

We thereby arrive at a reassessment of the goal we intend to attain in striving for objective truth: in doing so we intend to arrive at the best explanation of all data the existence of which we may, as we go along, correctly report by means of sentences such as "It is warrantably assertible that P". When we commit ourselves to the objective truth of "P" we conjecture that "P" will be part of this explanation. Accordingly, such commitments are not without costs. They engender the obligation to search for alternative explanations of why recalcitrant data crop up.

5.3 *Objective Discourse and Causation*

It would appear that the proposed account puts heavy constraints on assertoric practice. Four challenges will subsequently be discussed which suggest (a) that these constraints cannot even be so much as rendered intelligible; (b) that even if they can somehow be rendered intelligible, they cannot in general be met; (c) that even if they can be met, they will fall short of providing the means to overcome assertibilism; and (d) that even to the extent that all this can be achieved, the constraints are nonetheless inadequate in that assertoric practice as we know it is after all not constrained in this way.

- (a) To say that "P" can explain its warrants seems to imply that all descriptive discourse is—even if only implicitly—essentially explanatory; and to say this is utterly absurd. If we do not want to fall back into the myth of the ineffable Given, then we must concede that the *explanandum* allows for a

¹⁴ Recall that throughout this essay we are concerned with the role of truth in empirical discourse.

¹⁵ The realism to be defended in chapter six is thus opposed to metaphysical realism: in contrast to the latter, it has no use for the suggestion that there are facts, representable by us, which are causally insulated in the sense of essentially not being the kind of facts that would have appreciable effects on us if only we were spatio-temporally close or had the opportunity of applying our best possible scientific methodology. As we shall see in chapter six, the envisaged form of realism nonetheless allows for recognition-transcendent truths by driving a wedge between a subject's recognitional abilities and the possibility that this subject may come in a position in which she can exercise these abilities. In other words, recognition-transcendence is thought to result from limitations of epistemic opportunity rather than a layer of reality radically different in kind from anything we might in principle come to know.

description to the same extent the *explanans* does—and if so, how can every description be an explanation?

- (b) Not all claims are, if warranted, warranted by data that can be regarded as being available *because* these claims are true: warrants to assert "P" quite often relate to states of affairs whose obtaining is either believed to precede or even to cause whatever makes "P" true, or to be altogether independent from the truth of "P". How can these evident facts about our belief formation be reconciled with the idea that all claims apt for objective truth are taken to be part of the explanation of their warrants?
- (c) Even if an explanation of the intended kind was already effected by the descriptive use of "P", how could we ever account for the difference in assertoric content between "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P"? Since the use of the latter is undoubtedly descriptive, it would now appear that calling the descriptive use of the former an act of explaining is itself signally unexplanatory and provides as yet nothing to meet the Manifestability Requirement. How then can (O1) and (O2) be vindicated?
- (d) Even if, as Wittgenstein has argued, rules are not answerable to anything, the question can still be raised whether the rules that have been set up are the rules of the game we actually play when engaging in assertoric practice. Since games differ according to whether their rules differ, this amounts to asking first whether there is a game which we play and whose rules we have set up, and second whether that game is what we refer to as assertoric practice. Even if we can answer the former in the affirmative, a negative answer to the latter will reveal that the rules we have set up cannot be responsible for the difference in assertoric content between "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" that we aim to reveal. For this difference ought already to be recoverable from the rules constitutive of assertoric practice. But we have reason to doubt that the assertoric practice we actually engage in is constrained by the rules that have been set up.

In the remainder of this section I shall answer challenge (a). Challenges (b), (c) and (d) will be discussed in sections (5.4), (5.5) and (5.6) respectively.

To begin with, let me stress that it would of course be lethal to the present account if it could be shown to rest on the conception of data as the ineffable Given.¹⁶ As far as I can see however, there is no reason to suppose that it does. Indeed, data are not here conceived of as elusive sense data; in particular, visual data are not supposed to be images on a mental screen. Rather they are—in the most basic cases in which we are properly situated, cognitively unimpaired and attentive observers—alterations of the state of our perceptual apparatus. However, these data are identified in terms of what they are warrants for. Thus they can be described even if not in categorical terms.¹⁷ This does not rule out though that, on any particular occasion, the fact in which the having of such data consists can be categorically described. Once such a description is forthcoming however, it will be part of objective discourse, hence in turn require conditions of warranted assertibility. For this very reason, it is ruled out that "It is warrantably assertible that P" can ever be *reduced* to categorical descriptions, for " $\sim W(WP) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim WP)$ " is contradictory whence "WP" cannot be equivalent to any sentence apt for objective truth. Accordingly, the account presently proposed is at odds with a version of reductive materialism. But then, reductive materialists of this kind still owe us an account of understanding.¹⁸

¹⁶ The so-called *Myth of the Given* is a combination of two ideas: that the content of experience is inexpressible (incommunicable)—e.g. because it is private and absolutely subjective—and that all empirical knowledge is based on experience as thus understood; cf. McDowell [MW]: 7. One of the most passionate defences of this view can be found in Schlick [FC]: 163-70, 208. Cf. Friedman [CN] for a discussion of Schlick's views.

If I here agree with those who deny that the content of experience cannot be communicated, I do not wish to be understood as suggesting, as they often do, that this content ought to be communicable by what I shall call categorical descriptions—that is by sentences of a form other than "It is warrantably assertible that P" or variants of it (see footnote 17). Nevertheless, nothing I have said so far, or I am going to say, controverts Sellars' claim that we cannot learn how to use sentences like "It is warrantably assertible that P" without at the same time learning how to use sentences like "P"; Sellars [EPM]: 274. One can only conceive of one's epistemic state as suggesting that P if one has a conception of what it is that is being suggested, *viz.* what it is for it to be the case that P.

¹⁷ By "categorical descriptions" I mean indicative declarative sentences which ascribe properties and relations to objects outright, *i.e.* without qualification by means of epistemic operators such as "It seems to me as if...", "It appears to be the case that...", "This is a confirmation of the claim that...", "*Prima facie*...", "It is warrantably assertible that...", and the like. All purely objective discourse essentially involves the use of categorical sentences. Cf. Carl [OR]: 181.

In this context it is important to recall that statements effected by means of non-categorical descriptions do not yet demand the introduction of a notion of truth over and above warranted assertibility:

(A3) "It is warrantably assertible that P" is warrantably assertible iff
"It is warrantably assertible that P" is true.

Hence nor do they call for an account of their content in terms of objective truth conditions.

¹⁸ In other words, I here argue no more than that in the most basic cases, *i.e.* in cases in which we are properly situated, cognitively unimpaired and attentive observers of the scene, empirical warrants *supervene* on alterations of the state of our perceptual apparatus. This supervenience does and ought better leave room for a token-token identity linking individual uses of categorical descriptions to individual uses of non-categorical descriptions. For in explaining away warrants for $\sim P$ in terms of a

That interpretation can get off the ground does not depend on there being categorical descriptions of the data. All that is required is that the interpreter can discern conditions under which the interpretee's assertoric use of a given sentence is considered to be warranted; and she may well identify them as conditions under which the assertoric use of a sentence of her own repertoire is warranted. In other words, the principle of charity which deserves to be regarded as a methodological principle without which interpretation cannot even begin is the principle according to which one ought to regard one's *vis-à-vis* as making assertions only if they are warranted.¹⁹ To extend this principle in order to cover conditions under which individual warrants are being recognised—and not just those under which a given sentence counts as warrantably assertible relative to all data currently available—seems pretty straightforward once we reflect on how conditions of the latter kind are discerned: the interpretee moves around, has a look here, a look there—ponders—and only then makes up her mind.

To speak of data in terms of what they suggest is not meant to foster the view that the world around us presents us with propositions and in favourable circumstances, forces an opinion down our throats. Such a McDowellian conception of experience is utterly mysterious and anyway not part of the present account.²⁰ Rather, the differential response to causal clues which terminates in the endorsement of claims according to whether these claims are warranted, is supposed to be learnt as a social, normatively constrained practice. Which causal clues count as warrants for "P" accordingly depends on how we act upon them—in other words, on what we take them to be.²¹

belief set entailing P, these warrants must allow for however defeasible an identification other than in terms of what they suggest.

It might nonetheless be suggested that this supervenience thesis is at odds with the externalist arguments advanced in Putnam [MLR] and Burge [INM]. Insofar as these arguments were merely designed to ensure the possibility of scientific progress and to account for the social dimension of knowledge-gathering, there should be no reason for concern: as we shall see in the remainder of this section, the account given here satisfies these desiderata. In particular, room is left for the possibility that the discovery of identities such as water being H₂O will alter the warranted assertibility conditions of, say, "This is water". On the other hand, if these arguments were meant to show that an account of empirical knowledge can be complete without any mention of mental states that fall short of being states of knowing, *viz.* states of being warranted in the sense mooted here, then it is far from clear whether these arguments have succeeded: even if we hand it over to our experts to determine what counts as a sufficient warrant for believing that something is water, it simply does not follow that our experts can acquire knowledge that something is H₂O without having warrants that supervene on alterations of *their* perceptual apparatus. The latter claim would need further argument, for although the methods of telling truths may become ever more refined, they do not stop being methods we employ: science is not an oracle but knowledge achieved through human practice.

¹⁹ This idealisation makes sense to the extent that in the context of interpretation, speakers intend to be understood, hence will eventually point to features in their environment which provide reasons for what they say. As we shall see in sections (5.5) to (5.7), they may, in doing so, achieve what they so intend even if what they intend to communicate are objective truth conditions.

²⁰ Cf. McDowell's [MW]: lectures I and II.

²¹ As already argued at the end of chapter four, claims as to the warranted assertibility of a given sentence can be accounted for in broadly response-dispositional terms: if cognitively unimpaired,

Given that the data can be described in terms of what they suggest, there is then no way of saying that the present account is hostile to the idea that explanations can be effected by linking certain descriptive sentences. To say so does of course require that one must not conceive of all descriptive sentences as serving an explanatory role. But this is not part of the present account anyway. What it rather entails is that descriptive sentences with a certain content serve that role: those sentences whose content can rightly be regarded as objective in that it does not relate to the speaker's present epistemic situation. However, neither does the present account entail that the only way explanations can be given is by using complex sentences formed by means of a connective such as "because". On the contrary, it will be part of the answer to challenge (c) that this need not be the case.

What has been said so far may not suffice to diffuse the worry underlying challenge (a): why should we conceive of what philosophers have commonly regarded as purely descriptive discourse—say observation reports—as being in the business of explaining anything? To begin with, it would be altogether wrong to suggest that according to the present account, what is being described is what is being explained: it is not the fact stated that is explained by stating it, rather the fact stated is intended to explain why certain data become available. The resistance to accepting such explanations even so may ultimately rest on the idea that all causal explanations are deductions from lawlike generalisations, hence that (i) all *explananda* do themselves pertain to objective discourse insofar as all lawlike generalisations do, and (ii) every *explanans* is of a higher logical order than the *explanandum*. But what is the argument for this?

Both Scriven and Davidson have argued that even if the truth of a singular causal statement depends on the truth of a causal law, singular causal statements need not contain the very terms which figure in the respective causal law on which their truth depends, in order for them to have explanatory power.²² If this is correct however, then even if they did contain those terms, explanations could already be given by their means without it ever being mentioned that they did. Accordingly, what serves as stating the *explanans* is, if at all, a statement to the effect that the antecedent condition of a law is satisfied, hence is of the same logical order as the sentence stating the *explanandum* in the sense that both are singular statements.²³

Admittedly, if the truth of singular causal statements did depend on the truth of causal laws—as the covering law model of causal explanation requires²⁴—a categorical

properly situated and attentive speakers report that a given sentence is warrantably assertible, then there is no further question of whether that sentence really is warrantably assertible.

²² Scriven [EPL]: 193-99; Davidson [ARC]: 16-17.

²³ Scriven [EPL]: 204.

²⁴ Cf. Davidson [CR]: 159-60.

description of the *explanandum* would have to be possible in order for singular causal statements to be true. For its non-categorical description—say in terms of what it is a warrant for—is hardly suited to occur in a causal law.²⁵ This in itself would appear to be no objection to the present account though, since this account does not rule out that there are categorical descriptions of the data which are to be explained.²⁶ However, such categorically descriptive sentences will have warranted assertibility conditions in turn which are—as is to be expected—more fine-grained. In fact, this is where science leads us. Thus on the present account, it would just be a mistake to suppose that at any stage of scientific development, all discourse could be objective without allowing for the introduction of non-categorical sentences which are not already reducible to categorical ones.²⁷ There is therefore no guarantee either that for every non-categorically described effect, it is possible to describe this effect in categorical terms. Accordingly, if we do not wish to hold that there may be true yet unstable causal laws, the covering law model of causal explanation will have to be regarded as in the end incompatible with the account here proposed: if it was built into the notion of causality that there was such a guarantee, then a subject who explains why "WP" is true in terms of "P" would have to commit herself to the conceivability of an infinitely fine-grained, yet humanly understandable science; and such a requirement is clearly absurd. The covering law model faces serious difficulties of its own however, and is no longer regarded as the only viable conception around. Therefore I here allow myself to defer to the work of those philosophers who have argued, to my mind convincingly, that this model should be abandoned anyway.²⁸

5.4 Causal Origin and Evidence

Let us now address challenge (b). The idea that claims apt for objective truth are brought forth as part of the best explanation of the data on whose basis they are made,

²⁵ I am not sure though whether this is so with respect to probabilistic or statistical laws.

²⁶ Note though that this is not to say that the categorical description applicable to the very data suggesting P which are *now* available is applicable to whatever data there may be available suggesting P. As mentioned earlier, this possibility is indeed ruled out: since " $\sim W(WP) \ \& \ \sim W(\sim WP)$ " is contradictory, there can be no categorical sentence apt for objective truth which is equivalent to "WP".

²⁷ Indeed, this is one way of interpreting the outcome of the protocol-sentence debate which so much engaged the Logical Empiricists: even observation reports are 'hypotheses' in the sense that they may fail to be true although their conditions of warranted assertibility obtain; and the obtaining of the latter can be ascertained by using sentences which are, however, ill-suited to serve the role observation reports were intended to play in the fabric of scientific theories. Cf. Neurath [P].

²⁸ See, for instance, Woodward [SSC] and [TSC].

would appear to be easily refuted.²⁹ The (alleged) counterexamples are basically of two kinds:

- (i) P inherits its warranted assertibility from an empirical generalisation whose inductive basis does not include P.
- (ii) P is warranted by Q, where Q relates to events or states whose occurrence or obtaining is evidently no effect of what P relates to—*e.g.* these events or states precede or even cause what makes P true.

Although Paul's tendency to do silly things when drunk may warrant the claim that he did something silly last night, the fact that Paul did something silly last night is not causally responsible for all the silly things he did when drunk on previous occasions. But it is precisely what he did on those occasions that allows us to speak of his tendency to do silly things when drunk. In the same vein, the fact that Paul ingested a considerable amount of alcohol last night may warrant the claim that he did something silly, but his ingestion of alcohol can hardly be considered to be the result of his having done something silly afterwards. Rather, he did something silly because he ingested alcohol.

