

Naturalism and Inference
On the Need for a Theory of Material Inference

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PREFACE

At the broadest level, the goals of this dissertation are, first, to state a problem that any successful form of naturalism must be able to address; second, to apply this problem to the semantic projects of Donald Davidson, John McDowell, Huw Price, and Robert Brandom—all of whom work at the intersection of the analytic and pragmatist traditions—and to argue that none can satisfactorily address this problem; and third, to argue that the reason these figures cannot address this problem is that their acceptance of the priority of the propositional leads them to take truth (or some successor property of judgments) to be the fundamental semantic notion, when they instead ought to accept the priority of the inferential and take validity to be the fundamental semantic notion. Respectively, these three goals are addressed in the three chapters of this dissertation.

Dialectically speaking, my primary interlocutors and intended audience for this dissertation are analytic pragmatists. As a tradition, analytic pragmatism has something of a family-resemblance character to it, having as much to do with a roughly shared intellectual genealogy as it does with a tendency towards overlapping (though far from identical) philosophical commitments. Key figures in this intellectual genealogy include Kant, Hegel, Charles S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey, Rudolf Carnap, the later Wittgenstein, Wilfrid Sellars, W. V. O. Quine, and Richard Rorty. Alternatively, common analytic pragmatist commitments include a critical if not combative approach to metaphysics, a more or less liberal form of naturalism, an acknowledgement of normativity, a phenomenalist approach to semantics, an emphasis on pragmatics in

addition to or instead of semantics, a general mistrust of the notion of representation, and a positive appraisal of the linguistic turn. I identify myself with this analytic pragmatist tradition, and as such the arguments I provide and the conclusions I draw throughout this dissertation are intended to be most convincing to those already within this tradition. For those who are outside of this tradition, the less naturalistic, the less anti-metaphysical, and the less anti-representational their views are, the less convincing my arguments and conclusions will be.

Before I move on to summarizing each chapter, it is worth pausing to acknowledge that not every pragmatist would recognize what I am calling analytic pragmatism as being a genuine variety of pragmatism. The core complaint that these pragmatists have is usually that for a variety of pragmatism to be genuine it must deal with the immediate experiences of living, breathing people, but this is precisely what the analytic pragmatist's acceptance of the linguistic turn rules out. According to this line of thinking, analytic pragmatists study human language use because they conceive of language as an ever-present intermediary between people and their worlds, thus making the phrase 'immediate experience' a contradiction in terms. Therefore, what we need is not to continue the confused analytic uptake of pragmatism, as carried out by Sellars, Quine, and Rorty, but to return to the pre-analytic days of James and Dewey.

This complaint is not wholly unfounded; however, the case in favor of this complaint tends to be overstated and the complaint itself has considerably less critical weight than these other pragmatists would imagine. Concerning the case in favor of this complaint, the first and most obvious problem is that it overlooks the almost universal

tendency among analytic pragmatists who make the linguistic turn to prioritize pragmatics in their philosophies of language, either in addition to or instead of semantics.

Second, and less obviously, things simply aren't as simple as they would need to be for these other pragmatists' case to unproblematically establish their complaint. On the one hand, the analytic pragmatists' focus on language and the (supposedly) resulting denial of immediate experience gets presaged in as early a pragmatist as Peirce with his semiotics and his critique of intuitionism, respectively.¹ On the other hand, those supposed pragmatists who make the linguistic turn do not end up developing one and the same theory of experience. One need only look at Quine's focus on descriptive relations between stimuli and sensory receptors² and Sellars's contrasting focus on the normative space of reasons to appreciate this point.³ Since the above complaint seems to depend on such post-turn theories being at root the same, I say so much the worse for it. As we can see, on both the pre- and post-analytic ends of things, the picture just isn't as simple as the critical pragmatists would like it to be.

More to the point, even if the case for the complaint were sound the complaint itself does not have much critical weight. Suppose analytic pragmatism is not genuinely pragmatic; so what? This charge in isolation reeks of the no-true-Scotsman fallacy. For the charge to have its intended weight, the other pragmatists would have to establish that a theory must be genuinely pragmatic if it is to be true (or is to meet some other independently established standard). However, to establish this conditional requires that

¹ See in particular Peirce, "Questions"; also Peirce, "Some Consequences."

² See in particular Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized."

³ See in particular Sellars, "Empiricism."

these pragmatists not write off analytic pragmatism at the outset, but instead delve into first-order philosophical issues with the analytic pragmatist and let the cards fall where they may. If the analytic pragmatist is convincing, then so much the worse for the complaint.

With this said, let me now summarize what first-order issues I will be discussing in this dissertation, and where I argue the cards will ultimately fall in respect to these issues.

In Chapter One, I develop an objection that any naturalist must meet and that I level against analytic pragmatist approaches to intentionality. I begin by surveying contemporary debates concerning naturalism and by arguing that ‘naturalism’ designates any consistent view that is committed to the following thesis: some subset of the natural sciences serve as some sort of standard by which to judge philosophical investigation. I spend the rest of Chapter One showing that the naturalist’s commitment to this thesis presupposes that she meet what I call the Objectivity Demand and entails that she meet what I call the Deflationary Demand. The Objectivity Demand is that the naturalist must be able to acknowledge the objectivity of the sciences, because it is the objectivity of the sciences that justifies the naturalist in prioritizing the sciences in the manner that she does. So as not to beg questions against my naturalist interlocutors, I spend the bulk of Chapter One developing a sense of ‘objectivity’ that is neutral between the common metaphysical sense of ‘objectivity’ (whereby something is objective iff it is true or part of the external, mind-independent world) and the equally common epistemic sense (whereby something is objective iff it is justified in some

especially praiseworthy manner). The Deflationary Demand is that the naturalist must ensure that her philosophical investigations are not only internally consistent but also consistent with the aspects of the sciences that she takes to be authoritative over her philosophizing. The Pincer Objection is that these two demands operate at cross purposes to one another, thus raising the prima facie worry that both demands cannot be met consistently.

In Chapter Two, I survey and critique the works of Davidson, McDowell, Price, and Brandom. Starting with Davidson, he is inspired by the works of Alfred Tarski and is a champion of truth-theoretic semantics. However, whereas Tarski realizes that the infamous Liar's Paradox (i.e. the sentence, 'This sentence is false', is true if it is false and false if it is true) requires him to relativize any truth-predicate to the language in which it is used, Davidson argues for an unrelativized notion of truth. I argue that this leaves Davidson without a satisfactory response to the Liar's Paradox, meaning that he cannot meet the Deflationary Demand from Chapter One.

McDowell likewise fails the Deflationary Demand, but for different reasons. McDowell's account of sense perception in many ways mirrors more traditional accounts of rational intuition, and since these latter accounts contradict what the sciences tell us about ourselves, if McDowell is to meet the Deflationary Demand then he seemingly must be able to identify some feature of sense perception that distinguishes it from rational intuition. The McDowellian response is that things only seem this way to me because I am in the grips of a philosophical illness that needs treatment. But, I argue, if I am philosophically ill then my illness is a side effect of one of McDowell's treatments,

and so my concern about McDowell and the Deflationary Demand is appropriate and cuts against his position.

Unlike Davidson and McDowell, Price meets the Deflationary Demand but does so in such a way that prevents him from meeting the Objectivity Demand. This is because Price adopts a minimalist approach to semantics, whereby disquotational schemata (such as ‘P’ is true iff P’) exhaust the content of semantic predicates (such as the truth predicate). I argue that such an approach leaves semantic predicates relativized to a particular language, and that such relativization leaves Price unable to acknowledge the objectivity of the sciences (in my neutral sense from Chapter One).

Finally, Brandom in many ways defends a more detailed version of Price’s minimalism, one that he develops precisely to address the sort of critique I level against Price. In particular, Brandom argues that objectivity is a phenomenon that emerges when scorekeepers within a language game attribute certain commitments to others and undertake certain commitments themselves, but I argue that this makes objectivity language-relative in the same problematic way as with Price. Ultimately, for both Price and Brandom everything comes down to a scope ambiguity. What they are able to prove is that everyone has one and only one framework by which to structure their inquiries. But what they need to show, and can’t, is that there is one and only one such framework that everyone has.

In Chapter Three, I appraise the situation for analytic pragmatist approaches to semantics after my critiques from Chapter Two, and recommend that we attempt to salvage what is good in such approaches by modifying some common analytic

pragmatist commitments with an eye towards addressing the Pincer Objection. Therefore, there are two components to the task I set for myself in this chapter: first, I must establish that the view I defend is continuous with the analytic pragmatist tradition, and second, I must establish that the view I defend makes headway against the Pincer Objection.

Beginning with the first component, I survey the intellectual genealogies that the analytic pragmatists from Chapter Two provide for their own views, and note that Kant's claim that thoughts without content are empty and intuitions without concepts are blind is a significant influence for all four. This leads them to take the contents of propositions to be the primary explanans of semantic theorizing and the semantic properties of those propositions to be the primary explanandum. My recommendation is to modify the commitment from the previous sentence to read: the contents of propositions are the primary explanans of semantic theorizing and the semantic properties of inferences are the primary explanandum. I argue that this modified commitment is continuous with the analytic pragmatists' unmodified commitment because the modified commitment just is the Kantian view transposed into contemporary vocabulary. The key detail is that Kant wrote before the rise of classical predicate logic, and once we transpose Kant's view from the language of categorical logic into that of predicate logic we see that the synthetic *a priori* judgments at the heart of his critical project become quantified conditionals that encode inferences. The final result is that Kant's question, How are synthetic judgments a priori possible?, is transposed to read: How are materially valid inferences possible? The notion of inferential validity takes the place of propositional

apriority, and Kant's analytic-synthetic distinction is replaced by an analogous one between formal and material validity.

Moving to the second component of Chapter Three, I argue that much falls into place about how to address the Pincer Objection once we have the transposed question in mind. In the first instance, I understand validity in terms of its usual textbook definition of guaranteed truth-preservation. From there, I note that there are a number of naturalistically sound paradigms for understanding how non-logical terms can contribute to the guarantee of validity. Alternatively, to account for the truth-preservation of validity in naturalistically sound terms, I pursue a broadly Peircean approach by arguing that the truth predicate is coextensional with an ideal-justification predicate. By accounting for both the guarantee of validity and the truth-preservation of validity in naturalistic terms, I provide a schematic (and therefore incomplete) account of how analytic pragmatist approaches to intentionality that take seriously the transposed Kantian question can address the Pincer Objection.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PINCER OBJECTION TO NATURALISM

§1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, this chapter is where I pose what I call the Pincer Objection to naturalism. This is the problem I mentioned in the first goal of this dissertation, and I develop it by showing how a commitment to naturalism requires that two competing demands be met—the Objectivity Demand and the Deflationary Demand. To achieve this purpose, I begin in §2 by developing my account of naturalism. From there, I use §3 to characterize the Objectivity Demand and to show how a commitment to naturalism requires that this demand be met. Similarly, §4 does for the Deflationary Demand what §3 does for the Objectivity Demand. Finally, §5 outlines the tension that exists between these two demands, thus demonstrating how they jointly constitute a *prima facie* objection to naturalism. This is the Pincer Objection, and I carry it forward into my discussions of analytic pragmatist semantics across Chapters Two and Three.

Second, this chapter serves as an opportunity to introduce most of the technical vocabulary that I will be using throughout this dissertation. My strategy is to introduce terms as they become relevant to the first purpose of this chapter—and not all at once—so I should warn my reader that there will be terminological discussions throughout this chapter, some more tangential than others.

§2. Naturalism

Starting with naturalism, the stock thing to say is that there are many forms of naturalism, maybe as many as there are naturalists. And because the word 'naturalism' has become something of a praise term in recent decades, many a philosopher has sought to label her position as naturalistic regardless of the manifest conflicts between her own view and the views of other purportedly naturalistic philosophers. The unfortunate side effect is that 'naturalism' has lost any clear and distinct sense that it might once have had.

There is, of course, some truth in these platitudes, but I think the heterogeneity of naturalism is too often exaggerated. In this section, I argue that the following is a characteristic thesis shared by most naturalists from the analytic and pragmatist traditions of recent decades:

Characteristic Thesis of Naturalism (CTN): Some subset of the natural sciences serve as some sort of standard by which to judge philosophical investigation.

The two things to notice about CTN are that the sciences play a privileged role in characterizing naturalism and that there are two quantifiers, each marking a degree of freedom along which naturalists can differentiate their views from one another. Along the first degree, a naturalist can decide which subset of the natural sciences to prioritize, and along the second degree a naturalist can decide what sort of standard this subset of the sciences offers. My argument in support of CTN's adequacy at characterizing naturalism proceeds by considering Mario De Caro and David Macarthur's wide-ranging discussion of naturalism in the introduction to their edited volume, *Naturalism in*

Question, and showing how CTN is able to accommodate the various distinctions they draw between different types of naturalism.

To see why the sciences play the privileged role that they do in CTN, we must understand the reason two related ways of characterizing naturalism fail. First, naturalism could be characterized as the view that all there is is nature. Such a characterization is tautologically true of naturalism, but for this reason it is also thoroughly uninformative—if one does not already know what naturalism is one would not know what nature is, and vice versa. For this reason, De Caro and Macarthur begin by focusing on the common attempt of characterizing naturalism “in terms of the rejection of supernatural entities.”⁴ The hope is that, by contrasting the supernatural to the natural, both gain a determinacy that they would not have on their own. However, this second characterization merely reiterates the problem of the first, because “the category of the supernatural is no clearer and no less controversial than the category of the natural.”⁵ At best, we can define the supernatural as the not-natural, but then the two ways of characterizing naturalism produce one and the same tautological yet uninformative characterization. It is only by looking at the empirical results of our scientific practices of inquiring into nature that we can begin to provide a non-tautological account of the natural and supernatural—hence the importance of the sciences in CTN.

From here, the key distinction that De Caro and Macarthur draw between types of naturalism is that between scientific versions of naturalism on the one hand, and

⁴ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 2.

⁵ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 2.

liberal versions on the other.⁶ Since each type has its own internal complexities, I will address each in turn, highlighting how they relate to CTN.

For De Caro and Macarthur, there are three common commitments within scientific naturalism, each of which highlights a different sort of standard that the sciences might pose for philosophical investigation. First, there is the ontological commitment that “the entities posited by acceptable scientific explanations are the *only* genuine entities that there are.”⁷ If this is correct, then the sciences pose an ontological standard for the naturalist in the sense that they dictate what the proper ontology is for philosophical investigation. Second, there is the methodological commitment that “it is *only* by following the methods of the natural sciences—or, at a minimum, the empirical methods of a posteriori inquiry—that one arrives at genuine knowledge.”⁸ If this is correct, then the sciences pose a methodological standard for the naturalist in the sense that they dictate what the proper epistemological method is for gaining philosophical knowledge. Finally, there is the semantic commitment that “the concepts employed by the natural sciences are the *only* genuine concepts we have and that other concepts can only be retained if we can find an interpretation of them in terms of scientifically respectable concepts.”⁹ Again, if this is correct, then the sciences pose a semantic standard for the naturalist in the sense that they dictate what concepts one can

⁶ De Caro and Macarthur most frequently use the term ‘scientific naturalism’ to designate the first version, although they acknowledge that, on their usage, ‘scientific naturalism’ and ‘scientific naturalism’ can be used interchangeably (see De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 14). Because I will not be using these phrases interchangeably, I reserve the phrase ‘scientific naturalism’ for the view De Caro and Macarthur focus on, while using the phrase ‘scientific naturalism’ to designate the genus, of which scientific naturalism and liberal naturalism are species. More on this below.

⁷ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 7.

⁸ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 7.

⁹ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 7.

meaningfully use when conducting philosophical investigations. De Caro and Macarthur rightly point out that a scientific naturalist need not be committed to all three of these, as “the ontological and methodological [commitments] can come apart, in principle,”¹⁰ but they also concede that “of course, scienti[st]ic naturalism tends toward a global doctrine, committed to all of these versions together.”¹¹ The second degree of freedom in CTN is purposefully agnostic on this issue, as one need not hold philosophy to only one scientific standard to be a naturalist, nor need one hold philosophy to all such standards. One need only hold philosophy to at least one scientific standard.

De Caro and Macarthur identify four common liberal naturalist commitments, three of which highlight the importance of the first degree of freedom in CTN. First, liberal naturalists tend to shift “from concern with nonhuman nature to *human* nature,”¹² and CTN allows for this shift by remaining agnostic as to whether the set of the sciences includes or excludes “the so-called ‘human or social sciences,’ including intentional psychology, sociology, and anthropology.”¹³ Second, liberal naturalists tend to take “a nonreductive attitude to normativity in its various guises.”¹⁴ Assuming that the human sciences are included in the set of the sciences, CTN easily accommodates this attitude as normativity is often precisely what is at issue when people distinguish the human from the physical sciences. Additionally, this attitude is consistent with certain approaches to biology, although this is admittedly a more controversial point.¹⁵ Finally,

¹⁰ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 6.

¹¹ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 7.

¹² De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 14.

¹³ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 5.

¹⁴ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 14.

¹⁵ See, in particular, Ruth Millikan’s account of proper function in Millikan, *Language*.

liberal naturalists are more apt to reject the unity of the sciences, opting instead for a pluralist conception of them as being irreducible to one another.¹⁶ This is a possibility that I have implicitly acknowledged in my consistent use of ‘the sciences’ instead of ‘science’, and the fact that CTN quantifies over the sciences (plural) means that it is consistent with this liberal naturalist commitment. Taken as a whole, these three commitments should highlight the importance of the first degree of freedom in CTN, as a naturalism that prioritizes only fundamental physics will look very different from one that prioritizes physics, chemistry, and biology—and both will look different from one that prioritizes both the physical and the human sciences.

The final commitment of liberal naturalism is where things get tricky. According to De Caro and Macarthur, we must “distinguish the rejection of First Philosophy from the stronger claim that philosophy is continuous with the sciences.”¹⁷ To accept the image of philosophy as First Philosophy is to accept two related claims: first, that philosophy is authoritative over the sciences in the sense that philosophy can judge, independently of the sciences, the propriety of the sciences’ claims; and second, that philosophy is foundational for the sciences in the sense that the sciences must be grounded on an antecedently developed philosophy.¹⁸ Alternatively, the thesis that philosophy is continuous with the sciences is “the idea that philosophy has no autonomy with respect to the sciences. Philosophy, on this conception, *is* science in its general and abstract reaches.”¹⁹ Given these characterizations of First Philosophy and the continuity thesis,

¹⁶ See De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 15-16.

¹⁷ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 15.

¹⁸ See De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 6.

¹⁹ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 6.

the final liberal naturalist commitment is that philosophy is doing something *simply different from* the sciences, and so philosophy is neither First Philosophy nor is it continuous with science. In this manner, “philosophy [is], at least in some areas and respects, autonomous from scientific method.”²⁰

The worry that this final commitment might raise is that the sort of autonomy of philosophy from the sciences that the liberal naturalist defends is inconsistent with the standard-setting role that CTN cedes to the sciences, but this is not De Caro and Macarthur’s point. Although they admit in their introduction to another volume that “a necessary condition for a view’s being a version of Liberal Naturalism is that it rejects Scienti[st]ic Naturalism,” this is the case because liberal naturalists reject the pejoratively scientific attitude of scientific naturalism *while maintaining its commendably scientific underpinnings*.²¹ To understand this contrast between the scientific and the scientific, we must remember that scientific naturalists maintain that the entities of the sciences “are the *only* genuine entities,” that the methodologies of the sciences are the *only* genuine methodologies, and that the concepts of the sciences “are the *only* genuine concepts.”²² Notice that each of the scientific naturalist’s uses of ‘only’ encodes two distinct claims: first, that the entities, methodologies, or concepts of the sciences are genuine; and second, that no other entities, methodologies, or concepts are genuine. The first is the scientific claim while the conjunction of both is the scientific claim, and De Caro and Macarthur’s point is that the liberal naturalist’s final

²⁰ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 15.

²¹ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism and Normativity*, 9.

²² De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 7.

commitment is to accepting the scientific first claim while rejecting the scientific conjunction.²³

Now that this final commitment has been clarified, we can see not only that it is consistent with CTN, but that it highlights an aspect of CTN's second degree of freedom that we have so far ignored. If, in our philosophical investigations, we were to say something inconsistent with the ontology, methodology, or semantics of a certain science, we would have to conclude either that the science's ontology, methodology, or semantics is not genuine or that our philosophical investigations are not genuine. Therefore, by accepting the scientific claim that the entities, methodologies, or concepts of the sciences are genuine, the liberal naturalist accepts that the sciences pose one sort of standard for philosophical investigation—namely, the sciences dictate the ontologies, methodologies, or semantics with which our philosophical investigations must be consistent. And as such, the liberal naturalist accepts a version of CTN.

The aspect of CTN's second degree of freedom that this highlights is that the three types of standard I discussed above—ontological, methodological, and semantic—are far from an exhaustive list. The disagreement between liberal and scientific naturalists highlights a distinction that runs across these three types. Whereas both agree that genuine philosophy must be *consistent with* the sciences in the sense that philosophy cannot be contrary to the sciences, only scientific naturalists make the stronger claim that genuine philosophy must be *continuous with* the sciences

²³ See De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 15; also De Caro and Voltolini, "Is Liberal."

in the sense that philosophy “*is science in its general and abstract reaches.*”²⁴ In this manner, the sciences can pose a consistency standard or a continuity standard for philosophical investigation, and either type of standard can be posed in the ontological, methodological, or semantic registers. Another common distinction that cuts across those already discussed is that between using some *idealized* portion of the sciences as a standard and using some portion of the sciences, *as currently developed*, as a standard. There are surely more such distinctions that one could draw, but what is important is that the second degree of freedom is rich enough to account for a number of disagreements amongst naturalists.

At this point, I hope to have shown that CTN is not too narrow in its characterization of naturalism. I have done this by arguing that all of the various types of naturalism that De Caro and Macarthur consider can be developed in terms of CTN, namely by giving more determinacy to CTN’s two degrees of freedom. The issue I have not considered is whether CTN is too broad in its characterization of naturalism. On this front, I must engage in a bit of stipulation, but I believe that it is warranted stipulation: for a view to satisfy CTN, it must, at the very least, entail that philosophy be consistent with some aspect of the sciences. If this were not the case, then the view could be (explicitly or implicitly) inconsistent, and since anything follows from a contradiction the distinction between naturalism and non-naturalism would then break down. Once this consistency standard is in place, CTN easily rules out the more obvious non-naturalist views, i.e. those involving deities or miracles or other such things that contradict the laws of science. It is an open question as to whether CTN additionally rules out those views

²⁴ De Caro and Macarthur, *Naturalism in Question*, 6.

whose naturalist credentials are commonly under debate, such as those committed to the existence of numbers or values or modally robust properties. But this is how things should be, with the issue settled through considered debate and not terminological fiat.

The following terminological conventions are useful in summarizing the important points from this section. Going forward, ‘naturalism’ designates any consistent view that is committed to CTN. Because the sciences play a privileged role in CTN, ‘scientific naturalism’ is something of a redundancy; however, I still use this phrase when it is important to emphasize this privileged role of the sciences. Alternatively, ‘non-naturalism’ designates any view committed to the negation of CTN, whether or not it is also committed to CTN. Finally, although De Caro and Macarthur use the phrases ‘scientistic naturalism’ and ‘liberal naturalism’, I find this way of speaking inapt for the ideas that they develop. For one, the similarity of the phrases ‘scientistic naturalism’ and ‘scientific naturalism’ is apt to breed confusion. More substantively, ‘scientistic naturalism’ and ‘liberal naturalism’ do not designate two distinct views, but instead two families of views, and the boundaries of these families begin to blur into one another at a certain point. Consider someone like Ruth Millikan, who acknowledges normativity but does so by prioritizing biology as opposed to the more distinctly human sciences. The idea that ‘scientistic naturalism’ and ‘liberal naturalism’ designate rigid categories breaks down here, as the appropriate judgment to make is not the absolute one that Millikan is either a scientistic or a liberal naturalist. Instead, what are appropriate are the comparative judgments that her naturalism is more liberal than certain naturalists and

less liberal than others. For these reasons, I prefer the phrases ‘conservative naturalism’ and ‘liberal naturalism’, as these phrases better highlight the continuity between the various forms of naturalism while still acknowledging the marked differences at either end of the spectrum.

§3. The Objectivity Demand

Once we accept CTN, the first question we should ask ourselves is: what premise entitles us to hold CTN? Common sensically, what makes naturalism an attractive position is the track record of the sciences. They seem to be better at what they do than any other mode of inquiry, to the point where the laws and theorems of the sciences seem to be correct *full stop* if they are correct at all, and not merely correct *for* some person or community or correct *given* some practice or end. This categorical form of correctness is a key trapping of objectivity, and without such objectivity the sciences would be authoritative only for the particular people or communities engaged with the particular practices or ends associated with the sciences. Therefore, it is this objectivity that would allow the sciences to be authoritative over philosophy in the manner encoded by CTN, and for this reason naturalists must be able to acknowledge the objectivity of the sciences—ideally in a positive manner by explaining how such objectivity is possible, but at least in a negative manner by not saying anything that makes it impossible. This is the Objectivity Demand I will carry forward throughout this project.

I take it that this common sense story is correct as far as it goes, but it leaves the most important question unanswered: what exactly does ‘objectivity’ mean? In recent

decades, there has been fierce debate over whether there is anything like a single meaning of ‘objectivity’, and if so what that meaning might be. In this section, I quickly survey the literature on this debate, arguing that although many different meanings get ascribed to ‘objectivity’, these meanings are species of two more general meanings of ‘objectivity’. Unfortunately, this leaves the Objectivity Demand ambiguous between these two meanings, so to make the Objectivity Demand determinate I construct a third general meaning for ‘objectivity’, one that is presupposed by the other two.

a. J- and T-Objectivity

The best way of understanding these two senses of ‘objective’ is to recognize that they both connect objectivity with a traditional condition for knowledge, with the difference being whereas the first focuses on the justification condition, the second focuses on the truth condition. The justification-focused sense of ‘objectivity’—j-objectivity for short—applies most often to people or practices. A person is j-objective insofar as she has certain cognitive virtues that allow her to produce proper justification for her beliefs, and a practice is j-objective insofar as it instantiates these virtues. Different philosophers endorse different virtues, but common candidates are impartiality, disinterestedness, freedom from bias, and value neutrality. Because of this connection with the justification condition for knowledge, j-objectivity has more to do with the process of inquiry, not its final products, and in many speakers’ mouths ‘j-objective’ is roughly synonymous with ‘rational’. Finally, j-objectivity is a degreed notion in the sense that a person or practice can be more or less j-objective.

The truth-focused sense of ‘objectivity’—or t-objectivity—applies most often to facts, where a fact is t-objective insofar as it concerns reality and not mere appearance. As such, t-objectivity has more to do with the products of inquiry, and ‘t-objective’ is roughly synonymous with ‘real’. This leads t-objectivity either to be a binary notion in the sense that a fact either is t-objective or is not t-objective, or to be intimately bound up with such a notion (i.e. truth or reality). To summarize the difference between these two senses of ‘objectivity’, it helps to think in terms of Thomas Nagel’s familiar metaphor: in being j-objective we attempt to adopt the view from nowhere, and once we achieve the view from nowhere what we see is t-objective.

For some philosophers, distinguishing between j-objectivity and t-objectivity is sufficient for disambiguating the meanings of ‘objectivity’. Thomas Nagel, for one, holds such a view, maintaining that “[j-]objectivity is a method of understanding” and “only derivatively do we call [t-]objective the truths that can be arrived at” through j-objective methods.²⁵ Bernard Williams holds a similar view when discussing what he calls the absolute conception of objectivity, stressing that “we must concentrate not in the first instance on what our beliefs are about, but on how they represent what they are about.”²⁶ Williams’s hope is that by representing things j-objectively we can come into contact with the t-objective world. In an enlightening discussion of Nagel and Williams (among others), Arthur Fine highlights the distinction between j- and t-objectivity, saying that “the way inquiry is conducted can be objective but so can the results of inquiry,” and comments that Nagel and Williams’s “central image, the viewpoint of no-one in

²⁵ Nagel, *View*, 4. See also Nagel, *View*, 3-5.

²⁶ Williams, *Ethics*, 138. See also Williams, *Ethics*, 111-112 and 138-140.

particular, displays this double edge nicely.”²⁷ Much of Fine’s essay revolves around his distinction between procedural objectivity (i.e. j-objectivity) and the objectivity of the products of inquiry (i.e. t-objectivity), with his major contributions being to further disambiguate between species of each sense of objectivity²⁸ and to reinterpret both senses in terms of trust.²⁹ Finally, Nicholas Rescher says things perhaps most clearly of all:

The issue of the objectivity of claims and contentions has two principal sides or aspects. One is object-oriented.... This sort of *ontological* objectivity turns on the pivotal contrast between that which is in some way connected with existing things and that which is somehow ideational and mind-bound. The salient distinction here is that between real things and mere appearances.

However, the second ... mode of “objectivity” ... relates to the appropriateness of *claims* or *contentions*, addressing the question of whether a claim is impersonally and generically cogent rather than personal and idiosyncratic.... Objectivity in this sense has to do not with the *subject matter* of a claim but with its *justification*.³⁰

Rescher ultimately reverses Nagel’s and Williams’s claim, arguing that ontological (i.e. t-) objectivity is a presupposition of and therefore grounds cognitive (i.e. j-) objectivity;³¹ however, all three disambiguate ‘objectivity’ by taking recourse to j- and t-objectivity.

However, not all philosophers identify only two meanings of ‘objectivity’. Guy Axtell identifies three such meanings, Stephen Gaukroger identifies five, Heather Douglas identifies eight, and Marianne Janack identifies fourteen.³² Nevertheless, these

²⁷ Fine, “The Viewpoint,” 14. Much of Fine’s essay revolves around his distinction between procedural objectivity (i.e. j-objectivity) and the objectivity of the products of inquiry (i.e. t-objectivity).

²⁸ See Fine, “The Viewpoint,” 18.

²⁹ See Fine, “The Viewpoint,” 17-18.

³⁰ Rescher, *Objectivity*, 3-4.

³¹ See Rescher, *Objectivity*, Chapter Seven.

³² Janack’s list of meanings of ‘objectivity’ includes only 13 items. However, she later refers to “all 14 of these meanings” (Janack, “Dilemmas,” 276), suggesting to me that item 10 on

additional meanings can, for the most part, be seen as species of either j- or t-objectivity.

Starting with Axtell, although his pluralism leads him to distinguish a number of meanings of 'objectivity' from one another, only three are of general interest and therefore relevant to our current discussion.³³ The first two, what Axtell calls cognitive objectivity and what he calls either ontological or metaphysical objectivity, are simply j- and t-objectivity, respectively.³⁴ It is his third, axiological approach to objectivity that is of interest to us. For Axtell, the key insight of this approach is that "many philosophical debates presumed to be metaphysical or epistemological in character actually stem from divergent judgments of value."³⁵ In particular, the debate concerning the meaning of 'objectivity' can be seen as one such debate, if it is assumed that there can be only one genuine meaning. The promise of Axtell's axiological approach is to show how:

by charitably separating 'moderate' and 'presumptuous' versions of each [i.e. realism and idealism], the debate might move beyond its present impasse.... To the extent that the modest claims of realism [which prioritizes t-objectivity] and idealism [which prioritizes j-objectivity] can be consistently maintained, both principles [i.e. both t- and j-objectivity] could be mutually acknowledged.³⁶

In this manner, the axiological approach to objectivity does not result in a competitor to j- and t-objectivity, but instead a synthesis of the two.

Moving on to Gaukroger, although he identifies five possible meanings of 'objectivity', he only takes three seriously. According to the two meanings that he

her list—"objectivity as having to do with things as they are in themselves; objectivity as universality" (Janack, "Dilemmas," 275)—should be interpreted as two distinct items.

³³ See Axtell's index entry for 'objectivity' for a list of the other meanings, most of which are of only passing or specialized interest for Axtell (Axtell, *Objectivity*, 245).

³⁴ See Axtell, *Objectivity*, 1-3 and 19-23.

³⁵ Axtell, *Objectivity*, 39.

³⁶ Axtell, *Objectivity*, 42.

downplays, “an objective procedure is one that allows us to decide between conflicting views or theories”³⁷ and “something is objective if it leads to conclusions which are universally accepted,” respectively.³⁸ Gaukroger downplays the former because it provides a necessary but insufficient condition for objectivity, while he downplays the latter because it provides a test for (as opposed to a definition of) objectivity. Nevertheless, both can be seen as components to j-objectivity insofar as they both specify a condition that our objective justificatory practices must meet. Of the meanings that he takes seriously, one says that “an objective judgement is a judgement that is free from prejudice or bias,”³⁹ and another says that “an objective judgement is a judgement which is free of all assumptions and values.”⁴⁰ Again, these are both varieties of j-objectivity, as they both relate to the process of justifying judgments. What separates them is that the first requires that distorting assumptions or values be eliminated while the second requires that any assumptions or values be eliminated. According to the final meaning that Gaukroger identifies, “objectivity consists in accurate representation,” or in other words, objectivity consists in t-objectivity.⁴¹ In each of these five cases, the relation to j- or t-objectivity is obvious.

Douglas organizes her eight meanings of ‘objectivity’ under three banners, objectivity₁, objectivity₂, and objectivity₃. The three meanings that Douglas associates with objectivity₂ identify the senses in which “individual thought processes” can be

³⁷ Gaukroger, *Objectivity*, 6.

³⁸ Gaukroger, *Objectivity*, 10.

³⁹ Gaukroger, *Objectivity*, 4.

⁴⁰ Gaukroger, *Objectivity*, 5.

⁴¹ Gaukroger, *Objectivity*, 9.

objective,⁴² while the three that she associates with objectivity₃ identify the senses in which “social processes involved in knowledge production” can be objective.⁴³ As a result, all six are varieties of j-objectivity, with the former three focusing on the j-objectivity of persons and the latter three on the j-objectivity of practices. Concerning objectivity₁, Douglas notes that “an objective result under this mode would be one that gained a grasp of the real objects in the world,” leading one to expect that objectivity₁ is a variety of t-objectivity.⁴⁴ However, Douglas “attempts to remain agnostic over the realism issue” at the heart of t-objectivity, leading her to formulate her two meanings of ‘objectivity₁’ in j-objective terms. In short, ‘objectivity₁’ designates those aspects of j-objectivity that most readily lead one to infer the existence of t-objective facts. Again, my account of j- and t-objectivity allows us to make sense of each of these eight meanings.

Finally, Janack’s fourteen meanings of ‘objectivity’ are a bit of a hodge-podge; she provides a list of all fourteen, but spends little time explicitly discussing any one of them individually. As such, my comments here will be cursory at best. The majority of the meanings that Janack identifies have clear connections to j-objectivity. Items 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 11 of her list identify objectivity with value neutrality, lack of bias, rationality, psychological distance, impersonality, impartiality, and disinterestedness (respectively). Each of these are virtues that, when instantiated, purportedly make people more j-objective, and as such what I have said about Douglas’s objectivity₂ above applies equally here. Similarly, items 3, 12, and 13 identify objectivity with scientific method, commensurability, and intersubjective agreement (respectively); all relate to communal

⁴² Douglas, “Irreducible Complexity,” 458.

⁴³ Douglas, “Irreducible Complexity,” 461.

⁴⁴ Douglas, “Irreducible Complexity,” 456.

practices of inquiry, and so all can be understood in terms of Douglas's objectivity₃. Since objectivity₂ and objectivity₃ are both species of j-objectivity, so too are these 10 meanings that Janack surveys. Of the remaining 4 meanings, two have obvious connections to t-objectivity: item 9 identifies objectivity with "having to do with facts" and the first part of item 10 identifies it with "having to do with things as they are in themselves."⁴⁵ And finally, item 6 ("objectivity as 'world-directedness' ") and the second part of item 10 ("objectivity as universality") play a similar role as Douglas's objectivity₁, highlighting something about j-objectivity that purportedly allows us to bridge the gap to t-objectivity.⁴⁶ In short, my distinction between j- and t-objectivity proves adequate even for Janack's liberal disambiguation of 'objectivity'.

By surveying this debate over the meaning(s) of 'objectivity, we should now appreciate that my accounts of j- and t-objectivity capture the two poles around which the debate is structured. Some, like Nagel, Williams, Fine, and Rescher, are explicit about this point, while even those like Axtell and Janack who identify more than two meanings acknowledge the especial importance of j- and t-objectivity.⁴⁷

b. CPS-Aptness

But even though I have established that the debate on the meaning of 'objectivity' centers around the distinction between j- and t-objectivity, this is of little immediate help for characterizing the Objectivity Demand. True, the Objectivity Demand is now only

⁴⁵ Janack, "Dilemmas," 275. For why I say 'the first part of item 10' and not just 'item 10', see note 32 above.

⁴⁶ Janack, "Dilemmas," 275.

⁴⁷ See Axtell, *Objectivity*, 1-3. See also Janack's distinctions between objectivity_r and objectivity_c at Janack, "Dilemmas," 268, and between procedural objectivity and metaphysical objectivity at Janack, "Dilemmas," 278.

doubly ambiguous—and not three, five, eight, or fourteen times over—but this ambiguity is unfortunately ambiguity enough. One strategy for rectifying this would be to argue that the Objectivity Demand should be formulated in terms of either j- or t-objectivity, but to do so would involve taking a substantive position within the realist/anti-realist debate. Since this debate is especially lively among the sort of analytic pragmatist thinkers whose work is at the core of my dissertation project, pursuing this strategy would ultimately be question begging.

To avoid this problem, I pursue the alternate strategy of formulating the Objectivity Demand in terms of a third sense of ‘objectivity’, one that is both inferentially weaker than either of the senses I have surveyed above yet presupposed by both. This third sense of ‘objectivity’ applies primarily to sentences, and instead of being connected with truth or justification, it is connected with what I call *categorical-propriety-status-aptness (CPS-aptness)*. Because what is at issue here is the aptness of sentences to have some status, and not that status itself, I designate this sense of ‘objectivity’ a-objectivity. However, before I begin to characterize a-objectivity itself, I must mention four points about what I mean by ‘CPS-aptness’.

The first point concerns what I mean by ‘propriety’. Here, I am adopting the idiom of Robert Brandom, who takes language use to be a practice that is normatively rich in the sense that it is governed by rules of a peculiar kind. Unlike physical laws, which are rules that dictate how physical bodies *must* act, linguistic rules dictate how linguistic entities *ought* to be used. The important difference is that in the former case physical bodies actually do act in the manner prescribed by the rules that govern them, whereas

this need not be the case for linguistic entities. ‘Propriety’ is then the genus term that designates the sort of rules of which linguistic rules are a species—namely those that prescribe what merely ought to be done, but may or may not actually be done.

The second point concerns what I mean by ‘propriety status’. A linguistic entity, such as a sentence, is either governed by a propriety or it is not so governed, and if it is governed by a propriety then it is either appropriate or inappropriate to that propriety. Appropriateness and inappropriateness are then the two propriety statuses a sentence can have. To take a familiar example, consider the following propriety:

T-Propriety - It is *prima facie* appropriate to assert what is the case and *prima facie* inappropriate to assert what is not the case.

The t-propriety governs sentences such as ‘Snow is white’, and we designate such a sentence as being true when it is appropriate to the t-propriety and false when it is inappropriate. In this manner, truth and falsity are the two propriety statuses that a sentence like ‘Snow is white’ might have, while given certain details about the physical world and our usage of language, we know that the particular sentence ‘Snow is white’ actually has the propriety status of being true. Alternatively, the t-propriety does not so much as govern a non-assertional sentence such as ‘Is snow white?’, and so ‘Is snow white?’ does not have a propriety status relative to the t-propriety (although it may have such a status relative to some other propriety).

The third point concerns what I mean by ‘categorical propriety’. Given that humans have developed multiple different languages, and that within any one language we do many different things, it is natural to conceive of language as being made up of various language games. But once we do this, we realize that each linguistic propriety

does not govern every language game. In fact, a difference in proprieties is precisely what individuates language games one from another. With this in mind, a categorical propriety is one that applies across all (relevant) language games. Consider again the t-propriety. There are strong arguments to the effect that this propriety governs assertions, regardless of what language game one is playing. The *prima facie* qualifier marks that other proprieties (categorical or otherwise) may trump the t-propriety, but nonetheless it is a genuine propriety—even when it is being trumped. In this manner, a categorical propriety need not be one that is legislative all-things-considered.

Finally, the fourth point concerns what I mean by ‘aptness’. In particular, we should notice that there is an ambiguity in how ‘aptness’ is often used. On the one hand, for something to be propriety-status-apt could mean that it meets at least one condition for being either appropriate or inappropriate to the propriety for which it is apt, regardless of whether it meets all conditions (or even a single sufficient condition). On the other hand, for something to be propriety-status-apt could mean that it is either appropriate or inappropriate to the propriety for which it is apt. To understand the difference, consider the sentence ‘Colorless green ideas sleep furiously’. It is in the indicative mood, so its syntax allows it to be embedded within Tarski’s disquotational schema, so it meets one condition for being either true or false. For this reason, it is truth-apt in the first sense of ‘aptness’. However, it is arguable that this sentence is simply nonsensical and therefore not semantically meaningful. Assuming this to be the case, this sentence would not be truth-apt in the second sense, although it is in the first sense. Going forward, I will be using ‘aptness’ in the second sense.

c. CPS-Aptness in Practice

Before I move on to characterizing a-objectivity in terms of CPS-aptness, there is an obvious question I should address: given that I have used truth and truth-aptness as an example throughout the previous four points, why do I not characterize a-objectivity in terms of the more familiar notion of truth-aptness? As I hope is clear already, CPS-aptness is the genus concept of which truth-aptness is a species. Whereas what makes something CPS-apt is the fact that it is appropriate or inappropriate to a categorical propriety, for something to be truth-apt is for the categorical propriety to which it is apt to be characterized in a certain manner—usually in terms of a notion of correspondence or of accurate representation. Because these notions are commonly put in question by my analytic pragmatist interlocutors in this project, it would be blatantly question-begging on my part to insist that a-objectivity be understood in terms of the controversial species-concept of truth-aptness, so I have spent my efforts above developing (what I hope will prove to be) the uncontroversial genus-concept of CPS-aptness.

However, neologism is apt to breed confusion, so it is worth pausing to go over some additional species of CPS-aptness. On the one hand, there are strong reasons to think assertions are not the only speech acts governed by categorical proprieties. Consider imperatives, which are arguably governed by the following propriety:

A-Propriety: it is *prima facie* inappropriate to command someone over whom you do not have authority and *prima facie* appropriate (or at least not inappropriate) to command someone over whom you do have authority.

This propriety accounts for why it is appropriate for a drill sergeant to command, “Drop and give me 20!,” when this imperative is directed at her recruits while training them, but

inappropriate were she to direct this imperative at the keynote speaker of a philosophy conference during the speaker's Q&A session. The A-Propriety is (arguably) in effect in both cases, despite the marked differences in the language games surrounding the practices of basic training and academic conferences.

On another hand, there seem to be categorical proprieties that govern all types of speech act. Consider the following:

R-Propriety: it is *prima facie* inappropriate to utter something irrelevant to the current context and *prima facie* appropriate (or at least not inappropriate) to utter something relevant to the current context.

This (arguably) applies equally to the assertion, '4 is the square root of 16', the question, 'What's up?', and the exclamation, 'God damnit!' We can easily imagine '4 is the square root of 16' being appropriate to utter in the context of a math class, but it would generally be inappropriate to utter this while in the middle of a game of basketball. Similarly, 'What's up?' is a perfectly appropriate question when first seeing a friend or acquaintance after some time away from each other, but it is generally inappropriate to ask this question a second time of the same person immediately after he or she has finished answering you the first time. Finally, for the secular among us 'god damnit!' can be an appropriate exclamation to make in a number of contexts, but even we understand the inappropriateness of uttering it unprovoked in the middle of a church service. Arguably, the single R-Propriety not only applies across the highly varied language games associated with math classes, basketball games, interactions with friends, and church services, but it also applies to assertions, questions, exclamations, and any other type of speech act uttered in these or other language games.

Moving more directly to the issue of why I use CPS-aptness as the operative notion, and not truth-aptness, let us consider some pragmatist alternatives to the T-Propriety from above:

WA-Propriety: it is *prima facie* appropriate to assert what you have warrant to assert and *prima facie* inappropriate to assert what you do not have warrant to assert;

IJ-Propriety: it is *prima facie* appropriate to assert what would be justified 'at the end of inquiry' and *prima facie* inappropriate to assert what would not be justified 'at the end of inquiry';

SK-Propriety: it is *prima facie* appropriate to utter something that scorekeepers in your community take to be appropriate to utter and it is *prima facie* inappropriate to utter something that scorekeepers in your community take to be inappropriate to utter;

H-Propriety: it is *prima facie* appropriate to utter something that tends to 'keep the conversation going' and *prima facie* inappropriate to utter something that tends to prevent the conversation from 'going'.

Respectively, these proprieties are meant to line up with a Deweyan account of warranted assertibility,⁴⁸ a Peircean account of ideal justification,⁴⁹ Brandom's phenomenalist account of scorekeeping,⁵⁰ and a flat-footed reading of Rorty's account of hermeneutics.⁵¹ With these proprieties stated, it should not be difficult to imagine how they apply to individual utterances.

⁴⁸ See Dewey, *Logic*; also Price, "Truth."

⁴⁹ See Peirce, "Questions"; Peirce, "Some Consequences"; Peirce "Fixation"; Peirce, "How to Make"; also Price, "Truth."

⁵⁰ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, especially 291-293.

⁵¹ See Rorty, *Philosophy*, 313-394. I say that the C-Propriety lines up with a flat-footed reading of Rorty because, as I understand his distinction between epistemology and hermeneutics, Rorty's intention is not to argue against epistemology's concern with a categorical T-Propriety and replace it with hermeneutics's different but no less categorical C-Propriety. Instead, in arguing against epistemology Rorty is arguing against categorical propriety as such, and his replacement is a hermeneutics that consists in a collection of non-categorical proprieties.

Starting with the WA- and IJ-Proprieties, let us consider the sentence, ‘Snow is white’. Asserting this sentence would be appropriate to the WA-Propriety iff the asserter has seen snow, or read a textbook about snow, or received testimony from someone who is knowledgeable about snow, or has some other sort of evidence in favor of snow’s being white. Alternatively, such an assertion would be appropriate to the IJ-Propriety iff, after the asserter and his community were to inquire into the issue, the evidence would still support the assertion. In both cases, there is a break from the T-Propriety insofar as what is decisive is not the whiteness of snow itself, but the asserter’s epistemic access to the snow’s whiteness.

Turning to the SK- and H-Proprieties, we see that it is no longer the asserter’s epistemic access to snow’s whiteness that is decisive, but instead his intersubjective relation to other members in his community. Under the SK-Propriety, it is appropriate for the asserter to say that snow is white iff his peers ‘let him get away with it’, meaning that either they do not disagree with him about whether snow is white or they treat the issue as to whether snow is white to be an issue where no-fault disagreement is possible.⁵² And under the H-Propriety, such an assertion is appropriate iff it leads to some combination of more discussion, more productive discussion, and more important discussion between the asserter and his peers.

Hopefully this all-to-brief discussion of ‘Snow is white’ gives my reader the clues needed to apply these four proprieties to less schematic examples. But instead of focusing on further examples, it is time to highlight certain more general points about

⁵² See Price, “Truth” for more on no-fault disagreement.

CPS-aptness that emerge from considering all seven proprieties I have discussed so far.

First, I should reiterate the dialectical purpose of these examples. I do not take it that I have proven, through rational argument, that all of these proprieties are categorical. In fact, in Division Four of Chapter Two I will be arguing that Brandom cannot acknowledge categorical proprieties, so if I am right there then the SK-Propriety *is* not categorical because it *cannot* be so. Alternatively, in Chapter Three I will be arguing in favor of a version of IJ-Propriety, so I take it that this propriety can be categorical in nature. However, all of this is to come later. For now, I am discussing these proprieties simply in order to give my reader a better handle on what I mean by ‘categorical propriety’ and ‘CPS-aptness’, not to do any substantive philosophical work using these phrases.

Second, assuming that these proprieties are categorical, what makes them categorical is the fact that they *apply across all (relevant) language games*. This cross-language-game quality is what is decisive as to whether a propriety is categorical, and so by extension it is decisive as to whether something is CPS-apt or a-objective because my notions of CPS-aptness and a-objectivity are built around my notion of categorical propriety. Importantly, it is not the external world, nor our epistemic access to the external world, nor our engagement with members of various communities that is decisive, as we can see by the fact that the T-, WA- and IJ-, and SK- and H-Proprieties differ along these three dimensions but are all equally categorical proprieties. Since I am about to account for a-objectivity in terms of categorical propriety, this means that a-

objectivity has to do with commensurability between language games, and not necessarily the external world, our access to the external world, or our intersubjective relations to one another.

The final sentence of the previous paragraph leads into the third point worth highlighting: given the way I have developed my notion of categorical propriety, the notion of a-objectivity I am about to develop is merely a necessary component of what most people would consider a fully developed account of objectivity. My claim to come will be that my account of a-objectivity is both inferentially weaker than and presupposed by the accounts of j- and t-objectivity above. This entails that if something is j- or t-objective then it is a-objective. However, it need not entail that if something is a-objective then it is j- or t-objective, for the simple reason that these latter notions are more closely associated with the external world and our access to it than is a-objectivity. I say more on these issues shortly.

The fourth point worth noting is that, as I have formulated them, all seven categorical proprieties include a *prima facie* qualifier. I have not argued that such a qualifier is a necessary component of a categorical propriety, and it would take me too far afield from the topic of this section to do so now. However, I am inclined to think that this is the case. Wittgenstein's later works are particularly relevant here, as they highlight the many and varied things we do with language.⁵³ A common conclusion based on Wittgenstein's observations about this functional pluralism of language is that the sort of commensurability between language games that I associate with categorical propriety is illusory, but I think such a conclusion is too strong. Surely, Wittgenstein's

⁵³ See in particular Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*.

observations highlight that there are many proprieties at work within our use of language, that not all proprieties apply to all uses of language, and that any one propriety (categorical or otherwise) can and does get overridden by other proprieties (categorical or otherwise) in our actual use of language. This final point in particular tells against the claim that there are categorical proprieties of language use that apply all things considered, but it does not tell against the weaker claim that there are categorical proprieties that apply merely *prima facie*. For this reason, the lesson I take from the later Wittgenstein is not that there are no categorical proprieties, but that such proprieties are only *prima facie* proprieties.

Fifth, and finally, it is worth foreshadowing how I will be using the notion of categorical propriety within the Objectivity Demand as a critical tool in Chapter Two. Generally speaking, it is not difficult to identify what each analytic pragmatist purports to be a categorical propriety within his or her view. However, the difficulty resides in characterizing the operative words or concepts within these categorical proprieties in a way that is both naturalistically sound (more on this in §4 below) and allows for the possibility of categorical propriety in the first place. As such, my critique of Huw Price and Robert Brandom will not be that they do not provide us with a propriety that they purport is categorical. Instead, my critique is that the propriety they have chosen, despite its categorical purport, cannot actually be categorical because of the role that this propriety plays within their overall semantic theories.

d. A-Objectivity

With my notions of categorical propriety and CPS-aptness (hopefully) clarified, let us move on to characterizing a-objectivity. As I said, a-objectivity is connected with CPS-aptness and applies primarily to sentences. Namely, a sentence is a-objective iff it is CPS-apt. As such, a-objectivity does not focus exclusively on either the process or the product side of inquiry, but instead focuses on the stable, product-like entities with which the process of inquiry is conducted.

Now that we understand to a first approximation what a-objectivity is, we need to see how it is both inferentially weaker than j- or t-objectivity and presupposed by both. Doing this is important not only for ensuring my account of the Objectivity Demand is not question begging in the manner mentioned above, but also for giving us a deeper understanding of a-objectivity itself.

The claim that a-objectivity is inferentially weaker is easy to prove. Whereas someone's being j-objective has implications concerning that person's epistemic status and something's being t-objective has implications concerning that thing's metaphysical status, a sentence's being a-objective does not by itself have any such epistemological or metaphysical implications. Alternatively, assuming that a-objectivity is presupposed by j- and t-objectivity, anything that follows from a sentence's being a-objective will equally follow from a person's being j-objective or a thing's being t-objective in relation to that sentence.

That a-objectivity is presupposed by t-objectivity is similarly easy to prove. For us to speak about reality requires that we have sentences with which to speak. And for us

to speak t-objectively about reality, these sentences must be evaluable in terms of truth or some successor form of categorical propriety, which is just to say that these sentences must be a-objective. In this sense, a-objectivity is presupposed by t-objectivity.

Finally, proving that a-objectivity is presupposed by j-objectivity is a more substantive task. In outline, my argument for this is:

P1. For all x, if x is justifiable, then x is an assertion.

P2. For all x, if x is justifiable, then x has a stable meaning.

P3. For all x, if x is an assertion and has a stable meaning, then x is categorical-propriety-apt.

P4. For all x, if x is categorical-propriety-apt, then x is a-objective.

∴ C. For all x, if x is justifiable, then x is a-objective.

Although P4 encodes a terminological point that follows from my account of a-objectivity above, the remaining premises are controversial. As such, I need to argue for each in turn.

d. i. Preliminaries to My Arguments for P1-3

Before I address each premise individually, I must address two issues that will apply throughout my defense of each premise. First, I am assuming that there is a distinction to be drawn between utterances, sentences, and meanings. To gain an understanding of this distinction, consider the following examples. If I say or write ‘Snow is white’, I have made an utterance, and although I can refer to this utterance in another utterance (perhaps by saying ‘What I just said is true’), I am not able to make this same utterance again. However, if I were to say ‘Snow is white’ at one time, then say ‘Snow is white’ at another time, I would be making different utterances *of the same sentence*. In this

manner, sentences classify types of utterances. Similarly, if I were to say 'Snow is white', 'White is the color of snow', and 'Schnee ist weiß', I would be making three utterances of three different sentences, but these sentences would all have *the same meaning* (at least under normal circumstances). Finally, if I were to say 'Snow is white' and 'Grass is green', I would be making two utterances of two different sentences, each with a different meaning (again, assuming normal circumstances). At this point, I remain agnostic as to what is the proper ontological story to tell to support this three-way distinction, whether it be the minimal Sellarsian story of dot quotes and functional roles,⁵⁴ or the substantive Platonic story of non-natural forms,⁵⁵ or something between these extremes. What is important are the type-token relations between these three concepts. Going forward, unless I say otherwise I will be speaking at the level of sentences.

The second issue to address concerns what I mean by 'speech acts'. On my usage, a speech act is anything that has a performative linguistic force. Primarily, it is utterances that are speech acts. This is because different utterances of the same sentence can have different forces (think of how 'You're so smart' can be either a sincere compliment or an ironic insult). However, sentences and meanings can be considered speech acts in a derivative sense, insofar as utterances of a sentence normally have the same force within the same language game, or insofar as sentences that share a meaning normally perform the same speech act within the same language game, respectively. Again, I remain agnostic as to what is the proper story to tell about

⁵⁴ See Sellars, "Meaning."

⁵⁵ See Plato, *Republic*, Books VI and VII.

normalcy,⁵⁶ and unless I say otherwise I will be speaking about sentences when speaking about speech acts.

d. ii. Argument for P1

Returning to the premises of my argument, let us begin at the beginning, with P1. The first thing I need to do in my defense of P1 is to specify what it means for something to be justifiable. The purpose of inquiry is to turn up evidence, and that something gains the status of being justified once enough positive evidence has accrued in its favor. For something to be justifiable is simply for it to be the sort of thing to which evidence (whether positive or negative) is able to accrue.

From here, the next step in my argument for P1 is to argue that if something is a non-assertion then it is not justifiable. This is a contentious enough claim that counterexamples, if they exist, should be ready at hand, and so my defense of this claim consists in a survey of supposed counterexamples. First, let us consider non-assertional types of speech act. For many of these, the evidence-accrual model that is definitive of justifiability is plainly inappropriate. For instance, an interrogative like 'Is it raining?' is a call for evidence, and not something that is itself in need of evidence.⁵⁷

For other types of speech act, it is less clear that the evidence-accrual model is inappropriate. Consider an imperative like 'Drop and give me 20!'. This is a call to action, but one that is evaluable in terms of justification in at least two ways. First, a

⁵⁶ For one such story, see Millikan, *Language*.

⁵⁷ Of course, a speech act like 'Is it raining?' is an appropriate question' would be one for which the evidence-accrual model is appropriate, but this is simply because we have embedded the original interrogative into an assertional speech act.

person must have the proper justification to be entitled to perform this speech act, and second the act called upon to be performed ought to be one that is justified in some relevant sense. For now, I note that we are no longer talking about the speech act itself, but instead the performer of and perlocutionary effect of the speech act, respectively, so there is no reason to suspect that the speech act itself is in need of evidence. I say more about how justifiability relates to persons or non-linguistic actions shortly.

Finally, consider an observative like 'Lo, a rabbit!'. Focusing on its surface grammar leads one to think that such a speech act does not have the assertional force of a speech act like 'I see a rabbit', and yet both would seem to play the same evidential role within inquiry. However, this is not how things stand, as this is precisely the error that Sellars diagnoses in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." If 'Lo, a rabbit!' is non-assertional, then it cannot play the same role as 'I see a rabbit' does in the game of giving and asking for reasons. Therefore, 'Lo, a rabbit!' is not justifiable; instead, it reports a mere appearance for which evidence is inappropriate. Alternatively, if 'Lo, a rabbit!' plays the same role as 'I see a rabbit' does, it is because 'Lo, a rabbit!' is, despite its surface grammar, an assertion and therefore not a counterexample to my claim that if something is a non-assertion then it is not justifiable.

Let us now move on to things other than speech acts. One thing that might come to mind is that concepts can have a justified use within a language game. For instance, the concept of an electron has a justified use in the physical sciences because it allows us to predict certain phenomena (such as those that occur within a computer) and to design certain instruments (such as electron scanning microscopes). Does this not

entail that the concept of an electron is justifiable, since actuality proves possibility? My response is that this very well may be the case, but if so only because concepts are justifiable in the derivative sense of being used within assertions that are justifiable. This response maintains that assertions are the only things that are justifiable in the first instance, and thereby proves that concepts are not a counterexample to my claim.

Returning to where we left off with imperatives, what about persons or non-linguistic actions? Why aren't they justifiable and therefore counterexamples? Again, my response is to concede that they are justifiable, but instead of being justifiable in a derivative sense they are more likely to be justifiable in a distinct sense from the one I am using here. Instead of being justifiable in an epistemic sense that has to do with evidence-accrual through inquiry, persons and actions are justifiable in a practical or moral sense that has to do with either social positioning or furthering what is good. These are perfectly interesting senses of 'justification', but they are not of particular relevance to the current discussion.

At this point, I hope to have highlighted the sorts of strategies I would use when faced with a supposed counterexample to the claim that if something is a non-assertion then it is not justifiable. The first, as seen in the cases of non-assertional speech acts, is to claim that for some more or less obvious reason, the evidence-accrual model of justifiability is inappropriate for the supposed counterexample. The second, as seen in part in the case of observatives, is to claim that the supposed counterexample actually functions as an assertion, despite appearances to the contrary. The third, as seen in the case of concepts, is to concede that the supposed counterexample is justifiable, but in a

derivative sense. And finally, the fourth, as seen in the case of persons or non-linguistic actions, is to concede that the supposed counterexample is justifiable, but in a distinct sense that is irrelevant to our current concerns. With these strategies mapped out, it is now up to my dialectical opponent to produce a counterexample that cannot be accommodated through some combination of these strategies. Otherwise, I take it that this argument justifies a commitment to the claim that if something is a non-assertion then it is not justifiable.

The final step in my defense of P1 is the obvious step of noting that the second step establishes the contrapositive of P1. Since contrapositives are equivalent I have thereby established P1.

d. iii. Argument for P2

Moving on to P2, my defense comes in three steps. First, because P2 introduces the new concept of stability, I must specify what it means for a sentence to have a stable meaning. On my usage, there are two components to stability: diachronic stability and synchronic stability. A sentence S has a diachronically stable meaning within a language game L and across some period of time t_1 - t_2 iff S has the same meaning, or an adequately similar meaning, within L across t_1 - t_2 .⁵⁸ A sentence S has a synchronically stable meaning across a set of language games $\{L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n\}$ at a time t iff that sentence's meaning is either directly or indirectly synchronically stable across

⁵⁸ I define 'diachronic stability' in terms of either sameness of meaning or similarity of meaning in order to remain agnostic on the issues concerning synonymy and the analytic-synthetic distinction that Quine, "Two Dogmas" raises. At this stage, nothing hinges on whether sameness or similarity is taken to be the operative concept.

$\{L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n\}$ at t . S has a directly synchronically stable meaning across $\{L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n\}$ at t iff S both appears in each of the language games L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n at t and has the same or similar meaning in each language game L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n at t . S has an indirectly synchronically stable meaning across $\{L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n\}$ at t iff first, S does not appear in each of the language games L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n at t ; and second, S has a synchronically stable meaning at t across the set of language games included in $\{L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n\}$ in which S does appear; and third, for each language game included in $\{L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n\}$ in which S does not appear, S is translatable at t to some sentence S' that does appear in the language game and S' has the same or similar meaning as S at t . Putting all of this together, a sentence S has a stable meaning across a set of language games $\{L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n\}$ across a period of time t_1 - t_2 iff S has a diachronically stable meaning within each language game L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n across t_1 - t_2 and S has a synchronically stable meaning across $\{L_1, L_2, \dots, L_n\}$ at each time between t_1 and t_2 .

The second step in my defense of P2 is to argue that if something is justifiable then it is diachronically stable. This follows from P1, the accrual model of justification, and certain empirical considerations concerning inquiry. P1 tells us that if something is justifiable then it is an assertion, so we need only focus on assertional sentences when defending P2. Also, we should remember that for an assertional sentence to be the sort of thing that is justifiable it must be the sort of thing to which different pieces of evidence can accrue. It is at this point that the empirical considerations come into play. Given our cognitive capacities and the fact that we are embodied within the physical world, inquiry is not the sort of thing that happens all at once. We must engage in a temporally

extended process of inquiry, continuously turning up new evidence and combining it with old evidence. As such, given that we both gain evidence across time and apply it to justifiable assertional sentences across time, those sentences must maintain a diachronically stable meaning across that time—otherwise, we would not be justifying the same thing but instead justifying a series of distinct things, making the accrual of evidence to one thing an impossibility. Therefore, if something is justifiable, then it is diachronically stable.

The third and final step is to argue that if something is justifiable then it is synchronically stable. To see that this ought to be the case, notice that eliminating sources of justification is intellectually vicious, and that for all we know any language game might provide us with a source of justification. Denying either of these points—not to mention both—is the height of dogmatism in its pejorative sense. It is to block the way of inquiry, to use Peirce’s famous maxim.⁵⁹ If we are to avoid this vice, a sentence we are looking to justify must have a synchronically stable meaning so that evidence from disparate language games can accrue to it.

This is a regulative point about how things ought to be, and the obvious pushback is to say that this is a merely regulative point, one that has no bearing on how things actually are. But the latter simply isn’t the case. We have a certain autonomy over our language games to construct them as we see fit. Barring a substantive argument to the contrary, there is no reason to think that our efforts at constructing language games that meet this regulative demand are doomed at the outset. True, our autonomy is not

⁵⁹ See Peirce, “First Rule,” 48.

complete, but it is not illusory either, and my project throughout the coming pages is, in its own incomplete way, aimed at demonstrating this.

Since I have defined stability as the conjunction of diachronic and synchronic stability, and since I have now argued that justifiability entails both diachronic and synchronic stability, I have thereby established P2, i.e. that if something is justifiable then it has a stable meaning.

d. iv. Argument for P3

P3 is the final controversial premise. Luckily, we have already gone over what it means to be categorical-propriety-apt above, so we can jump directly to defending P3. The first point to note is that assertions don't simply assert something; they assert something *about something*. For this reason, assertions have intentionality and with this comes intentional objects. Acknowledging this much does not unduly stack the deck against the expressivist and in favor of the representationalist—a point not lost on either Brandom or Price.⁶⁰ However, acknowledging this does commit us to there being proprieties governing assertions, insofar as assertions can be appropriate or inappropriate to their intentional objects.

From here, the second point to note is how the stability of the sentences we use to make assertions affects the proprieties governing those assertions. In particular, if an assertional sentence has a stable meaning, then it will assert the same something about the same something across the set of language games over which it is stable. As such,

⁶⁰ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, Chapter 8 and Conclusion; also Brandom, *Between Saying*, Chapter 6; also Price, *Expressivism*, 55.

the propriety relating the assertional sentence to its intentional object will be the same across these language games, which is just to say that this propriety will be a categorical propriety and the sentence will be categorical-propriety-apt. Therefore, P3— if something is an assertion and has a stable meaning, then it is categorical-propriety-apt—has been established.

e. The Objectivity Demand

Now that I have argued for the controversial P1-3, I am entitled to accept the conclusion C—that if something is justifiable then it is a-objective. What this shows is that, for j-objectivity to be so much as possible (let alone actual), there must be a-objective sentences. With this I have completed the task that I set out to perform above, namely to demonstrate that a-objectivity is inferentially weaker than yet presupposed by both t- and j-objectivity.

Although this is, in its own right, an interesting conclusion about the relation between a-, t-, and j-objectivity, we are still one step removed from the final conclusion of this section. Remember that we are interested in these three forms of objectivity insofar as they are relevant to the Objectivity Demand with which we started this section. Now that I have shown that a-objectivity is weaker than yet presupposed by t- and j-objectivity, we can use the notion of a-objectivity to reformulate the Objectivity Demand in a manner that does not beg important questions against my interlocutors going forward. Doing so gives us:

Objectivity Demand: Naturalists must be able to acknowledge the objectivity of science—ideally in a positive manner by explaining how a-objectivity is possible,

but at least in a negative manner by not saying anything that makes a-objectivity impossible.

§4. The Deflationary Demand

Now that we have finished characterizing the Objectivity Demand, we should return our focus to CTN. Remembering how we developed the Objectivity Demand as a way of understanding what premise justifies a commitment to CTN, the natural next question is: what conclusions follow from this commitment to CTN? In this section, I highlight one such conclusion, and argue that it forces the naturalist to take seriously the project of deflation within philosophy.

Starting again with a common-sensical observation, the sciences paint a detailed picture of us as humans. We are fallible, finite beings, who are different from but nevertheless continuous with every other animal, plant, and inanimate object in nature. Our home is within the same spatial, temporal, and causal nexus that these animals, plants, and objects call home, and even our distinctive form of rationality is seen as the latest in a chain of evolutionary developments that connects us first to primates and then, more distally, to various lower animals.

If we are to be naturalists, we must take seriously this scientific picture we are painting of ourselves. Although part of our project as philosophers is to interpret what this picture means for us, we must be sure to curb our enthusiasm to ensure that our philosophizing is not itself without a place in this picture. Traditional superstitions (such as there being a transcendent god or our having an immortal, immaterial soul) must be reformulated such that they have their proper place within the scientific picture of

ourselves, or else we must learn to live without them. Reformulating this last point gives us a second demand that any naturalist must be able to meet—namely, naturalists must ensure that their philosophical investigations are properly deflated with respect to the sciences. Let us call this the Deflationary Demand.

a. Formulating the Deflationary Demand

As before, I take it that this common sensical story is on the right track, but that it leaves the important question unanswered: what does ‘properly deflated’ mean? Traditionally, naturalists have assumed that for philosophy to be properly deflated is for it to be continuous with the sciences (in the sense discussed in §2 above); however, such a requirement would beg the question against more liberal versions of naturalism. Therefore, to develop a neutral answer to this question, I turn to Mario De Caro and Alberto Voltolini’s “Is Liberal Naturalism Possible.” This article makes use of many of the same distinctions that De Caro and Macarthur develop in the Introductions to their edited volumes, but whereas De Caro and Macarthur focus on establishing that ‘liberal naturalism’ is a meaningful expression, De Caro and Voltolini argue that liberal naturalism is a viable research project.

In particular, De Caro and Voltolini make use of two distinctions from De Caro and Macarthur’s Introductions that are relevant to our present purposes. First, De Caro and Voltolini distinguish between philosophy’s being continuous with the sciences and philosophy’s being different than the sciences, and they use this distinction to differentiate conservative from liberal naturalism. The details mirror §2 above. More

conservative naturalisms entail that philosophy is continuous with the sciences,⁶¹ while more liberal naturalisms entail only that philosophy is different from the sciences.⁶² Despite this difference, what makes both sorts of naturalism of a kind is their shared commitment to what De Caro and Voltolini term “the ‘constitutive claim of contemporary naturalism’ ”: that “no entity or explanation should be accepted whose existence or truth contradict the laws of nature.”⁶³ By De Caro and Voltolini’s lights, to deny this final claim is to adopt non-naturalism.⁶⁴

De Caro and Voltolini are plainly on to something with their constitutive claim of naturalism, and this should go some ways towards vindicating my stipulation in §2 that the sciences pose at least a consistency standard for philosophy; however, I would reformulate their claim to read ‘no entity or explanation should be accepted whose existence or truth either contradicts *or is contrary to* the laws of nature’. If two propositions are either contradictory or contrary they cannot both be true (or categorically appropriate), but whereas contradictory propositions have opposite truth (or CPS-) values, it is possible for contrary propositions both to be false (or categorically inappropriate). By adding contrariness to De Caro and Voltolini’s claim, we are now able to acknowledge that contemporary science need not have all the answers while still maintaining that it provides a standard for rejecting certain philosophical excesses.⁶⁵ For simplicity’s sake, I have previously been using and will continue to use variations on the

⁶¹ See De Caro and Voltolini, “Is Liberal Naturalism,” 72-73.

⁶² See De Caro and Voltolini, “Is Liberal Naturalism,” 75-79.

⁶³ De Caro and Voltolini, “Is Liberal Naturalism,” 71.

⁶⁴ See De Caro and Voltolini, “Is Liberal Naturalism,” 73-75.

⁶⁵ I must thank Robert Talisse for helping me to appreciate the importance of the contrary-contradictory distinction in this context.

phrase ‘conflicts with the sciences’ as shorthand for ‘contradicts or is contrary to the sciences’.

But for now, let us turn to De Caro and Voltolini’s second distinction. This distinction is that between ontological and methodological understandings of non-naturalism, and it amounts to little more than the complement of De Caro and Macarthur’s distinction between these respective understandings of naturalism. In short, ontological non-naturalism is the view that some “entity or force ... is in principle unaccountable by science, ineliminable from our ontology, and contradictory to scientific knowledge,”⁶⁶ while methodological non-naturalism “appeal[s] to special [i.e. mystical] cognitive powers ... in order to account for the human capacity to grasp” certain entities or forces.⁶⁷ With De Caro and Macarthur’s work in mind, we can supplement De Caro and Voltolini’s distinction by adding to it semantic non-naturalism—the view that certain concepts are ineliminable, unaccountable by the sciences, yet contradictory of the sciences.

Putting these two distinctions together results in a more precise formulation of the Deflationary Demand:

Deflationary Demand: Naturalists must ensure that their philosophical investigations are properly deflated, in the sense that their investigations cannot imply the existence of any entities, epistemic capacities, or concepts that conflict with the sciences.

By my estimation, De Caro and Voltolini do an admirable job of sketching how a naturalist can meet the aspect of the Deflationary Demand concerning entities, assuming that the other aspects concerning capacities and concepts are already

⁶⁶ De Caro and Voltolini, “Is Liberal Naturalism,” 74.