The problematic nature of (i) is not independent from (ii), nor is the problematic nature of (ii) independent from (i). Consider (i) first. Apart from those cases in which P is itself a conditional, P will not yet be warranted by an empirical generalisation unless the relevant antecedent-condition of such a generalisation can warrantably be taken to be satisfied. However, if the (instantiation of the) antecedent-condition Q related to an event or state whose occurrence or obtaining could be regarded as the result of whatever event or state P relates to, then we would not yet have been presented with a counterexample to the account proposed in section (5.2). For there we did not demand that all presently available warrants for P be considered to be explained by P but only that P be *part of* what is considered to be an explanation of these warrants. Accordingly, if P can be taken to explain Q—where Q in conjunction with the respective generalisation warrants P—the latter demand will be met and our account is after all in good standing. Problems arise only if Q does not relate to anything that can be seen to be the effect of what P relates to—*e.g.* when (ii) is satisfied.

Next consider (ii): a state of affairs preceding the occurrence of whatever it is that makes P true can warrant P only if there is a warranted generalisation which allows us to infer (the likelihood of) P from the obtaining of that state of affairs. If all we know

²⁹ For the following, see Ennis' critique of Harman's [IBE] in his [EIB]: 524-28; and Jackson/Pargetter [COE]: 61-72.

is that Q has been the case, we cannot arrive at the warranted belief that P succeeded or was even caused by Q, unless we have some assurance that the way things evolve is usually such that states of affairs of kind Q are followed by states of affairs of kind P. In other words, (i) has to be satisfied as well.

Let us therefore consider the following case which results from a combination of (i) and (ii): the claim that Paul did something silly last night (Ga) is warranted on the basis of (i) the generalisation that Paul tends to do silly things whenever he ingests a certain amount of alcohol ($\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$); and (ii) the claim that Paul ingested a significant amount of alcohol last night (Fa).

Insofar as the premisses on which "Ga" rests are apt for objective truth, it follows by the account proposed that these premisses must themselves be taken to be part of the best explanation of the data on which their endorsement is based. Accordingly, the warrantedness of "Ga" will be worth no more than the warrantedness of all the premisses on whose basis it is held, hence be conditional on the explanatory credentials of these premisses. We may say that "Ga" is warranted by both what warrants "Fa" and what warrants " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ ", and that the latter statements are warranted only if they may be regarded as part of the explanation of the data which confirm them. *Ex hypothesi*, "Ga" must likewise be part of the explanation of the data which warrant its endorsement.

We must be clear on what we mean by saying that "P" is part of an explanation. On one reading, "P" is part of an explanation only if "P" explains part of what that explanation explains. On another reading, "P" is already part of an explanation if that explanation would not be true—and *a fortiori* would not explain what it purports to explain—if "P" was not. It is the latter, weaker reading which I shall adopt in defending the position canvassed in section (5.2) against the objection raised here. In other words, I shall merely require that "P" be entailed by the explanation in question.

Accordingly, we may explicate the notion of aptness for objective truth as follows: ϕ is apt for objective truth if (1) in cases in which ϕ is warrantably assertible ϕ itself is suited to explain why this is so, or (2) there is a ψ not entailed by ϕ but entailing ϕ which is apt for objective truth.³⁰

Given this interpretation, it is now a pretty straightforward matter to see in which sense "Ga" may be part of the explanation of its warrants: "Ga" is entailed by "Fa" in conjunction with " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ "; and the warranted assertibility of "Ga" is established by the warranted assertibility of both "Fa" and " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ ". Given that both "Fa" and " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ " are apt for objective truth, it remains to be shown that

³⁰ I here assume that if ϕ is apt for objective truth so is whatever sentence it entails.

- (α) what warrants "Fa" does not relate to anything prior to what makes "Fa" true, but can rather be seen to be caused by what makes "Fa" true; and that
- (β) there is a sense in which " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ " can feature as part of a (causal) explanation of what are warrants for it.

Let us address (α) first. The criterion that claims apt for objective truth be entailed by the best explanation of their warrants leaves room for the possibility that "Fa" is again warranted by a set of premisses none of which relate to anything that is caused by whatever makes "Fa" true. Insofar as we are here concerned with the nature of *empirical* knowledge however, it would simply be unintelligible to say that this inferential grounding could go on forever. Ultimately, the premisses will have to relate to, or be inductively confirmed by, states of affairs which we cannot know unless subjected to their causal powers. These states of affairs—hence the objective truth of claims expressing them—are known by their effects (rather than their causes) which impinge on our senses. In other words, there can be no knowledge of the past without knowledge of the present. This is not a heavy doctrine about the nature of the past (phenomenalism), but a claim about our knowledge of the past (a platitude). Hence there is no question that insofar as "Fa" is apt for objective truth (α) will ultimately be satisfied.

What about (β)? Can " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ " ever explain or contribute to an explanation of its inductive basis? Let us first ask what its inductive basis will be. It will consist of a sequence of pairs of warranted statements: {"F x_1 ", "G x_1 ", ... "F x_n ", "G x_n "}, where for all i with $1 \leq i \leq n$, both "F x_i " and "G x_i " are apt for objective truth. The individual statements themselves will therefore be taken to be part of the best explanation of their warrants. The trouble is that " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ " will not be entailed by the conjunction of these statements.

But then what explanatory role is there for " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ " to play? First note that we would neither include " $\sim Fy$ " in the inductive basis for " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ ", nor "Gy" if "Fy" was not also warranted: these statements would not *confirm* the generalisation. The inductive basis for " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ " essentially consists of *pairs* of statements. Since these pairs of statements must themselves be warranted, there will accordingly have to be a *pattern* of evidence in order for " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ " to be warranted. This pattern is not yet explained by the piecemeal explanation of what this pattern is constituted by. Thus, whatever the explanation of the warrants for "F x_i " and the explanation of the warrants for "G x_i " may look like, there is something further to be accounted for, *viz.* that the warrants for "F x_i " and the warrants for "G x_i " are *concomitant* for all i . There is

accordingly no reason to deny that insofar as they are apt for objective truth generalisations like " $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ " may perform an explanatory role. What is still unclear is *how* they may perform this role.

To begin with, think of generalisations about single individuals such as the generalisation about Paul. It is no accident that we spoke of Paul's *tendency* to do silly things when drunk. We have the tendency (!) to describe regularities exhibited by individuals in terms of their susceptibilities, their traits or, more generally, their dispositions. Whenever we do so we appeal to subjunctive conditionals to back up our generalisation. This way of talking is perfectly in order. Yet many philosophers have insisted that ascriptions of dispositions, just as subjunctive conditionals, are true in virtue of more basic facts, in particular facts about physical structures.³¹ These philosophers will have to agree that generalities—that what makes general statements true—can feature in explanations. Their reductionist programme will not yet fail if dispositions of a kind cannot be reduced to physical structures of a kind: dispositions may be multi-realizable. What has to be guaranteed is only that any single ascription of such a disposition to a given individual is reducible to the ascription of an intrinsic property to that same individual.

For present purposes it does not matter whether this reductionist programme is in the end successful.³² Suffice it to say that even if this programme fails—because talk about tendencies and dispositions is irreducible say—it simply does not follow that this kind of talk should be abandoned nor that it may be abandoned. The individual will not stop exhibiting the regularities in question; and we may accordingly be forced to say that her disposition to behave in such-and-such a way under certain specifiable circumstances is an irreducible fact about this individual—a fact which can still help explain why this individual behaves the way she does. How this latter claim may be understood will become clearer once we consider empirical generalisations ranging over more than one individual, *i.e.* individuals of a kind.

It has been argued that natural kind terms or other terms introduced by scientific theory, may be defined in terms of natural laws or theoretical postulates: something is denoted by such a term just in case it satisfies a specific set of natural laws or postulates.³³ To describe something as exhibiting certain regularities may therefore be one way to describe it as being of a certain kind. Conversely, describing something as being of a certain kind may entail that things of that kind exhibit certain generalities.³⁴

³¹ Quine [WO]: § 46; Dummett [WTM/II]: 53-57.

³² Whence I save the trouble to explain what intrinsic properties are.

³³ For the more general proposal, see Lewis [HDT].

³⁴ To say that a theoretically introduced term denotes is to imply that the respective theory is realised, and the realisation of the theory implies that the generalisations entailed by this theory are true; see Lewis [HDT]: 89-90.

To say that someone is an epileptic *is* to imply that she instantiates a specific pattern of behaviour provided certain initial conditions are satisfied.³⁵ In the same vein, if evidence is regarded as being available due to the presence of things of such a kind, it is regarded as being available due to the presence of things exhibiting certain regularities. Thus if ascriptions of natural kind terms can be part of (be entailed by) explanations of the evidence on which their application rests then so can general statements.³⁶

Of course not all empirical generalisations are natural laws or term-introducing theoretical postulates.³⁷ But insofar as we take such generalisations seriously enough to induce them—whenever we proceed from the observed to the unobserved—we suppose that there is a lawlike generalisation for which this generalisation is merely a placeholder (just as dispositional predicates may be placeholders for non-dispositional predicates), or at least that there is a set of lawlike generalisations which in conjunction with further premisses jointly entail it. This may be called the *covering law model of empirical generalisation*: whenever we accept a generalisation on the basis of a pattern of evidence, we conjecture that there is a natural law or a set of natural laws which would help explain why this pattern of evidence is available. If natural laws can feature in explanations, then generalisations which are not lawlike may be entailed by the best explanation of the data on whose basis they can warrantably be endorsed. Thus we can cater for the objective content not only of natural laws, but of empirical generalisations in general.³⁸

With these considerations in place, there is then no problem in reconciling the alleged counterexamples with the account proposed in section (5.2). Claims apt for objective truth may inherit their warranted assertibility from the warranted assertibility of other claims by being deducible from them; and although the former may not relate to the causes of the warrants for the latter, the latter will ultimately do so: the former will hence be entailed by the explanation of the warrants on whose basis they are endorsed. To return to our example: the claim that Paul did something silly last night is warranted because both the claim that he drank alcohol last night and the claim that he tends to do silly things when drunk are warranted. That Paul drank alcohol last night will be part of the explanation of the data on whose basis we come to believe that he did (sensory evidence or testimony say). That Paul tends to do silly things when drunk will be part of

³⁵ This holds for physiological terms in general. Similar things can be said about psychological terms; cf. Lewis [PTI].

³⁶ See Lewis [HDT]: 90.

³⁷ Note that term-introducing theoretical postulates are not true by definition but defeasible empirical claims.

³⁸ In the present context it is important to bear in mind that anti-realism is compatible with scientific realism, *i.e.* the claim that theoretical terms refer; cf. Tennant [ARL]: 7-12. As Lewis has argued, not all theoretically introduced terms which do refer, refer to entities which we believe in only because their existence is posited by the theory in question. Lewis quotes H₂O as a counterexample; [HDT]: 79.

the explanation of why he has displayed a certain pattern of behaviour in the past: it may for instance be entailed by the warranted claim that he meets a certain physiological condition.

5.5 *Inferences to the Best Explanation, and their Manifestation*

Challenge (c) rightly demands that an account be given of how we can discern explaining acts from the overall pattern of assertoric use. As I shall argue in this section, the answer to this challenge will pave the way to an explanation of how (O1) and (O2) are manifested in use. Thus not only will we be able to show how "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" differ in the way they are being used—the former but not the latter performs a certain explanatory role³⁹—but that this difference in use calls for an understanding of the truth of the former according to which

(O1) "P" may (actually) be true, even if it fails to be at present warrantably assertible

(O2) "P" may (actually) fail to be true, even if it is at present warrantably assertible.

In order to answer (c) it would be idle to compare the different warrantable assertibility conditions of the following two embeddings:

"It appears as if P because P"

"It appears as if P because it is warrantably assertible that P".

For even the assertibilist will concede—and has to some extent been shown able to accommodate—that "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" behave differently when embedded in complex sentences. The present case is even more complicated since "because" is not a truth functional connective.⁴⁰ Thus we should better argue that we can discern from the freestanding uses of "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" alone

³⁹ The latter may serve an explanatory role in explanations of why we come to assert or believe what we do.

⁴⁰ Davidson has argued that sentences which appear to have the logical form "P because Q" actually have the logical form of existentially quantified statements that quantify over events or states which are said to be causally related; [LFA] and [CR]. As far as I can see, the account proposed in this chapter is compatible with Davidson's analysis. Thus although Davidson rejects the idea that facts are causes, the existence of an event or state that causes another nonetheless is a fact, and it is by means of stating such facts that one gives causal explanations. In this context it is again important to stress that the account defended here is exclusively concerned with empirical discourse.

that both sentences serve different purposes: the former and not the latter can serve as an answer to the quest for an explanation of why certain data are available.

I have argued that such data are identified in terms of what they suggest. Inasmuch as responsiveness to such data is a precondition for the participation in a practice which is disciplined by norms of warranted assertion, awareness of them must go hand in hand with a grasp of their significance. The quest for an explanation of such data need not be formulated in terms of a *why*-question, although it usually will. Puzzlement, a facial expression of doubt or irritation, the resistance to putting up with the *status quo*, a closer scrutiny of the environment and the presented *corpus delicti*, or the readiness to consult an expert—all these behavioural characteristics manifest the quest for an explanation.

The important task is accordingly to show that uses of "P" but not of "It is warrantably assertible that P" are appropriate answers which satisfy the speaker's needs even though the assertion of either is warranted under the very same circumstances. Hence our question seems to be: how can it be manifested that the use of "P" satisfies the speaker's quest for an explanation? This is a misleading way of putting it though, for appropriate answers to *why*-questions *are* assertions. And since we are bound to consider only such linguistic performances which are permissible moves in a rationally constrained practice, the only conditions under which "P" can be said to serve as an appropriate answer are accordingly those under which it is warrantably assertible. Thus the circumstances under which the assertion of "P" can serve as an appropriate answer are precisely those under which "It is warrantably assertible that P" will be warrantably assertible too. Since the speaker must be taken to know that the warranted assertibility of "P" mandates the assertion of "P", we prove unable to discern whether it is "P" or "It is warrantably assertible that P" that satisfies her quest for an explanation.

Rather than considering circumstances under which her quest for an explanation can appropriately be satisfied, let us ask what the speaker herself can do under circumstances under which she has not yet a straightforward answer to her question. In the end it must be in terms of what one can *do* with "P" but not with "It is warrantably assertible that P", that we prove able to account for the manifestation of their difference in assertoric content. Assertions however, can be effected by the use of either.

The practice of abductive reasoning—of making inferences to the best explanation—is not independent from the practice of *heuristic reasoning*—of reasoning under a working assumption. It is by means of heuristic reasoning that we may arrive at conclusions as to whether a given explanation is better than another.⁴¹ Abduction is often called eliminative induction because it proceeds by eliminating alternative

⁴¹ Lipton [ITB]: 67-68, 89-90.

hypotheses;⁴² and one way to eliminate these alternatives is by asking how, if one hypothesis is correct, the data speaking in favour of another can be accounted for.⁴³ For example: assuming that Jones shot the sheriff I suppose that his fingerprints are on the deputy's gun because it was he who did it. Reasoning under this assumption I now try to find an explanation of the deputy's secretiveness (he is suffering from a shock, or is perhaps in love with the eye-witness), the eye-witness' account that a clean-shaven man did it although Jones has a beard (she is in love with Jones, or she has poor eyesight), and Jones' insistence that he cannot remember what happened (he tries to plead *non compos mentis*). Alternatively, assuming that the deputy shot the sheriff I suppose that he is so secretive because it was he who shot the sheriff. Reasoning under this assumption I suggest that Jones' memory loss is due to the fact that he was chloroformed by the deputy, that his fingerprints are on the gun because the deputy imprinted them on the gun, and that the eyewitness reports that it was a clean-shaven man who did it because she has poor eyesight (the deputy has a beard too). Of course, faced with suitable alternatives piecing such stories together will not be enough. Their credibility will ultimately depend on whether their consequences can be backed up by additional information. Heuristic reasoning as thus understood is essentially *not* counterfactual: reasoning under an assumption that is known to be established as false has no pay-off with respect to the quest for explanations of the intended kind.

Now suppose a speaker is in a state of information which is neutral with respect to "P" and " \sim P" yet contains warrants for "P" as well as warrants for " \sim P". Assume furthermore that the speaker displays her dissatisfaction with this epistemic situation. This dissatisfaction will accordingly be interpreted as expressing her intention to explain why she is in this situation, *i.e.* why the data in question have become available to her. If as a consequence she goes on to reason under the assumption of "P" and " \sim P" respectively, this heuristic reasoning will have to be understood as the attempt to overcome neutrality by way of finding an explanation "Q" of the warrants for " \sim P" given that the truth of "P" is part of the best explanation of the warrants for "P"—or of the warrants for "P" given that the truth of " \sim P" is part of the best explanation of the warrants for " \sim P". In favourable circumstances she will arrive at such an explanation "Q" and then be in a position to endorse "P" or " \sim P" as the case may be. What the speaker tries to find out then by reasoning under the assumption of "P" and " \sim P" respectively, will be whether her beliefs—her doxastic resources as it were—are such as to allow for an explanation of why those data have become available which are warrants for the other sentence. Depending on which sentence is assumed to hold—"P" or " \sim P"—this search for a further explanation will take a different route. The positive outcome of

⁴² Cf. Harman [IBE]: 88-89.

⁴³ Woodward [SSC]: 232-39.

this search will accordingly disclose whether "P" or whether " \sim P" can be regarded as the better explanation in the first place. Whether the outcome is positive though is at present inessential. Rather what is essential is that the search is undertaken at all.

Alternatively, consider the case in which a speaker is warranted to assert "P" on the basis of warrants for "P" yet in which the number of counter-warrants against "P" gradually increases. Her growing uneasiness with this acquisition of counter-warrants will accordingly be interpreted as stemming from her obligation to account for their availability. Suppose then that she goes on to reason under the assumption of " \sim P". Insofar as her claim to the truth of "P" has the status of a conjecture about the pedigree of some of the warrants she has for "P", her heuristic reasoning will have to be regarded as a precautionary check-up of the explanatory power of her current belief set. In other words, in reasoning under the assumption " \sim P" she will have to be understood as testing whether a belief set that includes " \sim P" rather than "P" will not after all yield a more satisfactory explanation of all the data presently available. If she hits on an alternative explanation of the warrants for "P" that is co-assertible with " \sim P" and whose truth in conjunction with the truth of " \sim P" best explains the progressive acquisition of counter-warrants against "P", she will then drop her belief in the truth of "P" and endorse " \sim P" instead.

In neither case however, would it be reasonable for the speaker to engage in reasoning under the assumption that "P" or " \sim P" were at present warrantably assertible. In the first case it is an established fact that neither "P" nor " \sim P" is at present warrantably assertible whose acknowledgement forms an essential part of the speaker's motivation to search for an explanation at all. To assume that the situation was different in this respect would be to assume that the quest for an explanation was misplaced. In the second case "P" is at present warrantably assertible while " \sim P" is not, to the effect that the conjecture that "P" is true is mandated; unless this was so, the speaker would not have undertaken the obligation to safeguard her current belief set against the possibility that a belief set including " \sim P" has more explanatory benefits. But to assume that " \sim P" rather than "P" was warrantably assertible would be to assume a situation in which this obligation would not have been undertaken, to the effect that the attempt to meet it would be beside the point. Therefore in heuristic reasoning of this kind, "P" and " \sim P" will behave differently from "It is warrantably assertible that P" and "It is warrantably assertible that \sim P" respectively.

The assertibilist may try to counter these objections by suggesting the following analysis of the content of assumptions: to assume "P" is not to assume that "P" is at present warrantably assertible but rather the anticipation of what would be the case were "P" to become warrantably assertible. This reply should carry no conviction however, for it leaves unexplained how hypothetical reasoning may have any bearing on what one

ought to assert: the anticipation of a change in information cannot contribute to such a change. If the assertibilist's analysis of the content of assumptions was right, heuristic reasoning could never move a rational agent towards endorsing or rejecting a claim, nor could it ever reasonably be undertaken in the hope that it might have this result, but *ex hypothesi* this is the case.

In the present context it is of some importance that heuristic reasoning neither involves the assertion of what is assumed nor necessarily the assertion of conditionals whose antecedent expresses that assumption. Hence even though heuristic reasoning may involve the use of sentences embedding "P" and "~P", there has to be a freestanding use of "P" and "~P" which is that of assuming that one of them holds and without which heuristic reasoning would not be what it is. But as I argued in section (4.5) of chapter four, there is indeed good reason to regard assumptions as speech acts of their own kind.

The manifestation of the explanatory role of "P" and "~P" at the same time manifests their aptness for objective truth. Thus if the speaker reasons under the assumption of "P" in states of informational neutrality, she considers it to be a genuine possibility that "P" is true despite the fact that it fails to be at present warrantably assertible. For insofar as this piece of reasoning is undertaken with the intention to overcome neutrality, it ought to be regarded as a possibility that as a result, "P" qualifies as part of what can then be taken to be the best explanation of all presently available data. In the same vein, if the speaker reasons under the assumption of "~P" in states which otherwise warrant the assertion of "P" and may even come to endorse "~P" on this basis, then the very fact that she does so will be intelligible only if she regards the truth of "~P", hence the falsehood of "P" as not yet being ruled out by the warranted assertibility of "P". In other words, the speaker's behaviour will be intelligible only to the extent that she is taken to conceive of the truth conditions of "P" as satisfying (O1) and (O2).

Even so, we still owe an account of how the fact that "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" behave differently in contexts of assumptions can so much as reveal a difference in their *assertoric* content. If such a difference in assertoric content was not already disclosed by the fact that both sentences behave differently in contexts of denials, then one might wonder why reflections on their different role in contexts of assumptions should be of any help either. The first thing to note is that while yielding an interpretation of "P" as used in denials, assertibilism is at a loss to interpret the use of "P" in the contexts of assumptions *at all*. In particular what I assume in assuming that P is nothing I can according to assertibilism assert. By contrast, assertibilism entails that what I deny in denying "P" is that it is not warrantably assertible that ~P and this is clearly something I can even on that view assert. But now insofar as reasoning under an

assumption made by means of a sentence whose assertion is so far considered to be unwarranted may at all result in the readiness to assert that sentence, then what has been assumed ought better be something one can assert. Although the readiness to assert, say, " $\sim P$ " is concomitant with the readiness to assert "It is warrantably assertible that $\sim P$ ", still what is being asserted by means of the latter cannot be what has been assumed. We are therefore bound to conclude that it is by means of sentences of the former kind and not by means of sentences of the latter kind, that we can assert what we have assumed.

5.6 *Assertoric Practice and Knowledge-why*

Even if this complex pattern of linguistic usage may allow for a systematic distinction between the roles "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" play in the game we have been describing—so as to manifest (O1) and (O2)—the question has still to be addressed whether this distinction is essential to the distinction between the objective truth conditions of "P" and its conditions of warranted assertibility. Insofar as the latter distinction is essential to the way we conceive of assertoric practice, asking this question boils down to asking whether the rules of the game we have been describing are essential to what we refer to as assertoric practice. If not, the difference in role between "P" and "It is warrantably assertible that P" which we have discerned would at most be a reflection of an underlying distinction which we have not yet captured—hence could be subjected to revisionist criticism whose success would not yet amount to the exorcism of objective content. Challenge (d) accordingly suggests that the rules of the game we have been describing need not be complied with in order for those rules to be complied with which one ought to follow when engaging in assertoric practice.

To begin with, let us be clear about the nature of the game we have been describing. Briefly put, participants in that game are knowledge seeking subjects whose pursuit of objective truth is the striving for a set of beliefs in terms of which all incoming data can best be explained. According to this picture then the pursuit of objective truth essentially involves the pursuit of knowledge-*why*. Those who engage in it intend to render intelligible to themselves why they receive the data they do, hence what the source of the causal influences is which they find themselves subject to. Thus their constant aim is to objectify their epistemic states by assigning these states—hence themselves—a place in the causal order. It is essential to this attempt at objectification that they thereby give an account of how the rationality of their doxastic past can be reconciled with its having been wrong-headed or impoverished all the same: they regard themselves as having given a wrong or incomplete picture of reality because they received too little of it in experience.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Cf. Carl [OR]: 179-80.

In what follows I will try to answer (d) in two steps. First I will address the challenge that participation in assertoric practice is not yet an epistemic enterprise. It is only after this challenge has successfully been rebutted that I will address the second challenge. According to this second challenge, my answer to the first falls short of showing that the participation in assertoric practice is furthermore the pursuit of knowledge-*why*.

Assertoric practice—or so we have assumed thus far—is governed by norms of warranted assertion. Very often though this assumption is stated in rather different terms, *viz.* that assertoric practice is governed by norms of *correct* assertion. Thus it has been argued that norms of correctness must be operative in any practice whose moves qualify as contentful, and that since assertoric moves are said to have assertoric contents, they must accordingly be subject to norms of *warranted* assertion. Even though compelling as far as it goes, this thought cannot be the whole truth of the matter. Indeed it cannot even be the essential bit. What is often missed is that the identification of norms of correct assertion with norms of warranted assertion already involves an explanatory step without which talk about *contentfulness* would simply be misleading.

To begin with, the alleged contentfulness which accrues to performances in virtue of the fact that there are conditions under which they qualify as correct or incorrect is better referred to as their significance. Thus, rules of conduct lay down conditions under which certain actions count as mandated and conditions under which their omission does. Poking chop sticks into the contents of a bowl is what you are expected to do at a certain point in a Japanese remembrance ceremony but counts as rude on every other occasion. Therefore, poking chop sticks into the contents of a bowl is a significant act. If it was not for the Japanese culture, doing so could at most be regarded as silly. But for all its significance, poking chop sticks into the contents of a bowl can hardly be said to have a content in virtue of the rules that determine the conditions under which doing so qualifies as correct. This is so for two reasons: on the one hand, if it had content then one could convey that content by other means; if instead of poking your chop sticks into the contents of the bowl in front of you, you folded your hands however, the other participants would not so much as try to understand what you were doing but rather teach you what one is expected to do at that point of the ritual, *viz.* to poke one's chop sticks into the contents of that bowl. On the other hand, any content it might be said to have besides its significance—*i.e.* besides its being the thing to do at that point of the ritual—will not be due to the rules which determine that it is the thing to do at that point. Hence even if rules of conduct determine conditions of correctness, the rules due to which certain performances qualify as content bearers are not just any rules of conduct.

It would be wrong to suggest that even though not all rules which determine conditions of correctness likewise contribute to the determination of content, some

nonetheless do and that whether they do so ultimately depends on the kind of performance they govern. According to this line of thought, we have been misled by the example chosen, hence what we should rather do is consider performances which we already know to be content bearers. This will not yet do however. If a guest says to her host that the dinner is disgusting, this will count as inappropriate. But it would in the very same sense be inappropriate to spit it out onto the table (unless one does so under compulsion)—even if this is on the far end of the scale. The fact that doing what the guest does can qualify as inappropriate in this sense is nothing due to which her remark has a content. For instance, its inappropriateness is perfectly consistent with the finding that it is correct as far as the dinner is concerned. Rather it would appear to be the other way round: the guest's remark can qualify as inappropriate in this sense because it has a specific content.

In other words, in order to get at content-determining conditions of correctness it is not yet enough to specify rules that confer significance onto certain performances and to identify these performances as assertions. Rather, what one must do in the first place is to specify the *kind* of correctness which is relevant for assertoric content. To identify the standards of correctness without which assertions would have no contents at all with standards of warranted assertion is to do precisely this. Accordingly, the question can be raised why this identification is apt. Assertions are moves whose content is given by the conditions under which they qualify as true. Why then could they not be said to have such a truth conditional content unless the practice of making them was governed by norms of warranted assertion?

As we have seen, we cannot explain why assertoric practice is governed by norms of warranted assertion by simply pointing to the fact that the significance of assertions requires such norms. Likewise, we cannot simply assume that insofar as significance requires standards of correctness, norms of warranted assertion are required for the contentfulness of assertoric moves. Neither can the significance of assertoric moves be reduced to their contentfulness, nor can standards of correctness for assertions be reduced to norms of warranted assertion. Thus Wright takes a short cut when he maintains that

[i]n order for [...] sentences [which can be used to perform assertions] 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 since they are sentences with assertoric content, that will be a distinction between cases where their assertion is justified and cases where it is not.⁴⁵

Whatever has content is significant, and in order for a performance to be significant, there must be conditions under which it is appropriate and conditions under which it is

⁴⁵ Wright [TO]: 17.

not. Conditions of warranted assertibility do indeed serve this purpose, but that they are what an assertion must be said to have in order to have assertoric content at all, is a further insight which requires some elucidation.

Since Wittgenstein it has become common philosophical practice to demand that accounts of content do justice to the fact that states and performances other than belief and assertion have a content: wishes, hopes, commands, *etc.* But to the best of my knowledge, every sufficiently systematic account of content has modelled the contents of such states and performances on the basis of truth conditions: wishes are wishes that something be true, hopes are hopes that something will turn out to be true, commands are commands that something be made true. In the same vein, almost every such account has taken the treatment of beliefs or assertions as its starting point.⁴⁶ The connection between truth on the one hand and belief and assertion on the other, is pretty straightforward and has anyway been our concern all along. But that the content of the other states and performances can be modelled along the lines suggested, is itself a striking fact whose explanation has received little attention.

It is not our present concern to give such an explanation however. We have already taken a step in this direction by highlighting the content-determining role of assumptions. Rather, what is important is that in order for the further constraint to be met, that an account be given of those other states and performances, one's account of the contents of beliefs and assertions, once available, need not be altered but merely be extended. For instance: once the content of sentences as they are used in assertions has fully been explained—if only by appeal to the relation between assertions and assumptions—truth can be defined in terms of assertoric content. If one furthermore wants to account for wishes, commands and the rest, all one must do is give a characterisation of these other states and performances. For if a systematic account of the content of all states and performances is possible at all, then *pace* assertibilism it is likely that the interpretees will use the same sentences, or grammatical transformations thereof, in order to express the same contents independently of which speech act they perform or which intentional state they intend to convey.