⁶⁷ De Caro and Voltolini, “Is Liberal Naturalism,” 74.

addressed.⁶⁸ However, they do not give a convincing argument in support of this latter assumption.⁶⁹ For this reason, in Chapter Two I do not focus on the ontological aspect of the Deflationary Demand, conceding for the sake of argument that a naturalist can take De Caro and Voltolini's approach once she has addressed the other two (epistemological and semantic) aspects. I focus instead on these latter two aspects, doing so through the lens of Donald Davidson's and John McDowell's respective semantic theories, ultimately arguing that Davidson's understanding of the concept of truth and McDowell's understanding of our second natural capacities (particularly that of empirical sense perception) leads to conflicts that are antithetical to the Deflationary Demand.⁷⁰

b. An Objection to this Formulation

With all of this said, there is a perhaps unsurprising objection to the above formulation of the Deflationary Demand: what happens when the results of the sciences are either contradictory of or contrary to one another? It would seem as though, if this were the case, every naturalist would fail the Deflationary Demand because whatever they said in their philosophical investigations would come into conflict with one or the other of the conflicting scientific results. Even more problematically, there is significant evidence to

⁶⁸ See De Caro and Voltolini, "Is Liberal Naturalism," 79-82.

⁶⁹ I say this because De Caro and Voltolini assert, but do not argue, that what they call "philosophical reasoning" and "imaginative speculation" (De Caro and Voltolini, "Is Liberal Naturalism," 81) are distinct from revelation or mystical intuition, and therefore unproblematic from a naturalist perspective. However, these claims are precisely what the Deflationary Demand requires us to not take for granted.

⁷⁰ It is worth noting that I have left the phrase 'the laws of the sciences' in the Deflationary Demand unaccounted for. My intention is to adopt Davidson's and McDowell's understandings of this phrase in their respective divisions of Chapter Two, arguing that they cannot live up to the Deflation Demand even when it is formulated in their own terms.

suggest that such conflicts within the sciences do exist. In physics alone, certain entities are both particles and waves, Schrödinger's cat is both living and dead, and quantum mechanics and general relativity make notoriously bad bedfellows. The picture only gets more conflicted when we introduce chemistry, biology, and the human sciences into the equation.

Within the confines of this dissertation project, my response to this objection is that any problems it raises are not my problem. The purpose of the present chapter is not to provide my own theory as to what the word 'naturalism' ought to mean, in all the minute detail that this would require. My purpose is the more modest one of outlining in the broadest details what self-avowed naturalists report themselves to mean when they use the word 'naturalism'. In this manner, my purpose is descriptive and not normative, meaning I can succeed at achieving this purpose even in the face of an objection showing that 'naturalism' is not actually being used in the way it should. In fact, if the present objection is (as I suspect) a genuine one to the way 'naturalism' gets used, I would be failing to properly describe how 'naturalism' is used if that description were to adequately address this objection.

Additionally, my purpose in this chapter is not to describe my own view, but to describe someone else's. This means that, even if we were to bracket my previous point and we felt the need for a response to the objection to be provided, it would not be my responsibility to provide that response. It would be the responsibility of those who have been using 'naturalism' in such a way as to lead to this objection. This is what I mean when I say the objection is not my problem.

True, my objector might concede, this response works given the purpose of the present chapter; however, in Chapter Three I will be trying to meet the Deflationary Demand and so at that point I can no longer insist that any problems with the Deflationary Demand are not my own. My response to this new objection is substantively the same as for the original, with one added twist. In Chapter Three I am trying to establish that my position is properly describable as naturalistic in the usual sense of the term, not that my position specifies a new sense of the term that others ought to adopt. In other words, I am trying to gain entry into the naturalists' current clubhouse and not trying to lure them away to my own.⁷¹ As such, naturalists serve as the gatekeepers to their clubhouse, and if I am to gain entry I have to play by their rules for the time being. Towards this end, I have been describing these rules here in Chapter One, and I will be applying them to my own position in Chapter Three. What I cannot do is change the rules come Chapter Three, as my objector is pushing me to do.

The added twist that I need to acknowledge is that my response to this new objection only works so long as I have not yet achieved my goal in Chapter Three—so long as I have not yet gained admission to the naturalist clubhouse. Once I have, I (like any other naturalist) must face up to any and all genuine objections to naturalism. My objector's point about conflicts in science would seem to be one such objection, and so if I think of myself as successfully meeting my goal in Chapter Three I must also think of myself as having to face up to some version of this objection. This is all true, but it means that the objection only takes effect for me after I have completed my current

⁷¹ Using the clubhouse metaphor, my critique of Davidson, McDowell, Price, and Brandom across Chapter Two will be that they do not meet the criteria for admission to their own clubhouse. In this way, I am offering an internal (and not external) critique.

dissertation project, and not during it. The objection is a problem for my future projects, but within the confines of my dissertation project it is still not my problem.

The final point my objector can raise is that there simply might not be any viable ways to address the current objection, neither for current naturalists nor for my future self. If this were the case, then it would be better for me to recognize it now and for me to shift from a descriptive to a normative approach to the Deflationary Demand. However, barring the sort of detailed look into this objection that is outside the scope of my current project, I see no reason to think this is the case. One way of addressing the objection could be to insist that any apparent conflicts within the sciences are not genuine, but simply a mistaken artifact of our incomplete knowledge. Given my own Kantian and Peircean leanings, my preferred way would be to argue that the Deflationary Demand plays a regulative role within naturalistic thinking, in the sense that the Deflationary Demand sets a standard that naturalists aspire to meet and that helps shape future inquiry. The Deflationary Demand can play this role even if, as my objector insists, the Demand is not already met at present. There are surely more ways of addressing the objection, but I will end my list here before it gets distracting.

§5. The Pincer Objection to Naturalism

With both the Objectivity and Deflationary Demands explained, we can now construct the Pincer Objection to naturalism, around which the remainder of my project revolves. I begin by saying a few things about the general structure of the objection, before moving on to consider my (and others') semantic approach to addressing it.

When we think of how the Objectivity and Deflationary Demands relate to one another, it quickly becomes evident that they demand opposing things. Whereas the Objectivity Demand compels the naturalist to leave some philosophical notions inflated to a certain level, thus allowing her to acknowledge the objectivity of the sciences, the Deflationary Demand compels her to deflate all philosophical notions past a certain level. The hope is that the deflation levels set by these demands do not overlap, leaving the naturalist with the conceptual space she needs to meet both. The Pincer Objection is that this hope is misplaced, that the Objectivity Demand compels the naturalist to inflate certain notions above the level set by the Deflationary Demand.

At this point, I have said nothing to prove that this hope is misplaced (or that it is well-founded for that matter) and for this reason I take the Pincer Objection to be a merely *prima facie* objection that any naturalist must address. The proof will be in the naturalist's pudding, so to speak, insofar as she gives herself the tools necessary to justify her hope. My argument going forward will be that the analytic pragmatists I consider are unable to adequately address this objection, which should make more plausible the claim that the Pincer Objection is a general worry for naturalists more generally. However, I do not think the Pincer Objection is decisive against all forms of naturalism, as I argue that by shifting our focus away from the semantic concept of truth and towards the semantic concept of validity we can begin to make headway against it.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FAILURE OF JUDGMENT-BASED SEMANTICS

Now that I have developed the Objectivity and Deflationary Demands that any naturalist must meet, and sketched out the Pincer Objection to naturalism that results from them, it is time to apply these points to the semantic projects of the analytic pragmatists. I split this chapter into four overarching divisions, one for each of the analytic pragmatists upon whom I focus—Donald Davidson, John McDowell, Huw Price, and Robert Brandom. I have chosen these figures in particular because, as a group, they are particularly representative of the various agreements and disagreements within the analytic pragmatist tradition. For the remainder of this section, I paint these agreements and disagreements with a broad brush. My hope is for this to orient my reader to the more detailed discussions that occur across the upcoming divisions.

Concerning the agreements, all of these figures have naturalist aspirations, although their naturalisms are of the liberal variety. All of them develop their semantics within the bounds of certain self-imposed restrictions concerning what proper philosophy—and in particular, what proper metaphysics—looks like. And finally, all of them emphasize the need to appreciate the bearing that our practical engagement with the world and its rational inhabitants has on our linguistic and rational capacities.

As for the disagreements, they can be at times stark. Along one fault line in the tradition, Davidson and Brandom approach philosophy with the sort of theory-building

mentality that is common to analytic philosophy, while McDowell adopts a more therapeutic approach of diagnosing and treating philosophical irritations. Price's approach fits somewhere in between these two extremes. Along another, Davidson and McDowell are concerned with giving substantive accounts in semantics, ones that take word-world relations to be essential (although each works with what is arguably a non-standard understanding of what constitutes the world). Against this, Price and Brandom are thoroughgoing minimalists who think that word-word relations are ultimately what matters in semantics. Along similar lines, Davidson and McDowell are realists of a sort (although what sort depends on their understanding of what constitutes the world) while Price and Brandom are expressivists. Finally, there are important disagreements within these two pairs: whereas Davidson takes truth to be the operative semantic notion McDowell takes experience to be so, and whereas Price takes i-representations (i.e. functional roles) to be operative Brandom takes de re ascriptions of belief to be so.

But enough with the broad brushstrokes. It is now time to fill this picture out in dialectical detail.

Division One of Chapter Two
Donald Davidson's Tarskian Truth-Theory

§1.1. Introduction

As I mentioned above, Donald Davidson's semantic project revolves around the notion of truth. Perhaps Davidson's clearest expression of his full theory of truth comes in his "The Structure and Content of Truth." Collecting his three John Dewey Lectures from 1989, this essay begins with a consideration of Alfred Tarski's formal work on truth, then moves on to Davidson's critique of traditional correspondence and coherence theories of truth, and concludes with Davidson's own Quinean alternative to correspondence and coherence theories. Throughout, Davidson contends that although Tarski's work provides us with key insights concerning the structural features of our concept of truth, his work does not give us an exhaustive characterization of truth. As such, Davidson accepts Tarski's general framework while supplementing it in such a way that accounts for the substantive or contentful side of the concept of truth, the side with which Tarski is unconcerned.

There is much to be said for each portion of Davidson's theory, but for my purposes in this dissertation I focus on the first, Tarskian portion.⁷² Since Tarski's work has been immensely influential with semanticists in general (and not just those from the

⁷² For more on the second, critical portion, see Davidson, "True to the Facts"; also Davidson, "A Coherence Theory," especially Afterthoughts; also Davidson, *Subjective*, xv-xvi. For more on the third, Quinean portion, see Davidson, "A Coherence Theory"; also Davidson, "Radical Interpretation." For a critique of this third portion, see Soles, "Prefers True." Additionally, many of my points against Brandom in §4.4 below are equally applicable to the third portion of Davidson's theory, as Brandom largely adopts Davidson's approach to interpretation and objectivity.

analytic pragmatist tradition), doing this allows me to highlight a general problem with many attempts to found a naturalist semantics on a substantive conception of truth. This should in turn motivate my consideration of more radical semantic views in the following divisions of this chapter.

In its most general formulation, the problem that plagues the Tarskian portion of Davidson's theory is the problem of developing a consistent, naturalistically sound conception of the structural aspects of truth. To show that this problem is genuine, I begin in §1.2 by outlining the Tarskian background of Davidson's theory; then in §1.3 I discuss Davidson's attempt to expand Tarski's work in formal semantics so as to apply it to natural languages, but I argue that Davidson is left choosing between a rock and a hard place in the form of a vicious regress and the liar's paradox.

§1.2. Tarskian Semantics

At its core, Davidson's structure-level theory of truth⁷³ is meant to adopt Tarski's approach to the semantics of formal languages and to apply that approach to natural languages. As such, if we are to understand Davidson's theory, we must first understand Tarski's approach to semantics. For our purposes, there are two points about Tarski's approach that are especially important.

⁷³ For the remainder of this division, I adopt the general policy of dropping such phrases as 'structure-level' and using simply 'theory of truth' and its cognates to designate the first, Tarskian portion of Davidson's overall theory (and not the overall theory itself). The only exceptions come when the contrast between the structural component of Davidson's theory and the contentful component is important, and in such cases I will explicitly mark the contrast using cognates of 'structural' and 'contentful'.

First, there is Tarski's use of Convention T.⁷⁴ Some aspects of Convention T should be familiar enough. There is the familiar schema at the center of Convention T:

x is true if and only if *p*.

And this schema is used to produce the set of T-sentences or truth conditions that plays a central role in Tarskian semantics (more on this shortly). A distinction between object language and meta-language is important for understanding how the schema produces this set: semantic investigations into some object language *L* are couched in terms of a meta-language *M* that is about *L*, and T-sentences are formulated in the meta-language *M* by (1) replacing the '*x*' from the schema with an expression from *M* that designates a sentence *s* in the object language *L* and (2) replacing the '*p*' from the schema with a sentence from *M* that has the same meaning as the sentence from *L* that is designated by the expression replacing '*x*'. Some variations on the familiar example can help illuminate this process:

'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white;

The sentence spelled thusly—s, n, o, w, space, i, s, space, w, h, i, t, e— is true if and only if snow is white;

'Schnee ist weiß' is true if and only if snow is white;

Tarski's favorite sentence is true if and only if snow is white.

The less familiar aspect of Convention T is the exact role that it (as well as its related schema and T-sentences) play within Tarski's approach to semantics. Many people have assumed that Convention T simply is Tarski's theory of truth, and that Tarski intends for his theory to give an exhaustive account of truth. It is out of this

⁷⁴ For more on Convention T, see Tarski, "Concept of Truth," 154-157 and 186-188.

reading of Tarski that the position variously called minimalism, deflationism, and disquotationalism develops. However, this reading gets the historical Tarski wrong. Instead of functioning as a theory itself, Convention T functions, in Tarski's hands, as a condition of adequacy that any theory must meet.⁷⁵ Convention T functions in this manner because truth is, in the first instance, a familiar concept of ordinary language, while Tarski is in the business of providing formalized theories of a sort that are particularly foreign to most ordinary language speakers. This introduces a gap between the object of inquiry (i.e. the concept of truth) and the results of inquiry (i.e. Tarski's formalized semantics), and as Davidson aptly summarizes the point:

Convention T and T-sentences provide the sole link between intuitively obvious truths about [the concept of] truth and formal semantics. Without Convention T we should have no reason to believe that truth is what Tarski has shown us how to characterize.⁷⁶

With the role of Convention T now clarified, we can turn to the second important point about Tarski's approach to semantics—namely that Tarski provides a substantive account of truth. To delve into the details of Tarski's account would take me too far afield from Davidson and his own theory of truth. Instead, we need only note that Tarski defines truth in terms of a notion of satisfaction.⁷⁷ Satisfaction is like reference in that it is a relation between words and objects in the world; however, whereas reference relations hold between a noun and an object, satisfaction relations hold between a sentence (with or without free variables) and an infinite sequence of objects. By defining truth in terms of satisfaction, truth is likewise characterized by the sorts of word-world

⁷⁵ See Tarski, "Concept of Truth," 187-188.

⁷⁶ Davidson, "In Defense," 66.

⁷⁷ For more on truth and satisfaction, see Tarski, "Concept of Truth," 189-197.

relations that we see with satisfaction, not the sorts of word-word relations we would expect were Tarski the minimalist he is often taken to be.

§1.3. Davidson's Extension of Tarskian Semantics, the Regress of Metalanguages, and the Liar's Paradox

Davidson's approach to semantics aligns with Tarski's on both of the points from the previous section. However, where Tarski thinks this approach is appropriate only for certain formal languages, Davidson argues that it can be extended to provide a semantic theory for natural languages. Davidson's Quinean theory of interpretation, which constitutes the portion of his overall theory that focuses on the content (as opposed to the structure) of the concept of truth, is the obvious place to begin understanding Davidson's supplement to Tarski. However, if we limit ourselves only to the structural portion of Davidson's overall theory of truth we find a less obvious though equally important jumping off point in the form of Davidson's claim that there is a need for two notions of truth, one that is relative to some particular language and one that is not.

Davidson is led to this claim by a simple question. Given the distinction between object language and metalanguage at the heart of Convention T, and given that the schema from Convention T delivers us with T-sentences that are about the object language, we can see that the truth predicate about which Convention T allows us to theorize is the truth predicate for the object language. This is because, in satisfying Convention T we need say nothing at all about the metalanguage or about how the truth

predicate functions in the metalanguage. The question this leads to is, How does the truth predicate function in the metalanguage?

One immediate response to this question would be to say that we need only follow Tarski's approach to semantics, that of using Convention T to develop a substantive theory of truth for the metalanguage, and we will be just fine. However, if we were to do as this response suggests, we would have to develop the theory of the metalanguage in a meta-metalanguage, then we would be forced to ask how the truth predicate functions in the meta-metalanguage, leading us to recognize this response for the regress that it is. Such a regress of metalanguages is not necessarily vicious, because on the assumption that we are competent speakers of the n th metalanguage, by following Tarski's approach we will have developed adequate theories of truth for the object language and the first $n-1$ metalanguages.

However, the regress does become vicious once one adopts Davidson's goal of giving a Tarskian account of natural languages. This is because natural languages are universal in the sense that "it would not be in harmony with the spirit of [these] language[s] if in some other language a word occurred which could not be translated into it."⁷⁸ Ultimately, all theorizing is done within a natural language, such that the object language and the infinite variety of metalanguages are (potential if not actual) fragments of that natural language; hence natural language's universality. As a result, when we are theorizing about natural languages, we cannot make the assumption that prevents the regress from being vicious—the assumption that we are competent speakers of the n th

⁷⁸ Tarski, "Concept of Truth," 164. Davidson's principle of charity expresses a similar point (see Davidson, "Radical Interpretation," 136-137; Davidson, "On the Very Idea," 196-197).

metalanguage. The reason is that, in theorizing about natural language, we are thereby theorizing about all of the metalanguages, and so we cannot bracket any concerns we have about any one metalanguage as we would were we to make this assumption. To do otherwise would be to give up on theorizing about natural language as such; at best we would be theorizing about some partial fragment of it.

In response to this issue, Davidson distinguishes between two varieties of truth in order to stop the regress from starting in the first place. As Davidson puts the point:

The trick is just to add to Tarski's definition of a truth predicate for a language L (say, ' s is true $_L$ ') the remark that Tarski's predicate holds for all and only the true sentences of L . Here, of course, the word 'true' expresses the real-life, substantive, undefined concept we need for serious semantics.⁷⁹

Here, Davidson distinguishes between a sentence's being true $_L$ and its being true. Both notions—those of truth $_L$ and truth—belong to the metalanguage, but whereas the former notion is relativized to the object language, the latter is unrelativized to any language. With this done, Davidson is able to argue that using the metalanguage, we can begin to define a notion of truth $_L$ for the object language by following Tarski's approach, then supplement this definition by adding that a sentence in the object language is true $_L$ if and only if it is true. This takes care of accounting for the function of the truth $_L$ predicate within the object language. But more importantly, because the truth (as opposed to the truth $_L$) predicate is unrelativized to any language and because, as Davidson insists, the truth predicate is to be left undefined, there is no need to develop an explicit theory about how the truth predicate functions in the metalanguage. The question that leads to the regress is an idle one that does not demand our attention (assuming Davidson's

⁷⁹ Davidson, "The Structure and Content," 292.

insistence that the truth predicate be left undefined is appropriate). If someone asks, What about the metalanguage, the Davidsonian response is simply, So what about the metalanguage?

Although Davidson's approach avoids the regress, it does so by leaving him prey to the familiar liar's paradox.⁸⁰ Consider the following sentence:

c is not true

where 'c' is the name for the very sentence in which 'c' occurs. From here, let us use the schema from Convention T to construct the T-sentence for this sentence:

'c is not true' is true if and only if c is not true.

And finally, substitute 'c' (i.e. the name for the original sentence) for ' 'c is not true' ' (i.e. the original sentence itself):

c is true if and only if c is not true,

which is equivalent to the contradictory sentence:

c is true and c is not true.

From a seemingly uncontroversial starting point we have derived a contradiction, and this is the liar's paradox.

The usual response to this is to insist that the object language-metalanguage distinction is overlooked in the proof of the paradox. To see how this dissolves the paradox, ask yourself which language the sentence 'c is not true' is in. The fact that it includes a truth predicate would lead us to believe that it is a metalanguage sentence, while the fact that it is embedded in a T-sentence would lead us to believe that it is an

⁸⁰ I follow Tarski's presentation of the liar's paradox, which he derives from Łukasiewicz (see Tarski, "Concept of Truth," 157-158).

object language sentence. As it is presented, it is something of a mongrel sentence, being in both the object language and metalanguage. This leaves the sentence grammatically ill-formed, and so it is not the sort of sentence for which we need to theorize.

However, this response works only if we accept the object language-metalanguage distinction on which it is built, and this is precisely what Davidson tacitly rejects in the case of natural language by insisting that there is an unrelativized and undefined notion of truth (as opposed to truth_L). To reiterate Davidson's strategy, it is to follow Tarski's approach to semantics and develop an account of truth_L for a fragment of a natural language. From there, we supplement the Tarskian approach by insisting that the true_L sentences of this language are true, where truth is the unrelativized and undefined notion. This insistence puts an end to the regress of metalanguages, thereby allowing us to respect the universal quality of the natural language by not forcing us to posit the existence of a distinct metalanguage for that natural language. Unfortunately, the result is that, although Davidson can make the usual response to the liar's paradox as it relates to truth_L , he is unable to do so with truth itself. The sentence 'c is not true_L ' would be an ill-formed mongrel of a sentence because truth_L is a part of the metalanguage (i.e. the natural language as a whole) and not the object language (i.e. the fragment of the natural language) but if the sentence is to be the sort of sentence for which the Tarskian theory is relevant then it must be in the object language and not the metalanguage. Alternatively, the sentence 'c is not true' does not run into this problem because, since truth is undefined, there is no Tarskian theory for sentences using the

truth predicate and therefore no demand that such sentences be formulated in the language identified as the object language in the Tarskian theory. 'c is not true' is, on Davidson's account, not a grammatically ill-formed sentence, and so the liar's paradox is a genuine paradox that displays the inconsistency of Davidson's unrelativized and undefined notion of truth.⁸¹

With this, we find ourselves in a bind. We began by considering Tarski's approach to semantics, and saw how it leads to a regress of metalanguages that is antithetical to Davidson's goal of providing a truth theory for natural languages. Now, we have seen Davidson's supplement to Tarski, which makes use of an undefined notion of truth, but after following it through we see that it leads to paradox. The obvious next step is to give some account of Davidson's undefined notion of truth, but this demands that we formulate this account within a metalanguage and with that we are back onto the regress. If we accept the regress, we admit that we cannot provide a semantics for natural languages (at best, we can do this for some fragment thereof); but if we accept the paradox, we run afoul of the Deflationary Demand and its call for consistency. Neither option is viable if we are to develop a naturalistically sound semantics, which is enough reason to reject Davidson's overall strategy of taking truth to be the operative notion within a naturalistic semantics.

⁸¹ Davidson considers this sort of objection at Davidson, "The Structure and Content," 292, but his response there is to assert without arguing that introducing an undefined truth predicate does not result in inconsistencies. Given that I have just argued to the contrary, this response is inadequate. A more substantive response occurs at Davidson, "In Defense," 71-72, but it amounts to Davidson denying the universal character of natural language by placing truth outside of natural language.

Division Two of Chapter Two
John McDowell's Therapeutic Empiricism

§2.1. Introduction

In this division, I argue that John McDowell's defense of empiricism threatens to run afoul of the Deflationary Demand, and that his therapeutic metaphilosophy is inadequate for dissolving this issue. In particular, McDowell's purportedly naturalistic account of empirical sense perception is indistinguishable from many non-naturalist accounts of rational intuition, leaving his reader to conclude that his account is either incomplete or inconsistent with naturalism. To establish this, I begin in §2.2 by outlining in broad strokes McDowell's empiricism and what he judges to be its main competitors. From there, I dedicate §2.3 to the details of McDowell's empiricism, and it is here that I argue that his account of perception is indistinguishable from various accounts of rational intuition. §2.4 functions as a detour of sorts, acknowledging that McDowell intends for his account of second nature to dissolve any non-naturalist worries relating to his account of perception but arguing that this former account too is indistinguishable from rationalistic forms of non-naturalism. Finally, in §2.5 I consider what I take to be McDowell's real defense against my indistinguishability objection—that it represents an anxiety that he has already diagnosed and treated. It is in this section that McDowell's therapeutic metaphilosophy comes to the fore, but I argue that there are reasons both general and specific for finding McDowell's therapy inadequate.

§2.2. The Oscillation

To begin our discussion of McDowell's therapeutic empiricism, I must say some quick words about the dialectical lay of the land in which McDowell situates his project. McDowell takes it that most contemporary philosophers share an urge towards empiricism; however, he also takes it that this urge ought to raise a certain anxiety for these philosophers, an anxiety to the effect that this urge cannot be satisfied. McDowell contends that this combination of urge and anxiety has led many a philosopher to oscillate between two equally unsatisfying positions, Givenism and coherentism. Ultimately, McDowell's project is to develop a philosophical treatment that satisfies our urge towards empiricism while dissolving its attendant anxiety, thus breaking out of the oscillation. The outline of this treatment should be familiar enough to anyone who has read *Mind and World*, but it is necessary background for understanding both the specific details of McDowell's treatment that I focus on in §§2.3 and 2.4 below, as well as the broader contours of McDowell's therapeutic metaphilosophy that I critique in §2.5.

At its core, empiricism for McDowell involves two commitments: first, that sensibility is in some sense distinct from the understanding; and second, that sensibility delivers us with reasons for or against our various beliefs about the world. McDowell is highly influenced by Kant in his insistence on distinguishing sensibility from the understanding. Sensibility and the understanding are two capacities that a subject has, with the former being a subject's capacity for intuiting certain basic information from the world and the latter being a subject's capacity for conceptualizing that basic information in more and more abstract manners. Importantly, whereas sensibility is passive and

receptive, thus allowing for genuine constraint from outside the mind, the understanding is active and spontaneous, thus allowing for genuine responsibility on the part of the subject. To collapse the distinction between sensibility and the understanding would be to eliminate either external constraint, or responsibility, or both.

Concerning the second commitment of empiricism, McDowell's primary influence is Wilfrid Sellars. For experience to constrain thinking, experience must engage in rational relations with our thinking and not merely causal relations. The key point is that the constraint in question is a normative endeavor, and only rational relations have the sort of normativity necessary for this endeavor. I say more on this topic shortly, when I discuss coherentism.

McDowell takes empiricism as he has characterized it to be nothing more than sound common sense; nevertheless, McDowell acknowledges that empiricism's stock has fallen in recent decades, largely as a result of naturalism's rising stock. The move towards naturalism has highlighted the need to consistently distinguish between reasons and causes, and this has raised familiar anxieties about empiricism.

Traditionally, the first commitment of empiricism has been interpreted as being equivalent to the claim that whereas the understanding is conceptual, sensibility is pre- or extra- or otherwise non-conceptual—let us designate such a version of empiricism with the word 'Givenism'. The naturalist critique of Givenism is then that reasons must be conceptual for them to be reasons at all,⁸² yet Givenism is committed to sensibility being both reason-providing and non-conceptual. As Sellars puts it, the Givenist conception of sensibility is "a mongrel resulting from a crossbreeding of two ideas," that

⁸² See Sellars, "Empiricism," §§3-7; also Davidson, "Coherence Theory," especially 140.

of a reason and that of a mere (non-conceptual) cause.⁸³ Givenism is therefore an inconsistent view, committed to what gets called the myth of the Given—i.e. the existence of data that is both merely causal yet also rational.

Once one is awoken to the mythical status of the Given, one must modify or reject some part of Givenism. One common strategy is what McDowell calls bald naturalism, which is characterized by rejecting the first commitment of Givenism. And since empiricism is traditionally identified with Givenism, bald naturalism is traditionally characterized by rejecting the first commitment of empiricism. McDowell finds the distinction between sensibility and the understanding to be a fundamental insight of Kant's, and so McDowell finds bald naturalism particularly unconvincing. As such, McDowell dedicates little explicit discussion to bald naturalism, besides to highlight that it counsels eliminating the urge towards empiricism that McDowell aims to satisfy.⁸⁴

Another strategy, one that McDowell takes more seriously, is coherentism. Such a view accepts the naturalist claim that reasons must be conceptual and maintains Givenism's first commitment by denying the second commitment that is common to Givenism and empiricism. Although the deliverances of sensibility can (and most likely do) cause certain beliefs, these deliverances are not reasons for or against those beliefs. McDowell objects that such a coherentist view leaves our thinking as a "frictionless spinning in a void," meaning that our thought is not rationally constrained by anything outside of itself.⁸⁵ At best, coherentism offers us exculpations (to the effect that

⁸³ Sellars, "Empiricism," 210.

⁸⁴ See McDowell, *Mind and World*, xviii-xix, xx-xxiii, 72-73, and 76-77. See also McDowell, "Reply to Commentators," 403-409 and 419-425.

⁸⁵ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 11.

we cannot but think the way sensibility causes us to) and not the justifications (to the effect that the way we are thinking is appropriate to the world) after which we are searching.⁸⁶

Assuming that empiricism is identified with Givenism, it seems as if we have exhausted our options. We have tried the naive strategy of accepting empiricism, but seen that we thereby fall into the myth of the Given. We have tried the bald naturalist strategy of denying the first commitment of empiricism, but seen that we thereby deprive ourselves of a true and genuine insight (according to McDowell). And we have tried the coherentist strategy of denying the second commitment of empiricism, but seen that this offers mere exculpations. Additionally, we can see that what Givenism is missing—namely a consistent conception of sensibility—is precisely what coherentism offers us, while what coherentism is missing—namely genuine justifications—is precisely what Givenism offers us. McDowell's contention is that so long as we hold onto both the urge towards empiricism and the assumption that empiricism simply is Givenism, we will fall "into an interminable oscillation" between Givenism and coherentism—our dissatisfaction with the one will drive us towards the other, and since there is no third option in view, our dissatisfaction with the other will drive us back towards the one, and so on *ad infinitum*.⁸⁷

McDowell's therapeutic suggestion is that a third option comes into view once we deny the assumption that empiricism is Givenism. Instead of taking sensibility to be non-

⁸⁶ For McDowell on exculpations and justifications, see McDowell, *Mind and World*, 8. Although he does not use 'coherentism' or its cognates, such phrases as "extraconceptual impingements," "brute impact," and "causal impact" imply that it is coherentism (and not Givenism) that offers exculpations and not justifications.

⁸⁷ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 9.

conceptual, as the Givenist does, McDowell suggests that we take it to be passively conceptual. This idea will be my jumping off point for the next section. For now, notice that if sensibility is conceptual it can provide reasons for or against our beliefs, and that if sensibility is passively conceptual it can still be distinguished from the understanding, which McDowell takes to be actively conceptual. In this manner, McDowell's suggestion allows us to accept the two commitments of empiricism without raising the sort of philosophical anxiety associated with Givenism. This is the promise of McDowell's project, an anxiety-free way of satisfying our philosophical urges.

§2.3. McDowell on Perception

Whether McDowell's position lives up to this promise depends on whether he can satisfactorily draw the active-passive distinction at the heart of his therapeutic suggestion. In *Mind and World*, McDowell seems less concerned with developing the details of how he draws this distinction or defending these details against objections, focusing instead on merely stating the main theses of his view. As such, I spend most of this section considering McDowell's *Perception as a Capacity for Knowledge*, where he more explicitly develops and defends the details of his view. However, it is helpful to start by considering the main theses from *Mind and World*, as they provide a roadmap for the discussion of *Perception as a Capacity for Knowledge* to come.

In *Mind and World*, McDowell takes it to be relatively unproblematic that the understanding is actively conceptual, as this thought is readily established in the works of Kant, Sellars, and Davidson (among others). The problematic idea is that of

sensibility being conceptual in a way that the understanding is while also being passive in a way that the understanding is not. On the former front, McDowell insists that sensibility is conceptual because we, as rational agents, have “a standing obligation to reflect about the credentials of the putatively rational linkages that govern [empirical thinking],” even those linkages involving the contents delivered to us through sensibility.⁸⁸ On the latter front, McDowell insists that through sensibility “one takes in how things are”⁸⁹—that “there is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case.”⁹⁰ The unmediated presence of reality to the mind that these quotations suggest is what distinguishes the passivity of sensibility from the activity of the understanding.

Of course, these are all contentious claims, and the connections between them are not immediately obvious. This is where *Perception as a Capacity for Knowledge* enters the picture. McDowell’s begins by highlighting the distinctively internalist model for perception with which Sellars provides us:

On this approach, a rational subject who has a bit of perceptual knowledge is self-consciously aware of the warrant provided for her knowledge by a perceptual state she is in.⁹¹

McDowell’s project is to develop a view of this sort, where perceptual states not only provide warrant for certain beliefs but also are such that the warrant they provide can be made manifest to an ordinary believer. For this to be possible, perception must be conceptual in the sense of McDowell’s theses from *Mind and World*, because for a

⁸⁸ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 12.

⁸⁹ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 9.

⁹⁰ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 27.

⁹¹ McDowell, *Perception*, 23.

believer to be aware of the warrant the believer must be thinking about the warrant and thinking is done through concepts of the understanding.

From here, McDowell considers the obvious objection to any internalist view of perception: that it over-intellectualizes perception. McDowell focuses on Tyler Burge's presentation of this objection, and in outline the objection goes as follows.⁹² Perceptual capacities are fallible, so the warrant that perceptual states provide must be defeasible. For a perceptual state to provide warrant for a belief, it is necessary merely that the warrant not actually be defeated (this being understood in externalist terms). However, for the perceptual state's warrant to be manifest to the believer, the believer must be aware of the fact that the warrant is not defeated. Such awareness would imply that the believer not only has a stock of highly developed epistemological concepts (such as those of a warrant, a defeater, a possible world, etc.), but also a practical familiarity with how to deploy those concepts (such as what counts as a warrant; how defeaters infirm warrants; how, if at all, circumstances in nearby possible worlds infirm or confirm warrants; etc.).⁹³ However, empirically speaking it is hard to imagine that most people have such a stock of concepts, let alone a familiarity with their use. Assuming internalism is correct, this means that most people are incapable of having perceptual knowledge, and the implausibility of this conclusion means that internalism (at least as it relates to perception) is an unacceptable view.

⁹² For the details, see McDowell, *Perception*, 23-30.

⁹³ If this were not the case, the believer would not only not have the authority to judge whether the perceptual state's warrant is defeated; the believer would be in no position to formulate the question that prompts such a judgment in the first place.

McDowell responds to this objection by denying that the warrant that perceptual states provide must be defeasible. Instead, for McDowell

when all goes well in the operation of a perceptual capacity of a sort that belongs to its possessor's rationality, a perceiver enjoys a perceptual state in which some feature of her environment is *there* for her, perceptually *present* to her rationally self-conscious awareness.⁹⁴

This is the unmediated presence that McDowell hints at in *Mind and World*, and it greatly simplifies the internalist requirement that a believer be aware that a perceptual state's warrant is not defeated. Although it is possible for a believer to judge that something is perceptually present to her when some other thing (or nothing at all) is perceptually present to her, when something *is* perceptually present to the believer it is her state of perceiving itself that constitutes her awareness that the warrant for her perceptual belief (which is delivered by that very state) is not defeated. The believer has no need to be familiar with a set of epistemological concepts if she is to meet the internalist requirement and thereby have knowledge about what she perceives (although she undoubtedly needs this if she is to have knowledge about her perceptual knowledge itself). All of this boils down to the claim that the warrant provided by a perceptual state is not only indefeasible but also self-intimating, which in turn implies that the perceptual belief based on it is veridical—it cannot but be true.