As has been emphasised in section (2.1) of chapter two, the notion of meaning is a determinable that receives its determination within theories of meaning.⁴⁷ If, according to such a theory, the meaning of such a sentence consists in its truth conditions, where

⁴⁶ Only recently Davidson has suggested that the interpreter's entering wedge are the interpretee's preferences between the truth of sentences; [SiCT]: 322-24. Others have tried to reduce belief to desire; cf. *e.g.* Grandy [RMB]: 451-52. Neither account however makes so much as sense, independently from the fact that contents are ultimately contents of beliefs or assertions. This is trivially so in the reductionist case; and Davidson's modified account implicitly relates to the fact that speakers prefer the truth of one sentence to the truth of another according to which sentences they believe (or hold true) to a higher degree.

⁴⁷ In other words, theories of meaning *explicate* the notion of meaning; cf. Carnap [LFP]: 3-8.

its having these conditions is *inter alia* determined by the conditions under which it may warrantably be asserted or believed, then this theory draws on notions which belong to the province of epistemology. If this theory furthermore seeks to explain the meaning, *i.e.* the content, of other intentional states on that basis, then this suggests that, in light of this theory, epistemology is not modelled after the fashion of intentional psychology but rather conversely.⁴⁸

For what it is worth, this view of the matter at least provides an answer to the question of why conditions of warranted assertibility have a decisive role to play in the determination of content, quite apart from the fact that their obtaining is public. If assertions are conceived of as performances of knowledge seeking subjects, then it is not at all surprising that these performances are answerable to questions like "How do you know?" or "How does she know?" Answers to such questions will vary according to whatever it is that is presented as true, therefore it will to some extent be possible to determine what is presented as true by the answers given. Once we take it that speakers comply with norms of warranted assertion in the sense that they intend to make assertions only when they are justified in doing so, we can regard the conditions under which these assertions are assessed as appropriate by others to be conditions under which such answers need not be given. Accordingly, conditions of warranted assertibility can then be taken to help determine what it is that is presented as true.

Even if this is the appropriate picture of what we do in devising an account of assertoric content, the question of why we should go so far and assume that the linguistic practice under study is furthermore constrained by the quest for knowledge-*why*, nonetheless remains unanswered. Speakers might be said to present as true what they so present because the conditions are such that they are justified in doing so. But why should the speakers conceive of themselves as taking the conditions under which they are so justified to obtain because what they present as true *is* true?

There is a sense in which this is obviously false: knowledge seeking subjects do not reason from whatever they claim to be the case to the obtaining of conditions under which they are warranted to do so, in the sense of justifying the latter by the former—indeed this would be characteristic of dogmatists rather than knowledge seeking subjects. The sense in which "because" was here intended to be understood however, is causal: according to the account developed in this chapter, knowledge seeking subjects causally explain the obtaining of certain conditions by what they take to be warrantably assertible under those conditions. In other words, amongst what they take to be warrantably assertible under certain conditions is what is supposed to state the cause of the obtaining of those conditions. Prior to their endorsement of a claim which is

⁴⁸ This echoes Dummett's remarks at the end of his [WTM/II]: 92-93. Elsewhere Dummett argues that the theory of meaning is more basic than epistemology though; see [FPL]: chapter 19; and [CAP].

intended to serve this role, they are faced with what they take to be warrants for the appropriateness of such an explanation. And their closer scrutiny of these warrants, which may or may not terminate in their endorsement of a certain claim, is the search for the causal source of these warrants. The identification of that source is simultaneously the assessment of the reliability of the evidence: both are effected by endorsing a certain claim or its negation. In fact how could this be otherwise? In basing one's claims on the evidence one possesses, how could one fall short of taking the truth of what one claims ultimately to be responsible for the availability of just that evidence?

One cannot so much as identify the source of one's evidence in order to assess its reliability by getting into contact with that source itself where that contact is unmediated by any further evidence. This is not to say that one can never know that source but only the effects whose source it is.⁴⁹ The naive realists' idea of an immediate uptake of facts is just as semantically obscure however, as the idea that such an uptake can without further ado be reconciled with fallibilism is epistemologically obscure. The abductive model of belief formation yields a far more plausible account than such a McDowellian picture.⁵⁰ While the search for the best explanation is conceded to be an ongoing affair such that fallibilism poses no difficulty, what is represented in presenting a sentence to be objectively true is accounted for exclusively in terms of warranted assertibility conditions and the role such a sentence plays in the overall project of causally explaining why conditions of that kind do obtain.

5.7 A Solution to the Problem of Understanding

Davidson has argued that at least in the most basic cases, we intend to speak about the causes of our beliefs—that in those cases our beliefs are about what we take them to be caused by.⁵¹ The account proposed here is faithful to this idea, but differs in important respects from Davidson's own.

First, according to the present view we can—even in the most basic cases—fail in our intention to speak about the causes of our beliefs when expressing them. Such errors are not conceived as exceptions to the rule: massive error is not ruled out by methodological constraints on mutual interpretation. The claim that most of our beliefs are true is not a theorem of the account proposed, nor is it suggested that whoever intends to communicate is bound to commit herself to this claim. On Davidson's account

⁴⁹ Cf. Woodward [SSC]: 243-45.

⁵⁰ McDowell [MW] equates facts with true propositions and condemns the view according to which genuine experiences and illusions have a common description. But he neither addresses the question of what (false) propositions are, nor does he account for the fact that genuine (veridical?) experiences and illusions are subjectively indistinguishable.

⁵¹ Davidson [CTK]: 317-18; [EC]: 332; [CoT]: 195; [EE]: 194-95; and [MTE]: 72-73.

on the other hand, the speaker displays her grasp of sense in saying of what is true that it is true. For although Davidson leaves room for the possibility that a speaker may be mistaken in any particular case, such errors do not contribute to the determination of truth conditional content: just as we were bound to restrict the scope of content-determining verbal behaviour to those moves which qualify as correct, Davidson is bound to restrict it to the true ones insofar as, according to him, the only standard of correctness is truth.

Secondly, according to the present account we intend to speak about the causes of our beliefs in expressing them in the sense that we aim to best explain the availability of those data which confer warranted assertibility onto sentences of our repertoire that can be used to express these beliefs—and do so by way of asserting these very sentences. The present account presupposes no more than that the causal chain leads from these data to such assertoric utterances: these data are what speakers respond to in making assertions. In performing such assertoric utterances in response to the data received—hence in expressing their beliefs—speakers give an account of the causes of these data. In this way they complete the account of the causal chain—although they can of course go wrong in doing so. Thus ultimately they intend to give an account of the causes of their beliefs too. But to engage in causal explanations is more than to produce what is ultimately the effect of one's surroundings. Such explanations can be intelligible to others even if taken to be false. This cannot be the case if the contents of the utterances—the beliefs expressed—are reckoned to be about *whatever* causes those utterances.⁵² And we would not yet be entitled to conceive of what someone else is doing as an exercise of her intellect if we regarded the significance of what she is doing as wholly determined by the causes which give rise to her doing it. In other words, to causally explain and to be caused are just two different pairs of shoes. According to the present account, assertions and beliefs are thus not just responses to stimuli, but fallible conjectures about something which lies further down the causal chain and whose absence does not yet render the stance taken irrational.

In shunning what he terms 'epistemic intermediaries', Davidson leaves no room for the distinction between conditions of warranted assertibility on the one hand and conditions which one states in expressing one's beliefs—*i.e.* truth conditions—on the other.⁵³ Nor does he solve the problem of distinguishing systematically between the contents of "P" and "It is (at present) warrantably assertible that P". Instead, a speaker's assertions are conceived of as reports of the very conditions of utterance which lie open to her and the interpreter's view: these conditions are regarded as truth conditions. That

⁵² Davidson holds that this is the correct account of the content of utterances whose interpretation serves as the basis for interpreting all the rest; [EC]: 332.

⁵³ [CTK]: 312.

the interpretee thus manages to embrace reality and cast it in propositional form—in other words to represent it—is explained in terms of the fact that she does pretty much the same the interpreter does, where what the interpreter does is left unexplained.⁵⁴

Let *representationalism* be the view that the notion of representation or aboutness is a primitive which is suited to play an explanatory role in theories of meaning. Then despite all declarations to the contrary the externalist account of truth conditional content that Davidson offers would appear to be representationalist—or no account at all.⁵⁵ For that the interpretee's assertions are *about* their causes is here cashed out in terms of the contents of the interpreter's beliefs. The question, how the causal relation between objects and events on the one hand and the interpretee's assertions on the other can be conceived as an intentional relation, is answered by saying that this causal relation is of the same kind as that between these objects and events and the interpreter's beliefs, where the contents of the latter are already given; and the aboutness of mental states that are known to have a specific content no longer seems to stand in need of explanation: contentful states are essentially intentional.

Indeed, it is otherwise hard to see how correspondence and coherence can be reconciled in the manner Davidson wants them to be reconciled once correspondence is explained in purely causal terms and coherence is explained in terms of consistency: how can the fact, that a speaker's utterances on the one hand and objects and events in her vicinity on the other are causally related, help explain that these utterances have truth conditional content that makes them answerable to logical constraints? On the other hand, if we conceive of the assignment of the relevant causal relations as being informed by these logical constraints—according to Davidson not every causal factor counts as constitutive of content—then it is likewise obscure how such an assignment can issue in an assignment of truth conditional contents. Granted: talk about consistency makes sense only where it makes sense to speak of truth conditional contents. But even if we are bound to view the speaker as instantiating something that can be given a consistent interpretation in terms of such contents, the question would still arise of how the speaker's differential responses to objects and events in her vicinity can confer these contents onto her utterances so as to make us so bound. In other words, it remains

⁵⁴ Cf. Dummett [WTM/I]: 6.

⁵⁵ Rorty, who tends to think that Davidson has solved all problems in the area, contrasts representation with aboutness; [RB]: 133. Whatever he has in mind when he talks about representation, I have in mind what he has in mind when he talks about aboutness. According to Rorty, no further questions arise once we realise that aboutness and truth are indefinable. Not so: what we demand a justification for is Davidson's claim that what speakers do—their responses to distal stimuli—calls for an interpretation in terms of truth conditions which presents the speakers as talking about these stimuli.

unclear how the causal order and the logical order interact in such a way that truth conditional content emerges.⁵⁶

The need for such an account of representation or aboutness has led some philosophers to endorse the view that reality itself exerts a rational constraint on our beliefs.⁵⁷ Thus McDowell has argued that if our thinking is to have any bearing on reality at all—if it is in the business of being endowed with truth conditional content—then reality itself must be contentful: in experience, it must present us with facts which we can simply take in, where our experience is conceived of as our conceptual abilities being drawn into operation. To say that in experience our conceptual abilities are drawn into operation however, is no more than a platitude: what we need is precisely an account of how the exercise of these abilities can issue in so much as a representation of the world around us—what makes them *conceptual* abilities.⁵⁸ On the other hand, to contend that such representations are what we arrive at when embracing facts—where facts are ultimately understood as true propositions—is merely to refuse to give an account of propositions by turning the true ones into denizens of reality, while letting the notions of taking in, embracing, grasping, *etc.* do all the work without in turn explaining them.⁵⁹

What McDowell should have said is rather that content externalism does not yet explain how speakers perform the magnificent task of talking about whatever causes this talking and in such a way that this talking can be true or false. But neither McDowell nor Davidson sets out to give such an explanation—at least none that does not in turn draw on truth conditional contents or representations. The notion of representation or aboutness which is entwined with the notion of truth conditional content is not intelligible independently of the intentional attitudes of assertion and belief: it is these latter notions by means of which we express the intention to represent reality the way it is. In taking belief and assertion as primitive Davidson simply helps himself to a certain vocabulary whose employment conceals the lacuna in the account he proposes: just combine talk about responsiveness to causal factors with talk about the intention to say something true about reality, and all of a sudden you are in the favourable position to say that speakers intend to tell the truth about the causes that prompt their beliefs—

⁵⁶ It is not surprising that Davidson has eventually come to the conclusion that the concept of causality itself is essentially an interest-relative notion that has its proper place in intentional explanations rather than science; [TVK]: 162-63. However this may be, to say this much is not yet to explain what causes have to do with truth conditional content.

⁵⁷ McDowell [MW]: lectures I and II; and Putnam [POQ]: 64-68.

⁵⁸ If the demand that such an account be given is to have force against McDowell himself, it needs to be shown not to presuppose any reductionist thesis he rejects. But I can neither see why the account developed in this chapter should be regarded as reductionist in spirit—any more than, say, the account proposed by Brandom [MIE]—nor, if this label is thought to apply after all, what arguments McDowell has to hold against it.

⁵⁹ [MW]: lectures I and II.

where all you have to adduce in order to tell apart truth conditions appear to be the relevant causes. Since on this model the causes are what one takes them to be, the success of this intention can accordingly be described in terms of truth—a notion which is again taken as primitive.

The present account by contrast does not pretend to *explain* the truth conditional content of intentional states and performances in terms of what causes them. Rather, the speaker herself is considered to give causal explanations in expressing her beliefs, and it is this activity—as well as the speaker's compliance with norms of warranted assertion—which is taken to determine the contents of her assertoric utterances. To give such causal explanations is to render intelligible to oneself why one is in the informational state one happens to be in, hence it is an operation of one's intellect.⁶⁰ That the story which one tells about the causes of this state is in the market for being true or false, is explained in terms of its corrigibility in face of further data that call for a different story altogether. Thus far such stories are no more than systematic mappings of available data onto a structure of sentences whose difference in import is wholly determined by the conditions under which they would count as warrantably assertible. These sentences differ from their non-categorical, non-objective counterparts only insofar as the latter are debarred from playing any role in that structure.⁶¹

In distinguishing between conditions of warranted assertion and conditions of truth in such a way that even under the former conditions truth conditional content can be manifested, we can after all account for the difference between knowledge of meaning and knowledge of fact which is central to Frege's distinction between grasp of sense and recognition of truth value: the speaker's mustering warrants, her assuming and finally endorsing a certain claim in order to explain these warrants under conditions where, on balance, this claim is warrantably assertible, displays her knowledge of what she is trying to establish as true or false—her grasp of sense. The manifestation of her grasp of sense however, is consistent with her lacking knowledge of matters of fact. In other words, she does not thereby already manifest her recognition of truth value, for the conditions under which her assertion is warranted need not coincide with the conditions under which it qualifies as true.

We thus eventually arrive at an account of how *Verstand* and *Verstehen* are related to each other, and thereby manage to reconcile Frege's insights into the nature of objective knowledge with Wittgenstein's insights into the nature of communication: although making assertions or forming beliefs is preceded by grasp of sense, this grasp of sense is wholly manifested in use with the effect that what is grasped can be communicated without residue. Thus, while grasp of sense—entertaining a thought—is

⁶⁰ See footnote 40.

⁶¹ Cf. Carl [OR]: 182-83.

an exercise of one's intellect in that it is an essential prerequisite of making intelligible to oneself why one is in the epistemic state one happens to be in, it can nonetheless be conceived of as a practical ability, *viz.* as the ability to engage in abductive and heuristic reasoning in response to intersubjectively accessible data. And although grasp of truth conditions is wholly manifested in the mastery of linguistic rules, what is grasped nonetheless relates to something independent from compliance with these rules.

Brandom tried to give such an account based on a conception of contents as inferential roles. He failed however, because he proved unable to disentangle the consequences of what is being said from the consequences of saying it. We are now in a position to see more clearly where the deeper reason for this failure lies. Brandom does not address the question of what it is for our assertoric practice to be constrained by objective truth as a goal of enquiry: what it is we strive for in striving for objective truth and what obligation we undertake when presenting ourselves as having attained this goal.⁶² He thereby leaves unexplained why we should engage in that practice at all—in other words what the rationale of that practice is. Due to this shortcoming, he does not succeed in taking us beyond Wittgenstein, hence neither does he take us back to Frege.

Brandom calls attention to an important aspect of the task of giving an account of understanding however, which we have not yet addressed: we must still explain how speakers can come by the semantic notions employed in devising a theory of meaning for other speakers—in other words how they can arrive at such theories. *Ex hypothesi*, constructing such theories is sufficient, even if not necessary, for coming to understand what others say. But it is not enough to give such theories without explaining how—by the exercise of the very same kind of capacities the theory ascribes to them—speakers can construct such theories on their own. For it is only if such an explanation can be given by invoking no more than the kind of capacities already in play, that we can claim to have devised a theoretical representation of the practical ability to theoretically represent: since a theory of meaning is a theoretical representation of such practical abilities, the practical ability to give a theory of meaning must itself be accountable for in terms of that theory.⁶³

Thus far it has not been assumed that the speakers themselves are in possession of the concept of truth. This concept and the notion of objective content in terms of which it is to be explained, are invoked in the course of devising a theory of meaning for a speaker: it is by ascribing to her knowledge of truth conditions that we intend to explain her verbal behaviour. Pending a more refined description of that behaviour, Davidson's claim that such ascriptions yield the best explanation of what the speaker

⁶² To say that we seek to sort out who has the better reason is not yet to give an account of what it is to strive for objective truth or what the nature of this goal is; cf. Brandom [MIE]: 601, where he more or less explicitly renounces the idea that such an account be given.

⁶³ Brandom [MIE]: xix-xx, 116, 641-43, 650.

does remained unconvincing. Having discerned a more complex pattern of verbal behaviour we are now in a position to prove that Davidson's claim holds good: while norms of warranted assertion at most explain why speakers strive to make assertions only if these assertions are warranted, these norms alone cannot yet account for the fact that speakers strive to arrive at warranted assertions. That they strive to do the latter is *inter alia* manifest in their attempt to overcome neutral states of information.

As Scriven observes, to say that an event or state is of a certain kind—to describe it in a certain way—may sometimes explain why it does occur or obtain.⁶⁴ For instance, to say that the state of my skin is a case of sunburn is to say that it came to obtain because of my exposure to sunlight. To explain a certain linguistic move in terms of the performer's knowledge of truth conditions is to describe her move as her saying that (it is true that) P, for some P. Such accounts are of the same kind as explanations of one's informational states in terms of facts: in explaining one's seeming to see that there is a wood pigeon in terms of there being a wood pigeon, one typically describes one's seeming to see as the seeing that there is a wood pigeon.⁶⁵ In both cases, the same kind of abilities are drawn upon, *viz.* abilities required to engage in abductive reasoning.

Whether in one's own case or in the case of others, the *explanans* one alludes to in describing someone's assertion as the assertion that (it is true that) P systematically differs from the *explanans* one alludes to in describing someone's informational state as the seeing, or more generally the recognition, that (it is true that) P. As speakers are represented as being able to give explanations of either kind, they may accordingly be credited with a conception of truth explicable as follows:

M is true iff $\Sigma P(M \text{ says that } P \ \& \ P)$.

In conceiving of the two conjuncts on the right-hand side as mutually independent, speakers can accordingly be credited with a conception of the systematic difference between expressing a belief and telling the truth: whether one expresses the belief that P by making assertoric moves of kind M depends on one's knowledge of the truth conditions which moves of kind M enjoy; whether what one expresses is furthermore a true belief depends on whether this belief best explains the data on the basis of which it is formed.

Eventually then, constructing theories of meaning for others—and employing the notion of objective truth in doing so—is something a speaker can be said to be able to

⁶⁴ Scriven [EPL]: 175-77. Scriven rightly remarks that "an explanation of [an] event *must* be more than the *identifying* description of it, else to request an explanation of X (where 'X' is a description, not a name) is to give an explanation of X"; [EPL]: 177.

⁶⁵ As examples of what have come to be called "deviant causal chains" illustrate, this will not always be the case; therefore the claim made in the text is qualified by "typically".

do just on the basis of the capacities she is credited with by the theory of meaning devised for herself: in giving such theories for others the speaker attempts to best explain the verbal behaviour of her interlocutors. Accordingly, Brandom's constraint on accounts of understanding has been met.

In this chapter I have attempted to devise an account of our grasp of objective truth conditions that satisfies the Manifestability Requirement. In empirical discourse, speakers who go in for asserting sentences to be objectively true embark on an explanatory project: they intend to explain and thereby make sense of the information they receive by way of relating it to a reality that is taken to make them receive this information. By the same token, participation in this practice engenders the obligation to explain why this information is received. The search for best explanations was shown to be linked to hypothetical reasoning. Explaining part of the evidence one way rather than another constrains the explanation of the remainder; and how the remainder might be explained can be explored by assuming that part of the evidence is correctly explained in this way. Eliminating some of these hypotheses by way of concluding that we would be at a loss to explain the remainder if these hypotheses were regarded as true, may itself constitute a reason to endorse one rather than another such hypothesis. In this way hypothetical reasoning may be of assistance when we try to overcome informational neutrality. In the same way it may be of assistance when we try to reassure ourselves that our beliefs still form part of the best explanation of all currently available evidence: we may eliminate their alternatives by way of first assuming them and then concluding that given this assumption, a significant part of the evidence we now have would go unexplained.

By appeal to hypothetical reasoning of this kind—*heuristic reasoning* as I have called it—we could account for the fact that speakers conceive of some sentences in their repertoire as being endowed with objective truth conditions. Since heuristic reasoning, just as hypothetical reasoning in general, has its distinctive behavioural manifestations, our account was shown to comply with the Manifestability Requirement.

It was argued in previous chapters that realists and anti-realists alike are forced to give an account which has both these properties. Accordingly, we now have to address the question of whether on the basis of the account proposed here, anti-realists prove able to show that speakers cannot be credited with a conception of objective truth as exceeding the knowable. This will be the topic of the final chapter.

Chapter Six

Dummett argued that in the absence of complex sentence-forming devices there would be no detectable difference between speech communities who went in for asserting what is currently warranted and speech communities who went in for asserting what is true. According to Dummett, the difference between truth conditions and warranted assertibility conditions only emerges once we try to give a systematic account of the contribution sentences make to the determination of the assertoric content of complex sentences of which they are constituents.

The Manifestability Requirement demanded that insofar as understanding cannot solely consist in verbalisable knowledge, knowledge of truth conditions, if essential to understanding, must be manifested in practical abilities. If knowledge of truth conditions is sufficient for successful participation in assertoric practice however, then the conclusion seems apt that it involves recognitional abilities. The crucial step in the anti-realist argumentation was to conclude from this that knowledge of truth conditions is already manifested in recognitional abilities; from there it was but a small step to the conclusion that the conditions knowledge of which is thus manifested are conditions the knowing subject must be able to recognise as obtaining whenever they do obtain.

I argued in chapter three that Dummett goes wrong when he suggests that the assertibilist—who identifies the designated value of a sentence with its warranted assertibility—cannot give a systematic account of the assertibility conditions of complex sentences. But if the assertibilist can after all devise such an account, then we so far lack any reason to believe on the basis of what speakers do who engage in assertoric practice, that a sentence has truth conditions which may obtain while its warranted assertibility conditions do not, or which may fail to obtain while its warranted assertibility conditions nonetheless do. By the same token, nor is there so far any reason to believe that one's ability to engage in assertoric practice manifests one's knowledge of objective truth conditions. Since the notion of objective truth alluded to ought to be accepted even by the anti-realist, then by Dummett's own lights, knowledge of truth conditions must be manifested in more than those recognitional abilities which are required for successful participation in the practice that assertibilism so aptly describes.

The Inferentiality Constraint—the constraint that a systematic account be given of how the assertibility conditions of complex sentences are determined so as to make their inferential connections with other sentences explicit—was supposed to achieve what the Manifestation Argument alone could not achieve: to license the ascription of objective truth conditions to assertoric performances. All the Manifestation Argument could be seen to achieve was showing that the conditions ascriptions of the knowledge

of which are already justified by the practice of making assertions must be conditions which are recognisable. This much is surely compatible with realism, for the conditions ascriptions of the knowledge of which is so justified are no more than conditions of warranted assertibility.

Dummett's contention that assertibilism is already refuted by its inability to meet the Inferentiality Constraint would after all appear to be inessential to the anti-realist's Manifestation Argument, for corrections already call for an account of content that the assertibilist is incapable of giving. However, the trouble was that corrections are effected by means of assertions and that there is no institution of making corrections alongside the institution of making assertions: the corrections in question have no practical consequences assertions do not have. In particular, there are no further sanctions involved. Rather, assertions are to be identified as corrections in virtue of the objective content that they have; and according to Dummett himself, that they have objective content must then be manifested in a practice other than solely the practice of making assertions.

If this is so however, then it is no longer clear whether the recognitional abilities involved in knowledge of truth conditions exceed the ability to recognise the conditions under which a sentence qualifies as warrantably assertible or deniable: recognitional abilities are displayed in the practice of making assertions, and if this practice in itself falls short of justifying the attribution of knowledge of truth conditions, then that knowledge will further be manifested in other than recognitional abilities.

The idea accordingly was to look for another way of justifying the ascription of objective contents to assertoric performances. Brandom offered an account of analytic consequence intended to reveal that assertibilism is at odds with our inferential practice: that the assertibilist can meet the Inferentiality Constraint only at the cost of blinding herself to the ways in which we treat inferences as deductively valid. Although Brandom's account does not assign any explanatory function to the concept of truth but rather conceives of contents in terms of inferential roles, still it may have laid the groundwork on whose basis the realism/anti-realism debate could then have been conducted—if only it had succeeded in undermining assertibilism. As I argued in chapter four however, Brandom's account fails in this respect.

We were then led back to a reconsideration of what kind of content assertions must have in order to qualify as corrections. The difference between objective contents as thus understood and warranted assertibility conditions gave rise to the Problem of Rational Belief Change. The upshot of these reflections was that warranted assertibility conditions—*i.e.* those conditions knowledge of which is already displayed in making assertions—must be linked to truth conditions in such a way that commitment to the truth of a sentence is answerable to the recognition of its warranted assertibility. And

this meant that knowledge of truth conditions is to be conceived of as involving knowledge of warranted assertibility conditions. The problem and the response it prompted illustrated Dummett's idea that unless knowledge of truth conditions can somehow inform or guide assertoric practice it cannot qualify as what understanding consists in.¹ Having knowledge of truth conditions is knowing which truth conditions a given sentence has; and it may well so turn out that *which* truth conditions a given sentence has is at least partly determined by the conditions under which that sentence is warrantably assertible and those under which it is to be denied. This would leave us with the task to explain what it takes to know that a sentence has objective truth conditions at all which are determined in this way, hence on which basis such knowledge may be ascribed. To accomplish this task is to provide the means to overcome assertibilism.

In chapter five I attempted to explain objective content in terms of the institution of giving causal explanations. This attempt was further motivated by the idea that the institution of giving causal explanations would allow us to see how commitments to the truth of a sentence are answerable to the recognition of its warranted assertibility. The proposed solution was that in empirical discourse assertions with objective contents form part of causal explanations of the facts we may report by means of assertions whose content is not objective.² Indeed the claim that facts explain data was intended to ensure that *all* empirical sentences with objective contents, including observation sentences, can play an explanatory role their non-objective counterparts cannot.

Again we faced the problem that explanations are effected by means of assertions. It was argued however, that the practice of heuristic reasoning is essential to the institution of giving causal explanations, in the sense that engagement in this kind of reasoning is to be seen as a practical consequence of one's quest for explanations. As a species of hypothetical reasoning heuristic reasoning was distinguished from the assertion of conditionals. The assertibilist could be shown to be at a loss to devise an interpretation of certain assumptions and *a fortiori* to account for the link between what is assumed and what is asserted. The independence of truth conditions from warranted assertibility conditions—as required by our objectivist conception of truth—was conceived of in causal terms and shown to be manifestable in hypothetical reasoning. At the same time though, the relation between both kinds of conditions was taken care of—

¹ Dummett [LBM]: 308.

² Speakers do not typically report their epistemic states by means of sentences like "It is warrantably assertible that P" or "It appears as if P". But this observation does not undermine the cogency of the current proposal. Obviously, one may give explanations without stating the *explanandum*, in particular if the *explanans* is understood to explain why it can warrantably be put forward. In any case, our task was to recover a difference in assertoric content between "It is warrantably assertible that P" and "P" from a difference in the way these sentences are being used. It is therefore no good objection to the proposed account that, as a matter of fact, speakers hardly ever use sentences of the former kind.

just as a solution to the Problem of Rational Belief Change required. In order to attain these results however, we did not yet have to explicitly acknowledge that knowledge of truth conditions resides in or calls for the ability to recognise a sentence as true if it is objectively true. Whether this assumption holds good will have to be shown by connecting the different strands of the account given.

Thus we have eventually arrived at an account of how thinking objective contents is possible—possible, that is, under the constraint that such contents be communicable without residue by means of language use. Accordingly, we have reconciled Frege's insight into the nature of thoughts with Wittgenstein's demand that what we think be determined by the rules of the language game in which we engage in order to communicate what we think. Until now realists and anti-realists have travelled together passing the point at which compliance with the Wittgensteinian constraint seemed to make betraying Frege's insight inevitable. If the realism/anti-realism debate is to be fought on semantic grounds at all, then we should now be able to draw some conclusions. It is ultimately the degree of objectivity our thoughts may be said to enjoy, that lies at the heart of this debate and the Manifestability Requirement is the only—or to be more careful, the most widely recognised—constraint on semantic theories that may provide for an upper bound.

In this chapter I shall argue that if there is a case to be made for anti-realism, that case will not rest on the Manifestability Requirement. This leaves us with two options: either anti-realism cannot be vindicated unless by appeal to this requirement, hence ought to be rejected—the Dummettian Criterion rules out anti-realism; or there are other decision procedures which still are in need of being devised—the Dummettian Criterion does not arbitrate the debate. In either case temporary agnosticism about the apriority of (EC*) is forced upon us:

(EC*) for all non-Moorean sentences *S*, if *S* is true, then *S* is knowably true.