Although denying that perceptual states always provide defeasible warrant allows McDowell to address the over-intellectualization objection, it immediately leads to a new objection.⁹⁵ Our perceptual capacities are fallible in the sense that their operation produces both true and false beliefs. This is an obvious observation, one that is verified

⁹⁴ McDowell, *Perception*, 30-31.

⁹⁵ See McDowell, *Perception*, 34-36.

by the familiar examples (straight sticks looking bent in water, objects of one color looking to be of another color under certain lighting, one object looking to be two when the perceiver is under the influence of certain drugs, etc.). However, if McDowell is right in claiming that perceptual states deliver indefeasible warrants and so perceptual beliefs are veridical, then it would seem that our capacities cannot be fallible. If this is really a consequence of McDowell's view, then so much the worse for him.

McDowell has the beginnings of a response to this new objection, one that hinges on a distinction between defective and non-defective exercises of a capacity.⁹⁶ McDowell insists that, in non-defective exercises of our perceptual capacities, they are capacities for "get[ting] into states that consist in having a certain feature of the objective environment perceptually present to one's self-consciously rational awareness."⁹⁷ However, McDowell is equally insistent that, in defective cases, our perceptual capacities do not involve this sort of immediate presence, or the indefeasibility and veridicality that go along with it. With this in mind, we see that McDowell does not replace the claim that all perceptual warrant is defeasible with the claim that all perceptual warrant is indefeasible; he replaces it with the weaker claim that some perceptual warrant is indefeasible. And this in turn is what allows McDowell to acknowledge the fallibility of our perceptual capacities. Assuming that an exercise of these capacities is non-defective, it is true that they will be infallible. However, in defective cases these capacities will be fallible, and this is enough to establish that

⁹⁶ See McDowell, *Perception*, 36-39.

⁹⁷ See McDowell, *Perception*, 37.

these capacities are fallible when considering defective and non-defective cases together.

McDowell thinks that this is all that he needs to say about the defective-non-defective distinction, but if he is to meet the Deflationary Demand then he is mistaken on this front. The reason is that, so far, McDowell's account of perception is indistinguishable from common forms of rational intuitionism. Both posit a capacity that presents a subject with states that provide indefeasible warrant for subsequent beliefs, and the indefeasibility of this warrant is guaranteed because the state is self-presenting so that the warrant it provides is self-intimating. The result is that beliefs based on these states are veridical. The problem this raises is that rational intuitionism is traditionally seen as a non-naturalist view, but McDowell insists that his account of perception is a naturalist view (although liberally so). If McDowell is to be justified in holding his account to be naturalistic, he must identify some quality of his account of perception that distinguishes it from rational intuitionism, or else argue that rational intuitionism is actually a naturalistically sound view.

Unfortunately, McDowell does neither of these. McDowell's account of the fallibility of our perceptual capacities does nothing to distinguish his account from rational intuitionism, as most any plausible form of rational intuitionism acknowledges the fallibility of our rational capacities, and does so using largely the same strategy as McDowell.⁹⁸ Additionally, when considering a closely related objection, McDowell simply

⁹⁸ As an example, see Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, 2:348 and 2:310. I discuss this point in §4 of Dabay, "Why Peirce's."

reiterates the self-intimating quality of perceptual warrants, which again does nothing to distinguish his view from rational intuitionism.⁹⁹

The closest McDowell gets to addressing the objection that his purportedly naturalistic view is indistinguishable from (seemingly) non-naturalist forms of rational intuitionism is when he considers an imagined psychological experiment; but even here he overlooks the decisive case. The case he focuses on is a case where the test subject

is going to be asked to identify the colours of things she is shown in a succession of tests.... But she is told that in half the tests the light will be unsuitable for colour recognition, though cunningly arranged so as not to seem suspicious in any way; in the other half the light will be a good light for knowing the colours of things by looking at them.¹⁰⁰

Such an experiment places the test subject into two different types of situation, the first in which she is in good lighting but has reason to suspect that she is in bad lighting, and the second in which she is in bad lighting and has reason to suspect that she is in bad lighting. McDowell's position is that in both cases the subject's perceptual capacities are being exercised defectively, and so the subject's perceptual state is not one in which the object's color is presented veridically to the subject.¹⁰¹

However, once we recognize these two types of situation, we are in a position to recognize two additional, complementary types of situation: the third type is that in which the subject is in good lighting and has no reason to suspect that she is in bad lighting, and the fourth is that in which she is in bad lighting but has no reason to suspect that she is in bad lighting. The third type of situation is the paradigmatic non-

⁹⁹ See McDowell, *Perception*, 39-44. If anything, this passage strengthens the connection between McDowell's view and rational intuitionism.

¹⁰⁰ McDowell, *Perception*, 45-46.

¹⁰¹ See McDowell, *Perception*, 45-48. The details that lead McDowell to this position are beside my current purpose.

defective case in which the subject's perceptual state presents the object's color to her, and so is covered easily enough by McDowell's account of perception.

It is this final, fourth type of situation that is decisive for McDowell's account, but it is precisely this type that he does not consider in any detail.¹⁰² McDowell needs it not to be the case that the subject's perceptual state presents the object's color to her in these situations. If this were the case, then the subject would have indefeasible warrant for a veridical belief that the object's color is as it appears in the bad lighting, when what makes the lighting bad is precisely that the object's color is not as it appears. In short, if this were the case, then the subject would know something false, which is a patent absurdity.

If we consider the subject as a physical being, we can distinguish a situation of the fourth type from one of the third type. This is because the subject stands in different lawlike, causal relations to the object in the two cases. But to take this difference to be the decisive one would make McDowell a coherentist of the sort that plays into his oscillation from §2.2 above. Such a conclusion is obviously unacceptable to McDowell.

Alternatively, there is seemingly nothing about the subject qua rational agent that differentiates a situation of this type from one of the third type, in which the object's color is presented to her. She has the same evidence set in both situations, because in both situations she has no reason to think the lighting is bad. Admittedly, she is in different perceptual states in these two situations—in one case the perceptual state is a state of

¹⁰² McDowell acknowledges this type of situation in the paragraph immediately before his discussion of the psychological experiment, but goes on to ignore it in the actual discussion (see McDowell, *Perception*, 45). The closest McDowell comes to discussing this type of situation is when he discusses cases where the lighting is possibly (but not actually) bad but the subject has no reason to suspect that it is bad (see McDowell, *Perception*, 48-49).

being presented with the object's color and in the other it isn't—but it is hard to see how this can make a rational difference to the subject. If it were to make such a difference, it seemingly must alter the subject's evidence set such that the subject after all does have a reason to suspect that the lighting is bad in situations of the fourth type, which is just to say that these situations—which McDowell acknowledges to be possible¹⁰³—are impossible.

What McDowell needs is an account of rational relations that are independent of individual subjects, so that these rational relations can play the role that causal relations play in the coherentist strategy of distinguishing situations of the fourth type from situations of the third type. However, this account must not entail the existence of non-natural entities or capacities, per the Deflationary Demand. Since I have already conceded that Mario De Caro and Alberto Voltolini outline a way of avoiding a commitment to the existence of non-natural entities,¹⁰⁴ the decisive issue for McDowell is not that of the subject-independent rational relations themselves, but our cognitive access to them. And the only way in which I find myself able to make sense of our cognitive access to these relations is to conceive of our perceptual capacities as indistinguishable from a capacity for rational intuition that I find naturalistically suspect.

Ultimately, my objection is not that McDowell cannot provide an account of our perceptual capacities as giving us access to subject-independent rational relations, only that he has not provided such an account and that I cannot foresee myself shaking the anxiety that McDowell is steering me in a non-naturalist direction until he has done so.

¹⁰³ See McDowell, *Perception*, 45.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter 1, §4 above.

§2.4. McDowell on Second Nature

Returning to McDowell's project from *Mind and World*, we can begin to see how he would respond to my final objection from §2.3. My anxiety is that McDowell's account of perception is non-naturalistic, and in one sense this is right. McDowell is a liberal naturalist, so his account is non-naturalistic if 'nature' is interpreted in the sense that conservative or bald naturalists interpret it. However, McDowell contends that conservative and bald naturalists overlook the existence of what he calls second nature, and that once second nature is taken into account my anxiety concerning his account of perception should dissolve. In this section, I quickly summarize McDowell's account of second nature, and argue that the same anxiety I have concerning his account of perception arises again concerning his account of second nature.¹⁰⁵

McDowell begins by disarming an immediate objection that he foresees to his account of second nature. As he puts it

It would be a cheat, a merely verbal manoeuvre, to object that naturalism about nature cannot be open to question. If we can rethink our conception of nature so as to make room for spontaneity, even though we deny that spontaneity is capturable by the resources of bald naturalism, we shall by the same token be rethinking our conception of what it takes for a position to deserve to be called "naturalism".¹⁰⁶

McDowell's point is that there is conceptual space for naturalists to disagree about what nature is, that these disagreements are substantive instead of merely verbal, and that, for these reasons, it would be inappropriate for a bald naturalist to insist that his is the only sound conception of nature. Given that McDowell introduces his discussion of second nature in this manner, one would expect what follows to be a substantive

¹⁰⁵ For a detailed look at these issues, see Forman, "Autonomy."

¹⁰⁶ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 77.

account of second nature, but my charge in this section is that McDowell falls into the same sort of merely verbal maneuvering that he disparages in the first sentence.

To appreciate why this is the case, we must understand the two views with which McDowell contrasts his account of second nature. The first is the bald naturalism we discussed in §2.2 above, which is a particularly conservative form of naturalism committed to reducing or eliminating normative and intentional phenomena to phenomena describable in the non-human sciences. The second is what McDowell terms rampant platonism, which amounts to more or less the sort of non-naturalism with which I ended §2.3 above, the one that led to my anxiety surrounding McDowell's account of perception:

This [sc. rejecting bald naturalism] can easily seem to commit us to a rampant platonism. It can seem that we must be picturing the space of reasons as an autonomous structure—autonomous in that it is constituted independently of anything specifically human.... But human minds must somehow be able to latch on to this inhuman structure. So it looks as if we are picturing human beings as partly in nature and partly outside it. What we wanted was a naturalism that makes room for meaning, but this is no kind of naturalism at all.¹⁰⁷

McDowell's account of second nature is intended to give us what we want, namely a view that is naturalistic (unlike rampant platonism) yet that also makes room for meaning (unlike bald naturalism).

McDowell's strategy is to use the notion of second nature to develop a naturalized version of platonism.¹⁰⁸ He does so by noting that humans are born with certain capacities, while they must develop others through their upbringing. The former capacities constitute a human's first nature and the latter capacities constitute her

¹⁰⁷ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 77-78.

¹⁰⁸ See McDowell, *Mind and World*, 84.

second nature. Finally, McDowell asserts (and does not argue) that “human beings are intelligibly initiated into ... the space of reasons by [their] ... upbringing.”¹⁰⁹ Therefore, a human’s perceptual capacities (shaped as they are around the space of reasons) are second natural, and therefore natural as opposed to non-natural.

The problem with this strategy is that, just as McDowell leaves his account of perception indistinguishable from rational intuitionism, here he leaves his naturalized platonism indistinguishable from rampant platonism. To recognize this, notice that by replacing ‘second natural’ and its cognates with ‘non-natural’ and its cognates in the previous paragraph, the view that is described simply is that of rampant platonism. This should raise our suspicions that McDowell is engaging in merely verbal maneuvering, but these suspicions would rightly dissolve if he were to supplement his naturalized platonism with a method for distinguishing that which is second natural from that which is non-natural. Towards this end, McDowell time and again asserts without arguing that upbringing actually does inculcate just the second natural capacities he needs without being able to inculcate the non-natural capacities that would call his view into question.¹¹⁰ At the root of these assertions is an externalist way of thinking encapsulated by something McDowell says in another essay, where he discusses virtuous upbringing and our ethical capacities: “what is distinctive about virtue ... is that the reasons a virtuous person takes himself to discern really are reasons; a virtuous person gets this kind of thing right.”¹¹¹ Translated to be about second nature, McDowell’s claim is that what is distinctive about a human’s second natural capacities is

¹⁰⁹ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 84.

¹¹⁰ See McDowell, *Mind and World*, 84, 88, 92, 109-110, and 123-124.

¹¹¹ McDowell, “Two Sorts,” 189.

that she not only takes herself to have such a capacity; she really does have such a capacity. Whereas a person cannot have the non-natural capacity for having Platonic forms present to her regardless of how she takes things to be or how she is brought up, McDowell's response is that it is a simple fact that she can (and does) have the second-natural capacity for having physical objects present to her. Given that my challenge to McDowell has been to justify this latter commitment given the stark analogy between the former and latter capacities, the vacuity of McDowell's externalist response should be obvious. At best it begs the very question at issue, at worst it ignores the issue outright, and barring some substantive way of distinguishing the second-natural from the non-natural McDowell's account of second nature and the naturalized platonism he develops around it is indistinguishable from the non-naturalism of rampant platonism.

§2.5. McDowell as Therapist

My charges against McDowell in the previous two sections should not come as news. At root, they highlight one and the same problem with McDowell's first-order philosophy: that he does not address what seem to be the highly rationalist, non-naturalist implications of his view. Many commentators have levied similar charges against McDowell,¹¹² and it is not my primary intention to rehash these debates. Instead, I hope for these previous sections to show the general shape of McDowell's empiricism, so that now we can focus more directly on his therapeutic metaphilosophy. The reason I shift my focus from McDowell's first-order philosophy to his metaphilosophy is that this is a

¹¹² See, for instance, Brandom, "Perception"; Rorty, "McDowell"; Wright, "McDowell's Oscillation"; Dreyfus, "The Myth"; Blackburn, "Julius Caesar"; and Macdonald, "The Two Natures."

move McDowell himself makes time and again when he is faced with objections of any stripe. His strategy is to highlight what he takes to be a misunderstanding on the part of his objector—either at the level of McDowell’s first-order philosophy or his metaphilosophy—and conclude that, given this misunderstanding, the burden of proof for the issue at hand does not fall on McDowell after all. In this section, I develop two objections to McDowell’s metaphilosophy, the first highlighting a general problem concerning the consistency of McDowell’s metaphilosophical principles and his actual practice, and the second highlighting the faulty diagnosis at the heart of McDowell’s response to my objections from the previous sections more specifically. To differentiate these new objections from my objections in previous sections, I designate these former as meta-objections. Together, these meta-objections establish that McDowell cannot avoid the burden of proof in his usual ways, so that my first-order objections go through.

a. The First Meta-Objection

Let me begin by developing my first meta-objection against McDowell. I have already provided a general outline of McDowell’s metaphilosophical strategy: he highlights a misunderstanding and concludes that given this misunderstanding he has no obligation to respond directly to the objection at hand. To establish that this is his strategy, we need only consider a few examples. First, consider how Simon Blackburn criticizes McDowell’s metaphor of distinct “spaces”—one being the space of reasons and the other the realm of law—arguing that this metaphor makes it difficult (if not impossible)

for McDowell to acknowledge obvious facts concerning the causal dimension of perception.¹¹³ To address Blackburn's worries, McDowell simply notes that

I work with a contrast between the space of reasons ... and the realm of law.... Blackburn assumes that this is merely my preferred way of describing a contrast between the space of reasons and the space of causes. But I do not set off the space of reasons by distinguishing it from something describable as the space of causes.... This means that the main thrust of Blackburn's reflections ... [are] unthreatening to me.¹¹⁴

Here, we see McDowell highlighting that Blackburn (purportedly) confuses the realm of law with the space of causes. From this, McDowell concludes that Blackburn's objections raise no problems with his view.

Alternatively, Graham Macdonald argues that McDowell's insistence that there cannot be a science of our rational second nature is misguided, and that the project of teleosemantics allows us to understand how we might go about developing such a science of rationality.¹¹⁵ As McDowell summarizes the charge against him:

Now Macdonald thinks this stance [sc. McDowell's account of second nature] lands me with a burden of proof, to show that a sufficiently sophisticated exploitation of the concept of function, as it figures in framing biological understanding, cannot accommodate the explanatory potential of appeals to rationality.¹¹⁶

However, by McDowell's lights, "for there to be a burden of proof where Macdonald places it, a naturalism of natural science would need to be the default position."¹¹⁷ Since the motivation for McDowell's account of second nature is that such a prioritizing of this

¹¹³ See Blackburn, "Julius Caesar," especially 206-213.

¹¹⁴ McDowell, "Response to Simon Blackburn," 217.

¹¹⁵ See Macdonald, "The Two Natures."

¹¹⁶ McDowell, "Response to Graham Macdonald," 236-237.

¹¹⁷ McDowell, "Response to Graham Macdonald," 237.

sort of naturalism “is nothing but a scientific prejudice,” McDowell concludes by saying simply, “I reject [Macdonald’s] view of the dialectical situation.”¹¹⁸

There are many more cases where McDowell pursues this metaphilosophical strategy, some where the strategy is obviously convincing¹¹⁹ and others where it is less so.¹²⁰ For now, the conclusions I want to highlight are that, assuming this strategy is appropriate, McDowell places much of the dialectical burden on his interlocutor, thereby making his position highly immune to criticism. My first meta-objection is intended to call into doubt the general soundness of McDowell’s burden-shifting, while my second meta-objection is intended to prove that even if this burden-shifting is appropriate in general, it is not appropriate in the specific case of my charges of rationalistic non-naturalism and so McDowell’s view is not as immune to criticism as he would lead one to believe.

We are already halfway towards appreciating the first meta-objection, now that we have seen how McDowell goes about attempting to disarm his interlocutors’ criticisms. We gain a full understanding of the first meta-objections once we recognize one of McDowell’s general metaphilosophical principles. In his Introduction to *Mind and World*, McDowell gets to the heart of this principle when, after setting his goal of diagnosing the oscillation between Givenism and coherentism as illusory, he says:

I want to be able to acknowledge the power of the illusion’s sources, so that we find ourselves able to respect the conviction that the obligations [that lead to the

¹¹⁸ McDowell, “Response to Graham Macdonald,” 237.

¹¹⁹ To my mind, McDowell’s use of this strategy in his debate with Hubert Dreyfus is one such case. See Dreyfus, “The Myth”; also McDowell, “The Myth.”

¹²⁰ McDowell’s treatment of Robert Brandom and Richard Rorty’s objections are one such case. McDowell acknowledges that Brandom and Rorty offer an alternative that he does not explicitly treat in *Mind and World*, but nonetheless he judges them on *Mind and World*’s terms, not their own terms. See Brandom, “Perception and Rational Constraint”; also Rorty, “McDowell, Davidson, and Spontaneity”; also McDowell, “Reply to Commentators,” 403-409 and 419-425.

oscillation] are genuine, even while we see how we can, for our own part, reject the appearance that we face a pressing intellectual task.¹²¹

Against his actual practice of handling objections, in this passage McDowell is explicitly accepting the burden of proof—he is “respect[ing] the conviction that the obligations are genuine”—while insisting that he has a way to show that the burden can be met more easily than people often imagine. The obvious conclusion this should lead one to is that McDowell’s metaphilosophical practice is inconsistent with his principles.

The equally obvious way for someone sympathetic with McDowell to block this conclusion is to insist that he accepts the burden of proof only when it comes to addressing the oscillation between Givenism and coherentism; but such a contention is simply false. In two separate exchanges with Richard Rorty, one where McDowell defends the vocabulary of objectivity against Rorty’s arguments in favor of the vocabulary of solidarity and another where McDowell defends his therapeutic empiricism against Rorty’s arguments in favor of bald naturalism, McDowell reiterates that his goal is to accept a burden of proof that Rorty rejects.¹²² Together, these establish that McDowell’s principled acceptance of the burden of proof extends beyond the scope of only the oscillation from *Mind and World*.

But, might it still be the case that McDowell’s principle of accepting the burden of proof ranges only over a small number of issues, a number that includes those issues at stake in his exchanges with Rorty, without it ranging over any substantive number?

¹²¹ McDowell, *Mind and World*, xi.

¹²² For McDowell on objectivity and solidarity, see McDowell, “Towards Rehabilitating Objectivity,” especially 221-224. For McDowell on therapeutic empiricism and bald naturalism, see McDowell, “Reply to Commentators,” 419-425 (especially 422 and 423-424).

Again, McDowell himself tells us why this cannot be the case. When comparing his burden-accepting principle to Rorty's burden-shirking one, McDowell asserts that "Rorty's medicine ... is harder to take than mind."¹²³ It is not so much out of respect for argumentative norms that McDowell accepts the burden, but instead out of a desire for therapeutic efficacy that he does so. As McDowell puts it, when an interlocutor's anxieties are ignored, as they are by Rorty's burden-shirking principle, "it would be only natural [for the interlocutor] to recoil into just the kind of ... philosophical activity that Rorty deplors."¹²⁴ This is because the interlocutor needs to have his anxieties both diagnosed and treated—i.e. he needs a philosopher both to lay out in an orderly manner the conceptual space within which his anxieties operate and to conspicuously display why his anxieties are inappropriate once he adopts some position within that conceptual space. To stop at the diagnosis phase would leave the interlocutor's anxieties untouched, because although the interlocutor could identify his anxieties he has no way of seeing them as anything but appropriate. As such, he will try to address his anxieties in a philosophically robust manner that, assuming Rorty and McDowell are right in their therapeutic approach to philosophy, only serves to deepen his anxieties' hold on him. McDowell's charge is that this is precisely where Rorty's burden-shirking principle leaves the therapeutic philosopher—providing the interlocutor with diagnosis but no treatment, and therefore leaving the interlocutor to address his anxieties in his own pathological manner. Instead, by doing as McDowell advises and adopting the burden of

¹²³ McDowell, "Reply to Commentators," 422.

¹²⁴ McDowell, "Towards Rehabilitating Objectivity," 222.

proof, the therapeutic philosopher can provide the treatment which would otherwise be lacking.

Because the McDowellian argument from the previous paragraph is a perfectly general one, the conclusion is not hard to draw: McDowell is committed to a wide-ranging principle of accepting the burden of proof, one that his actual philosophical practice flies in the face of. This charge of inconsistency is my first meta-objection to McDowell, and this meta-objection is double-edged in the sense that it cuts against McDowell regardless of which approach he takes in trying to address it. On the one hand, if McDowell tries to avoid my objection from the previous sections by sticking to his burden-shirking practice, then I can respond that he is not providing me with an adequate treatment to my anxieties and so McDowell fails in his therapeutic endeavor. On the other hand, if McDowell accepts the burden of treating the anxieties at the heart of my objection from the previous sections, then he has a steep hill to climb, one that he has not even begun to climb and one that will almost inevitably involve him in the sort of constructive philosophizing in which he is loathe to engage.¹²⁵

b. The Second Meta-Objection

Now that I have gone over my first meta-objection, let's move on to consider my second. As I mentioned above, my second meta-objection is more specifically focused on the issues surrounding my objection from the previous sections, and the charge at the heart of this meta-objection is that McDowell provides a false diagnosis of my anxieties from these previous sections. To rebut an immediate objection, notice that philosophical

¹²⁵ For McDowell and constructive philosophy, see McDowell, *Mind and World*, xxiii-xxiv.

therapy is, for McDowell, a particularistic endeavor that is shaped by contingent and historical forces.¹²⁶ As such, he cannot object that my reaction to his work, and my resulting anxieties, are pejoratively idiosyncratic. That would require McDowell to engage in theorizing as opposed to therapy, and he is adamant that the former is not his method of philosophizing.¹²⁷

Getting to my second meta-objection, I admit that when I first read *Mind and World* I had the sorts of anxiety that McDowell associates with the oscillation between Givenism and coherentism. For the longest time, I assumed there was no problem with a naive sort of empiricism, but then I read the work of Wilfrid Sellars (among others) and learned to appreciate the force of his attack on the myth of the Given. This called into doubt my faith in empiricism, but I recognized that the coherentist alternative that many read Sellars as providing has problems of its own, and with that I was sucked into McDowell's oscillation and struck with its attendant anxieties.

As such, I read *Mind and World* eagerly awaiting McDowell's impending insights, which would doubtlessly show the error in my way of thinking and dissolve my anxieties. And there were the beginnings of such insights, as I acknowledge in the previous sections. However, at the end of the day I find myself unable to distinguish McDowell's empiricism and naturalized platonism from rational intuitionism and rampant platonism. This much is just a rehash of §§2.3 and 2.4.

¹²⁶ See in particular McDowell's contrast of theory and therapy at McDowell, "Reply to Commentators," 403-404; also McDowell, "Towards Rehabilitating Objectivity," 207-208.

¹²⁷ See again McDowell, *Mind and World*, xxiii-xxiv; also McDowell, "Reply to Commentators," 403-404.

At this point, I can hear McDowell beginning to push back, saying that his empiricism and naturalized platonism only appear this way to me because I am still in the grips of his oscillation, or because of a scientific prejudice on my part, or because of some other infirmity that he has already diagnosed and provided a treatment for. Therefore, my objections from the previous sections are simply a result of me not appreciating his diagnosis, or not following through with his treatment. Either way, the failing is mine and not his.

But this is simply not the case. I am a naturalist of a particularly liberal persuasion, agreeing with most of what De Caro and Macarthur identify as being liberal naturalist theses. Furthermore, I am not stuck in McDowell's oscillation; I concede that McDowell's position is an adequate escape to this. I could easily continue going through the list of McDowellianisms and defend myself against the McDowellian charge that I fail to appreciate their significance. Finally, it is not the case that I have anxieties that are simply unrelated to McDowell's project, as I came into reading *Mind and World* with precisely the anxieties McDowell is.¹²⁸ In short, I am a prime candidate for McDowell's diagnosis and treatment, yet even after following this therapy I am still left with anxieties.

McDowell's therapy is unsuccessful because it has had side effects on me, and these side effects are as serious as the problem that McDowell's therapy is supposed to resolve. I find myself in the grips of an oscillation, but it is not the one McDowell diagnoses and treats. I am oscillating between a bald naturalism of the sort McDowell

¹²⁸ At points in his reply to Brandom and Rorty, McDowell seems to suggest that this is the case with them—they are simply unbothered by the problems surrounding McDowell's oscillation and so do not feel the attendant anxieties. See McDowell, "Reply to Commentators," 403-409 and 419-425.

acknowledges in *Mind and World*, and a substantive rationalism of a sort that McDowell rarely considers explicitly. McDowell's combined account of perception and second nature appears to be the only plausible alternative to Givenism and coherentism that respects the points that get us into the oscillation in the first place, and as I concede in the previous paragraph, it dissolves the sorts of issues that McDowell and I both see as plaguing Givenism and coherentism. However, McDowell's account reminds me too much of rational intuitionism and rampant platonism, and McDowell's silence on this sort of concern (not only in *Mind and World* but also in his similarly focused Woodbridge Lectures and *Perception as a Capacity for Knowledge*) raises anxieties that the therapeutic side of McDowell's therapeutic empiricism is there simply to pass over (and not address) some of the more pressing issues for a view as committed to the conceptuality of perception as his is.¹²⁹ These anxieties lead me to conclude that there is no satisfactory alternative that respects the points that get us into the oscillation, and so I am driven into the sort of bald naturalism that "opt[s] out of this area of philosophy" altogether.¹³⁰ From here, I am convinced by the sorts of charges McDowell and other liberal naturalists levy against bald naturalism, and so I am driven back to McDowell's therapeutic empiricism. The result is that I am stuck oscillating between two views that I never seriously considered before reading *Mind and World*: on the one hand, a sort of naturalism for which I do not have much sympathy, and on the other, a sort of rationalism I never imagined would be relevant to understanding empirical sense perception. The novelty of this new oscillation means that this oscillation is a side effect

¹²⁹ For McDowell's Woodbridge Lectures, see McDowell, *Having the World*, Chapters 1-3.

¹³⁰ McDowell, "Reply to Commentators," 421.

of McDowell's treatment, and not a relapse on my part to some antecedent pathology. And if this is the case, then McDowell is stuck in much the same situation as he was at the end of my first meta-objection: if he refuses the burden I am placing on him then his therapy fails on its own terms, and if he accepts the burden I am placing on him then his therapeutic empiricism is radically incomplete, maybe even incompletionable.

Division Three of Chapter Two

Huw Price's Global Expressivism

§3.1. Introduction

In this division, I argue that naturalism and global expressivism are inconsistent with one another. Naturalism is the view characterized by CTN from Chapter One above, while global expressivism is a view that Huw Price has developed and defended across a number of recent publications (more on this shortly). Whereas Davidson's semantic project focuses on developing a substantive theory of truth and McDowell's focuses on embedding a substantive theory of perception within his broader therapeutic metaphilosophy, Price's global expressivism is distinctive for eschewing any substantive theorizing at all. Instead, Price adopts a minimalist and quietist approach to semantics. Minimalism is the view that the content of various semantic predicates is exhausted by their (merely) syntactical role—to take the most familiar example, one version of minimalism about truth is the view that there is nothing more to the truth predicate than

the disquotational feature captured by Tarski's schema: 'p' is true iff p'.¹³¹ Alternatively, quietism is the view that certain topics are beside the point. For this reason, we can justifiably remain silent on these topics, thus rejecting both affirmative and negative judgments related to these topics. Price's minimalism and quietism will come into clearer view as we continue through this division.

Price's minimalism and his quietism lead him to collapse a number of traditional distinctions—particularly that between expression and representation—and to prioritize the notion that is traditionally seen as being the weaker or more deflated of the two (again, more on this shortly). Although this sets Price up nicely to meet the Deflationary Demand, it would also seem to leave Price's global expressivism ripe for criticism to the effect that it is too deflated a position to accommodate the Objectivity Demand. This is my ultimate charge against Price, but he has time and again stressed that such critiques tend to backfire since they presuppose precisely the distinctions that he collapses and the robust notions that he eliminates.¹³² As such, I begin in §3.2 by quickly reiterating how my account of CPS-aptness avoids such backfiring presuppositions. From there, I turn to Price's global expressivism in §3.3, outlining it in its specific details. Finally, in §3.4 I look at how Price's global expressivism leads him to develop a minimalist account of intentionality in an attempt to meet the Objectivity Demand, then I argue that the indexical nature of Price's use of disquotational schemata prevents him from meeting the Objectivity Demand—this is what I call my Indexicality Objection. The conclusion is

¹³¹ Robert Brandom provides a helpful survey of minimalist views of truth at Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 299-305.

¹³² See, for example, Price, "Truth," 180-183; also Price, "Semantic Minimalism," 68-69; also Macarthur and Price, "Pragmatism," 240-241.

then that Price cannot be entitled to his naturalism, because his global expressivism is inconsistent with it. §3.5 provides a summary overview of this division, preparing the way for Division Four where I apply the Indexicality Objection to Robert Brandom's transcendental expressivism.

§3.2. The Objectivity Demand and CPS-Aptness

Let us begin by reminding ourselves of two things from Chapter One above. First, the Objectivity Demand states that naturalists must be able to acknowledge the objectivity of science—ideally in a positive manner by explaining how a-objectivity is possible, but at least in a negative manner by not saying anything that makes a-objectivity impossible. Second, 'a-objectivity' is to be understood in terms of categorical-propriety-status-aptness (CPS-aptness), and a sentence is CPS-apt when it is governed by a propriety that is shared across all (inquiry-relevant) language games.

Going forward, the Objectivity Demand will be a crucial point in my criticism of Price's global expressivism. As such, I should address at the outset the charge that Price will level at it—that it is blatantly question-begging. Often, the shared norm governing the various modes of inquiry is understood in terms of truth, such that the aim of inquiry is to begin with truth-apt sentences and uncover which of them are in fact true and which are in fact false. Objective modes of inquiry—paradigmatically the sciences—are on this approach those that successfully satisfy this truth-norm of inquiry. However, as we are about to see, Price is a minimalist about truth, meaning that for him the only role that truth plays is the purely syntactical one encoded by Tarski's disquotational

schema. Price's objection is then that if we are to use truth to make sense of objectivity, we must understand truth in a robust, non-minimal, and therefore question-begging sense.

But this objection is too hastily put. As I make a point to highlight in Chapter One, truth-aptness is a species of CPS-aptness, and nothing about my account of CPS-aptness necessitates that the concept of CPS-aptness be understood in terms of the more specific concept of truth-aptness. It could be understood just as easily in terms of Peircean ideal justification,¹³³ or Brandomian scorekeeping attitudes,¹³⁴ or a Rortian urge to keep the conversation going,¹³⁵ so long as there is nothing about these successor-concepts for truth that prevents them from factoring into a categorical propriety. What is important is not the content of the shared norm, nor how that content is specified, but instead *the functional role of the norm as shared*—i.e. as governing not just one mode of inquiry but as governing all modes.

Furthermore, even if the shared norm is understood in terms of truth, Price himself gives us a model for not begging questions against the minimalist. In his "Truth as Convenient Friction," Price argues in favor of a truth-norm governing conversation, one that is stronger than even an idealized, Peircean justification-norm.¹³⁶ By couching his discussion in specifically *linguistic terms* (as opposed to metaphysical terms), Price is able to identify positive reasons that both support this truth-norm yet do not commit

¹³³ See Peirce, "How to Make," 273; also Peirce, "Some Consequences," 239.

¹³⁴ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, Chapter 3.

¹³⁵ See Rorty, *Philosophy*, Chapters 7 and 8.

¹³⁶ See Price, "Truth," 177-180.

him to anything inconsistent with his minimalism.¹³⁷ Going forward, I adopt both the functional and linguistic approaches that these responses to the question-begging objection suggest.

§3.3. Global Expressivism

With these points about the Objectivity Demand and CPS-aptness noted, we can now turn to the details of Price's global expressivism. The purpose of this section is to outline these details, starting with global expressivism's genesis out of Simon Blackburn's quasi-realism and ending by noting its thoroughgoing anti-representationalism.

At the broadest level, Price considers his view to be "a generalised or 'global' version of quasi-realism."¹³⁸ For Price, quasi-realism is developed as a solution to what he calls the placement problem.¹³⁹ We recognize this problem when we realize that common sense tells us that there are many true statements but science tells us that

¹³⁷ See Price, "Truth," 180-183. Hopefully at this point the charge of begging the question has been adequately rebutted, although there is one final source of Pricean pushback. Price distinguishes between object naturalism—the view either that "all there *is* is the world studied by science" or that "all genuine knowledge is scientific knowledge" (Price, *Expressivism*, 4-5)—and subject naturalism—the view that "philosophy needs to begin with what science tells us *about ourselves*" (Price, *Expressivism*, 5). Price argues that subject naturalism validates, and is therefore theoretically prior to, object naturalism. The question begging charge would then be that the Objectivity Demand reverses this order of explanation. My first response is to fall back on the linguistic-functional nature of my use of the Objectivity Demand, which I discuss in the following body paragraph. But if this is not satisfying to Price, I would ask how it is that he is entitled to his subject naturalism. If Price answers that the sciences are better at what they do than any other mode of inquiry, then he accepts the common sensical point which leads to the Objectivity Demand (see Chapter One, §3 above). And if Price does not answer in this way, he is left with no good reason for prioritizing the scientific story of ourselves that is at the heart of his subject naturalism, as opposed to prioritizing the story that religion tells us about ourselves, or that art tells us, or metaphysics or any of a number of other disciplines. In this manner, either Price presupposes the Objectivity Demand when he commits himself to subject naturalism, or he must concede that his commitment to subject naturalism is unjustified—because-unjustifiable.

¹³⁸ Price, *Expressivism*, 29.