To show this much is of course not yet to vindicate moderate realism. For moderate realism is the claim that (EC*) cannot be known *a priori*, rather than the weaker claim that (EC*) is not presently known *a priori*. To show that (EC*) cannot be established on the basis of the Dummettian Criterion however, deals a decisive blow against all foes of realism who are armed with no more than the Wittgensteinian mace.³

In the next two sections I shall discuss—and finally dismiss—a suggestion as to how truth might be understood by the anti-realist. Although showing this suggestion to

³ Throughout this essay I have been exclusively concerned with empirical discourse. Thus any existing arguments for the validity of (EC*) with respect to another discourse, *e.g.* mathematical or ethical discourse, will have no effect on the propriety of the general conclusion reached: in any case we ought to adopt temporary agnosticism towards *global* anti-realism.

be inappropriate leaves the general debate untouched, doing so will help get into sharper focus which direction this debate must take; this line will then be pursued in the remainder of this chapter.

6.1 *Superassertibility and the Limits of Truth*

Crispin Wright has suggested that the notion of *superassertibility* captures the anti-realist's conception of truth.⁴ A sentence *S* is superassertible just in case the actual world is such that there is a state of information *j* attainable by us such that *S* is warranted assertible in *j* and for any enlargement of *j*, *j*+, *S* remains warranted assertible in *j*+.⁵ In other words, *S* is superassertible if and only if there are (actually) undefeasible warrants for *S* available (in principle) which are sufficient to license its assertion.

Since the claim that *S* is superassertible is an existential claim that is entailed by but does not entail the claim that one's present state of information contains actually undefeasible warrants for *S*, the notion of superassertibility fares well with the constraints imposed by our conception of corrections—as the reader may herself check by returning to section (3.8) of chapter three. The same applies to our conception of the attribution of shortcomings which are due to a failure to endorse what is objectively true, as it was described at the beginning of the last chapter.

As we shall see shortly however, the idea that superassertibility and truth are one and the same concept is in tension with the account developed in the last chapter. This account described a practice whose participants manifest their knowledge of objective truth conditions. If the concept of truth whose grasp they thereby manifest is distinct from that of superassertibility, then it would seem that truth cannot be equated with superassertibility: at most superassertibility would appear to be suited to serve as a model for truth in other areas of discourse such as ethics or mathematics; it is anyway not to be identified with truth for variable discourses.⁶

In the last chapter I argued that assertions have objective contents insofar as they relate to facts (whose existence is implied by the existence of facts) that are taken to causally explain the data on whose basis these assertions are warrantedly made. If this is correct, the *truth* of an assertion of this kind will consist in the existence of such a fact.

⁴ [CDM]: 411-18, 422-25; and [TO]: 33-70; cf. as well Dummett [LBM]: 338.

⁵ It might be suggested that the reference to the actual world give the wrong result when one applies the definition to counterfactual superassertibility. But at least on one reading of "actual" this is wrong: the actual world might have been different, which is to say, another world might have been actual. Here "actual" is a directly referring *indexical* that, if used in modal contexts, refers to that possible world which is contemplated as actual in those contexts; cf. Davies [MQN]: 220-42, especially 224-26.

⁶ Of course, there is still room for manoeuvre here if the anti-realist can avail herself of the distinction between concepts and the properties they denote. However, see footnote 13 below for some doubts about the cogency of this move.

But then it seems obvious that the truth of such an assertion cannot consist in the fact that what is being asserted is superassertible, for one cannot causally explain why one is in possession of warrants for this assertion by citing the fact that actually undefeasible warrants for it are attainable—even if the further assumption is being made that the warrants one possesses are warrants in virtue of which what one asserts is superassertible. In the same vein, the fact that there is a man who has been or will be born such that for every woman who has been or will be born, that man is taller than her, does never causally explain why Dennis is taller than Maggie—even, that is, if Dennis happens to be that man. If Dennis can (independently) be identified as such a man, then this may yield a reason to believe that insofar as Maggie exists, Dennis is taller than Maggie. What we are concerned with are causal explanations however, and not rational vindications. Thus we do not justify the claim that S is at present warrantably assertible in terms of the truth of S nor in terms of the further assumption—which if we endorse S we cannot help but make—that the warrants we presently have will survive the future. Rather we explain why these warrants have become available in terms of the truth of S, and here it seems that superassertibility is a poor candidate for truth.⁷

But what does this show with respect to (EC*)? All that seems to have been established so far is that the superassertibility of S is not to be equated with its truth, as the fact in whose existence its truth consists is suited to causally explain what the fact in whose existence its superassertibility consists is not. Accordingly, it might be suggested that this leaves the status of (EC*) quite unaffected, for this constraint merely says that all (non-Moorean) truths have the feature of being knowable. A rather quick argument to be presented in due course will show that this suggestion is mistaken however. The upshot of this argument will be that there is good reason not to regard (EC*) as conceptually necessary. Of course, to show this much is not yet to show that there is no good reason on whose basis (EC*) may be known *a priori*. But it might still be disconcerting for all those anti-realists who have proposed (EC*) as a piece of conceptual analysis.

Wright's notion of superassertibility incorporates a modalised version of the standard internalist conception of knowledge that has emerged from the Gettier debate: according to this conception, to have knowledge is to have a justified true belief which is based on actually undefeasible warrants.⁸ For a truth to be knowable is accordingly for there to be such actually undefeasible warrants on the basis of which a subject may come to endorse it. In other words, knowability entails superassertibility.

⁷ Cf. Johnston [ORP]: 94-96.

⁸ Cf. Lehrer/Paxson [KUJ].

It would appear that this account of knowability is at odds with externalist epistemology. An externalist conception of knowledge that makes the possession of knowledge that P a matter of how one is—externally—related to the fact that P immediately invites the thought that it is not only possible for one not to be so related to this fact, but possible that one is debarred from getting into the position of being so related. If so the anti-realist would seem ill-advised to base her belief in (EC*) on such an externalist conception of knowledge. It is actually far from clear however, whether an externalist epistemology is necessarily realist. Whether or not this is so need not detain us here. In the present context all that matters is whether a truth can be said to be knowable just in case it is superassertible, even if knowability is construed along externalist lines. Again, I do not see any reason not to think so. Even if there was no externalist analogue of the notion of an undefeasible warrant which is applicable to first order knowledge, still the perspective we have to adopt is that of the theorist of understanding and viewed from this perspective, it must be possible to ascribe knowledge to a given speaker, hence to have second order knowledge. In other words, if the speaker recognises a truth, then not only must it be possible for the theorist of understanding to recognise this truth herself, but also to recognise that the speaker does so. Accordingly, whatever externalist constraints the speaker must be said to meet in order to be credited with such knowledge, that she meets them must in turn be knowable. For example, it must be knowable that she is reliable. But then the claim that she is reliable can itself serve as a warrant for asserting what she asserts, and will, if true, never be defeated by any other truth to which the theorist of understanding can be externally related.⁹

Let us therefore define the notion of knowability appealed to by the anti-realist as follows—bearing in mind that truth and superassertibility are distinct:

(\Diamond K) S is knowable iff S is true and S is superassertible.

⁹ Cf. Brandom [MIE]: 217-21. It is part of the externalist's stock in trade that a subject *a* may know that she knows P without *first* recognising that she satisfies the externalist conditions for knowing P. In the same vein, it might be suggested that someone else may know that *a* knows P without first recognising that *a* satisfies these conditions. To my mind, this is pretty unconvincing: it would require that you may acquire knowledge about my states of knowing without first taking into account how I am related to my environment. However, nothing of what has been said so far is inconsistent with this idea: it has merely been suggested that if *a* knows P it will be knowable that she satisfies the externalist conditions for knowing P. This can be so even if there are states of knowing that *a* knows P which are not, at the same time, states of knowing acquired by first recognising that *a* satisfies the externalist conditions for knowing P.

(\diamond K) and (EC*) jointly entail that for all non-Moorean sentences S,

if S is true, then S is superassertible.¹⁰

The converse of (EC*) is the *Alethic Constraint*:

(AC) if S is knowable, then S is true.

Applying (\diamond K) to (AC) yields the following tautology:

if S is true and S is superassertible, then S is true.

(AC) and (\diamond K) do not entail that if S is superassertible, S is true. Indeed that this conditional fails to be necessary is what you would expect: if two contingent empirical states of affairs are distinct, then there should be a possible world in which one of them obtains while the other one does not.¹¹ Hence if it is impossible that S is true without being superassertible—as the necessity of (EC*) would require—then the distinction between the fact that S is true and the fact that S is superassertible, should accordingly reside in its being possible for S to be superassertible without being true:

it is possible that (S is superassertible and S is not true).

If S is not true, then by the Negation Equivalence:

(NE) S is not true iff ' \sim S' is true,

' \sim S' will be true. Hence by (EC*) and (\diamond K), ' \sim S' will be superassertible. Accordingly, it should be a genuine possibility that S and ' \sim S' both are superassertible:

it is possible that (S is superassertible and ' \sim S' is superassertible).

But S and ' \sim S' cannot both be superassertible, for S and ' \sim S' cannot both be warrantably assertible in the same state of information, and any state of information which confers superassertibility onto a given sentence must be attainable by someone

¹⁰ For the sake of brevity, I shall henceforth omit the explicit restriction to non-Moorean sentences and presuppose that the sentences S being talked about are non-Moorean in kind.

¹¹ Cf. Fine [FOM]: 58-59.

who has been in a state of information warranting its negation.¹² So something must have gone wrong.

Since we are presently concerned with the implications of the account devised in the preceding chapter, we cannot blame the inconsistency on the assumption that the truth of S does not consist in its superassertibility. Nor is it open to the anti-realist to object to (\Diamond K). But then unless she finds some fault with the criterion of distinctness of facts alluded to or its application to the present case, she will have to concede that the distinction between the fact that P and the fact that it is superassertible that P resides in its being possible that the former exists while the latter does not. Hence pending further argument, there is reason not to regard (EC*) as conceptually necessary.¹³ In any case,

¹² Given that superassertibility was intended as an anti-realist notion of truth, the actually undefeasible warrants which confer superassertibility on a given sentence must not be conceived of as purely permissive: otherwise the anti-realist would leave room for the (im)possibility that both S and ' \sim S' are true.

¹³ It might for instance be argued on the anti-realist's behalf that all we have established so far is that the concepts expressed by "is knowable" and "is true" are two different modes of presentation of one and the same property—in just the same sense in which the concepts expressed by "is water" and "is H₂O" are—with the effect that (EC*) will after all be metaphysically necessary. The question would then immediately arise, however, how we might nonetheless know (EC*) *a priori*, although the claim that water is H₂O can only be known *a posteriori*. This question might be answered by way of comparing the relation between "is true" and "is knowable" to that obtaining between "is water" and "has whatever property, or set of properties, is causally responsible for watery symptoms": the truth-predicate would then be said to denote whatever property, or set of properties, is causally responsible for the availability of undefeasible warrants for its instantiations. On this construal, it would still hold that truth and superassertibility are distinct properties: the availability of warrants for S is not a property of S which is causally responsible for the availability of warrants for S. But it might now be suggested that these properties are nonetheless related in such a way that it is both necessary and *a priori* that whatever has the one has the other and *vice versa*. This will only be so, however, if "is true" is *defined* as denoting whatever property renders its instantiations superassertible—just as the natural kind terms "is water" is defined as denoting whatever property is causally responsible for watery symptoms: otherwise it cannot be ruled out *a priori* that S might be superassertible while lacking the property actually denoted by "is true". But if "is true" is defined in the way suggested, then it should be legitimate to use the following explanations interchangeably:

- (i) S is warranted because S is true
- (ii) S is warranted because S has whatever property, or set of properties, causes it to be superassertible.

But one may ask: how should the fact that S has a property causally responsible for the existence of undefeasible warrants for S explain why there are, at present, warrants for S? True: if S is accepted as true on the basis of the presently available warrants, then these warrants will be regarded as warrants in virtue of which S is superassertible. But accepting S as true was supposed to be the outcome of accepting an explanation like (i), not a presupposition of the candidature of such an explanation. Yet, even if we bracket this concern, the presupposition that the presently available warrants are superassertibility-conferring—which, as just noted, is necessary to render the candidature of (ii) intelligible—will have the effect that (ii) won't be any better than (iii):

- (iii) S is superassertible because S has whatever property, or set of properties, causes it to be superassertible.

But now (iii) is entirely futile: it in effect states that whatever causes S to be superassertible causes it to be superassertible; and this is hardly an explanation of *why* S is superassertible. Hence, "is true" cannot be taken to be defined as denoting whatever property, or set of properties, causes its instantiations to be

we are left with the task to settle whether (EC*), even if not conceptually necessary, can nonetheless be known *a priori*.

6.2 Theoretical Slack?

At this point the friend of superassertibility may retort that we can do without the causalist elements of the account of objective truth developed in chapter five: they constitute the theoretical slack anti-realists seek to eradicate in favour of a slimmer but empirically just as adequate theory of understanding. To recall, these causalist elements themselves were introduced in the course of an inference to the best explanation: they were taken to render intelligible why speakers display certain patterns of hypothetical reasoning in certain contexts; and it was this verbal behaviour that was then said to manifest the speakers' knowledge of objective truth conditions. The superassertibilist may of course suggest that there is verbal behaviour of an altogether different kind which licenses the ascription of such knowledge but also the identification of truth with superassertibility. But then what kind of behaviour is it? Until this question has been answered, the present suggestion lacks any force and need not detain us here.

What we have to consider though, is the alternative suggestion that the very behaviour we have been concerned with can be rendered intelligible without conceiving of speakers as being involved in the pursuit of knowledge-*why*. Thus the superassertibilist may argue instead that she can equally well explain:

- (i) why reasoning under the assumption effected by the use of S (or its negation) may be called for in informational states which are neutral with respect to both S and its negation, and
- (ii) how the outcome of such reasoning may provide a reason to assert S (or its negation)
- (iii) why reasoning under the assumption effected by the negation of S may be called for in informational states that license the assertion of S, and
- (iv) how the outcome of such reasoning may provide a reason to assert the negation of S (or to refuse to assert S).

superassertible. Therefore, (EC*) cannot be shown to be both necessary and *a priori*—even, that is, if the distinction between concepts and properties is being invoked. Since the anti-realist claims that (EC*) is known *a priori*, she will have to resist calling it necessary.

Suppose that the assumption that S is true after all reduces to the assumption that S is superassertible. If this assumption is made in states of informational neutrality, it will not be counterfactual: the claim that there are warrants of a certain kind which one may have, is not the claim that one has warrants of this kind *now*. In this respect the superassertibilist seems better off than the assertibilist because the assumption that one has warrants for S now is contrary-to-fact if made in neutral states of information; and as has been emphasised *ad nauseam*, counterfactual reasoning will never play the role that an answer to (i) to (iv) calls for.

But is the superassertibilist really in a more advantageous position? If one assumes that S is superassertible one assumes that the actual world is such as to contain *de facto* undefeasible warrants for S which one may come to possess, hence that there is an actually attainable state in which one possesses such warrants. If S is presently undecided one knows that one is not now in a position one would be in if one attained such a state. Thus although the fact that S is presently undecided does not rule out that there is such a state, it nonetheless rules out that one's present state of information is a state of this kind. Both the assumption that one was now in a state known to be different from the state one is actually in and the assumption that in future one can attain a state known to be different from the state one is actually in share this feature: they both relate to an unactualised epistemic possibility, even if only the former but not the latter is counterfactual. But then how can reasoning under an assumption which relates to such an unactualised epistemic possibility provide a promising starting point for the attempt to overcome actual informational neutrality? Assuming that there is a procedure of warrant-acquisition which would result in knowledge of S, if only it was carried out, is to assume the outcome that carrying out some such procedure would have and not yet to carry out a procedure that may or may not have that outcome. Hence reasoning under the assumption that S is superassertible alone will never play the role which (i) to (iv) circumscribe.

By contrast, if we conceive of speakers as having the intention to explain the information they now possess in terms of facts expressible by sentences apt for objective truth, the speakers' assumption that such sentences are true will not reduce to the assumption that there is a procedure of warrant-acquisition the carrying out of which would yield warrants for their assertion—independently that is of whether or not these sentences are furthermore assumed to have the feature of being superassertible: their assumed superassertibility will not be that feature whose assumption is of relevance in assessing the costs and benefits that giving explanations by their means may have. If S is objectively true now there will be nothing unactualised about what makes it so: if S states a fact which relates to causally efficacious states and events, these states and events can stand in relations to one's present epistemic state, notably causal ones, whose

nature can again be specified independently from any reference to unactualised epistemic possibilities. Given the speakers' intention to explain their present epistemic states, and the conception of facts they accordingly bring to bear, the chance of eliminating alternative explanatory hypotheses by reasoning under the assumption of their truth may provide a reason to engage in this kind of reasoning in order to overcome informational neutrality.¹⁴ But then superassertibility does not constitute objective truth, at most it is an additional feature of it.

The claim that a workable theory contains theoretical slack can only be justified on the basis of a workable alternative. The identification of truth with superassertibility yields no such workable alternative to the theory developed in chapter five. Accordingly this identification gives no comfort to the anti-realist who seeks to establish that that theory contains theoretical slack whose eradication will bring the truth of anti-realism to light. She therefore ought to change tack.

6.3 *Completeness and Superneutrality*

It is a widely shared view among realists and anti-realists alike that we have no reason to suppose that the principle of Completeness holds:

(C) either S is knowable or '¬S' is knowable.

Any anti-realist who shares this view is bound to opt for logical revisionism in remaining agnostic about the Law of Excluded Middle too. For (EC*) in conjunction with (NE) and (AC) entails that

'¬S' is knowable iff S is not knowable.

And this biconditional turns (C) into an instance of the Law of Excluded Middle. This means that the anti-realist's reason not to endorse Completeness cannot consist in the idea that with respect to a given pair of sentences S and '¬S' apt for objective truth, the actual world may be *superneutral*. The actual world is superneutral with respect to a sentence S and its negation just in case there is a state of information *j* such that neither S nor its negation is warrantably assertible in *j* and any enlargement of *j* is such that neither S nor its negation is warrantably assertible in the enlarged state. Let us label the idea that there is a pair of sentences S and '¬S' with respect to which the *actual* world is superneutral *Superneutrality*. The anti-realist will have to deny Superneutrality because Superneutrality would issue in a counterexample to Completeness and given (EC*)

¹⁴ Cf. Lipton [ITB]: 67-68, 89-90.

yield a contradiction. But then the anti-realist cannot even conceive of a world other than the actual world which is superneutral with respect to S and '¬S' unless this world is at the same time conceived to be a world in which (EC*) breaks down. That the anti-realist should concede the possibility of worlds of the latter kind was the upshot of the argument presented at the end of section (6.1). Thus while the intuitionist refuses to give a counterexample to the Law of Excluded Middle in order to back up her agnosticism with respect to this law insofar as such counterexamples are logically impossible—the anti-realist refuses to give a counterexample to Completeness in order to back up her agnosticism with respect to this principle insofar as such counterexamples are not to be found in the *actual* world. The anti-realist may therefore not yet be impressed by the finding that speakers have the conceptual resources to contemplate such counterexamples as long as it can be shown in addition that they engage in counterfactual reasoning when doing so.

By the same token however, if speakers can be shown to contemplate counterexamples to Completeness but cannot be shown thereby to engage in counterfactual reasoning, the anti-realist cannot argue her case by charging them of a contradiction, for doing so would be to beg the question: a contradiction can be recognised as being involved only to the extent that the validity of (EC*) has already been acknowledged so as to rule out Superneutrality.

That there should be no worlds which are superneutral with respect to some S and '¬S' is indeed hard to swallow. Since it is conceivable that neither S nor '¬S' is warrantably assertible in some state of information, it is hard to see how the thought that this state of information may have no enlargement in which S is warrantably assertible and no enlargement either in which '¬S' is warrantably assertible, may involve a contradiction. As we have seen, (EC*) need not rule out this possibility: it just entails that it is not actualised. But since there are in fact some S and '¬S' neither of which is at present warrantably assertible, why should we be confident that it is not the case that our present state of information has neither an enlargement which warrants S nor one that warrants '¬S'? And how could this confidence be less than the confidence that there is either an enlargement that warrants S or an enlargement that warrants '¬S'? In other words, how can we be assured that there are no S and '¬S' with respect to which the actual world is superneutral without thereby being assured that either S or '¬S' is actually superassertible? Logic tells us that S and '¬S' cannot both be false but this has any bearing on Superneutrality only if (EC*) is being assumed. (EC*) tells us that it can be guaranteed that either S or '¬S' is superassertible only provided the Law of Excluded Middle is being assumed; that this law ought not to be assumed cannot then in turn be based on the idea that we have no guarantee that either S or '¬S' is superassertible. In other words, the anti-realist should stop tugging at her bootstraps.

The leading thought behind the Manifestability Requirement has been that the concepts whose extensions we can delineate on *a priori* grounds are concepts whose possession we are justified in ascribing to speakers including ourselves. (EC*) is supposed to set a limit to the extension of objective truth where objective truth applies to sentences, or utterances of them, which express objective contents. The Manifestation Argument was intended to show that we are not justified in attributing to speakers the ability to entertain or communicate objective contents which determine truth conditions whose obtaining it may be beyond the speakers' ability to recognise. If this argument had been successful we would have been in a position to say that if a sentence were endowed with truth conditions whose obtaining it may exceed our powers to recognise, then that this was so would not be manifested in our linguistic practice. The Manifestability Requirement would then have allowed us to conclude that there is no such sentence.

The idea is now to investigate whether the anti-realist can rule out Superneutrality with respect to sentences that bear objective contents without yet admitting Completeness by means of showing that if Superneutrality holds with respect to some S and '~S', then neither S nor '~S' bears objective content. For even if S and '~S' do not bear objective contents, they may still be significant. Instead, asserting them may then be to claim no more than that they are warrantably assertible. Since the anti-realist has no problem in conceding that S and '~S' may both fail to be warrantably assertible at some point, neither will she have any problem in conceding that this very fact is itself superassertible: if neither S nor '~S' is at present warrantably assertible, then this situation itself will not be altered by any further information becoming available at a later stage.¹⁵ After all, that neither S nor '~S' is at present warrantably assertible does not involve a contradiction, even if (EC*) is assumed.

Since we are no longer concerned with the modal status of (EC*), we must consider a state of information which is neutral with respect to S and '~S' and yet which the speakers whose behaviour we study can actually occupy. Suppose the anti-realist conceded that there is no enlargement of this state of information such that either S or '~S' became warrantably assertible in the enlarged state of information. She would then have to conclude that neither S nor '~S' bears objective content.

The trouble lies in the fact that whether or not S and '~S' bear objective contents is partly manifested in neutral states of information. It is in states of this kind that speakers engage in heuristic reasoning in order to resolve their ignorance and thereby display their knowledge of truth conditions. Thus it would now appear to become a matter of whether the speakers in question do or do not engage in this reasoning whether the anti-realist can drive her point home.

¹⁵ Cf. Wright [CDM]: 407.

But suppose they do. At this point the anti-realist will object that she never intended to base her conclusions on what speakers actually do. Pointing to the logical revisionist she will claim equal right to criticise actual practice: just as logical revisionism could not get off the ground if the intuitionist was debarred from criticising actual inferential practice, so too anti-realism would never have the chance to get a grip if the way speakers actually behave was sacrosanct. This is not an altogether happy parallel though, for the incoherence in actual practice which the logical revisionist intends to reveal resides in a conflict between our practice of drawing inferences and our conception of the validity of the rules we employ. Deductive inferences should be truth preserving, hence tailored to fit our conception of what it is for premisses and conclusions to be true. The logical revisionist claims that there is no aspect of the use of premisses and conclusions respectively that justifies the attribution to speakers of a grasp of bivalent truth conditions. In the present case *there is* an aspect of use that justifies the attribution to speakers of a grasp of objective contents however, and the only incoherence that has as yet been identified if any, is one between this aspect of use and (EC*).

Even if the parallel does not hold, we may still concede that there are ways to criticise actual practice which are open to the anti-realist. What she has to argue for is that in the case at hand the speakers' behaviour is somehow at odds with the conception of truth we are justified in attributing to them. Suppose the anti-realist asked the following question: even if in the case at hand speakers displayed their understanding of S and ' \sim S' as being endowed with objective contents, would they be rational in doing so if they had reason to assert that neither S nor ' \sim S' is knowable just as the assumption of Superneutrality contends?

Indeed if the hypothetical reasoning we are concerned with is undertaken in order to overcome ignorance and if there was reason to believe that ignorance cannot be overcome, there would be no point in engaging in this kind of reasoning. The realist is bound to concede this. She will hasten to add however, that there is a vital difference between taking oneself to have the chance of being successful and taking oneself to have a guarantee of not being unsuccessful. Just as the realist may be reluctant to postulate the existence of unknowable truths, hence to commit herself to the existence of a counterexample to (EC*), neither may she be ready to concede that speakers ever have a reason to believe that the actual world is superneutral with respect to any given pair S and ' \sim S'.¹⁶ She will resist making any such commitment if her realism is moderate. Yet,

¹⁶ The sceptic who takes Superneutrality to obtain must give a reason for this belief. Even if such a reason can be given it will presuppose a realist conception of truth. Since the moderate realist neither intends to base her view on the prospects of scepticism as thus conceived, nor to beg the question against the anti-realist, she should not base anything she says on the idea that there may be a reason to believe in Superneutrality.

just as she denies that there is any reason to believe in Completeness or (EC*), she denies that there is a reason to rule out Superneutrality. The realist/anti-realist debate is precisely the debate about whether it can be ruled out that unknowable truths are an actual possibility; this question has not been answered in the positive by way of showing that if speakers had a reason to believe that they were debarred from getting to know the truth-value of S, they would not even try to do so.

If (EC*) was knowable *a priori* as the anti-realist contends, then there would be a standing reason to deny that neither S is knowable nor ‘~S’ is knowable—a reason which is available in all states of information. Now suppose the anti-realist asked the following question: even if in the case at hand speakers do in fact display their understanding of S and ‘~S’ as being endowed with objective contents, can they still be considered as rational in doing so if they lack a reason to deny that neither S nor ‘~S’ is knowable? If not then insofar as they are fully rational the speakers must take themselves to be in possession of a standing reason to rule out that neither S nor ‘~S’ is knowable.

But just when is a statement of the form ‘~Q & ~R’ warrantably deniable? As has been argued in the third chapter, this will be so just in case either ‘~Q’ is warrantably deniable or ‘~R’ is or it is a consequence of certain principles that ‘~Q & ~R’ ought to be denied. The first two disjuncts do not obtain in the present case because the speakers are taken to be in a state of information which is neutral with respect to S and ‘~S’ and *a fortiori* neutral with respect to ‘It is knowable that S’ and ‘It is knowable that ~S’. This leaves us with the question of whether the third disjunct obtains. However, the only principle from which it may follow that ‘It is neither knowable that S nor knowable that ~S’ ought to be denied is the Epistemic Constraint! Accordingly, the suggestion that the speakers would not be rational in doing what they do if they lacked a reason to deny Superneutrality, is just the question-begging thought that they ought to subscribe to (EC*). As long as they do not however, there is as yet nothing in what they do which betrays an incoherence on their part. We have therefore to conclude that so far the anti-realist has not succeeded in her attempt to vindicate (EC*).

6.4 *Causes and Best Explanations*

In what follows I shall present what I take to be the anti-realist's best shot. Part of the account of assertoric practice developed in the preceding chapter was that speakers conceive of truth in such a way that if S is true, S will be part of the belief set which best explains all data ever available. The anti-realist now argues that if this is so, there ought to be data available on whose basis we can come to know that S is true if it is true.

Since not both S and ' $\sim S$ ' can be true, then by (NE), neither can both be entailed by the best explanation of all the data ever available. This is indeed already a part of what it is for an explanation to be best. Thus although we have no reason to suppose that either S or ' $\sim S$ ' will be part of the best explanation of all data ever available, speakers who conceive of truth in this way have a standing reason to suppose that if S is true, there must be some data available that decide the issue. Hence Superneutrality is ruled out.

The realist will contend that a belief set best explains all available data insofar as it mentions their causes and reject the alternative suggestion that a belief set mentions the causes of all available data insofar as it best explains them. It is in this sense that we may be debarred from telling what the best explanation is, or so the realist will argue. In order to give substance to this contrast the realist will ask us to distinguish between data which are available and data which are not. If an explanation is considered best if it states the causes of the phenomena to be explained, then since a belief set that best explains all data, whether available or not, best explains all data which are available, there is so far no contradiction involved. In other words, the realist is a realist about best explanations by being a realist about information.¹⁷

The anti-realist will retort that talk about unavailable data is a contradiction in terms: data are what is given to us. Hence to say that there may be data which we have no access to is simply unintelligible. After all, it has been conceded all along that data are identified by our response to them; and while it makes sense to assume the existence of something that has not yet been but nonetheless can be so identified, the suggestion that there may be something so identifiable which we cannot so identify is devoid of sense.

This is fair comment. So far the struggle seems to be about words however, rather than anything else. According to the realist, it is one thing to say that certain features of reality can be identified as data only to the extent that we have the ability to classify them in these ways; it is quite another to say that in order for there to be such features of reality, we must always be in a position to exercise this ability. In other words, the realist holds that we ought to distinguish the fact that we have the ability to respond to features of reality in a certain way from the fact that we are always able to exercise this ability. Indeed, as was suggested in section (2.2) of chapter two, the anti-realist who is to give an account of our understanding of *pro tem*. undecidable sentences had better allow for such a distinction.

It is important to keep in mind though that the realist is not thereby committed to the existence of features of reality we have no access to. If the world has holes where we have white patches on the map then so be it. The point is just that we have no reason to

¹⁷ This may even be regarded as a theoretical advantage for the realist because she can give a straightforward answer to the question of what it is for an explanation to be the best.

think that where there are white patches on our map there are holes in the world. A subtle but crucial distinction that even the anti-realist will be ready to draw. Realists and anti-realists only disagree whether we are able to fill in the details wherever a white patch does not cover a hole.