¹³⁹ See Price, "Moving," 3-6; also Macarthur and Price, "Pragmatism," 230-232.

there are not enough truth-makers in the world to account for all of the true statements. This would seem to entail the existence of truths without truth-makers, of which the most common examples are moral truths like ‘murder is wrong’ or modal truths like ‘massive bodies necessarily attract one another’. The quasi-realist’s strategy is to argue that common sense overestimates the number of truths that are in need of truth-makers, and he pursues this strategy in two stages. First, he argues that the function of certain sentences—such as moral and modal sentences—is not to represent the world but instead to express something about the speaker. Second, the quasi-realist argues that, despite their expressive function, these sentences are entitled to the syntactical trappings of representational sentences—paradigmatically the indicative mood and Tarski’s disquotational schema. The first stage shows why the truth-maker model is inappropriate for certain statements, while the second stage ensures that the first stage does not become too revisionary or *ad hoc*.¹⁴⁰

Price’s challenge to quasi-realism concerns the status of “the *bifurcation thesis*—the doctrine that there is a line to be drawn in language, between descriptive [sc. representational] and non-descriptive [sc. non-representational] uses.”¹⁴¹ Although quasi-realists are committed to the bifurcation thesis, in an essay coauthored with David Macarthur, Price argues that they ought not be. Macarthur and Price begin their attack by posing the following question to the quasi-realists: are you minimalists about truth? If the quasi-realists answer affirmatively, then they are saying that Tarski’s schema is the only criterion for using the truth predicate, and since statements like ‘ ‘snow is white’ is

¹⁴⁰ For more on quasi-realism, see Blackburn, *Essays*; Price, *Expressivism*, 23-31; Macarthur and Price, “Pragmatism,” 237-239 and 244.

¹⁴¹ Price, *Expressivism*, 30.

true' and 'murder is wrong' is true' equally follow Tarski's schema, there is no longer a principled way of drawing the distinction at the heart of the bifurcation thesis. Therefore, quasi-realists must answer negatively and identify an additional criterion for the truth predicate that allows it to apply when the embedded sentence is representational but not when it is expressive.

Regardless of what this criterion is, Macarthur and Price now ask the quasi-realists whether the new criterion is what entitles expressive uses of language to the syntactical trappings of representational uses. If the quasi-realists answer affirmatively, then they admit defeat because expressive uses of language do not meet this criterion by hypothesis, and so expressive uses of language are not entitled to the syntactical trappings of representational uses—thus contradicting the second stage of the quasi-realist's strategy for addressing the placement problem. Therefore, the quasi-realists need to answer negatively, but once they do so the new criterion becomes an *ad hoc* addition to quasi-realism, "an idle cog, unnecessary in accounting for the use of semantic vocabulary."¹⁴² The result of Macarthur and Price's two questions is that no matter how the quasi-realists answer, they run into a compelling objection.¹⁴³

At this point, Macarthur and Price's recommendation is for quasi-realists to accept minimalism about truth. By doing this, the quasi-realists must also reject the bifurcation thesis and the representational-expressive distinction it supports, leaving them unable to account for the *quasi* aspect of their quasi-realism. Therefore, quasi-

¹⁴² Macarthur and Price, "Pragmatism," 245.

¹⁴³ For this argument, see Macarthur and Price, "Pragmatism," 239-246.

realists must adopt a new position, and the only issue left to settle is whether this position is a global realism or a global expressivism.

On the face of it, it would seem like global realism follows from accepting minimalism. As Macarthur and Price put it:

If there is nothing more to truth than the equivalence schema, then any meaningful sentence “P” whose syntax permits it to be embedded in the form “P is true” immediately possesses truth-conditions, in the only sense available: namely, “P” is true if and only if P.¹⁴⁴

Because minimalism entails that all syntactically indicative sentences are able to be given an analysis based on truth-conditions, the assumption is that all syntactically indicative sentences must be representational in nature, and therefore a global realism follows.

Macarthur and Price object to this inference from a truth-conditional analysis to representationalism. They begin by noting that expressivism is characterized by two claims:

The negative claim says that these terms or statements [being given an expressivist analysis] lack some semantic feature: they are non-referential, non-truth-apt, non-descriptive, non-factual, or something of the kind. The positive claim offers an alternative, non-semantic, account of the functions of the language in question—for example, that it expresses, or projects, evaluative attitudes of the speaker in question. Thus the negative claim is *anti-representational*, the positive claim *expressivist*.¹⁴⁵

The global realist is right that minimalism entails a rejection of the anti-representational claim, but the global realist also makes two mistakes. First, the global realist assumes that to reject the anti-representational claim is to accept its negation. But this need not be the case. To understand why, consider the theistic claim that god exists. It is true that

¹⁴⁴ Macarthur and Price, “Pragmatism,” 240.

¹⁴⁵ Macarthur and Price, “Pragmatism,” 240.

one way of rejecting this claim is to accept its negation—the atheistic claim that god does not exist. But there is another, agnostic way of rejecting the theistic claim, namely by rejecting the intelligibility of the word ‘god’ and thereby rejecting both the theistic and the atheistic claims together. Outside of a religious context, ‘quietism’ is the name for this agnostic strategy, and Macarthur and Price’s contention is that minimalism leads to quietism. As they put it, the thought behind deflating truth to the Tarski schema is that “semantic notions [such as truth] have no substantial theoretical role to play,” meaning that the proper response to the anti-representational claim is to reject both it and its substantial, representationalist negation.¹⁴⁶ For this reason, representationalism does not follow from minimalism, and so the route to a global realism is cut off.

The second mistake that the global realist makes is to ignore the positive expressivist claim outright. Macarthur and Price do not elaborate as to how they would develop this claim, so going forward I understand ‘expressivism’ in the general sense that they leave it in the quotation above—as an “alternative, non-semantic, account of the functions of ... language,” whatever the details of that account might be.

Given these two mistakes, the lesson to learn is that minimalism causes us “to deflate the expressivist’s (usual) negative claim, *while leaving intact the positive claim.*”¹⁴⁷ The result, Macarthur and Price argue, is global expressivism. Given the rejection of the bifurcation thesis, we must be either global realists or global expressivists, and given that there is no good argument in favor of realism (per the first

¹⁴⁶ Macarthur and Price, “Pragmatism,” 240.

¹⁴⁷ Macarthur and Price, “Pragmatism,” 241.

mistake) and no good one against expressivism (per the second), we ought to be global expressivists.

§3.4. The Indexicality of Disquotational Schemata

Let us now apply the Objectivity Demand to Price's global expressivism. Because he characterizes his project as that of developing a specifically "pragmatic naturalism," Price must be able to meet the Objectivity Demand;¹⁴⁸ but as I argue in this section, this proves impossible for him. The reason is that, in rejecting the bifurcation thesis, Price deprives himself of the conceptual tools needed to acknowledge the CPS-aptness of any sentence, scientific or otherwise. Although Price attempts to do just this on minimalist grounds, I argue in this section that this attempt fails.

a. Price's Attempt to Meet the Objectivity Demand

The first step in Price's attempt is to substitute a distinction between i- and e-representations for the distinction at the heart of the bifurcation thesis—that between representational and non-representational uses of language. Both sorts of representation are similar in that they must be representations in a minimalist sense in order to be consistent with Price's global expressivism. However, i-representations are individuated according to their "*internal* functional role[s]," while e-representations are individuated according to their covariation with "*external* environmental condition[s]."¹⁴⁹ The difference that makes the difference is that i-representations are representations

¹⁴⁸ Price, *Naturalism*, ix.

¹⁴⁹ Price, *Expressivism*, 36.

insofar as they hold certain relations to other i-representations, while e-representations are representations insofar as they hold certain relations to the external world.

Price's second step is to develop a correlative distinction between i- and e-worlds. The i-world is "what our i-representations are *about*, in the proper deflationary sense of 'about'."¹⁵⁰ Price does not elaborate as to what this deflationary sense is, but given his approach to other semantic predicates one is left to assume that his account of 'about' would be similarly minimalist, involving some such disquotational schema as 'S is P' is about S's being P'.¹⁵¹ Alternatively, the e-world "is simply the natural environment—what we have in view in the scientific project."¹⁵² I will say more about both the i- and e-worlds shortly.

From here, Price's final step is to claim that "the e-world simply *is* the i-world of the scientific vocabulary."¹⁵³ This tactic of explaining the e-world in terms of the i-world is the only option available to Price given his global expressivism. To reverse the order of explanation would be to adopt global representationalism, while to explain both independently would reconstitute the quasi-realist's bifurcation thesis. The result is that Price explains both the bearers of intentionality (i.e. i- and e-representations) and their intentional objects (i.e. the i- and e-worlds) solely in terms of the disquotational 'about' schema, making his account of intentionality a thoroughly minimalist one.

¹⁵⁰ Price, *Expressivism*, 55.

¹⁵¹ This is consistent with the last paragraph of Macarthur and Price, "Pragmatism," 252, where they support a minimalism about reference.

¹⁵² Price, *Expressivism*, 55.

¹⁵³ Price, *Expressivism*, 55.

b. The Indexicality Objection to Price's Attempt

Unfortunately, it is precisely this minimalism about intentionality that prevents Price from meeting the Objectivity Demand. To see why, we must understand how 'i-world' gains its intentional object. Looking back to Price's definition, we see that the intentional object of 'i-world' is precisely the set of intentional objects of all (other) i-representations, and that we use the disquotational 'about' schema to determine the intentional object of any particular i-representation. This may appear to put Price on safe ground, because seemingly all we need to do to determine the intentional object of 'i-world' is to use the disquotational schema to read off the intentional objects of i-representations, and the resulting set will be the singular intentional object of 'i-world'.

However, such an approach ignores the fact that there is no in principle reason for why the functional roles of i-representations cannot change over time. Because i-representations are individuated by their functional roles, were these roles to change so too would the i-representations themselves. A perspicuous language would introduce a syntactical device—say subscripts—to mark such changes. Once such a device is introduced, we see that were we to apply the disquotational 'about' schema both before and after the change in roles occurs, the intentional objects picked out would not be the same—a fact marked by the different subscripts attached to the names for the different objects. Therefore, the intentional object of 'i-world' before the change in roles would not be the same as its intentional object after the change, even though 'i-world' maintains a singular intentional object throughout the change.

The lesson is that 'i-world' functions as an indexical.¹⁵⁴ Just as we can evaluate the propriety of a sentence that uses words such as 'now' or 'here' only after we index the sentence to the time or position of its utterance, so too can we evaluate the propriety of a sentence that uses 'i-world' only after we index the sentence to the linguistic context surrounding its utterance. Moreover, the propriety of 'i-world' sentences must be indexed to a linguistic context by means of the same token reflexive function that we associate with 'now' or 'here'. Without such an indexing function, there is simply no way of identifying which is the appropriate linguistic context to associate with the sentence. Therefore, whereas 'now' means roughly 'the time at which the sound 'now' is uttered' and 'here' roughly 'the place at which the sound 'here' is uttered', 'i-world' means roughly 'the set of intentional objects entailed by the linguistic context in which the sound 'i-world' is uttered'. Because the e-world is explained in terms of the i-world, similar considerations apply *mutatis mutandis* to 'e-world'.

Once we recognize that 'i-world' and 'e-world' function as indexical terms, we recognize that statements about both the i- and e-worlds are not CPS-apt (as the Objectivity Demand would require). This is because the function of an indexical term is to alter the content being expressed by different utterances of the same sentence using that term, depending on the context in which that sentence is uttered. When we attempt to appraise such an indexical sentence according to any arbitrarily chosen norm, we see that particular utterances of that sentence may be appropriate or inappropriate to the norm, but the sentence itself is neither appropriate nor inappropriate because it does not

¹⁵⁴ Price seems to overlook this implication of his view, as it seems to be precisely the "soapbox ... for the village idealist" that he claims is nowhere to be seen given his account of the i-world (Price, *Expressivism*, 55). See Price, *Expressivism*, 53-55.

have a determinate content. Therefore, sentences using indexical terms cannot have a determinate propriety status—categorical or otherwise—and so they cannot be CPS-apt.

To better understand this point, let us consider the following two sentences:

‘It is raining here and now’

and

‘Phlogiston is included in the e-world’.

The content of an utterance of ‘It is raining here and now’ at place $p1$ and time $t1$ is that it is raining at place $p1$ and time $t1$. Alternatively, the content of such an utterance at a different place $p2$ and different time $t2$ is that it is raining at place $p2$ and time $t2$. From here, showing that ‘It is raining here and now’ does not itself have a determinate propriety status is a simple matter of specifying the conditions under which, given some norm, the different utterances of this sentence would have different propriety statuses. Assuming that the relevant norm is a truth-norm, the relevant conditions concern the arrangement of things in the external world—namely, when there are rain-producing storm clouds located above $p1$ at $t1$, and when there are no such things located around $p2$ at $t2$. Alternatively, if the relevant norm is a justification-norm, the conditions concern what evidence the utterer does and does not have to support his utterance. One obvious example is when the utterer has heard the weatherman say that it will rain at $p1$ and $t1$ but not at $p2$ and $t2$; another is when the utterer is located around $p1$ at $t1$ and is being appeared to raining-ly, but later is located around $p2$ at $t2$ and is not being appeared to in this manner. Finally, given a Brandomian scorekeeping-norm, the

relevant conditions would concern the scorekeeping attitudes of the utterer's linguistic peers, such that these peers judge his utterance to be appropriate for $p1$ and $t1$ and inappropriate for $p2$ and $t2$. Since 'e-world' functions indexically, parallel thoughts apply to 'Phlogiston is included in the e-world', leaving both sentences unable to be CPS-apt.

Nevertheless, each utterance of 'It is raining here and now' seemingly expresses something objective, and so this sentence ought to be CPS-apt in some extended or indirect sense. To develop this thought, we need only notice what I did in the previous paragraph to disambiguate between the different utterances of 'It is raining here and now': I translated the original indexical sentence into multiple, non-indexical sentences like 'It is raining at place $p1$ and time $t1$ '. What makes these latter, non-indexical sentences explanatorily useful is that the propriety status of their utterances remains the same across their different utterances. In other words, whereas the original indexical sentence is not CPS-apt, these latter non-indexical sentences are (assuming that there is a categorical norm with which to appraise these sentences). For the original, indexical sentence to be CPS-apt in this indirect sense, it must be possible for us to translate any arbitrary utterance of it into a similarly CPS-apt non-indexical sentence. In the case of 'It is raining here and now', the following translation scheme suffices:

'It is raining at place p and time t '

where ' p ' and ' t ' are variables that take as their substitutions names of the particular place and time (respectively) at which 'It is raining here and now' is uttered.

For Price's global expressivism to meet the Objectivity Demand, a similar translation scheme must be available for sentences such as 'Phlogiston is included in the e-world'. And at first it appears as if there is one, namely:

'Phlogiston is included in the set of intentional objects entailed by the linguistic context c '

where ' c ' is a variable that takes as its substitutions names of the particular linguistic context in which 'Phlogiston is included in the e-world' is uttered. But remember that the reason we recognized that sentences using 'e-world' are indexed to a linguistic context is because the functional role—and with it the intentional object—of the representations in those sentences change across different linguistic contexts. To take the present example, the functional role of 'phlogiston' is drastically different when it is uttered by a 17th century scientist as compared to a 21st century scientist. As such, the above translation scheme is inappropriate for translating both scientists' utterances, because it implies that they use 'phlogiston' univocally across both utterances, when in fact they use it equivocally.

The obvious way of modifying the scheme so as to account for this equivocation is to index 'phlogiston' to its relevant functional role. Using a subscript to do this, we get:

'Phlogiston _{x} is included in the set of intentional objects entailed by the linguistic context c '

where substituting numerals for ' x ' in 'Phlogiston _{x} ' produces names for the different intentional objects associated with the different functional roles of 'phlogiston'. However, we should now be able to see that such indexing serves merely to mark the problem of equivocation, and not to solve it. The reason is simple: there is no in principle reason for

making any one substitution for 'x' as opposed to another. For any particular utterance of 'Phlogiston is included in the e-world', should we translate 'phlogiston' as phlogiston₁, which is the intentional object of 'phlogiston' as used in 17th century science? Or as phlogiston₂, which is the intentional object of 'phlogiston' as used in 21st century science? Or as phlogiston₃, which is the intentional object of 'phlogiston' as used by philosophers who are comparing 17th to 21st century science? More generally, should we choose a translation of utterances of 'Phlogiston is included in the e-world' that tends to make the utterances inappropriate, since we know that phlogiston is not included in the e-world (given our linguistic context)? Or should we choose a translation that tends to make the utterances appropriate, since we are charitable Davidsonian translators?¹⁵⁵ Or is there no such uniform approach to translation? The scheme by itself does not provide an answer to these questions, and neither can any further modification to the scheme. *The conclusion is that 'Phlogiston is included in the e-world' is not itself CPS-apt, nor can its utterances be translated into sentences that are.*

c. Two Generalizations of the Indexicality Objection

More problematically, we can make two generalizations to this conclusion. For the first generalization, notice that my argument above depends only on the fact that the functional role of 'phlogiston' changes across different linguistic contexts, and not on any determinate quality that that functional role might have in any one context. A survey of the history of the sciences shows us that there is hardly a theoretical term that has not undergone noticeable changes in its functional role, and so this conclusion

¹⁵⁵ See Davidson, "Radical Interpretation" and Davidson, "On the Very Idea."

generalizes to the claim that most any sentence using ‘e-world’ is not CPS-apt, nor can its utterances be translated into sentences that are.

For the second generalization, notice that because Price explains the e-world in terms of the i-world, the only difference between the two is their scope—whereas the e-world includes only the intentional objects of our scientific language games, the i-world includes the intentional objects of all of our language games. As such, my argument can just as easily be used to show that any sentence using ‘i-world’ is not CPS-apt, nor can its utterances be translated into sentences that are. If anything, the greater scope of the i-world leads to a greater diversity in functional roles for any individual term, making the argument against the CPS-aptness of i-world sentences stronger still than that against the CPS-aptness of e-world sentences.

The fully generalized conclusion is then: *neither i-world nor e-world sentences are CPS-apt, nor can their utterances be translated into sentences that are.* For this reason, Price is unable to acknowledge the existence of CPS-apt sentences or the sort of objectivity that I developed around the notion of CPS-aptness above. In short, Price cannot meet the Objectivity Demand, and so he cannot be entitled to his naturalist commitments.

§3.5. Summary of the Indexicality Objection

At this point, it is worth pausing to summarize what has led us to the conclusion that global expressivism is inconsistent with naturalism. In Chapter One above, we see how anyone committed to naturalism must also be committed to the objectivity of the

sciences, understood in terms of CPS-aptness. This is the Objectivity Demand that any naturalist must meet. Alternatively, in §3.3 we see how Price's acceptance of minimalism about truth leads him to reject the bifurcation thesis, which in turn leads him to develop his global expressivism. §3.4 is where naturalism and global expressivism meet. This section begins by showing how Price's global expressivism leads him to develop a minimalist account of intentionality, then the remainder of the section is dedicated to my argument showing that this minimalism about intentionality leaves Price unable to acknowledge the existence of CPS-apt sentences. The latter is my Indexicality Objection, and together with the Objectivity Demand it shows that Price cannot be entitled to his naturalist commitments. Finally, all of this was done using the linguistic-functional approach to philosophy that Price prefers, meaning that my critique is internal to Price's global expressivism, not question-beggingly external to it.

Division Four of Chapter Two

Robert Brandom's Transcendental Expressivism

§4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this division is to extend my Indexicality Objection against Price's global expressivism to apply to Robert Brandom's semantic project from *Making It Explicit*. Like Price, Brandom's project is thoroughly minimalist, although unlike Price, Brandom takes the syntactical roles that exhaustively determine the content of semantic predicates to be more complex than that of mere disquotation. In particular, Brandom sees the

syntactical roles characteristic of anaphoric and *de re* modal locutions as being essential to a full account of the semantic or representational dimension of language. Brandom adopts this syntactically richer approach to minimalism because he acknowledges the challenge posed by my Indexicality Objection, and he attempts to use his syntactical notions of anaphora and *de re* modality in order to develop an account of objectivity that does not fall prey to this objection. My argument throughout this division is that this attempt fails.

I begin in §4.2 by outlining the key structural difference between Price's global expressivism and what I call Brandom's transcendental expressivism. My intention is to show that, although Brandom and Price disagree about the systematic relations between those representational locutions that make explicit the semantic dimension of any first-order language game and those first-order language games themselves, they are equally minimalist in their accounts of the representational locutions and so my Indexicality Objection is an at least *prima facie* objection to Brandom's transcendental expressivism. From there, I spend §4.3 surveying Brandom's accounts of anaphora and *de re* modality, before arguing in §4.4 that, despite appearances to the contrary, Brandom's account of objectivity is inadequate for addressing the Indexicality Objection. Finally, I spend §4.5 considering the significance of my conclusion that Brandom's transcendental expressivism is inconsistent with naturalism given Brandom's at times tenuous relation to naturalism.

§4.2. Transcendental Expressivism

The immediate worry with applying my Indexicality Objection to Brandom is that, by developing this objection as I did around Price's global expressivism, I have inadvertently designed it such that it is inapplicable to any other view. Given that Brandom explicitly asserts that his is a local version of expressivism—and not a global one—this is a pressing worry that I must address at the outset.¹⁵⁶ The first point to note is that it is not Price's global expressivism as such that leaves him open to the Indexicality Objection; instead, it is his minimalism about intentionality (which is admittedly a consequence of his global expressivism) that does this. The second point, which I dedicate this section to establishing, is that despite his local expressivism Brandom too is a minimalist about intentionality.

Brandom's most concise statement of his versions of expressivism and minimalism can be found in his response to Price's *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism*. There, he begins by outlining his thesis that the distinctive expressive role that he is interested in theorizing is the role of a vocabulary's being both elaborated from and explicating of a (set of) practice(s) that one must engage in to be playing any language game at all.¹⁵⁷ A vocabulary is elaborated from a practice when it is possible for someone to speak that vocabulary by performing actions that occur within that practice, and a vocabulary is explicating of a practice when that vocabulary allows someone to say in words what one is doing when one performs actions from that

¹⁵⁶ See Brandom, "Global Anti-Representationalism," 102 and 105.

¹⁵⁷ For Brandom's overview of this thesis, see Brandom, "Global Anti-Representationalism," 99-102. For Brandom's detailed account of this thesis and its place within his project of meaning-use analysis, see Brandom, *Between Saying*, Chapters 1 and 2 (especially 44-48).

practice. The concept of a vocabulary that is elaborated-explicitating (LX) in this manner is important for Brandom because it is the genus concept of which logical, normative, modal, and (as we will shortly see) intentional vocabularies are all species.

Because as an expressivist Brandom is interested in this LX relation, his “is essentially, and not just accidentally, a *local* expressivism.”¹⁵⁸ Brandom’s reasoning here seems to be that while a vocabulary may hold this LX relation to some practice(s), those practice(s) are a proper subset of a larger set of practices that make possible some second vocabulary, one that does not itself hold the LX relation to any of these practice(s).¹⁵⁹ In this manner, the vocabulary that is LX is, in an indirect sense, a metalanguage for the vocabulary that is not LX (which is in turn an object language), and for this reason the former but not the latter can be given an expressivist analysis. But whatever the reasoning, Brandom is adamant that

not all vocabularies can play *this* particular expressive role [sc. the role of being LX]. Autonomous discursive practices *must* contain vocabularies playing *other* expressive roles—for instance, observational vocabulary that reports features of the non-linguistic bits of the world.... So *this* [sc. Brandom’s] sort of expressivism is not a candidate for extension to a *global* expressivism.¹⁶⁰

However, whereas most expressivists (local or global) introduce their expressivist vocabularies as a *competitor* to the representational vocabulary of truth, reference, and intentionality more generally, Brandom introduces his expressivist vocabulary to *better explain* such representational vocabulary. As Brandom puts it, “one of the vocabularies I

¹⁵⁸ Brandom, “Global Anti-Representationalism,” 102.

¹⁵⁹ I am here drawing from Brandom’s Figure 5.2 at Brandom, “Global Anti-Representationalism,” 102.

¹⁶⁰ Brandom, “Global Anti-Representationalism,” 102.

am a local expressivist about is representational vocabulary itself.”¹⁶¹ I have much to say about Brandom’s expressivist story about representational vocabulary in the following section. For now the point to note is simply that Brandom’s strategy is not to explain language use in expressivist as opposed to representational terms; instead, his strategy is to admit that language use can be explained in representational terms, but also to argue that these representational terms are not what they seem—that they are not to be understood on their own terms but instead in expressivist terms. Given Brandom’s penchant for the German idealists, we can put this point by saying that, for Brandom, language use is empirically representational but transcendently expressive, and for this reason I designate his view with the phrase ‘transcendental expressivism’.

Finally, it is Brandom’s transcendental expressivism that leads him to accept minimalism about intentionality. This is because what Brandom takes representational vocabulary to be expressive of are certain syntactical features of the deontic scorekeeping practices of our various language games. Looking forward to the next section, this leads Brandom to accept “deflationism [sc. minimalism] about traditional technical semantic vocabulary,” such as “ ‘true’, ‘refers’, ‘denotes’ and like cognates.”¹⁶² On this front, Brandom’s minimalism takes the form of his prosentential theory of truth and his broader account of anaphora. However, this is just the tip of Brandom’s minimalist iceberg, as his transcendental expressivism also leads him to accept minimalism about “something possibly more fundamental,” namely “the representational

¹⁶¹ Brandom, “Global Anti-Representationalism,” 102.

¹⁶² Brandom, “Global Anti-Representationalism,” 102.

dimension of intentionality itself.”¹⁶³ The details concerning this level of Brandom’s minimalism will come when we consider his account of *de re* modality in the next section. What is important now is simply that Brandom shares Price’s minimalist approach not only to truth and reference, but also to intentionality as such. Therefore, Brandom’s is the sort of view that is at risk of falling prey to my Indexicality Objection, and so this is an objection that he must be able to address.

§4.3. Truth, Anaphora, and *De Re* Modality

Now that we appreciate why my Indexicality Objection is applicable to Brandom’s transcendental expressivism, we should survey his attempt to address it. Unlike Price, Brandom is acutely aware of the danger I highlight under the banner of the Indexicality Objection, and he spends the greater portion of Part Two of *Making It Explicit* developing the tools he takes to be necessary for rebutting this objection. As readers, the obvious places to begin might seem to be Brandom’s accounts of truth or anaphora, given the close conceptual ties between truth and objectivity and between anaphora and indexicals. However, truth and anaphora are for Brandom only indirectly relevant to his response to the Indexicality Objection. Instead, it is his account of *de re* modality that allows him to develop a notion of objectivity that he takes to be robust enough to address my Indexicality Objection. I will argue in the following section that Brandom is mistaken on this latter point, but before I get there I must first outline his accounts of truth, anaphora, and *de re* modality.

¹⁶³ Brandom, “Global Anti-Representationalism,” 102.

a. Brandom on Truth

To appreciate why Brandom decides to develop an account of anaphora in the first place, we must consider his approach to truth. Although he has much to say on this topic,¹⁶⁴ Brandom ultimately defends a prosentential theory of truth of the sort developed by Dorothy L. Grover, Joseph L. Camp, Jr., and Nuel D. Belnap, Jr.¹⁶⁵ The key thesis in Brandom's development of this theory is that the truth predicate is not used to ascribe a substantive property (one usually seen to involve correspondence) to a sentence; instead, the truth predicate is what Brandom calls a prosentence-forming operator. Prosentences are understood by analogy to pronouns: just as a pronoun is a noun whose content is determined not by its relation to some non-linguistic entity but by its relation to another noun, a prosentence is a sentence whose content is determined not by its relation to some non-linguistic state of affairs but by its relation to another sentence. Brandom provides a detailed explanation of how exactly prosentences relate to regular sentences,¹⁶⁶ ultimately characterizing the relation in anaphoric terms.

b. Brandom on Anaphora

With his prosentential theory of truth developed, Brandom quickly notes that "the treatment of 'true' has an exact parallel in the treatment of 'refers'."¹⁶⁷ In particular, "'refers' can be understood as a pronoun-forming operator,"¹⁶⁸ leading to "a single

¹⁶⁴ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 285-305.

¹⁶⁵ See Grover, Camp, and Belnap, "Prosentential Theory."

¹⁶⁶ See in particular Brandom's discussion of lazy and quantificational uses of pronouns and prosentences at Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 301-302.

¹⁶⁷ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 305.

¹⁶⁸ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 305. To investigate Brandom's pronominal theory of reference in detail would take me too far from the topic of Brandom's response to the

theory form to explain the use of all legitimate semantic talk about truth *and* reference in purely anaphoric terms.”¹⁶⁹ In this manner, much of Brandom’s semantic project is built around the notion of anaphora, to which we should now turn our attention.

Brandom defines anaphora in terms of its “asymmetric structure of recurrence.”¹⁷⁰ To understand this, let us consider the notion of an anaphoric chain, which designates a set of linguistic items that hold the sort of asymmetric recurrence relations to one another that are characteristic of anaphora. To understand these relations, consider Brandom’s example sentences:

A man in a brown suit approached me on the street yesterday and offered to buy my briefcase. When I declined to sell it, the man doubled his offer. Since he wanted the case so badly, I sold it to him.

There are two anaphoric chains across these sentences, one that consists of the set of linguistic items {‘a man in a brown suit’, ‘the man’, ‘he’, ‘him’}, and another consisting of the set {‘my briefcase’, ‘it’, ‘the case’, ‘it’}. The relation between the various words and phrases within each chain can be understood “presystematically by saying that the reference of later elements in such chains ... is secured only by the relations these elements stand in to the singular terms that initiate the chains in which they appear.”¹⁷¹

In this manner, ‘a man in a brown suit’ serves as the initiator for the first chain. ‘The man’, ‘he’, and ‘him’ are then recurrences of ‘a man in a brown suit’ because all four have the same reference. However, the relation between the initiating ‘a man in a brown suit’ and the other words in the chain is asymmetric because ‘a man in a brown suit’ has

Objectivity Demand. Curious readers should see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 305-307. Two additional, relevant passages can be found at Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 432-449 and 459-473.

¹⁶⁹ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 306.

¹⁷⁰ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 455.

¹⁷¹ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 307.

the reference it does independently of its grammatical relations to the other words, while these other words would have no determinate reference were they not preceded by ‘a man in a brown suit’. In this manner, these other words depend for their reference upon the initiator of the anaphoric chain.

Although Brandom has much more to say on the topic of anaphora,¹⁷² for our purposes the important point is that Brandom does not intend for his account of anaphora to address the Indexicality Objection. As Brandom puts the point:

It should be emphasized that this is an account of what anaphoric relations consist in—or better, given the methodological phenomenalism about normative statuses that governs the theoretical idiom employed here, about the practical attitudes that constitute *taking* or *treating* two expressions as anaphorically linked.¹⁷³

Brandom’s phenomenalism entails that—mentions of reference and coreference aside—his account of anaphora is ultimately an account of the subjective, word-word relations between the linguistic items in an anaphoric chain, not an account of any purported objective, word-world relations between those items and some non-linguistic reality. Brandom’s concern is with what our collateral commitments lead us to *take to be* the case, not with what *actually is* the case.¹⁷⁴ Although the notion of an anaphoric chain plays a role in Brandom’s account of objectivity, it is not until we get to Brandom’s theory of *de re* modality that anything like the word-world relations characteristic of objectivity come into view.

¹⁷² For Brandom’s full elaboration of his theory of anaphora, see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, Chapter 7 (especially 449-459); also Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 307-313. For a summary of how Brandom develops his theory, see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 431-432.

¹⁷³ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 457.

¹⁷⁴ For more instances where Brandom highlights this point as it relates to his theory of anaphora, see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 433 and 461.

c. The *de re-de dicto* Distinction

Brandom comes to focus on *de re* modality by first noting that it is through using words such as ‘of’ or ‘about’ that we make explicit the intentional dimension of language (consider such sentences as ‘I am thinking of a number’ or ‘You are talking about the weather’). However, both ‘of’ and ‘about’ play additional grammatical roles besides this one of marking intentionality. For example, ‘of’ is often used to indicate possession (as in the phrase ‘the book of mine’) and ‘about’ is used to indicate approximations (as in the sentence ‘My house is about five miles from downtown’). Brandom’s claim is that what distinguishes the former intentionality-marking uses of ‘of’ and ‘about’ from these other uses is “the way [‘of’ and ‘about’] figure in *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitudes” in these former uses.¹⁷⁵

To understand what *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitudes are, it helps to contrast them with their traditional counterpart, *de dicto* ascriptions. There are two common criteria for distinguishing between *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions. On the one hand, *de re* ascriptions are understood as being those ascriptions that remain appropriate even when the words characterizing them are replaced with corefering words; *de dicto* ascriptions are then those for which this is not the case. As an example, assume that John believes the sentence ‘The German national team did not win the 2014 World Cup’ but does not believe ‘The 2014 World Cup champion did not win the 2014 World Cup’. It is appropriate to ascribe to John both *de re* and *de dicto* the belief that the German national team did not win the 2014 World Cup. However, substituting ‘the 2014 World Cup champion’ for the corefering phrase ‘the German national team’

¹⁷⁵ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 500.

and thus ascribing to John a belief that the 2014 World Cup champion did not win the 2014 World Cup is appropriate when the ascription is understood as *de re* but not when understood as *de dicto*.

On the other hand, *de re* ascriptions are understood as being those for which at least one of its (explicit or implicit) quantifiers is of wide scope, where a quantifier is of wide scope iff there is a propositional attitude operator such that the quantifier is not within the context of this operator and a variable bound by the quantifier is within the scope of this operator. *De dicto* ascriptions are those for which all of its (explicit or implicit) quantifiers are of narrow scope, where a quantifier is of narrow scope iff it is not of wide scope. ‘John believes the German national team did not win the 2014 World Cup’ is an example with an implicit quantifier, and as such is ambiguous between a number of meanings, among them:

$(\exists x) (x \text{ is the German national team} \ \& \ \text{John believes that } (x \text{ did not win the 2014 World Cup}))$

and

John believes that $((\exists x) (x \text{ is the German national team} \ \& \ x \text{ did not win the 2014 World Cup}))$.

The former is a *de re* reading, meaning that it quantifies over *things* about which John has beliefs, and the latter is a *de dicto* reading, meaning that it attributes a quantified *belief* to John. Together, they help us visualize why substituting ‘the 2014 World Cup champions’ for ‘the German national team’ is inappropriate in the one case but not the other—in the *de dicto* case such a substitution changes the content of the ascribed belief while in the *de re* case it leaves the content of the ascribed belief unaltered.

Brandom introduces a helpful convention for keeping track of what portion of an ascription is *de dicto* and what portion (if any) is *de re*.¹⁷⁶ Formally, the convention schema is:

Subject S ϕ s of x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n that $P(it_{x_1}, it_{x_2}, \dots, it_{x_n})$

By filling in the variables ' S ' and ' ϕ ', the convention has us specify to whom we are ascribing a propositional attitude and what that propositional attitude is, respectively. From there, we nominalize the portions of the attitude that we are ascribing *de re*, and replace ' x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n ' with those nominalizations. In this manner the 'of' marks off the *de re* portion of the ascription. Alternatively, the 'that' marks off the *de dicto* portion, which includes two important parts: first, a predicate term that replaces the variable ' P ' and specifies the *de dicto* portion of the ascribed attitude; and second, pronouns referring to each of the terms ' x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n ' that take the place of ' $it_{x_1}, it_{x_2}, \dots, it_{x_n}$ ' and that make explicit how the *de re* and *de dicto* portions relate to one another. Finally, when there is no *de re* portion to the ascription, the 'of x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n ' from the schema is dropped and ' x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n ' takes the place of ' $it_{x_1}, it_{x_2}, \dots, it_{x_n}$ ' in the *de dicto* 'that' clause. Continuing with our example about John, the ascriptions we have been working with in previous paragraphs can be formulated as

John believes that the German national team did not win the 2014 World Cup
and

John believes of the German national team that they did not win the 2014 World Cup.

For clarity's sake, I make use of this convention going forward.