In face of this realist rejoinder, the anti-realist's immediate response should be: where is it manifested that we take such putative features of reality into consideration whenever we give explanations? For it is only if this question has been answered that we have reason to credit speakers with a conception of best explanations that tracks realistically conceived causes. No such answer seems to be forthcoming however, because it is agreed on all sides that it is impossible for speakers to respond to features of reality they have no access to, if indeed there are any. There would accordingly appear to be nothing on the basis of which we might be justified in attributing to speakers abilities they may forever be debarred from fully exercising. And the realist's modesty not to assume that we are forever debarred from fully exercising what we are able to do will do nothing to help her out of this impasse. Bad news for the realist.

6.5 Assumptions and their Conclusions

In the last section, the anti-realist was seen to capitalise on the observation that trivially, the speakers' concern about inaccessible data cannot be manifested in their response to them. But then since knowledge of objective truth conditions could not be manifested by the speakers' response to conditions of utterance and since it is their grasp of objective truth conditions which reveals, if at all, their concern about inaccessible data—insofar as this concern is a concern about what objectively true sentences are supposed to explain—it seems to be too rash to conclude from the triviality mentioned that they cannot manifest a realist conception of best explanations. To draw this conclusion would be to commit the same kind of fallacy that was already embodied in the original Manifestation Argument, *viz.* to presuppose that the ability to reach verdicts is all there is to the manifestation of understanding. Accordingly it is a move we should despite its initial plausibility resist. This initial plausibility has already been undermined by assertibilism anyway. Instead we should investigate whether the speakers' practice of making assumptions rather than assertions is at odds with the idea that they can be credited with a realist understanding of truth and best explanation.

The leading thought has been since the very beginning that the concept whose limits we are concerned with, *i.e.* truth, is a concept we are justified in ascribing to speakers. This principle is in effect the converse of Brandom's constraint on theories of understanding according to which we cannot just confine ourselves to explaining the

speakers' understanding in terms of the concept of truth but ought to explain as well how, by having this understanding, the speakers can be said to possess this concept.

The anti-realist's contention was that the speakers' concept of truth is one that is co-extensional with the concept of knowability or knowable truth. It was the upshot of section (6.1) that the anti-realist should agree that both concepts nonetheless differ, or at least that truth and superassertibility do. It is therefore legitimate first to enquire what it takes for speakers to have the concept of knowability (or superassertibility) and secondly, to check whether truth and knowability (or superassertibility *plus* truth) may diverge in contexts which are not counterfactual. Once such a divergence can be made manifest, the principle that what can be assumed can be asserted will allow us to conclude that S and 'It is knowable that S' (or 'S & it is superassertible that S') differ in assertoric content.¹⁸

What we want to know in the first place then is how 'It is knowable that S' is used to state what it does. Since the fact that a given sentence is endowed with objective content ultimately becomes manifest in hypothetical reasoning, we must enquire how 'It is knowable that S' is used in such contexts. The hypothetical reasoning in question was required not to be counterfactual. Accordingly, if 'It is knowable that S' and S behave differently in heuristic reasoning, then the conclusion seems apt that they differ in objective content.¹⁹ If this is so the realist's conception of best explanation cannot be ruled out as a conception speakers can be credited with.

In contrast to 'It is at present warrantably assertible that S' the sentence 'It is knowable that S' not only has the same warranted assertibility conditions as S but also seems to have the same warranted deniability conditions as S. For clearly, to deny that it is knowable that P requires warrants stronger than those which warrant the denial that it is at present warrantably assertible that P; and which warrants could these be other than those which warrant the denial of P?²⁰ For the sake of argument, we may therefore concede that, insofar as "P" and "~P" are not Moorean in kind, the following inference preserves warranted assertibility and, *if* objective truth entails the availability in principle of warrants, will also preserve objective truth:

~(It is knowable that P)

It is knowable that ~P

¹⁸ Since it does not matter whether the argument to be presented is run in terms of 'It is knowable that S' or 'S & it is superassertible that S', I shall henceforth omit reference to the latter. All that matters is that we can compare the use of two different sentences, S and one of the two sentences just mentioned.

¹⁹ Recall that a sentence was said to be knowable just in case it is both true and superassertible. Accordingly, the fact that superassertibility cannot play the explanatory role assigned to truth does not show that knowability cannot.

²⁰ Again the sceptic may object to this. But then she owes us a reason for sharing her view. See footnote 16.

Owing to (AC) the sentence 'It is knowable that S' furthermore differs from 'It is at present warrantably assertible that S' in that it can feature in heuristic reasoning which is undertaken in neutral states of information. Indeed, it would appear that to this extent 'It is knowable that S' can play the very same role S can play. However, as I shall argue, its negation behaves in a way rather different from the way the negation of S does—or to be more careful, there is no reason to rule out that this is so.

Recall that reasoning under an assumption ought not to be equated with the endorsement or assertion of conditionals. Assumptions are freestanding uses of the sentences assumed which contrast with assertions. If we hold that reasoning under an assumption need not consist in the endorsement or assertion of a conditional however, then we are bound to acknowledge yet another use to which sentences may be put. Reasoning under an assumption essentially involves the drawing of *conclusions* which can neither be regarded as assertions. Conclusions are conditional on an assumption being made—they need an assumption as their opening as it were.

It is at least clear that engagement in hypothetical reasoning must be governed by certain norms. Otherwise it would be permissible to regard both a sentence and its negation as conclusions of the same assumption, even if this assumption was not already inconsistent—which would render the whole enterprise of non-counterfactual hypothetical reasoning futile.²¹ On the other hand, insofar as abductive reasoning is to some extent creative, we cannot expect that throughout, the rules governing hypothetical reasoning dictate that all conclusions which one is permitted to draw from a given assumption are conclusions which one is committed to draw from this assumption. Nor can we expect that generally, if it is not permissible to regard a certain sentence as a conclusion of a given assumption, we are thereby permitted to regard its negation as such a conclusion. For the conclusions that might be drawn are conditional on the assumption being made, and what is being assumed may have no bearing on whether a given sentence or its negation is true. All we need to know though is that it is not permissible to draw certain conclusions from certain assumptions where this does not necessarily result in the permission to conclude their negations.

It seems reasonable to demand that if two sentences S and R can *a priori* be known to be materially equivalent although they do not entail each other, then S and R will have the same set of sentences as their conclusions *provided the hypothetical reasoning in question is not counterfactual*. It follows from this that if two monadic predicates Φ and Ψ can *a priori* be known to be co-extensional although they express different concepts, then for any argument α , ' $\Phi\alpha$ ' and ' $\Psi\alpha$ ' will have the same set of sentences as their conclusions—again provided their assumption is not conceived of as

²¹ Of course, in cases in which the assumption itself is inconsistent both sentences and their negations will be included in the set of conclusions; this is just *reductio ad absurdum*.

contrary to fact. For example, insofar as I know on the basis of the statutes alone that the eldest member presides over the committee, my assumption that the eldest member of the committee is involved in a car accident will allow me to draw the same conclusions as does my assumption that the chairman of the committee is involved in a car accident—unless I take myself to know that the eldest member of the committee is not involved in a car accident. For then I would engage in counterfactual reasoning; and I may assume—contrary to fact—that the eldest member did not preside over the committee.

In the same vein, it seems reasonable to demand that if S and R can *a priori* be known to be materially equivalent although they do not entail each other and if neither is taken to be established as false, then for any sentence T not known to be false, 'S & T' and 'R & T' will have the same set of sentences as their conclusions. Thus in the example given: if I assume that the eldest member of the committee is involved in a car accident and that the next meeting is scheduled for this Friday, I will have to conclude whatever I have to conclude from the assumption that the chairman of the committee is involved in a car accident and that the next meeting is scheduled for this Friday.

As we have seen, (EC*) in conjunction with (NE) and (AC) entails that

'~S' is knowable iff S is not knowable.

Thus if (EC*), (AC) and (NE) are all knowable *a priori*, then in neutral states of information not only should '~S' and 'It is knowable that ~S' have the same sentences as their conclusions but '~S' and '~(It is knowable that S)' too. The question accordingly becomes whether in states of information which are neutral with respect to S and '~S' there is a sentence which qualifies as a conclusion of '~S' but not of '~(It is knowable that S)' or *vice versa*—or rather, given the nature of the norms governing hypothetical reasoning, whether there can be such a neutral state of information in which the refusal to regard a given sentence as a conclusion of one of either will be penalised while in the very same state the refusal to regard that sentence as a conclusion of the respective other will not be so penalised.

Consider the sentence '~S' itself. Surely, the refusal to regard '~S' as a conclusion of itself will never be tolerated. But why should there not be neutral states of information in which the refusal to regard '~S' as a conclusion of '~(It is knowable that S)' will be tolerated—or even be mandated? Likewise: may there not be states of informational neutrality in which regarding the sentence "There are features of reality inaccessible to us" as a conclusion of '~(It is knowable that S)' goes uncontested while regarding that sentence as a conclusion of '~S' does not?

The anti-realist will reply that since *S* and 'It is knowable that *S*' are known to share their conditions of warranted denial, there will just be no reasoning under the assumption that *S* is not knowable which could provide for an incentive to endorse what has been assumed and at the same time involve conclusions not included in the set of conclusions which it is permissible to draw from the assumption of ' \sim *S*'. Insofar as in the case at hand engagement in heuristic reasoning is rational only to the extent that one takes oneself to have a chance of resolving neutrality, any reasoning under the assumption that *S* is not knowable which involves conclusions not involved in the reasoning under the assumption of ' \sim *S*' will therefore be irrational unless it is after all conceived to be counterfactual. In a similar vein, since *S* and 'It is knowable that *S*' share their conditions of warranted denial, any sentence that is regarded as a conclusion of ' \sim *S*' but not of ' \sim (It is knowable that *S*)' will be one which becomes warrantably assertible as soon as we are in a position to assert ' \sim (It is knowable that *S*)'. Since to get into such a position is the ultimate goal of heuristic reasoning, to exclude this sentence from the set of conclusions of ' \sim (It is knowable that *S*)' can only be reasonable if one's reasoning under this assumption is taken to be counterfactual. That ' \sim *S*' and ' \sim (It is knowable that *S*)' behave differently in counterfactual reasoning has already been conceded without this affecting the anti-realist's contention that (EC*) holds *a priori*.

Counterfactual reasoning is to be distinguished from reasoning under an assumption which is as a matter of fact false: in counterfactual reasoning the assumption is taken as known to be false independently of whether it actually is. Not so in heuristic reasoning: in neutral states of information, speakers who reason under the assumption that *S* is not knowable or under the assumption of ' \sim *S*' do not thereby engage in counterfactual reasoning because they lack a reason to believe either of these assumptions to be false. Now the anti-realist's contention was that in neutral states of information, ' \sim *S*' and ' \sim (It is knowable that *S*)' share their conclusions: if there was a conclusion that one is allowed to draw from ' \sim (It is knowable that *S*)' but not from ' \sim *S*', it would already be guaranteed that one will never be in a position to assert that conclusion; on the other hand if there was a conclusion that one is allowed to draw from ' \sim *S*' but not from ' \sim (It is knowable that *S*)', the lack of permission involved would betray the fact that necessarily, if one is in a position to assert ' \sim (It is knowable that *S*)', hence all of its conclusions, then one will be in a position to assert ' \sim *S*', hence all of its conclusions. In either case, the rationality of the normative restraints can be maintained only if the reasoning which is so restrained is after all conceived to be counterfactual reasoning. Since it cannot be counterfactual insofar as undertaken in states of informational neutrality however, these normative restraints are irrational—or so the anti-realist argues.

In heuristic reasoning one leaves room for the possibility that the assumption being made is actually true. In this sense heuristic reasoning is not counterfactual. According to the realist however, this is not the same as to say that in heuristic reasoning one is bound to hold that one may get into the position to assert (or deny) what is being assumed. Accordingly, to equate a lack of prospect ever to assert (or deny) the conclusions drawn from a given assumption with a reason to believe that this assumption is false—hence to conceive of one's reasoning as counterfactual—is just to beg the question. Of course the heuristic reasoning undertaken in neutral states of information was considered to be fuelled by one's attempt to overcome informational neutrality. This much was in effect sufficient to distinguish between the assumptions effected by means of S and 'It is at present warrantably assertible that S' respectively: reasoning under the latter assumption in states of informational neutrality is counterfactual and therefore not to the purpose. But this does not mean that the only reason to engage in heuristic reasoning is that it may help us to overcome informational neutrality—in the sense that it may have the effect that one is put in a position to assert the assumption as well as its conclusions. The anti-realist's complaint must therefore be that insofar as it is not done for this reason, heuristic reasoning is pointless.

There is a pay-off which heuristic reasoning may have however, which is less than that it helps us to overcome informational neutrality: it may bring us to endorse conditionals that are warrantably assertible even though their antecedents are not.²² To say that this pay-off is one which counterfactual reasoning may equally have is just another *petitio*. As we have already seen, reasoning under the assumption that S is not knowable cannot be counterfactual if undertaken in states of informational neutrality, hence neither are the conditionals which we arrive at by these means counterfactual conditionals. To see this, suppose that 'S & ~(it is knowable that S)' was being assumed. If reasoning under this assumption was conceived to be counterfactual, then the following conditional

'if S & ~(it is knowable that S), then ~S'

²² Edgington writes that "[w]e are constantly faced with a range of epistemic possibilities—things that, as far as we know, may be true, when the question whether they are true is relevant to our concerns. As part of such practical or theoretical reasoning, it is often necessary to *suppose* (or assume) that some epistemic possibility is true, and to consider what else would be the case, or would be likely to be the case, given this supposition. The conditional expresses the outcome of such thought processes"; [DCH]: 177-78. As I have argued towards the end of chapter four, the outcome of an inferential thought process set off by an assumption (or supposition) need not be the assertion of a conditional: if assumptions are cognitive acts, or speech acts, of their own kind, then so are conclusions. And as I have argued in chapter five, the assertions to which such inferential thought processes may give rise include assertions of what was being assumed. Here I argue that we are free to suppose or assume something to be true which cannot be known—e.g. a Moorean sentence—and that, in such cases, the only assertions to which reasoning under assumptions of this kind may lead are assertions of conditionals.

should be amongst the warranted conditionals arrived at by these means. But it may well not be; and the only reason to think that this betrays an incoherence on the speakers' part is the idea that this conditional *is* a counterfactual conditional because (EC*) holds which renders its antecedent false. But why should the speakers believe in (EC*)?

It is natural to think that the conditionals whose endorsement is a consequence of reasoning under assumptions such as ' \sim (It is knowable that S)' do themselves belong to philosophy. But then the realist/anti-realist debate is itself a debate which pertains to philosophical discourse. And now it seems that the realist and the anti-realist, rather than debating whether the other can meet the Manifestability Requirement, disagree about whether the other should manifest her view. In other words, the debate is no longer concerned with the question of whether there are any facts that justify the attribution to the realist of an epistemically unconstrained notion of truth, but rather with the question of whether truth should or should not be so conceived. Therefore, the *a priori* reasons for (EC*) will have to be sought outside the semantic arena.

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