¹⁷⁶ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 501-502 and 504.

d. Brandom's Social-Practical Twist on the *de re-de dicto* Distinction

Now that we understand the *de dicto-de re* distinction and a convention for marking it, we can consider how this distinction factors into Brandom's transcendental expressivism. Perhaps the most obvious way would be for Brandom to have *de dicto* ascriptions be such as to ascribe a belief concerning mere word-word relations, while having *de re* ascriptions ascribe beliefs concerning the sort of robust word-world relations that are missing in his account of anaphora. Etymology would seem to push in this direction—after all, 'dictum' means saying and 'res' means thing—but this is not the approach that Brandom pursues.¹⁷⁷

Instead of distinguishing *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions in terms of a difference concerning the ascribed beliefs' objects of acquaintance (i.e. words and the world, respectively), Brandom distinguishes them in terms of a difference in how they ascribe one and the same type of belief. In Brandom's words, "the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* should not be understood to distinguish two kinds of *belief* or even belief-contents, but two kinds of *ascription*—in particular two different *styles* in which the *content* of the commitment ascribed can be *specified*."¹⁷⁸

To understand Brandom's point, we must first go over some basics of his deontic scorekeeping account of language games.¹⁷⁹ Each speaker in a language game has his own set of commitments. The contents of these commitments are determined by their inferential relations to one another, and the contents of any words used to express

¹⁷⁷ For more on this non-Brandomian approach, and Brandom's reasons for rejecting it, see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 547-552.

¹⁷⁸ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 503.

¹⁷⁹ For more on deontic scorekeeping, see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, Chapter 3. For simplicity's sake I ignore the role that entitlements play in deontic scorekeeping because they do not factor into Brandom's account of the *de dicto-de re* distinction.

these commitments are determined by those words' contribution to the inferential relations between the commitments. Additionally, for a commitment to be included in a speaker's set of commitments, it must be ascribed to the speaker by a scorekeeper (either implicitly or explicitly). Propositional attitude ascriptions (both *de dicto* and *de re*) play the expressive role of making explicit what a scorekeeper is doing in keeping score. However, the scorekeeper has her own set of commitments, and she need not share the commitments of the speaker on whom she is keeping score. Since the contents of any one commitment is determined by its relation to every other commitment in a person's set of commitments, a difference in one commitment between speaker and scorekeeper entails a difference in every commitment.

With this in mind, we can now understand Brandom's point that the *de dicto-de re* distinction identifies two styles of specifying belief contents, and not two distinct types of belief or belief content. In explicitly ascribing a propositional attitude to a speaker, the scorekeeper is obviously ascribing some content to the speaker; however, to do this the scorekeeper must be using words whose contents are determined by their contribution to the inferential relations between her own commitments—she has no other option given Brandom's inferentialism. Therefore, the scorekeeper is responsible for the contents of the words used in the ascription, but the speaker is responsible for the overall content being ascribed, and barring some grammatical device the sentence expressing the ascription is systematically ambiguous as to who is responsible for which contents. Brandom's claim is that the *de dicto-de re* distinction, and the of-that convention he develops around it, serves precisely this grammatical role, with the

speaker being responsible for the *de dicto* portion of the ascription (conventionally marked by ‘that’) and the scorekeeper being responsible for the *de re* portion (marked by ‘of’).¹⁸⁰ Using Brandom’s terminology, in uttering an ascription, the scorekeeper *attributes* responsibility for the *de dicto* portion to the speaker while *undertaking* responsibility for the *de re* portion herself.

§4.4. Objectivity and the Indexicality Objection

a. Brandom’s Account of Objectivity

We are finally in a position to appreciate Brandom’s account of objectivity. Starting with the basics, for Brandom a necessary condition “on any account of concepts [is] that it make sense of a distinction between how [concepts] *are* applied in fact, by anyone or everyone, and how they *ought* to be applied,” regardless of how anyone or everyone in fact does apply them.¹⁸¹ Determining how concepts are actually applied is no doubt a serious empirical endeavor, but it need not produce significant philosophical problems.¹⁸² Instead, it is the normative side of the distinction—how concepts *ought* to be applied—that makes headaches for philosophers and that Brandom’s account of objectivity is intended to address.

The reason that Brandom takes objectivity to be relevant to drawing this distinction is that this distinction can be reformulated in terms of a distinction between someone’s taking something to be true and something’s being true, this latter distinction

¹⁸⁰ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 504-508.

¹⁸¹ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 593.

¹⁸² See Brandom’s discussion of regularism at Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 26-30 and 37-42. Some form of regularism is no doubt appropriate for understanding how concepts actually are applied, and Brandom’s objections against regularism only have force once it is used to understand how concepts ought to be applied.

being at the heart of t-objectivity. In short, when a person is applying concepts he *is taking* his application to be true, while when those concepts are applied the way they ought to be the application *is* true.

It is here that Brandom's account of *de re* modality comes to the fore. This is because

the distinction between claims or applications of concepts that are objectively correct and those that are merely taken to be correct is a structural feature of each scorekeeping perspective. Indeed, the required notion of objective correctness is just what is expressed by *de re* specifications of the conceptual contents of ascribed commitments.¹⁸³

This quotation introduces the two core ideas in Brandom's account of objectivity: first, that objectivity is a structural feature of scorekeeping; and second, that the structural feature is precisely that expressed by the *de dicto-de re* distinction.

I will consider the first idea shortly, but for now I let me turn to the second. We have already seen Brandom characterize objectivity in terms of an is-ought distinction and a taking true-being true distinction, so how does the *de dicto-de re* distinction fit in? Brandom's answer is that, from a scorekeeper's perspective, in ascribing a propositional attitude to a speaker, the *de dicto* part of the ascription commits the scorekeeper merely to the claims that the speaker *does* apply certain concepts in certain ways and that the speaker *takes* something to be true, whereas the *de re* part commits the scorekeeper to the stronger claims that certain concepts *ought* to be applied in certain ways and that something *is* true. This is merely reiterating Brandom's point that the *de dicto* part attributes some content to the speaker while the scorekeeper undertakes the *de re* part

¹⁸³ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 595.

herself. In this manner, Brandom insists that from the scorekeeper's perspective there is a way to draw the distinction he takes to be characteristic of objectivity.¹⁸⁴

The obvious objection to Brandom's second idea is that this distinction is being drawn *from the scorekeeper's perspective*. It is true that the scorekeeper is committed to the *de re* portion of an ascription being true and not to its merely being taken to be true, but this is just to say that the scorekeeper *takes* the *de re* portion to be true. What Brandom has said is simply that in ascribing a propositional attitude to a speaker, the scorekeeper takes one content to be true while also taking it to be true that the speaker takes some other content to be true. Nowhere does something's actually being true factor in, and so Brandom has not actually characterized the taking true-being true distinction (or the related is-ought distinction) in terms of the *de dicto-de re* distinction.

However, this objection misses the point of the first core idea in Brandom's account of objectivity. Brandom expands on this idea by saying that his strategy is

to reconstrue objectivity as consisting in a kind of perspectival *form*, rather than in a nonperspectival or cross-perspectival *content*. What is shared by all discursive perspectives is *that* there is a difference between what is objectively correct in the way of concept application and what is merely taken to be so, not *what* it is—the structure, not the content.¹⁸⁵

Brandom concedes that all scorekeeping activity occurs from the perspective of some subject doing the scorekeeping, and so any contents being ascribed (either *de dicto* or *de re*) are merely taken to be true, either by the scorekeeper or the speaker. However, for us to make this appraisal of how the scorekeeper keeps score upon the speaker requires that we adopt a perspective from which we can keep score on both the

¹⁸⁴ For more, see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 595-596.

¹⁸⁵ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 600.

scorekeeper and the speaker, a perspective which is therefore distinct from both the scorekeeper's and the speaker's perspectives. Brandom's point is that what we are implicitly doing in adopting this third perspective is distinguishing what is true from what the scorekeeper and speaker merely take to be true. However, this is precisely what the scorekeeper is implicitly doing with regards to the speaker, and assuming the speaker is keeping score on someone, this is what the speaker is implicitly doing with regards to this someone. More to the point, this is precisely what we would be doing were we to adopt some fourth perspective from which to keep score on our past selves who adopted the third perspective, and so on *ad infinitum*. When comparing these various perspectives, the contents under question drop out of consideration, because what the perspectives share is not any set of contents but simply the structural feature that within each perspective there is a distinction to draw between being true and taking true.¹⁸⁶

Where the objection goes wrong is to suppose that there is any privileged perspective from which to judge the others. The thought behind the objection is that a scorekeeper's *de re* ascriptions are, although not perspectival in the sense that her *de dicto* ascriptions are, still problematically perspectival, but this thought is problematic only against the background assumption that there is some non-perspectival alternative. Because Brandom's position is expressivist about representational locutions, the role that both the *de dicto* 'that' and the *de re* 'of' play is to make explicit what we as players of the game of giving and asking for reasons have always already been implicitly doing, and what they show us is that there is no such alternative. The philosopher studying the

¹⁸⁶ In this paragraph, I have combined considerations from Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 592-601 and 639-650.

de dicto-de re distinction does so just as perspectively as anyone else playing the game of giving and asking for reasons, and the philosopher's perspective is no different in form than anyone else's. Instead of being antithetical to objectivity, the inevitability of one's having a perspective is, for Brandom, the essence of objectivity.¹⁸⁷

b. Applying the Indexicality Objection to Brandom's Account of Objectivity

Now that I have finished outlining Brandom's account of objectivity, we need to consider whether it gives him the conceptual tools needed to meet the Objectivity Demand. My argument for the remainder of this section is that it does not, because Brandom's transcendental expressivism falls prey to the same Indexicality Objection that plagues Price's global expressivism.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 598-601.

¹⁸⁸ This should not be a surprising conclusion, given certain formal similarities between Brandom's account of the *de dicto-de re* distinction and Price's global expressivism. First, notice the formal parallels between Brandom's account and Price's denial of the bifurcation thesis. Using the language of that thesis, Brandom's claim is that it is not the case that *de re* ascriptions ascribe genuinely representational beliefs or belief contents whereas *de dicto* ascriptions ascribe non-representational or otherwise second-rate beliefs or contents. And second, notice how after denying that the *de dicto-de re* distinction corresponds to any distinction between types of belief or belief content, Brandom goes on to explain both *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions in terms of their "expressive functions" within the scorekeeping practices of a language game (Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 505). This expressivist explanation of both sides of the *de dicto-de re* distinction mirrors Price's expressivist explanation of both sides of the bifurcation thesis's representational-non-representational distinction. Finally, notice how Brandom's expressivist explanation concerns the grammatical role that *de dicto* and *de re* locutions play in marking who is responsible for which contents. Brandom eventually develops this explanation in disquotational and anaphoric terms (see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 530-547), but what is important is that this explanation concerns the *merely* grammatical role of *de dicto* and *de re* locutions, meaning that his is a minimalist explanation. Since Brandom is interested in *de dicto* and *de re* locutions only insofar as they "express the intentional directedness of thought and talk" (Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 500), we are now in a position to understand Brandom when he says, "I am also a certain kind of deflationist [sc. minimalist] about the representational dimension of intentionality itself"[□] (Brandom, "Global Anti-Representationalism," 102)—his minimalism about *de dicto* and *de re* locutions simply is his minimalism about intentionality.

To appreciate my argument against Brandom, it is helpful to understand what it is not. We have already discussed one common objection to Brandom's account of objectivity—that it does not characterize a distinction between taking true and being true because it is couched only in terms of taking true. For the sake of argument, I concede that Brandom's response to this objection, to the effect that it misses the point of his formal construal of objectivity, is satisfactory. Another common objection is simply that objectivity concerns contents and not perspectival forms. The problem with this objection should be obvious enough, as it simply begs the question against Brandom.

Ultimately, my argument does not hinge on either of these objections. Instead of arguing that Brandom does not draw a distinction between taking true and being true, I argue that he draws too many such distinctions. And instead of arguing that objectivity cannot be formal, I argue that the form Brandom associates with objectivity is not the form appropriate to objectivity. On both fronts, the problem is that of a scope ambiguity: for Brandom's account to succeed, he must have proven that the *de re* 'of' has one and only one functional role *for every person*; but what he in fact proves is that the *de re* 'of' has one and only one functional role *for each person*.

To see why this is the case, we need only consider the third perspective that we adopt to keep score on both the speaker and scorekeeper. Given Brandom's expressivism, the use of *de dicto* and *de re* locutions from such a perspective makes explicit what the speaker and scorekeeper are implicitly doing. So, consider the case where the scorekeeper asserts to the speaker:

You believe of the 2014 World Cup champions that they won the 2014 World Cup,

and the speaker asserts to the scorekeeper:

I do believe of the 2014 World Cup champions that they won the 2014 World Cup.

Assuming that both only assert what they believe, the question now is, how should we go about ascribing the scorekeeper's and speaker's beliefs about each other's beliefs, given that we have our own third perspective?

The most obvious option would be for us to say:

The scorekeeper believes of the speaker that he believes of the 2014 World Cup champions that they won the 2014 World Cup; and the speaker believes of himself that he believes of the 2014 World Cup champions that they won the 2014 World Cup.

However, this way of speaking is misleading. By framing our two belief ascriptions third-personally using the terms 'the scorekeeper' and 'the speaker', it might seem as though the perspective we are taking in ascribing those beliefs is privileged over and above the perspectives of the scorekeeper and the speaker. But (right or wrong) Brandom's contention is that such privileging of a perspective is antithetical to objectivity.

The Brandomian way of putting things is to say:

You_{scorekeeper} believe of the speaker that he believes of the 2014 World Cup champions that they won the 2014 World Cup; and you_{speaker} believe of yourself that you believe of the 2014 World Cup champions that they won the 2014 World Cup,

where the subscripts on 'You_{scorekeeper}' and 'you_{speaker}' serve to mark the fact that each belongs to a different anaphoric chain, one with an initiating word referring to the scorekeeper and the speaker, respectively.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ For more on the dangers of the third person and the importance of the second person, see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 598-607 and 623-650.

Now that we have identified the sentence with which to ascribe the relevant beliefs to the scorekeeper and speaker from our own perspective, we need only ask what the expressive roles of the *de re* uses of ‘of’ are to begin to appreciate how the Indexicality Objection applies to Brandom. The first and third uses of ‘of’ follow Brandom’s account unproblematically—each expresses our own undertaking of a commitment, namely one to the effect that it is the speaker whom each of the two beliefs being ascribed are about. However, the second and fourth uses of ‘of’ are embedded within a *de dicto* use of ‘that’, and so their expressive role is less obvious. Brandom briefly discusses the case of iterated ascriptions in an Appendix, but this discussion is too brief to be of much help.¹⁹⁰ What is clear is that the *de dicto* ‘that’s within which the second and fourth uses of ‘of’ are embedded express our attributing a commitment to the scorekeeper and speaker, respectively.¹⁹¹ From here, the most plausible line to take is the following.¹⁹² Since the second use of ‘of’ is within the scope of a ‘that’ attributing a commitment to the scorekeeper, the role of this second use of ‘of’ is to express our attributing to the scorekeeper a commitment to undertake a further

¹⁹⁰ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 608-613. The point Brandom needs to expand on is the transition from (i’) to (i’’) at Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 611-612. Everything would seem to hinge on the expressive role played by the ‘:’s in (i’) and (i’’), as Brandom’s strategy for eliminating a *de dicto* ‘that’ that has further *de dicto* or *de re* locutions within its scope is to substitute (i’’)—which includes a ‘:’ and only one ‘that’—for the first clause in (i’)—which includes no ‘:’ but two ‘that’s. It would seem as though a ‘:’ is an operator that takes a scorekeeper as the argument to its left and an ascription as its argument to the right, but it is not clear what operation a ‘:’ performs on these arguments and even less clear how a ‘:’ is supposed to function when it is embedded within the scope of the right argument of another ‘:’ (as would happen if (i’) were substituted for (i’’)). Both problems leave Brandom’s account of iterated ascriptions incomplete at best.

¹⁹¹ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 612.

¹⁹² This is the only plausible line assuming that attributing and undertaking are the only pragmatic forces at play in iterated ascriptions and we, the speaker, and the scorekeeper are the only subjects at play in an example such as ours. There is conceptual space for denying these assumptions, but Brandom gives his reader no reason to think that this is the line he takes (see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 608-613).

commitment. Similarly, the fourth use of ‘of’ expresses our attributing to the speaker a commitment to undertake a commitment.

Notice that, on this line, the second and fourth uses of ‘of’ do not have the same expressive role—in using the second ‘of’ we are attributing an undertaking *to the scorekeeper* while in using the fourth ‘of’ we are attributing an undertaking *to the speaker*. Notice also that this difference in expressive role is not accounted for by a difference in contents being ascribed to the scorekeeper and speaker. Explicitly, we are ascribing one and the same content (that the 2014 World Cup champions won the 2014 World Cup) to both, and for the sake of argument we can assume that the speaker’s and scorekeeper’s implicit background commitments are the same (there is nothing in principle preventing this after all). What makes the difference is the formal feature that the second and fourth uses of ‘of’ are associated with different, non-coreferential anaphoric chains. Specifically, the second use is indexed to a chain whose members refer to the scorekeeper and the fourth use is indexed to one whose members refer to the speaker. With this in mind, it is not hard to see that the first and third uses of ‘of’ are likewise indexed to an anaphoric chain whose members refer to us, although this is only implicit in our speaking from our own perspective. We could make this point explicit by adopting some fourth perspective on our past selves, and go through this very process again (and we could make the analogous point for this fourth perspective explicit by adopting a fifth perspective, and so on).

In this manner, each use of the *de re* ‘of’ is indexed to an anaphoric chain referring to a person (just as each use of ‘i-world’ and ‘e-world’ is indexed to an

individual linguistic context). So long as two uses of the *de re* ‘of’ are indexed to coreferring anaphoric chains, the two uses will have the same role of expressing (the attributing of the attributing of...) the undertaking of a commitment by the referent of the anaphoric chains. For this reason, Brandom has established that there is one and only one functional role of the *de re* ‘of’ associated with each person. However, there is nothing about Brandom’s account of objectivity that guarantees the anaphoric chains associated with any two uses of the *de re* ‘of’ will be coreferential—in fact, such a guarantee would be antithetical to the decidedly *social* articulation that Brandom gives to objectivity. Therefore, Brandom has not established that there is one and only one functional role of the *de re* ‘of’ associated with every person. In short, he has not established that there is one functional role of the *de re* ‘of’; instead, he has established that there are as many roles as there are persons.

At this point, we have seen how the indexical aspect of the Indexicality Objection applies to Brandom; what about the objection aspect? How does this conclusion that the *de re* ‘of’ has many functional roles prevent *de re* ascriptions from being CPS-apt and thereby prevent Brandom from meeting the Objectivity Demand? The answer is perhaps unsurprising. Returning to the case of ‘phlogiston’, the sentence

‘You believe of phlogiston that it is involved in combustion’

is not CPS-apt for the simple reason that ‘of’ is indexed to an anaphoric chain (and indirectly, to the perspective of the person referred to by the members of that chain).¹⁹³

¹⁹³ For simplicity’s sake, in this sentence and the forthcoming translation schemes, I am ignoring the fact that ‘you’ is an indexical and the issues concerning CPS-aptness that this raises.

The point exactly mirrors the case of ‘Phlogiston is included in the e-world’ from §3.4 above.

Now, let us try using the following as a translation scheme for ‘You believe of phlogiston that it is involved in combustion’:

‘You believe of_x phlogiston that it is involved in combustion’

where substituting different numerals for ‘x’ in ‘of_x’ disambiguates between the various meanings of the *de re* ‘of’. For instance, ‘of₁’ might have the functional role of the *de re* ‘of’ associated with a particular 17th century scientist’s perspective, and ‘of₂’ might have the functional role associated with a particular 21st century historian of science. Again, the problem with this as a translation scheme is the same problem as ‘Phlogiston is included in the set of intentional objects entailed by the linguistic context *c*’ has from §3.4. This scheme implies that ‘phlogiston’ is being used univocally by different utterers of ‘You believe of phlogiston that it is involved in combustion’. However, the purpose of distinguishing between different meanings of the *de re* ‘of’ in the first place is to acknowledge that different utterers of ‘You believe of phlogiston that it is involved in combustion’ have different commitments, and given Brandom’s inferentialism this difference in commitments entails a difference in the contents of the utterers’ words. Therefore, the purpose of distinguishing between meanings of the *de re* ‘of’ is to acknowledge that people’s use of ‘phlogiston’ is not univocal, contrary to what the scheme implies.

Therefore, the following might seem to be a better translation scheme:

‘You believe of_x phlogiston_y that it is involved in combustion’

where substituting different numerals for 'y' in 'phlogiston_y' produces names for the different intentional objects associated with the different functional roles of 'phlogiston' (note that the numeral substituted for the 'x' in 'of_x' need not be the same as the numeral substituted for the 'y' in 'phlogiston_y'). Again the problem is the same as before: this translation scheme merely marks the problem of equivocation without solving it. And again, the conclusions this ultimately leads us to are that sentences ascribing attitudes *de re* are not CPS-apt, nor can their utterances be translated into sentences that are; that Brandom is unable to acknowledge the existence of CPS-apt sentences; that Brandom is unable to acknowledge the sort of objectivity associated with CPS-aptness above; that Brandom cannot meet the Objectivity Demand; and finally, that Brandom's transcendental expressivism is inconsistent with naturalism.

§4.5. Brandom and Naturalism

Now that we have seen how the Indexicality Objection applies to Brandom's transcendental expressivism, there is the lingering issue of its significance. In *Articulating Reasons*, Brandom quickly summarizes Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of *Making It Explicit* only to admit that "none of these is a naturalistic account."¹⁹⁴ Similarly, in his "Reply to Sebastian Rödl's 'Brandom's Theory of the Mind,'" Brandom claims that "to attribute [to him] the allegiance to naturalism and empiricism ... requires Rödl to read between the lines—indeed, I think, to misread between the lines."¹⁹⁵ Given the clearly non-naturalist sentiments displayed in these quotations, why should we be surprised

¹⁹⁴ Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, 27.

¹⁹⁵ Brandom, "Reply," 309. The rest of Brandom's reply to Rödl is illuminating for the sense in which Brandom is and is not a naturalist.

that Brandom's account of objectivity is inconsistent with naturalism? Why think that my argument from the previous section is an objection to Brandom's view and not simply a feature of it?

To answer these questions, we must understand another quotation from *Articulating Reasons*: "the rationalist pragmatism and expressivism presented here is opposed to *naturalism*, at least as that term is usually understood."¹⁹⁶ There are two components to this quotation, the forcefully non-naturalist claim before the comma and the hedging move after the comma. For our purposes, it is the post-comma hedging move that is most important. Although Brandom is adamantly a sort of non-naturalist, he is just as adamant that he is not an "anti- (or super-)naturalist."¹⁹⁷ The picture this leaves us with is one in which Brandom is not a scientific naturalist, *but is still a naturalist of a more liberal variety*. This picture is supported by some of Brandom's more detailed discussions of his relation to naturalism.¹⁹⁸ Given that all naturalists, and not just scientific naturalists, must meet the Objectivity Demand, Brandom's failure on this front points out a genuine inconsistency between his account of objectivity and his liberal naturalism.

¹⁹⁶ Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, 26.

¹⁹⁷ Brandom, *Reason*, 2.

¹⁹⁸ See in particular Brandom, *From Empiricism*, 90-96 (ultimately, Brandom accepts the second species of subject naturalism that he attributes to Sellars); also Brandom, *Between Saying*, 207-211.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROMISE OF INFERENCE-BASED SEMANTICS

§1. Introduction

At this point, I have argued in Chapter One that the Objectivity and Deflationary Demands specify two necessary conditions for being a naturalist, and I noted that there is a *prima facie* tension between these two demands that is constitutive of my Pincer Objection to naturalism. In Chapter Two, I have looked at how a number of philosophers operating within the analytic pragmatist tradition in semantics are unable to address the Pincer Objection, with Donald Davidson and John McDowell unable to meet the Deflationary Demand and Huw Price and Robert Brandom unable to meet the Objectivity Demand. The question now is, what significance does these philosophers' failure to address the Pincer Objection have for our appraisal of the analytic pragmatist tradition in semantics?

a. Some Unsatisfying Responses

There are a number of possible responses to this question. The most obvious responses are that these failures show either that the analytic pragmatist tradition is not adequately naturalist or that the Objectivity or Deflationary Demand is too strong (thus leaving my account of naturalism too narrow). Other possible responses include that this shows nothing of importance because the philosophers I have chosen to focus on are

unrepresentative of the broader analytic pragmatist tradition. Or that this shows that there is a tension in the conjunction of naturalism and pragmatist semantics, although an acceptable one that falls short of being a contradiction. Or that this shows that there is a genuine contradiction in such a conjunction, but this is beside the point because the pragmatist's adherence to naturalism is edifying and therefore merely rhetorical.

Each of these responses is plausible, but for various reasons I find them unsatisfactory. The charge of non-naturalism amounts to an almost wholesale rejection of analytic pragmatism (not only in semantics but in general) insofar as the twin pillars of pragmatists' metaphilosophy are a critique of the pejoratively naive metaphysics of non-naturalism and a defense of the adequacy of naturalism in accounting for the distinctively human aspects of our existence. As someone sympathetic to analytic pragmatism, I take this response to be an option of last resort.

Alternatively, I simply do not see how either my Objectivity or Deflationary Demands can be too strong. The Deflationary Demand is nothing more than a demand for consistency, while I have taken pains to develop my Objectivity Demand in terms of CPS-aptness to mitigate precisely this sort of worry. If the worry surrounding the Objectivity Demand persists, it must be because the Objectivity Demand requires there to be a framework for comparing disparate language games (and not because of this or that way of developing this framework), but notice that without such a framework there is no defensible way to prioritize any one language game (say that of the sciences) over any other. Different language games would be simply different, not better or worse, resulting in a pluralism and not a naturalism.

Concerning the charge that Davidson, McDowell, Price, and Brandom are unrepresentative, I likewise do not see how this can be the case. They are four of the most prominent members of the analytic pragmatist tradition in semantics, and so they obviously represent significant aspects of that tradition. True, to keep Chapter 2 to a manageable length I have avoided detailed discussions of figures such as the later Wittgenstein, W. V. O. Quine, Wilfrid Sellars, and Richard Rorty, but it should not be hard to predict the outlines of my critique of each. Wittgenstein and Rorty are both therapeutic philosophers along the lines of McDowell, and my charge against each would be that their therapy is either ineffective because incomplete or complete but problematically non-naturalistic. Alternatively, Quine and Rorty both fall into the same sort of problems as Price and Brandom, with all four accepting a deflationary approach to semantics that leaves them unable to develop the sort of framework needed to meet the Objectivity Demand. The complexity and systematicity of Sellars's thinking makes him (admittedly) harder to place in this dialectical context; but as a first attempt I note the common reaction to his infamous notion of picturing. If this notion is taken substantively then it is hard to see how Sellars's position does not fall prey to similar objections as Davidson's and McDowell's, but if this notion is not taken substantively then it is hard to see how it does not fall prey to similar objections as Price's and Brandom's. Finally, there are those who think that the linguistic turn and its attendant focus on semantics has been one of worst developments within the pragmatist tradition, and that the truly representative figures are the classical pragmatists of Peirce, James, and Dewey. On the one hand, as the father of semiotics Peirce presages the linguistic

turn and so fits nicely within the story I have been telling. On the other, although James and Dewey are less interested in philosophy of language their rich conceptions of experience fit right into the Sellarsian dialectic that McDowell traces and its attendant oscillations between givenism and coherentism, and between bald naturalism and non-naturalism. In short, pragmatists both pre- and post-turn fit within the dialectical contours of Chapter 2.

Moving on to the next charge, it is not the case that what I have highlighted in Chapters 1 and 2 is merely a tension (as opposed to a contradiction) between naturalism and analytic pragmatist semantics. The case is clearest with Davidson, whose undefined notion of truth leads to the contradictory liar's paradox. But although the route to contradiction for McDowell, Price, and Brandom is less direct, it is nonetheless present. Whereas the liar's paradox is a consequence of Davidson's truth-theoretic semantics in isolation, for all I have said in Chapter 2 McDowell's, Price's, and Brandom's respective semantic theories are internally consistent. However, each of their theories have non-naturalist implications insofar as they cannot meet the Objectivity or Deflationary Demand, implications which contradict each philosopher's independent commitment to naturalism. Unlike in Davidson's case, were McDowell, Price, and Brandom not committed to naturalism then their semantic theories need not be contradictory; but they are so committed, so their theories are contradictory.

Finally, there is the response of having the analytic pragmatist accept the contradiction and recontextualize their project in such a way that the contradiction is not a decisive objection. I find this response highly problematic, and I suspect that, at the

very least, Davidson, Price, and Brandom do as well. For more therapeutically minded pragmatists, this response is not patently inappropriate, but even still, the points McDowell raises while critiquing Rorty for being an ineffective therapist would seem to eliminate this response from the realm of possibilities for McDowell and any other more moderate therapeutic philosopher. Of course, this is just to say that such a response is possible for more radical therapeutic philosophers. According to a common caricature of Rorty, this is the approach he takes. On such a reading, so long as a person's peers let her get away with holding a set of beliefs, it is not inappropriate for her to hold those beliefs. Admittedly, it might be the case that these beliefs must facilitate the person's practical coping with her environment or that they must serve to ennoble her life as a moral being before they count as being truly appropriate for her to hold (as opposed to being neither appropriate nor inappropriate). But none of this has any necessary connection to avoiding contradiction, especially on issues as far removed from ordinary life as one's metaphilosophical bearings on semantics and naturalism. The purported lesson of Rorty's edifying philosophy is to recognize the philosopher's concern with avoiding contradiction on such issues for the pathologically misguided relic of traditional epistemology that it is. To my mind, if this really is a lesson of Rorty's philosophy (and I am not convinced that it is), then it motivates a modus tollens for rejecting the Rortian philosophy that leads to it, not a modus ponens for accepting it based on that philosophy.

b. One Satisfying Type of Response

Having surveyed these unsatisfying responses to the question, what significance does the failure of the philosophers from Chapter Two to address the Pincer Objection have for our appraisal of the analytic pragmatist tradition in semantics, we are now faced with the task of identifying a response that is satisfying. If we cannot find such a response we will be left with our option of last resort—admitting that analytic pragmatist semantics is non-naturalistic—but luckily for us there is a response we have yet to consider. According to this response, what these philosophers' failure highlights is the need to modify some shared commitment of theirs, other than their commitment to naturalism, with an eye towards resolving the admitted contradictions that result from their unmodified views. This is the response I pursue, and the primary purpose of this chapter is to develop my version of this response.

But before I begin developing my version, I should note that this response is a particularly open-ended one. Analytic pragmatists share many commitments and there are many ways of modifying each of these commitments, meaning that there are as many versions of this response as there are modifications to members of this set of shared commitments. As such, it is infeasible for me to consider all of the competing versions of this response and give anything that approaches a deductive argument in favor of my particular version. Instead, my argumentative strategy in this chapter is decidedly abductive, focusing solely on my own version and arguing that it provides a good response to our original question.

Before arguing that my version provides a good response, I must first outline what the criteria are by which to judge this argument—i.e. what makes a response better or worse than another. My survey of the various unsatisfying responses should establish that, all things being equal, one response is better than another if that response is a token of the type on which I am now focusing—the type involving a modification of the analytic pragmatist’s commitments—and the other is a token of one of the unsatisfying types of response. The issue we need to address now is what makes one token of the response type on which I am now focusing better than another of that same type.

Towards this end, I take there to be two criteria for goodness of response tokens. The first criterion is that one response token is better than another if the modification the one recommends is more continuous with the analytic pragmatist tradition than the modification the other recommends. On my usage, there are two components to a modification’s continuity with the pragmatist tradition. First, all things being equal the closer the content of the modified commitment is to its unmodified counterpart the more continuous the modification is with the tradition. And second, all things being equal the more the modified commitment fits into the analytic pragmatists’ shared intellectual genealogy the more continuous the modification is. To understand why continuity with the analytic pragmatist tradition is a criterion for the goodness of response tokens at all, remember my objection to the response type of concluding that analytic pragmatist semantics has non-naturalist implications. This is an option of last resort because, as someone who is sympathetic to the analytic pragmatist tradition, I would have to reject

much of what I find admirable about the analytic pragmatist approach to semantics were I to pursue this response type. These same considerations explain why continuity with the analytic pragmatist tradition is important—the more radical the modification, the less the resulting view can have in common with the mostly admirable analytic pragmatist approach to semantics.

The second criterion is that one response token is better than another if it addresses the Pincer Objection while the other does not. The purpose of pursuing the response type of modifying an analytic pragmatist commitment is to acknowledge the problem the Pincer Objection poses and to address it; so, to the extent that a token of this response type fails to do this, to that extent it fails as a response.

c. My (Hopefully) Satisfying Response-Token

With these criteria in mind, I now turn to the content of my version of a modification-focused response to our original question. The commitment I recommend for modification is the analytic pragmatists' commitment to what is usually called the priority of the propositional. In short, this is a commitment to the effect that, first, the objective contents of propositions (or judgments, or sentences, etc.) are the primary explanans of semantic theorizing and, second, that the objective contents of propositions are to be explained in terms of the semantic properties of those propositions. My proposed modification to this commitment is to keep the first conjunct unchanged but to change the second so that it reads: and, second, that the objective contents of propositions are to be explained in terms of the semantic properties of those inferences within which the

propositions occur. Since I leave the first conjunct unchanged, we can already see a significant overlap in the contents of the unmodified and modified theses.

Going forward, I organize the chapter around my two criteria from above. I argue across §§2 and 3 that my modification to the shared commitment to the priority of the propositional is continuous with the broader analytic pragmatist tradition. To do this, I begin in §2 by highlighting the degree to which the content of my modified commitment overlaps with that of the unmodified commitment, and then I outline the intellectual genealogy that analytic pragmatists commonly give for their unmodified commitment. Since Kant functions as the progenitor of this genealogy, I argue in §3 that my modified commitment is what Kant's analogous commitment becomes once it is transposed into contemporary vocabulary.

After arguing that my modification fares well under the first criteria, I move on in §4 to argue that my modification also fares well under the second criteria. The result of my discussion in §3 is that, once we transpose Kant's position out of the vocabulary of categorical logic and into that of modern predicate logic, we see that his question, How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?, becomes the question, How are materially valid inferences possible? Once we take this latter question seriously, we are forced to develop a theory of material validity. My argument across §4 is not intended to establish any one theory of material validity as the correct theory, but instead to show that of the many ways of developing such a theory, there is a justified hope that some of them can be developed in such a way as to meet both the Deflation and the Objectivity Demand, thus that some can address the Pincer Objection.

§2. The Traditional Genealogical Story

To begin, it will be helpful for us to survey how each of the figures from Chapter 2 is committed to the two conjuncts of the unmodified priority of the propositional thesis. Let us designate the first conjunct as the Teleological Priority of the Propositional Thesis, because it specifies what the explanatory goal of semantics is:

TP-Prop. The objective contents of propositions (or judgments, or sentences, etc.) are the primary explanans of semantic theorizing.

And let us designate the second conjunct as the Explanatory Priority of the Propositional Thesis, because it specifies how to achieve the explanatory goal of semantics:

EP-Prop. The objective contents of propositions are to be explained in terms of the semantic properties of those propositions.

Starting with Davidson, he comes down forcefully in favor of TP-Prop when, in his “Reality without Reference,” he says

There are two approaches to the theory of meaning, the building-block method, which starts with the simple and builds up, and the holistic method, which starts with the complex (sentences, at any rate) and abstracts out the parts.... The second begins at the point (sentences) where we can hope to connect language with behavior described in non-linguistic terms.... I propose to defend a version of the holistic approach.¹⁹⁹

Davidson’s point is that sentences have an internal complexity (one that has often been understood in terms of subjects and predicates), and that the goal of semantic theorizing is not to give an independent account of the contents of the simple constituents of sentences and then explain the contents of sentences in terms of the contents of those constituents. Instead, Davidson recommends that we invert the order of explanation, beginning with an independent account of the contents of sentences and

¹⁹⁹ Davidson, “Reality,” 221.

ending with an explanation of the constituents' contents in terms of the sentences' contents. By saying that we should adopt the sentence-first, holistic approach Davidson is simply voicing his acceptance of TP-Prop.²⁰⁰ From here, Davidson's acceptance of EP-Prop is not hard to appreciate: to determine the contents of sentences we must develop a truth theory for those sentences.

Moving to McDowell, he insists that thinking involves the sort of "co-operation between receptivity and spontaneity"²⁰¹ that Kant highlights with his familiar dictum, "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."²⁰² As with Kant, this leads McDowell to conclude that thinking (at least in the first instance) takes the form of judging. The clearest route McDowell provides to this conclusion begins with his insistence that the space of reasons be identified with "the realm of the freedom [sc. spontaneity] of *judging*."²⁰³ From here, McDowell goes on to argue against Sellars that there is no philosophical need for a "below-the-line conception of sensibility [sc.

²⁰⁰ There are two related themes in Davidson's work that might cast doubt on his acceptance of PPT1. First, Davidson insists that language is compositional (see Davidson, "Theories of Meaning"); and second, Davidson accepts in general outline Tarski's theory of truth, which accounts for truth in terms of a satisfaction relation that is in certain respects analogous to reference (see Tarski, "Concept of Truth," 189-197). Both would seem to support the building-block approach, but Davidson insists that this is not the case. Concerning the first theme, Davidson responds by conceding that the compositionality of language supports the building-block approach at one level of thinking about language, though it does not support the building-block approach at the level appropriate to philosophical semantics (see Davidson, "Epistemology," 180). Concerning the second theme, Davidson insists that according to Tarski's theory, "which semantic concept [truth or satisfaction] we take as basic is open to choice" (Davidson, "Epistemology," 180).

²⁰¹ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 4. Although McDowell rejects the view (commonly attributed to Kant) that the deliverances of receptivity provide an independent contribution to thinking, one that is unstained by spontaneity, he still insists that receptivity and spontaneity are at work together in thinking (see McDowell, *Mind and World*, 9-10).

²⁰² Kant, *Critique*, A51/B75.

²⁰³ McDowell, *Having the World*, 6; italics mind.

receptivity]”—i.e. a conception characterizable independently of the space of reasons.²⁰⁴ Since both receptivity and spontaneity are understood in terms of the space of reasons, and since the space of reasons is in turn understood in terms of judging, thinking itself (which is the result of the joint activity of receptivity and spontaneity) is understood in terms of judging. This is just another way of putting TP-Prop. To get to EP-Prop, we need only remember that on McDowell’s account our perceptual judgments have the contents they have because those very contents are presented to us. It is because the contents have this property of being-presented-to-us that explains why they have the content they do.

Price gives a few clues as to the role that TP-Prop and EP-Prop play in his semantic theorizing, but by and large he defers on this (and other) issues to Brandom and the latter’s inferential semantics. Most explicitly, Price commits himself to TP-Prop by accepting “that language is a medium for encoding and passing around sentence-sized packets of factual information.”²⁰⁵ However, when it comes to the details of how TP-Prop factors into his semantic theory and where EP-Prop comes into the picture, Price is happy to “coast in Brandom’s wake..., helping ourselves to his account of assertion.”²⁰⁶ As such, the points I make in the following paragraph about Brandom apply equally to Price.

Finally, Brandom comes down forcefully in favor of TP-Prop, but less so in favor of EP-Prop. Unlike “the pre-Kantian tradition[, which] took it for granted that the proper

²⁰⁴ McDowell, *Having the World*, 29. For McDowell’s full argument, see McDowell, *Having the World*, Chapter 2.

²⁰⁵ Price, *Expressivism*, 40.

²⁰⁶ Price, *Expressivism*, 49.

order of semantic explanation begins with a doctrine of *concepts* or *terms*,” Brandom concurs with Kant “that the fundamental unit of awareness or cognition, the minimum graspable, is the *judgment*.”²⁰⁷ A clearer acceptance of TP-Prop is hard to imagine. However, Brandom’s relation to EP-Prop is a tale of two parts. In Part One of *Making It Explicit*, Brandom accounts for the contents of propositions in terms of their role within inferences (this is why he designates his view with the term ‘inferentialism’). This sounds remarkably like the modified version of the priority of the propositional thesis that I recommend above; but then, in Part Two of *Making It Explicit*, Brandom shows his true colors. Instead of arguing that propositions have content of a specifically objective sort because the propriety of certain inferences is ascribed to a speaker *de re*, Brandom’s argument is that this sort of content arises because commitments to propositions are ascribed *de re*. At the end of the day, it is certain properties of propositions (i.e. their being ascribed *de re*) that is decisive for Brandom’s account of the content of propositions, and not certain properties of inferences—hence his commitment to EP-Prop.

After this survey, two things should be apparent: first, that the unmodified priority of the propositional thesis is generally contrasted with an analogous priority of the conceptual thesis; and second, that there is an at least implicitly held genealogical story undergirding these figures’ commitment to the priority of the propositional thesis. Concerning the contrasting thesis, it is characterized by a focus on the contents and semantic properties of what Davidson considers the simple constituents of sentences and what Brandom calls concepts or terms, as opposed to a focus on the contents and

²⁰⁷ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 79.

semantic properties of propositions (as is the case in TP-Prop and EP-Prop). This contrast is important because it shows that the unmodified version of the priority of the propositional thesis is, in part, a rejection of the contrasting priority of the conceptual thesis. Since my modified version of the former thesis not only includes a commitment to TP-Prop but also includes a rejection of the priority of the conceptual thesis, there is a noticeable overlap between the contents of the modified and unmodified versions, and to that extent my modified version is continuous with the original unmodified version.

Concerning the genealogical story behind the analytic pragmatists' commitment to TP-Prop and EP-Prop, we see both McDowell and Brandom tracing it back to Kant. Of the two, Brandom tells this story most clearly, and I follow its outline over the following paragraphs.²⁰⁸ Unlike his predecessors, who give monistic accounts of cognition, Kant gives a dualistic account, one where sensibility, receptivity, and intuitions are placed on one side and the understanding, spontaneity, and concepts are placed on the other. This leads to various of Kant's dicta—such as “thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind,”²⁰⁹ “the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than that of judging by means of them,”²¹⁰ and “the understanding in general can be represented as a faculty for judging”²¹¹—all of which hint at what becomes TP-Prop and EP-Prop.

After Kant, we do not see the importance of the priority of the propositional being recognized again until the work of Frege. In particular, his context principle (“the

²⁰⁸ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 79-83. For a parallel genealogical story, one that supplements (as opposed to contrasts with) Brandom's story, see Hacking, *Why Does Language Matter*, especially Chapter 13.

²⁰⁹ Kant, *Critique*, A51/B75.

²¹⁰ Kant, *Critique*, A68/B93.

²¹¹ Kant, *Critique*, A69/B94.

meaning of a word must be asked for in the context of a proposition, not in isolation”²¹²) and his priority principle (“I do not believe that concept formation can precede judgement, because this would presuppose the independent existence of concepts, but I think of a concept as having arisen by decomposition from a judgeable content”)²¹³ have obvious affinities with TP-Prop and EP-Prop.²¹⁴ Frege adopts these principles for reasons relating to the role truth plays in his semantics,²¹⁵ and they have gone on to influence much of the subsequent semantic theorizing from within the analytic tradition.

If Frege represents the analytic source of the analytic pragmatists’ acceptance of TP-Prop and EP-Prop, then the later Wittgenstein represents the pragmatist source. According to Brandom, it is the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* who first makes us appreciate that “it is to sentences that pragmatic force attaches,” and that for this reason “the contents expressed by sentences must play a privileged explanatory role” in semantics.²¹⁶ This emphasis on pragmatic force, as opposed to the semantic concept of truth, offers the analytic pragmatist another entry point into the priority of the propositional thesis.

Most every subsequent analytic pragmatist semanticist can be seen as fitting within this genealogical line from Kant to Frege to Wittgenstein. Wilfrid Sellars is

²¹² Frege, *Foundations*, 90.

²¹³ Frege, “Letter to Marty,” 81.

²¹⁴ For more on Frege’s principles and their relation to Kant, see Heis, “The Priority Principle.”

²¹⁵ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 80-82.

²¹⁶ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 82. In claiming this, Brandom is most likely thinking of Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §49.

perhaps the first of this stripe, and the figures from Chapter 2 are simply the next generation of such thinkers.²¹⁷

§3. The Modified Genealogical Story

Having sketched in rough outline the sort of genealogical story that many analytic pragmatists tell about their commitment to the priority of the propositional thesis, I am now in a position to show where my modified version fits into the overall story. My hope is that, in doing so, I will prove my position to be a branch on one and the same genealogical tree as the analytic pragmatist positions from Chapter 2, thus demonstrating the continuity between my modified commitment and their unmodified one.

Before I begin, I should remind my reader of what my modified version of the priority of the propositional thesis is. Like with the unmodified version, it is a conjunction of two commitments, with the first conjunct being the Teleological Priority of the Propositional Thesis:

TP-Prop. The objective contents of propositions (or judgments, or sentences, etc.) are the primary explanans of semantic theorizing and,

However, unlike the unmodified version, the second conjunct of my modified version replaces the Explanatory Priority of the Propositional Thesis with an analogous

Explanatory Priority of the Inferential Thesis:

²¹⁷ We have already seen McDowell and Brandom's debt to Kant. In addition to this, all four figures explicitly comment on their debt to Sellars (see Davidson, *Subjective*, xvi; McDowell, *Perception*; McDowell, *Having the World*, Chapters 1-3; Price, *Expressivism*, 148 and 160-170; Brandom, *From Empiricism*). Finally, Frege is a common interlocutor for Davidson (see, for instance, Davidson, "Truth and Meaning"), while the later Wittgenstein is one for McDowell and Price (see, for instance, McDowell, *Engaged Intellect*, Chapters 5 and 6; Price, "Immodesty").

EP-Inf. The objective contents of propositions are to be explained in terms of the semantic properties of those inferences within which the propositions occur.

For the remainder of this section, I argue that once we transpose certain traditional Kantian claims out of the vocabulary of categorical logic that Kant (at least nominally) accepts and into the vocabulary of quantified predicate logic that has dominated since the time of Frege, we come to see that Kant's use of 'judgment' is equivocal between a propositional sense of the word and an inferential sense.²¹⁸ This is important because if one does not recognize this equivocation, then it is natural to interpret him as accepting the analytic pragmatists' unmodified conjunction of TP-Prop and EP-Prop. But once one does recognize this, one sees that the Kantian position is better encapsulated by my modified conjunction of TP-Prop and EP-Inf.

a. Kant on Judgment

To begin, let us go over three familiar points about Kant's conception of judgment. First, for Kant a judgment is the bringing together of either two concepts or two judgments into the relation of having the objective unity of apperception.²¹⁹ Just what this relation of having the objective unity of apperception amounts to is an important issue to settle in

²¹⁸ It is important to emphasize that I am not appraising Kant's project on its own terms, but instead on the terms set by post-Fregean logicians. This introduces a certain anachronistic quality into my discussion of Kant insofar as I am working with logical concepts he may or may not recognize as valid. I have little interest in resolving this issue, and as such my argument across this section is not meant to tell one way or another against the historical Kant or his views. What it does tell against is the analytic pragmatist uptake of Kant and his views. Readers who are interested in the historical Kant's relation to pre-Fregean categorical logic and post-Fregean predicate logic should consult Heis, "The Priority Principle" (Heis uses cognates of 'Aristotelian logic' and 'Boolean logic' to refer to categorical logic, and cognates of 'modern logic' to refer to predicate logic).

²¹⁹ See Kant, *Critique*, A67/B92-A69/B94 and B140-B142. For a helpful analysis of these passages, see Allison, *Kant's*, 82-89. I say 'in the first instance' because at B141 Kant acknowledges that judgments can also consist in a bringing together of two judgments.

Kant interpretation, but for my present purposes it is beside the point. Instead, what is important right now is that an atomic judgment involves two concepts. A concept is something that either is immediately about (in the intentional sense of 'about') an intuition or else is mediately about some other concept, where this second concept is in turn either immediately about an intuition or mediately about a third concept, and so on until the final *n*th concept is immediately about an intuition. Given that an intuition is a representation of an object, concepts are then representations of a representation of an object. Putting this all together results in the familiar understanding of categorical judgments as involving an (implicit or explicit) quantifier, a subject term, a copula, and a predicate term. The subject and predicate terms correspond to the two concepts in a Kantian judgment, and the copula corresponds to the relation between them. Finally, the quantifier corresponds to the fact that the concepts are about an intuition (either immediately or mediately through other concepts), which is in turn immediately about an object.

Second, for Kant a judgment is either *a priori* or *a posteriori*.²²⁰ An *a priori* judgment can be justified independently of any particular experience, whereas an *a posteriori* judgment, if it is to be justified at all, must be justified by some particular experience.

Third, for Kant genuine *a priori* judgments are both necessary and strictly universal.²²¹ In the relevant passage at B3-B6 of the first *Critique*, Kant says little about what he means by necessity, but he attempts to clarify what he means by strict

²²⁰ See Kant, *Critique*, B1-B3.

²²¹ See Kant, *Critique*, B3-B6.

universality by distinguishing it from empirical universality. In short, an empirically universal judgment is one for which there are no actual counterexamples, while a strictly universal judgment is one for which there cannot possibly be any counterexamples. I say more about this distinction below.

b. Transposing Kant on *A Posteriori* Judgments (i.e. Kant's Propositional Sense of 'Judgment')

With these points noted, we may now transpose Kant's points into the vocabulary of modern, quantified predicate logic. When we do so with *a posteriori* judgments, we can understand the propositional sense of Kant's usage of 'judgment'. For example, the judgment 'Some houses have exactly four walls' will be transposed into a judgment formalized as

$$(\exists x) (Hx \cdot Fx).$$

Since this formula represents a judgment, it will have a propositional content (as opposed to a conceptual or inferential content) for the simple fact that propositional contents are the sort of contents that judgments have—any other sort of content would not have the right 'shape' to 'fit' a judgment. And if we accept Kant's account of judgment from above, the natural way of interpreting this formula is as follows. 'H' represents the concept of being a house and 'F' represents the concept of having exactly four walls. The quantifier and variables represent the fact that each of these concepts is about the members of a single (indeterminately specified) subset of one's set of intuitions, in the sense that each concept is able to be applied to each member of

the subset (though it is not necessarily the case that each concept is to be applied to each member of the subset). Finally, the ‘•’ represents that both concepts are not merely able to be applied to each member of the subset, but that both concepts are to be applied to each member of the subset.²²² By going through all of this, we are now in a position to understand that the propositional content of this judgment is that certain concepts relate to one another and to intuitions in a specific way, one that on Kant’s account is characteristic of a proposition. In short, this judgment has a propositional content which asserts that the very propositional relation characteristic of its content is in effect. Let us call this phenomenon—where a judgment asserts that the propositional relation characteristic of its own content is in effect—the phenomenon of propositional transparency.²²³

From here, it would not be difficult to demonstrate that this phenomenon of propositional transparency is, on a transposed Kantian account, characteristic of any *a posteriori* judgment, although it would be time-consuming. As such, I will only discuss

²²² To understand why I distinguish between a concept’s being able to be applied to an intuition and a concept’s being applied to an intuition, it helps to consider the subcontrary of my example, ‘Some houses do not have exactly four walls’. Formalizing this, we get:

$$(\exists x) (Hx \bullet \sim Fx).$$

We should now realize that the quantifier and variables do not represent the fact each concept does apply to the members of the subset of intuitions, because this judgment as a whole is saying the opposite of that, that one of the concepts does not apply to the members (that is precisely what the ‘ \sim ’ signifies). Instead, the quantifier and variables represent the fact that the concepts are able to be applied to the members of the subset and prime us to expect some further claim about how those concepts actually are to be applied. It is then the role of the truth-functional operators (‘•’ and ‘ \sim ’) to specify what claim is actually being made—i.e. to specify how these concepts are to be applied. In our new example, the ‘•’ and ‘ \sim ’ represent the fact that while one concept is to be applied to each member, the other is not to be applied to any member.

²²³ This phenomenon of transparency has many affinities to McDowell’s thought that things are presented to us in perceptual judgments. However, the conclusions I come to throughout this section conflict with McDowell’s own conclusions concerning perceptual presence.

singular and universal *a posteriori* judgments here, in the hopes that this will provide enough of a beginning to make a fuller account intelligible. Beginning with singular judgments, let us consider as our example the judgment ‘This house has exactly four walls’, which we can formalize as

Ha • Fa.

On the Kantian account, ‘a’ will represent the single intuition picked out by the indexical use of ‘this’ in the original judgment. From there, the account should be unsurprising. ‘H’ and ‘F’ represent the same concepts as before. The major change from the previous existentially quantified judgment is that there is no longer an explicit quantifier because we have substituted the constant ‘a’ for the variable ‘x’ from that previous judgment.²²⁴

This alters the story from the previous paragraph, so that now the various uses of ‘a’ represent the fact that each of these concepts is about the single intuition associated with ‘a’ in the sense that each concept is able to be applied to that intuition. Finally, the ‘•’ represents that both concepts are not merely able to be applied to the intuition, but that both concepts are to be applied to it. Just as before, when we put this together we see that this new judgment has a propositional content to the effect that the

²²⁴ This change might seem like it would entail drastic changes in the logical grammar of our new judgment, but this is not the case. With the previous judgment, the ‘ $(\exists x)$ ’ is there to explicitly mark two facts: first, that if we are to understand the judgment as a whole then we must keep track of the formal relations between the various uses of the variable ‘x’ and the other symbols in the formula; and second, that these formal relations have the significance of existential quantification (as opposed to that of universal quantification, or that of definite description, or any other significance). However, in our new judgment we still must keep track of the formal relations between the various uses of the constant ‘a’ and the other symbols in the formula if we are to understand the judgment as a whole, and the use of constants instead of variables tells us that these formal relations have the significance of indexical or singular quantification. For this reason, the logical grammar is largely the same between these judgments. At the level of logical grammar, the difference in these judgments is simply the difference in significance of the formal relations. The absence of any analogue to ‘ $(\exists x)$ ’ in our new means only that this significance is left implicit, whereas it is explicitly marked by the ‘ $(\exists x)$ ’ in the previous judgment.

propositional relation characteristic of its own content is in effect, thus this new judgment displays the phenomenon of propositional transparency.

Finally, let us consider universal *a posteriori* judgments, taking as our example ‘All houses have exactly four walls’. Such a judgment must be merely empirically universal (as opposed to strictly universal), otherwise it would be an *a priori* and not an *a posteriori* judgment. The question now is what Kant’s empirical universality amounts to in predicate logic, and here the details of Kant’s discussion of empirical and strict universality are helpful: “Empirical universality is therefore only an arbitrary increase in validity from that which holds in most cases to that which holds in all, ... whereas strict universality belongs to a judgment essentially.”²²⁵ Kant’s point is that there is no essential difference between existential judgments (those about “most cases”) and empirically universal judgments (those about “all” cases), only an arbitrary one. Given this, the logical form of both existential and empirically universal judgments will be the same, namely

$$(\exists x) (Hx \cdot Fx),$$

and so empirically universal judgments are (surface grammar aside) a species of existential judgment. This means that my account of the judgment ‘Some houses have exactly four walls’ applies equally well to the judgment ‘All houses have exactly four walls’, which in turn establishes that both judgments (as well as their associated types) display the phenomenon of transparency. The arbitrary difference between these two judgments concerns the scope of the subset of intuitions that the concepts are about— with the existential judgment, the claim is that the subset of intuitions may or may not

²²⁵ Kant, *Critique*, B4.

include at least one intuition of each empirically existing house, whereas with the empirically universal judgment the claim is that the subset decidedly does include at least one intuition of each empirically existing house. Thus, if this were the complete story of universal judgments then one would need to perform a complete enumeration of the objects in the world if one were to be fully justified in believing the content expressed by a universal judgment. This in turn would lead to the familiar problem of induction (which I will not be discussing in this chapter, but mention only to give my reader a better feel for the logic behind empirically universal judgments).²²⁶

c. Transposing Kant on *A Priori* Judgments (i.e. Kant's Inferential Sense of 'Judgment')

The important takeaway from these previous paragraphs is that Kantian *a posteriori* judgments—singular, existential, and universal—all share a similar logical grammar when they are transposed into the vocabulary of predicate logic. Additionally, this shared logical grammar entails that *a posteriori* judgments are propositionally transparent in the sense that they have propositional contents which assert that the very propositional relations characteristic of their contents are in effect. This transparency is characteristic of what I term Kant's propositional sense of 'judgment'. In the upcoming paragraphs, I will turn to Kant's account of *a priori* judgments, transposing it into the vocabulary of predicate logic and arguing that, once this is done, such judgments are not propositionally transparent because the contents of these judgments assert that certain inferential relations hold between propositional contents (and not that certain propositional relations hold between concepts and intuitions). This difference of *a priori*

²²⁶ See Hume, *Treatise*, 61-65 (Book 1, Part 3, Section 6).

judgments from *a posteriori* judgments is characteristic of what I term Kant's inferential sense of 'judgment'.

To see why *a priori* judgments are not propositionally transparent, let us consider as an example the *a priori* judgment 'All bachelors are unmarried'. Remembering back, *a priori* judgments are, for Kant, both necessary and strictly universal. Since my argument against the transparency of *a priori* judgments does not depend on the necessity of *a priori* judgments, let us instead focus on their strict universality. We should again remember that, whereas empirically universal judgments are merely arbitrarily different from existential judgments (and therefore a species of existential judgment), strictly universal judgments are essentially different from existential judgments and therefore of their own genus. When we consider the expressive resources of modern predicate logic, this means that the existential quantifier ' $(\exists x)$ ' is inappropriate to this account of strict universality, and instead the universal quantifier ' (x) ' is appropriate. With this in mind, and bracketing any issues concerning modality, the appropriate formalization of our example judgment is

$$(x) (Bx \supset Ux),$$

where 'B' represents the concept of being a bachelor and 'U' represents the concept of being unmarried.

Notice that, in addition to the new quantifier, this formula also includes a new first-order logical operator (a ' \supset ' instead of a ' \cdot '); it is this difference in logical operator that prevents *a priori* judgments from being propositionally transparent. This is because ' \supset ' represents the conditional, and there is an important difference between the

conditional and the conjunction: whereas you can conjoin both concept-expressions and judgment-expressions to produce a meaningful expression, you can only use the conditional with judgment-expressions to produce a meaningful expression. For instance, 'being a house and having exactly four walls' is a meaningful expression, and the gist of the Kantian account of *a posteriori* judgments from above is that if the following judgments:

1. 'Some houses have exactly four walls'
2. 'This house has exactly four walls'
3. 'All houses have exactly four walls'

were more conspicuously worded in ordinary language, then they would read as follows:

- 1'. 'Being a house and having exactly four walls are concepts that apply to a set of intuitions'
- 2'. 'Being a house and having exactly four walls are concepts that apply to this intuition'
- 3'. 'Being a house and having exactly four walls are concepts that apply to a set of intuitions (and this set just happens to include intuitions of all existing houses)'.

However, 'if being a bachelor then being unmarried' is not a meaningful expression; only expressions such as 'if Thomas is a bachelor then Thomas is unmarried' are meaningful, i.e. expressions where 'judgment-shaped' expressions are embedded within the conditional. For this reason, whereas the conjunction can be used to say how concepts 'add up' to become a proposition, the conditional cannot be so used. The conditional can only be used to show how propositions 'add up' to an inference. This is the reason why Brandom claims that the expressive function of the conditional is to

say, as part of the content of a claim (something that can serve as a premise and conclusion in inference), *that* a certain inference is acceptable. The conditional is the paradigm of a locution that permits one to make inferential commitments explicit as the contents of judgments.²²⁷

²²⁷ Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, 60.

Or, in the terms I have been working with, conditional judgments are not propositionally transparent because although each conditional judgment has a propositional content, this content asserts that certain inferential relations hold between propositions (and not that the very propositional relation characteristic of each's own content holds between certain concepts and intuitions). Since *a priori* judgments just are a variety of conditional judgment (once the Kantian account is transposed into the vocabulary of modern predicate logic), *a priori* judgments are not transparent but instead make assertions concerning inferential relations. This lack of transparency due to a concern with inferential relations is characteristic of what I term Kant's inferential sense of 'judgment'.

d. Material Inference and EP-Inf (i.e. Transposing Kant on Synthetic *A Priori* Judgments)

With the propositional and inferential senses of Kant's usage of 'judgment' adequately disambiguated, we are now in a position to see how Kant's project in the first *Critique* relates to the analytic pragmatists' and my own semantic projects. As I hope to have shown in the previous section, the analytic pragmatists themselves trace their intellectual lineage back to Kant, and they see their acceptance of TP-Prop and EP-Prop as the latest development within this lineage. However, as I will currently argue, Kant can just as easily be seen as providing those of us engaging in contemporary debates with an example of how one can pursue a semantic project developed around TP-Prop and EP-Inf—not TP-Prop and EP-Prop.

The reason that this is the case is simple enough. The analytic pragmatists' considerations that I discuss in the previous section establish that a Kantian approach

to semantics involves accepting TP-Prop. However, if we recognize the difference between Kant's propositional and inferential senses of 'judgment', we can appreciate that his strategy of accounting for the contents of empirical (i.e. *a posteriori*) judgments in terms of the appropriateness of certain synthetic *a priori* judgments amounts to an acceptance of EP-Inf and not EP-Prop. In making a synthetic *a priori* judgment, one asserts that certain inferential relations obtain between certain propositions; and so in following Kant's explanatory strategy, one asserts that it is because of the fact that these inferential relations obtain that empirical judgments have the propositional contents that they do.

It is important to note that Kant accounts for the contents of empirical judgments in terms of those *a priori* judgments that are also synthetic. Kant gives various accounts of the analytic-synthetic distinction.²²⁸ On one account, a judgment is analytic iff its truth is guaranteed because its predicate is contained in its subject; otherwise, the judgment is synthetic.²²⁹ On another, a judgment is analytic iff its truth is guaranteed because "the connection of the predicate [to the subject] is thought through identity"; otherwise, the judgment is synthetic.²³⁰ On still another, a judgment is analytic iff its truth is guaranteed

²²⁸ I am assuming that the viability of such a distinction is not under question, but of course within the analytic pragmatist tradition precisely this has been called into question by Quine, "Two Dogmas." To my mind, Quine's critique does not establish that all ways of drawing the analytic-synthetic distinction are untenable; only that certain well-known ways are. Quine's own metaphor of statements being "of varying distances from a sensory periphery" allows for a plausible version of the analytic-synthetic distinction, whereby those statements that are closer to the periphery are more synthetic and those that are further from the periphery are more analytic (Quine, "Two Dogmas," 43). Such an account eliminates the binary quality that is usually associated with the distinction, but nonetheless leaves the distinction in tact. For a discussion of these and related issues, see Lance and O'Leary-Hawthorne, *Grammar of Meaning*, Chapter 2.

²²⁹ See Kant, *Critique*, A6-7/B10-11.

²³⁰ Kant, *Critique*, A7/B10.

solely by the principle of non-contradiction; otherwise, it is synthetic.²³¹ For my purposes, what is important is that, on all of these accounts, a judgment is analytic when its truth is guaranteed on the basis of logic alone (whether it be the logic of containment, identity, or contradiction), whereas it is synthetic when its truth or falsity is founded on an extra-logical basis. This final point leaves synthetic *a priori* judgments in a precarious position. Being *a priori*, such judgments can be justified independently of any particular experience, but being synthetic, their truth (and for that reason their justification as well) cannot be established through logic alone. Therefore, for synthetic *a priori* judgments to be so much as justifiable, there must be some source of justification other than logic and particular experience; but there seemingly isn't a third source over and above these two. It is for this reason that Kant takes the question, "How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?," as the guiding question of his entire project.²³²

An analogous problem remains for us analytic pragmatists pursuing a semantic project centering on TP-Prop and EP-Inf. My discussion of transposing Kantian *a priori* judgments into universally quantified conditionals should establish the connection between inference and the *a priori*. However, we can distinguish two types of inference from one another, along similar lines as Kant distinguishes analytic and synthetic judgments from one another. Some inferences are appropriate because of the purely logical relations between their premises and conclusions, such as:

Soccer balls are round and soccer balls are hollow.

∴ Soccer balls are round.

²³¹ See Kant, *Critique*, A150/B189-A153/B193. Also Kant, *Prolegomena*, 4:266-4:269.

²³² Kant, *Critique*, B19.

In this example, it is the formal feature characteristic of conjunction that accounts for the validity of the inference, and in other such inferences it is one or another formal feature of the logical operators in the inference. For this reason, let us call inferences of this type formal inferences.

However, there is another type of inference in addition to that of formal inference, a type where no logical vocabulary at all is used. Consider the inference:

Nashville is to the west of Knoxville.

∴ Knoxville is to the east of Nashville.

Here there are no explicit logical operators being used, leaving us with two options for how to interpret this inference. On the first interpretation, what I have given above is not a full inference, but only a portion of the more complete:

Nashville is to the west of Knoxville.

If Nashville is to the west of Knoxville, then Knoxville is to the east of Nashville.

∴ Knoxville is to the east of Nashville.

This more complete version is a formal inference in the sense from above, and the less complete version is simply an enthymeme for the more complete version (assuming that the less complete version is an inference at all). On the second interpretation, what defenders of the first interpretation treat as the less complete version of the inference is actually complete in and of itself, and what accounts for the validity of this original inference is the conceptual contents of the words 'east' and 'west'. This means that the inference is not a formal inference after all, and its validity is determined by certain

extra-logical features of its premise and conclusion. Let us designate such non-formal, extra-logical inferences with the phrase 'material inferences'.²³³

The question now is which of these interpretations is the appropriate one. There is something to be said in favor of both responses, but ultimately I follow the likes of Sellars and Brandom in pursuing the second, material interpretation over the first, formal-enthemematic interpretation. My defense of this second interpretation in the next few paragraphs is a summary version of Brandom's more detailed defense in *Making It Explicit*, so I direct more curious readers to the relevant passages there.²³⁴ Also, Sellars offers another sort of defense, and although I find it less accessible it is, to my mind, no less convincing.²³⁵

To begin, notice that if we accept the first interpretation, then we are providing a reductive account of what defenders of the second interpretation consider material inferences, explaining them in terms of formal inference. For such a strategy to be successful, the notion of a formal inference must be intelligible independently of that of a material inference. But notice that the '∴' marks but does not state the fact that the conclusion of an inference (purportedly) follows from the premise(s) of that inference, while conditional expressions explicitly state this fact. The reason the inference concerning Nashville and Knoxville is taken to be enthematic is because it uses a '∴' without explicitly stating the conditional encoding its own inferential propriety, and therefore stating this conditional is necessary before the inference can be fully explicit.

²³³ For more on the distinction between formal and material inferences, see Sellars, "Inference"; also Sellars, "Is There?"

²³⁴ See in particular Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 94-116. Brandom's discussion of regulism and regularism is also informative (see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 18-30).

²³⁵ See Sellars, "Inference"; also Sellars, "Is There?"

However, the inference about soccer balls uses a ‘∴’ without stating the associated conditional. As such, its more explicit form should be:

Soccer balls are round and soccer balls are hollow.

If soccer balls are round and soccer balls are hollow, then soccer balls are round.

∴ Soccer balls are round.

But notice that, by adding the conditional as a premise, we are no longer working with the same inference as before. We realize this once we notice that this new inference also uses a ‘∴’ without explicitly stating its own inferential propriety in the form of a conditional, and as such could be formulated in a more explicit manner as:

Soccer balls are round and soccer balls are hollow.

If soccer balls are round and soccer balls are hollow, then soccer balls are round.

If soccer balls are round and soccer balls are hollow and if soccer balls are round and soccer balls are hollow then soccer balls are round, then soccer balls are round.

∴ Soccer balls are round.

And again, this is a new inference that needs to be made more explicit. At this point, the regress this way of thinking leads to should be clear.²³⁶ The source of this regress is the urge to ground the propriety of a less explicit inference on the propriety its more explicit counterpart, which is precisely the problem that defenders of the first interpretation from above fall into. To end the regress, we need to reverse the order of explanation by

²³⁶ At its root, this is the same regress as Wittgenstein’s regress of rules and Lewis Carroll’s Achilles and the tortoise regress. See Carroll, “What the Tortoise Said”; also Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§84, 86-87; also Kripke, *Wittgenstein*; also Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 18-30.

accounting for formal inferences in terms of material inferences.²³⁷ Once we do so, material inferences will no longer appear to be enthymemes for longer formal inferences; instead, formal inferences will be the members of that subset of material inferences whose validity depends on the contents of logical words such as ‘and’ and ‘if’ and ‘then’ (as opposed to the contents of extra-logical words such as ‘east’, ‘west’, ‘red’, etc.).

At this point, we have reached the same impasse that Kant faces, only concerning material inferences and not synthetic *a priori* judgments. Such inferences must be valid, otherwise they would be nothing more than a random collection of statements with no inferential structure. However, their validity cannot be established through mere logic alone, otherwise they would be formal inferences and the regress would arise again anew. Finally, as we will see in the next section, validity has a modal component. Just as genuine *a priori* judgments are necessarily true, valid inferences with true premises necessarily deliver a true conclusion. With this in mind, we can see that, for the same reason why *a priori* judgments cannot be established solely through particular experiences, the validity of inferences cannot be established solely through particular experiences.²³⁸ Putting these points together, the validity of material inferences cannot be established on the basis of logic alone or on the basis of particular experiences. Thus, the guiding question for a semanticist who accepts TP-Prop and EP-Inf should be an analogue to Kant’s: How are materially valid inferences possible?

²³⁷ For more on this reversed order of explanation, see Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 97-105. Additionally, Sellars offers independent arguments to the same conclusion that material inference (and not formal inference) should be taken as the privileged concept. See Sellars, “Inference”; also Sellars, “Is There?”

²³⁸ For more on a similar point, see Brandom’s discussion of the difference between rules and regularities at Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 26-30.

e. Concluding Note on Brandom

The previous section on material inference and substituting EP-Inf for EP-Prop might sound particularly Brandomian, and in one sense it is. Brandom accepts the material-inference-first order of explanation that I defend here,²³⁹ and his approach to understanding the semantic contents of propositions is called inferentialism after all. However, Brandom tips his hand when he says, “In [the chapter where he discusses material inferences explicitly] material proprieties of inference have been treated as primitives, playing the role of unexplained explainers.”²⁴⁰ Brandom’s intention is for subsequent chapters to provide a story concerning the pragmatics of language to undergird his notion of material inference, but although these chapters tell a compelling story about the pragmatics of language his refusal to return to the topic of material inference for any extended period leaves the connection between pragmatics and material inference murky at best, and nonexistent at worst.²⁴¹ Instead of focusing on this issue, Brandom spends the bulk of his efforts showing how “if [the inferentialist] approach [to semantics] is granted its preferred starting point, it can develop it into an account of the sort of objective representational content other approaches begin with.”²⁴² For these reasons, if there is a single guiding question to Brandom’s project from *Making It Explicit*, it is not the question that I recommend: How are materially valid inferences possible? Instead, Brandom’s guiding question is: Given that materially valid

²³⁹ See Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 97-105.

²⁴⁰ Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 133.

²⁴¹ I am not the only person to level this complaint against Brandom. Without naming names, Rebecca Kukla and Mark Lance disappointingly observe, “Not that philosophers have offered much in the way of theories of material inference in any case” (Kukla and Lance, *Yo!*, 69).

²⁴² Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 136.

inferences are possible, how is objective representation possible? And, as I pointed out in the previous section, Brandom's answer to this question in terms of *de re* ascriptions is founded on a commitment to EP-Prop, not EP-Inf.

§4. Material Validity and the Pincer Objection

At this point, I hope to have established that the content of my modified commitment to TP-Prop and EP-Inf has significant similarities to the content of the analytic pragmatists' unmodified commitment to TP-Prop and EP-Prop, and that by way of Kant my modified commitment fits well into the analytic pragmatists' intellectual genealogy. Therefore, my modified commitment is to a significant degree continuous with its unmodified counterpart. However, this continuity would be all for naught if my modified commitment were to fare no better against the Pincer Objection than its unmodified counterpart.

In this section, I will lay the groundwork for an argument that this is not the case. To do so, I first analyze the concept of material validity into its Modal and Representational Components. To develop a full account of the Modal Component of material validity would be a dissertation-length project in itself, so instead of doing this in all its attendant detail, I briefly provide my reasons for thinking that it is possible to develop such an account, and to develop it in a manner consistent with the Deflationary Demand. However, I find it unlikely that an account of the Modal Component of material validity would, by itself, address the Objectivity Demand. As such, I spend the bulk of my efforts in this section focused on the Representational Component of material validity and its relation to the Objectivity Demand.

When I began this dissertation project, I predicted that my account of the Representational Component would be independent of whatever account of the Modal Component I end up developing in future projects; unfortunately, this prediction has proven to be inaccurate. In particular, I follow Peirce in believing that an idealized notion of justification is necessary for understanding representation, and as I have come to understand the idealization at work here it presupposes an antecedently developed account of modality. As such, the force of my discussion of the Representational Component is weaker than I originally planned. Before writing this section, I expected to be able to develop an account of the Representational Component in all of its detail, and prove that this account allows me to meet the Objectivity Demand. While revising this section, I have realized that, given the dependence of the Representational Component on the Modal Component, my discussion of ideal justification is incomplete, meaning that by extension my discussion of the Representational Component is incomplete. Instead of proving that I can meet the Objectivity Demand, this latter discussion merely provides me with three points concerning ideal justification that, if justified, allow me to meet the Objectivity Demand. The justification for these stipulations can come only in the form of a more developed account of the Modal Component, and for this reason these three points jointly function as a criterion for success of my future work concerning the Modal Component. I say more about this as the section progresses.

a. The Representational and Modal Components of Material Validity

To begin, let us consider the textbook definition of a valid inference:

An inference is valid iff the truth of its premise(s) guarantees the truth of its conclusion.

This definition is a good starting point, but is in need of two modifications. First, as I mentioned in Chapter One, truth is a controversial concept within the analytic pragmatist tradition and so I substitute the philosophically neutral genus-term, 'categorical propriety', for its more controversial species-term, 'truth', in the original definition:

An inference is valid iff the categorical propriety of its premise(s) guarantees the categorical propriety of its conclusion.

As a terminological point, going forward I use 'categorical propriety', 'categorical impropriety', and 'CPS-aptness' in a manner analogous to how 'truth', 'falsity', and 'truth-aptness' (respectively) are normally used.

Second, if we explain formal inference in terms of material inference (as I have argued we should) then all valid inferences will be materially valid and vice versa. Therefore, we can modify the above definition to be in terms of the concept of material inference, which is our primary concern in this section:

An inference is materially valid iff the categorical propriety of its premise(s) guarantees the categorical propriety of its conclusion.

Once we make these modifications, we can define material validity as guaranteed categorical-propriety-preservation. In doing so, we see that material validity can be analyzed into two components. The first, which I term the Representational Component, concerns the fact that materially valid inferences are *categorical-propriety-*

preserving; and the second, which I term to Modal Component, concerns the fact that this categorical-propriety-preservation is *guaranteed*.

b. The Modal Component and the Deflationary Demand

Since I have more to say about the Representational Component in this section, let's first look at the Modal Component and its relation to the Deflationary Demand. There are of course many ways of understanding the guarantee that constitutes the Modal Component in such a way that is inconsistent with the Deflationary Demand—it might be that the guarantee is understood in terms of non-natural forms, or in terms of a non-natural capacity for perceiving such guarantees, or in terms of the will of a non-natural god, or any number of other options. However, there are also ways of understanding the guarantee that are (at least *prima facie*) consistent with the Deflationary Demand. One way would be to go externalist, and argue that an inferring subject does not have to have any cognitive access to the guarantee for one of her inferences to be valid. All that matters for the guarantee to be in effect is that the actual world be arranged so that there are no instances of her inference that are not categorical-propriety-preserving, or that the actual as well as nearby possible worlds be so arranged, or that all possible worlds be so arranged. Alternatively, one could understand the guarantee in teleosemantic terms, whereby a subject's inferences are guaranteed to be categorical-propriety-preserving in the sense that the evolutionary history of her species or her conceptual apparatus imparts the proper function of being categorical-propriety-

preserving onto these inferences.²⁴³ Or, we could understand the guarantee in terms of social practices. Such stories should be familiar enough within the analytic pragmatist tradition, so I direct my reader to some representative examples.²⁴⁴ There are surely other ways of understanding the guarantee provided by validity that are consistent with the Deflationary Demand, but I will end my list here. My point in providing this list is not that all conceivable externalist, teleosemantic, or social-practice accounts will meet the Deflationary Demand, but instead the weaker point that there are no in principle barriers to deflating such accounts to be consistent with the Deflationary Demand. As such, the strategy I recommend is to do just this—to pick a way of understanding the guarantee and to deflate it until it is consistent with the Deflationary Demand.²⁴⁵

The obvious objections to this strategy are that pursuing this strategy will too greatly weaken the guarantee that validity provides and that pursuing this strategy will deprive us of the tools needed to meet the Objectivity Demand. Concerning the first objection, my recommendation would be to accept (all things being equal) the strongest guarantee that can be accounted for in a manner consistent the Deflationary Demand, but also to recognize and accept that as a naturalist our modal notions will likely be

²⁴³ For more on teleosemantics and proper functioning, see Millikan, *Language*.

²⁴⁴ See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, especially §198; also Brandom's discussion of regularism at Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, 26-30 and 37-42; also Brandom's discussion of external and internal interpretation at Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, Conclusion; also Davidson's account of radical interpretation in Davidson, "Radical Interpretation" and Davidson, "A Coherence Theory"; also McDowell's discussion of *bildung* at McDowell, *Mind and World*, Lectures IV, V, and VI.

²⁴⁵ Personally, I am of the mind that the social-practice way of understanding the guarantee appears most promising. However, I am also of the mind that alternative ways of understanding are simply different from, and not contradictory of, the social-practice way, and so an analog to Carnap's principle of tolerance (see Carnap, *Logical Syntax*, 51-52) is appropriate here: everyone is at liberty to construct their own account of the guarantee that validity provides, and far from hindering the development of a theory of material inference this will help it flourish.

weaker than certain non-naturalist approaches to modality have led us to expect. This response will undoubtedly ring hollow to some, but I do not see a viable alternative.

Concerning the second objection, my response should be more satisfying. I concede that, on its own, a deflated account of the guarantee will most likely not provide us with the tools needed to meet the Objectivity Demand. However, the guarantee is only one component of material validity, and therefore we can supplement our eventual account of the Modal Component with an account of the Representational Component. So long as the latter account provides us with these tools without running afoul of the Deflationary Demand, then the conjunction of both accounts will likewise do so. Given what I have said in the introduction of this section above, my discussion of the Representational Component to come, and particularly those paragraphs dealing with ideal justification, is best seen as providing us with a scheme for meeting the Objectivity Demand. So long as the details of an eventual account of the Modal Component can be substituted into this scheme without running afoul of the Deflationary Demand, we can be confident that the combined theory of material validity can meet the Objectivity Demand and thereby avoid the Pincer Objection. However, my goal for the remainder of this section is to establish the conditional—if these details can be substituted into this scheme, then the Pincer Objection can be addressed—not to establish both the conditional and its antecedent.

c. A Schematic, Peircean Approach to the Representational Component

With my goal for the remainder of this section clarified, let me turn to the first stage of meeting this goal: namely, to provide my schematic account of categorical propriety-preservation and the Representational Component of material validity. Later, the second stage will be my argument that this schematic account provides us with the tools we need to meet the Deflationary and Objectivity Demands (assuming that the details concerning the Modal Component can be substituted into it); but for now let us focus on the account itself. In this first stage, I have been immensely influenced by Peirce's approach to truth and a number of Peirceans' elucidation of that approach.²⁴⁶ Whereas Peirce uses an idealized notion of justification to better understand the notion of truth, I use an idealized notion of justification to understand that of categorical propriety. However, given that my concern is with material validity there are two noteworthy differences between my approach and Peirce's. First, and obviously, my ultimate goal is in understanding categorical propriety-preservation and not categorical propriety itself. And second, I do not argue that truth reduces to ideal justification (as some have read Peirce as doing), nor do I argue that an account of ideal justification offers something like a pragmatic elucidation of truth (in Misak's technical sense of the phrase).²⁴⁷ For all I say these might be true, but they are not the conclusions of my argument. The conclusion for which I argue is the weaker one that the categorical propriety and ideal justification predicates are coextensional. Since my concern is with categorical-

²⁴⁶ See in particular Peirce, "Questions"; Peirce, "Some Consequences"; Peirce "Fixation"; Peirce, "How to Make"; Misak, *Truth*; Hookway, "Truth"; Heney, "Reality"; and Legg, "Charles Peirce's Limit."

²⁴⁷ See Misak, *Truth*, 3-45.

propriety-preservation and not categorical propriety, the pressing question is not the constitutional question of what categorical propriety is but instead the functional question of how individual categorically appropriate sentences relate to one another within the complex entity we call an inference. To answer this functional question, we need only know whether the sentences within an inference are categorically appropriate or not, and so our only concern is with the extension of the categorical-propriety predicate. Therefore, if we are to use ideal justification to understand categorical propriety (as I suggest), our purposes will be served so long as we show the coextensionality of the categorical-propriety and ideal-justification predicates. There is no need to decide the further issue as to whether their intensions are the same (and hence whether categorical propriety reduces to ideal justification) or distinct (and hence whether ideal justification provides a pragmatic elucidation but not a definition of categorical propriety).

c. i. Inquiry and 'Inquiry'

To see why the categorical-propriety and ideal-justification predicates are coextensive, I must first say a few words about how I will be using the word 'inquiry'. To begin, 'inquiry' designates a practice that we humans engage in, and the goal that we have while engaging in this practice is to attain categorical propriety. However, inquiry is not the only practice with categorical propriety as its goal. People dogmatically maintain their beliefs, they believe based on faith, they defer to the authority of others with social or political power, they alter their consciousness using drugs and other means, they take

their arbitrary whims as inspiration, and they do any number of other things all with an eye towards categorical propriety. What separates what I call 'inquiry' from these other practices is the role that justification plays in inquiry. It is tempting to say that inquiry is distinctive because it is only when we engage in inquiry that we take justification to be our means to attaining categorical propriety, whereas these other practices have no regard for justification. This thought is on the right track, but it threatens to overstate the difference between inquiry and these other practices. A more careful statement of the difference would be as follows: one's experience engaging in these other practices can serve as justifying evidence within inquiry, but these other practices merely produce such evidence and do not make use of it themselves. Only what I call 'inquiry' makes use of evidence.

To understand this point about the role of justifying evidence within inquiry, we must understand my distinction between a practice's *producing evidence* and its *making use of evidence*. As I am using the relevant phrases, a practice *produces evidence* iff there are some people who hold a new (set of) propositional attitude(s) towards some content(s) after having engaged in that practice. Alternatively, a practice *makes use of evidence* iff part of the practice consists in people (1) using the contents of their propositional attitudes as premises and conclusions within their reasoning and (2) actively treating the contents of their propositional attitudes as being under a standing obligation to be modified in the face of the contents of any new propositional attitudes they gain. (1) ensures that what I call 'inquiry' is rational, while (2) ensures that it is reflective.

This distinction is all well and good, but why do I think that it distinguishes what I call ‘inquiry’ from other categorical-propriety-directed practices? And why do I think that what I call ‘inquiry’ has any relation to the practice that is ordinarily called ‘inquiry’? The first question is easy to answer: I’m stipulating that out of the categorical-propriety-directed practices *only* what I call ‘inquiry’ makes use of evidence.

It is the second question that asks for me to go beyond mere stipulation, so to answer this question let us consider how my distinction from two paragraphs ago applies to some example categorical-propriety-directed practices. First, consider the example of dogmatically maintaining a set of beliefs in the face of any potential sources of evidence. When this is done perfectly, the person engaging in such a practice gains no new propositional attitudes, and so such a practice does not produce evidence. Of course, such perfection is rarely if ever achieved in practice; usually, in order to maintain the propositional attitudes that she takes to be most important, the person dogmatically maintaining her beliefs is forced either to adopt some new propositional attitudes she does not already have or to modify some propositional attitudes that she has but takes to be less important. It is in such “imperfect” cases that dogmatism produces evidence.

This much should be uncontroversial, but what about whether dogmatism makes use of evidence. Here, it depends on the details of what is being dogmatically maintained and who is doing the maintaining. The standard philosophical example is oftentimes along the lines of Peirce’s metaphorical image of an ostrich burying its head.²⁴⁸ For example, an everyday person, call him Steve, finds himself believing that he is supremely interesting and intelligent, and that everyone ought to fall under the

²⁴⁸ See Peirce, “Fixation,” 3:248-250.

sway of his superior personality. Unfortunately, no one actually finds Steve all that interesting or intelligent; in fact, many people find him boorish, thanks in part to his tendencies to insist that President Obama was born in Africa and to act as though he is entitled to the attention of others, especially women. Instead of using these people's reactions as evidence that he has some serious problems concerning how he believes and acts, Steve finds it more comfortable to "bury his head" and insist that "he's just telling it how it is" and that "boys will be boys." The sort of dogmatism that Steve is supposed to highlight is the sort that is unjustified—not only are there no good reasons to support Steve's dogmatic attitude, there are plenty of good reasons against it. Cases of such unjustified dogmatism are the antithesis of what usually gets called 'inquiry', as unjustified dogmatism consists in people shutting themselves off to the rational process instead of engaging in it. And given that Steve and his unjustified dogmatist peers do not make use of evidence while being dogmatic, my stipulations concerning the word 'inquiry' put me in line with ordinary usage.

However, there are more interesting cases of dogmatism that are not so easy to write off as being unjustified. Consider the case of Sally. Sally is a doctor, and her years in medical school have led her to believe that immunizations do not cause autism and that most doctors agree about this. While practicing medicine, Sally has immunized many children who have not become autistic, and she has met innumerable doctors who have done the same. When Sally goes home for the holidays, she finds that her brother's new significant other insists that immunizations cause autism, and that there is plenty of evidence in support of this "fact." Sally rolls her eyes and doesn't respond. This

lack of response on Sally's part shuts her off from the rational process, at least in this interaction, and so is another case of someone dogmatically maintaining their beliefs. However, her dogmatism is the *result of* her past inquiries, and not *antithetical to* them. In this manner, her dogmatism is a stage within her ongoing inquiring as a doctor, but again this squares with my usage of 'inquiry'. The reason is because Sally has made use of plenty of evidence before dogmatically maintaining her belief—whether she liked it or not, this is what medical school and practicing medicine have forced her to do. Similar thoughts apply *mutatis mutandis* to other experts who dogmatically maintain the propositional attitudes relating to their respective fields.

There are two things to take away from this pair of examples concerning dogmatism. First, it is the case that sometimes dogmatism is distinct from inquiry while other times it is a component of inquiry. And second, my stipulations concerning how to use 'inquiry' can capture this phenomenon.

More importantly, similar take aways can be had from considering a number of other categorical-propriety-directed practices. Deferring to an authority can be antithetical to inquiry, for instance as when someone is born into a society that defers to a religious leader on all matters and is habituated into doing the same. Or, deferring to an authority can be a component of inquiry, as when a non-scientist learns enough about science and scientific practice to feel confident deferring to scientists who are experts in their fields. Similarly, faith can be antithetical to inquiry, as when someone's faith in the Bible leaves them unwilling to ever take seriously what cosmology, geology, biology, and anthropology tell us about the history of the earth. Or, (something akin to)

faith can be a component of inquiry, as when a scientist has faith that his novel line of research is worth pursuing. I could continue listing examples, but what is important is that time and again the cases where a categorical propriety-directed practice is antithetical to inquiry is when its practitioner is not embedding this practice into a broader set of practices that involve putting the practitioner's propositional attitudes into rational relations with one another and reflectively updating those propositional attitudes based on those rational relations. And when the practitioner does do this, the original practice not only ceases to be opposed to inquiry but becomes a component within the broader practice of inquiry. In this manner, my stipulations concerning 'inquiry' entail that inquiry is something of a meta-practice, one that is able to include any number of sub-practices within it. This may not be exactly the sense usually associated with the word 'inquiry', nor the only such sense, but it is at least not so different as to be a cause for concern.

c. ii. A Preemptive Objection

Now that I have outlined what I mean by the word 'inquiry', I should address a preemptive objection that my reader likely has to my upcoming argument that categorical propriety and ideal justification are coextensional. True, my objector concedes, inquirers might take justification to be the means for attaining categorical propriety; however, justification is at best a reliable yet imperfect means for this purpose. As such, the most I can hope to prove is an incomplete overlap between the

extensions of the categorical propriety predicate and any justification predicate, and not their complete coextensionality.

There are two related parts in my response to such an objection. The first is that my objector misconstrues the sort of hope that I would recommend that inquirers share. I would not recommend a single abstract hope to the effect that producing justification through inquiry will eventually lead us to the set of all categorically appropriate sentences; instead, I would recommend a set of concrete hopes to the effect that, when someone inquires into *this particular* issue, justification will lead that person to the categorically appropriate sentence on this particular issue. Although the issues that these hopes are about are different, they have one and the same form, making the regulative hope of inquiry a type of hope of which there are many tokens, and the form of these hope-tokens is to connect individual cases of justification to individual cases of categorical propriety (not the set of all justification-cases to the set of all categorical-propriety-cases). Such hope-tokens are *prima facie* appropriate for each and every issue into which we can inquire, in the sense that there is no positive in principle reason to suspend such hope-tokens before we begin inquiring—any reason to suspend a hope-token would have to be a concrete result we reach after we have already begun inquiring. All of this is consistent with (any or all of) the hope-tokens not being rewarded in the sense of inquiry not settling on a single, categorically appropriate response to the issues under investigation within any finite period of time.

The upshot of this discussion of the regulative hope of inquiry is that the imperfection of justification is not necessarily one of scope, as my objector assumes. It

is not an essential feature of any justification predicate that the scope of its extension not coincide with that of the categorical propriety predicate. We know this because we can consistently hope for such coextensionality, while were a lack of coextensionality essential to justification then the consistency of our hope would vanish—an impossible hope is not a consistent hope. Instead, the imperfection concerns whether the individual hope-tokens that we have will actually be rewarded, i.e. whether our inquiries will actually settle on a single categorically appropriate answer within our life times.

c. iii. A Schematic Argument for the Coextensionality of Ideal Justification and Categorical Propriety

The second part of my response to the preemptive objection is simply my schematic argument that ideal justification and categorical propriety are coextensional. As a beginning to this argument, let me make the stipulations about ideal justification that I mentioned in the introduction to this section, and with which I will be working. To understand ideal justification, we must first understand its contrasting notion, that of actual justification. For my purposes, there are three points to note about actual justification. The first point is terminological. Sentences (or beliefs or some other such entities) have an actual-justification status. Since justification is a degreed notion, justification statuses can be more or less finely distinguished one from another, and since actual justification is a species of justification the same holds for it. For simplicity's sake, unless otherwise noted I adopt the rough-grain approach of only distinguishing the two statuses of being actually justified and being actually unjustified. By and large, my

usage of ‘actual justification’ will be shorthand for ‘the status of being actually justified’ (just as by and large ‘categorical propriety’ is shorthand for ‘the status of being categorically appropriate’). Second, actual justification is the sort of justification that occurs in actual inquiries successfully carried out by actual inquirers (such as myself or yourself). As such, actual justification has the qualities we usually associate with justification as such: it is relative to an inquirer and a time (or context), it is fallible, what is actually justified for one person at one time need not be actually justified for another person at another time, and the extension of a relativized actual-justification predicate is (at least contingently) non-coextensional with that of the categorical propriety predicate. Third, there are three varieties of actual justification that are important for us—past justification, present justification, and future justification. Assuming we have relativized to a particular inquirer, past justification is the status of having been actually justified at some point in the inquirer’s past, present justification is the status of being actually justified at the inquirer’s present point in time, and future justification is the status of going to be actually justified at some point in the inquirer’s future.

With these points about actual justification noted, we can now outline the key points about ideal justification that any account of the Modal Component, if it is to be satisfactory, must make possible. The first point is that a sentence has the status of being ideally justified iff the sentence would be justified at some point in the future were inquiry to be conducted into the issue, and this future justification would be maintained indefinitely were inquiry continued indefinitely.

A corollary of this first point is that, according to this account of ideal justification, we must idealize from actual justification in two manners. First, we do not have immediate cognitive access to the indefinite future, so since ideal justification concerns the indefinite future we must cognize this future through inductive means.²⁴⁹ To judge whether or not something will be justified throughout the indefinite future, we cannot look directly to its justification status in said future because the future has yet to arrive for us. The best we can do is to judge based on its past and present justification statuses at any time, and to keep an eye out for changes in these statuses as we move forward in time and adjust our judgment accordingly.

The second manner of idealization is that ideal justification concerns what subjunctively would happen in the indefinite future, not necessarily what actually will happen. This is where the Modal Component comes into play, as there is a significant overlap between the issues that the subjunctive mood raises and that modality more generally raises. Unfortunately, adjudicating these issues is outside the scope of my present project, and for this reason my notion of ideal justification will be indefinite to the degree that it is shaped by its relation to the subjunctive mood.

With the notion of ideal justification defined, the second point in my schematic argument is that ideal justification is the best sign of categorical propriety for which inquirers can hope. As I mentioned above, justification is a degreed notion, so there are indefinitely many degrees of justification—i.e. something can be not only justified, but well justified or very well justified or very very well justified or so on. As such, the more

²⁴⁹ For the purposes of this argument, I am bracketing any Humean or Goodmanian worries about induction (see Hume, *Treatise*, 61-65 (Book 1, Part 3, Section 6); also Goodman, *Fact*).

new evidence that comes in through inquiry without controverting the justification of some sentence, the better justified that sentence is. Furthermore, given that ideal justification involves a sentence maintaining its justification indefinitely, a sentence cannot be any better justified than it is when it is ideally justified (any actual history of past and present justification can at best approximate to the goodness of ideal justification). Therefore, given that justification is taken to be a sign of categorical propriety within inquiry, ideal justification is a better sign of categorical propriety than any other sort of justification. Finally, justification is taken as the sole sign of categorical propriety within inquiry. To see why this is the case, assume for the purpose of reductio that there is something other than justification that is taken to be a sign of categorical propriety within inquiry. Either this something else is taken to be a sign because there is justifying evidence that it is a sign, or because of some reason not relating to the notions of justification or evidence. For instance, we can take our current propositional attitudes as a sign of categorical propriety in the sense that we take them to be a sign *because we have justificatory evidence* that they are a sign. This is the case of justified dogmatism illustrated by Sally above, but in such a case the evidence we have that our propositional attitudes are a sign for categorical propriety transforms our propositional attitudes into evidence of categorical propriety, contrary to our original assumption. Alternatively, when we take our current propositional attitudes as a sign of categorical propriety *for some reason not relating to justification or evidence*, we are engaging in the sort of unjustified dogmatism that is illustrated by Steve. Such dogmatism is antithetical to inquiry, so when we engage in this sort of dogmatism we are no longer

engaging in inquiry (again, contrary to our original assumption). Both examples lead us to contradict our assumption, and a similar argument can be run for pairs of examples where we are engaging in other categorical-directed practices other than inquiry. The ultimate conclusion is that ideal justification is the best sign of categorical propriety within inquiry because it is better than any other form of justification and there are no other signs within inquiry besides justification.

With the third and final point, we reach the crux of the issue concerning the coextensionality of the categorical-propriety and ideal-justification predicates. At this point, we should be asking ourselves whether or not it is the case that the coextensionality of the ideal-justification and categorical-propriety predicates follows from ideal justification being the best sign of categorical propriety for which inquirers can hope. This third point is that this inferential connection obtains. To see why, assume that such a connection does not obtain, again for reductio purposes. Now, ask yourself: if ideal justification is the best sign of categorical propriety yet ideal justification and categorical propriety are not coextensional, then what accounts for their difference in extension? Since we do not have direct cognitive access to individual categorically appropriate sentences within inquiry, but only mediate access through individual cases of justification, the only way for us to conceive of the total set of individual categorically appropriate sentences is mediately, using our best sign for categorical propriety: ideal justification. Therefore, the difference between the extensions of the categorical-propriety and ideal-justification predicates cannot be accounted for by any difference in our manners of conceiving of them, because the extensions of both predicates are

conceived in terms of ideal justification. In short, it is not something about ourselves and our cognitive apparatuses that accounts for the difference. Therefore, it must be something independent of ourselves and our minds that accounts for the difference in extension; it must be the world. But once we make this move, we realize that the world must be something radically independent from us for it to account for the difference in extensions. We must have no hope of conceiving of the world as it really is, because justification is the only means through which inquirers can reach categorical propriety about the world but the world must be something beyond justification for it to account for the difference in extensions between categorical propriety and ideal justification. Therefore, the world must be an uncognizable thing-in-itself, which raises a number of familiar problems. To name but a few, taking the world to be a thing-in-itself has radically skeptical consequences to the effect that we know nothing about the world, and possibly that we have no intentional directedness towards the world. Alternatively, the notion of a thing-in-itself is (or at least seems to be) internally inconsistent; if 'thing-in-itself' is to be meaningful (as opposed to non-sensical) we must be able to use it to cognize its object, but by definition its object is uncognizable. Finally, the notion of a thing-in-itself is particularly problematic for those of us sympathetic to Peirce's dictum, "Do not block the way of inquiry."²⁵⁰ In his "The First Rule of Logic," Peirce argues that "maintaining that this, that, and the other never can be known" and "maintaining that this, that, or the other element of science is basic, ultimate, independent of aught else, and utterly inexplicable" are paradigms of blocking the way of inquiry; but this is

²⁵⁰ Peirce, "First Rule," 48.

precisely what we are doing in conceiving of the world as a thing-in-itself.²⁵¹ These problems should suffice for concluding that the world cannot be a thing-in-itself even though a negative answer to the question from above entails that it must be a thing-in-itself. Therefore, we should reject the negative answer and conclude that the categorical propriety and ideal-justification predicates are coextensional.

Assuming that all three of these points can be cashed out in terms of an account of the Modal Component, we can now define material validity in terms of ideal justification. First, notice that because categorical propriety and ideal justification are coextensional, an inference is categorical propriety-preserving iff it is ideal-justification-preserving (where an inference is ideal-justification-preserving iff either its premises and conclusion are all ideally justified or at least one of its premises is not ideally justified). Given this equivalence, material validity can equally be understood as either guaranteed categorical propriety-preservation or as guaranteed ideal-justification-preservation.

d. Some Objections to My Peircean Approach

Before I turn to the second stage in establishing that the schematic account of the Representational Component above provides us with the tools for addressing the Objectivity Demand without running afoul of the Deflationary Demand, let me consider three objections to the first stage. The first objection is to the effect that my focus on inquiry is misplaced. As I mentioned above, there are many other categorical propriety-directed practices besides inquiry, as well as many non-categorical propriety-directed

²⁵¹ Peirce, "First Rule," 49. See also Peirce, "Questions," 208-209 and Peirce, "Some Consequences," 213 and 238-242.

practices. So, why do I prioritize inquiry in the manner that I do? First, I prioritize inquiry over the non-categorical propriety-directed practices because inquiry is a categorical propriety-directed practice and my concern is with understanding categorical propriety-preservation and the Representational Component of material validity. Non-categorical propriety-directed practices play an important role within our lives, and are rich subjects for philosophical thinking, but they are not particularly relevant to my present concern. Next, I prioritize inquiry over the other categorical propriety-directed practices because inquiry would appear to be the most successful of the categorical propriety-directed practices at actually achieving categorical propriety. Whether or not categorical propriety is intrinsically valuable, we justifiably expect categorical propriety to be at least instrumentally valuable insofar as it facilitates us in pursuing the goals of other practices besides inquiry. For instance, when we engage in the practice of construction, we expect that categorically appropriate beliefs about the materials and tools with which we are working will help us construct sturdy and lasting structures. Or, when we engage in the practice of mere rhetoric, we expect that categorically appropriate beliefs about our audience will help us convince them to believe as we want them to believe. Similar thoughts apply to most every practice in which we engage. Now, it would seem to be a brute empirical fact that the products of inquiry are more helpful at facilitating our other practices than are the products of any other categorical propriety-directed practice. The best (or at least simplest) explanation of this phenomenon is that of the categorical propriety-directed practices inquiry is the best at achieving its goal of categorical propriety, hence my focus on inquiry above.

Notice that in addressing the first objection I am attempting to justify my focus on inquiry, meaning that I am inquiring about inquiry; this thought leads into the next objection and my response to it. My objector will concede for the time being that what I have said about inquiry, categorical propriety, and justification is unproblematic, but she will ask me what I take myself to be doing in saying such things. If I am engaging in inquiry, then there is a circularity in my account insofar as the subject I am inquiring into is inquiry itself. Alternatively, if I am engaging in some other practice—call it philosophizing—then I should instead be focusing my attention on philosophizing and not on inquiry. Given these options, my objector will argue that pursuing the first option leads to vicious circularity, while pursuing the second requires that I adopt an inquiry-transcendent perspective that transforms philosophizing into something pejoratively metaphysical. I concede that my objector’s appraisal of the second option is appropriate, but find the circularity involved with the first to be relatively unproblematic. What would make the circularity vicious would be if I were to lose the justification for my claims about inquiry, categorical propriety, and justification once I recognize what I am doing as inquiring. True, it is the case that my recognizing myself as an actual human engaging in a finitely-extended period of actual inquiring is inconsistent with my taking the justification I have provided for my claims about inquiry, categorical propriety, and justification as being ideal justification. However, I take the justification for my claims about inquiry, categorical propriety, and justification to be actual justification, not ideal justification. This does imply that my justification is not decisive or categorical-propriety-

entailing, but there is no reason to think that my recognizing myself as an inquirer engaged in inquiry makes this actual justification any less genuine.

The last objection is that there precisely is a reason to think that my recognition makes my actual justification less genuine (if not completely disingenuous). My objector will charge that although my arguments above establish that ideal justification is a sign for categorical propriety—in fact, such a good sign that the categorical propriety and ideal justification predicates are coextensional—I have given no reason to suspect that actual justification is a sign for either ideal justification or categorical propriety. I have said that we must hope that this is so when we engage in inquiry, but this is consistent with our hope being unfounded. In response to this objection, I note that actual justification and ideal justification are continuous with one another in the sense that ideal justification is inductively and subjunctively extrapolated from actual justification. Given this continuity, it is simply not the case that actual justification is not a sign for ideal justification. True, actual justification is a weaker sign for ideal justification than ideal justification is for categorical propriety, a point which is illustrated by the fact that the various subject- and time-relativized actual justification predicates are not coextensional with the ideal justification predicate. But a weak sign is not no sign at all, and one must overlook this point if one is to find the current objection compelling.

e. Resolving the Pincer Objection

With these objections cleared up, we can now move on to the second stage, that of showing how my schematic account of the Representational Component allows me to

meet both the Objectivity and Deflationary Demands. Beginning with the Deflationary Demand, I take it that the controversial concepts in my account are those of justification, induction, subjunctive modality, and categorical propriety. There are good *prima facie* reasons to suppose that all can be consistent with the Deflationary Demand.

When we consider justification, Quine has shown us how to redefine this notion so that it is consistent with a particularly conservative form of naturalism,²⁵² and the Sellarsian metaphor of the space of reasons has shown us how to fit justification into a more liberally naturalist viewpoint.²⁵³ My point is not to advocate for one option over the other, nor to develop a moderate position between that of Quine's conservatism and Sellars's liberality; my point is simply that, as naturalists, there are options available to us and so there is no need for my use of the concept of justification to run afoul of the Deflationary Demand.

Concerning induction, I have already acknowledged the Humean and Goodmanian problems of induction in notes above. However, given the importance of induction to most all of our scientific practices, the default position should be to take these to be interesting philosophical problems but not decisive objections against the use of induction in science. As such, there should be no problems with my use of induction.

Moving to subjunctive modality, this is the notion that is most apt for criticism. I have had to leave the details about how I account for subjunctive modality nebulous, and the naturalistic fortunes of subjunctive modality stand or fall along with those of the Modal Component. Since my goal is not to account for the Modal Component here, but

²⁵² See Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized."

²⁵³ See Sellars, "Epistemology," especially 248; also Brandom, *From Empiricism*, 2-4 and 22-23.

simply to show that if it can be accounted for in a manner consistent with the Deflationary Demand then I can address the Pincer Objection as a whole, the most I can say about subjunctive modality is that it instantiates a problem I have already acknowledged as opposed to raising a new problem I have yet to consider.

Finally, there is the notion of categorical propriety. I have already discussed this notion in Chapter One, where I argued that it is the genus concept of which truth is a species. What makes categorical propriety dialectically important is that it has many additional species concepts, ones which vary between being deflated and being inflated. Therefore, there will be some species of categorical propriety that meet the Deflationary Demand, and this is all that I need for my account of categorical-propriety-preservation to meet this demand. However, notice that I have been concerned only with the extension of the categorical propriety predicate, and not with categorical propriety as such. This means that, even if categorical propriety is a non-naturalistic concept, I have said nothing positive about it but have instead accounted for what is important about categorical propriety when it comes to material validity in terms of justification. This opens up the possibility that a non-naturalistic conception of categorical propriety can play a merely nominal or common sensical role in inquiry, while justification plays the philosophically robust role.²⁵⁴ I mention this possibility only to bring it to light as a genuine possibility, not to defend it myself.

Moving to the Objectivity Demand, we can see that it too can be met. Given the coextensionality of the categorical propriety and ideal justification predicates, a

²⁵⁴ For more on this point, see Misak's discussion of definition and pragmatic elucidations at Misak, *Truth*, 3-45.

sentence will be ideally justified iff it is categorically appropriate and it will be ideally unjustified iff it is categorically inappropriate. Furthermore, if we think back to Chapter One we can remember that a sentence is CPS-apt iff it is either categorically appropriate or categorically inappropriate, and a sentence is a-objective iff it is CPS-apt. Putting this together with the previous point, we see that a sentence is CPS-apt iff it is ideally justifiable (i.e. either ideally justified or ideally unjustified) and therefore that a sentence is a-objective iff it is ideally justifiable. Finally, given that material validity is defined in terms of ideal justification, an inference is a-objective iff it is material-validity-apt (i.e. either materially valid or materially invalid).

The argument in the previous paragraph might seem too easily done, because although I have established the conceptual claims connecting ideal justification, material validity, and a-objectivity, I have left unaddressed the substantive issue of whether there actually exist any ideally (un)justified sentences or materially (in)valid inferences. This is an unfortunate necessity given my limited aspirations in this dissertation. A full account of the Modal Component of material validity would provide us the tools needed for understanding the subjunctive aspect of ideal justification, which would in turn give us the tools for addressing the current issue. But, as I mention above, providing this account of the Modal Component goes beyond the scope of my project. Therefore, the best response I can give to the present worry is that once an account of the Modal Component is provided, that account will unproblematically deliver us a response to this worry—it, together with the relevant facts about us, our linguistic practices, and the

world, will imply that some sentences or inferences either are or are not ideally justified or materially valid.

But even once an account of the Modal Component is provided, might the response it delivers still be mistaken? Might it be the case that some or all sentences or inferences actually have the opposite status of that implied by the account? The answer is that of course this is possible, because any account of the Modal Component will be developed by an actual inquirer actually inquiring into the issue and so the account will be fallible (as any product of actual inquiry must be). This leaves open the possibility that there will be rational disagreements as to what a-objectively is a-objective, but this should not be surprising nor is it problematic. This is simply the same benign circularity that was at play when I discussed the objection above that threatened to separate philosophizing from inquiry. It alone does nothing to diminish the justification that either participant in the disagreement has, and so inquiry can consistently continue into the issue of what is a-objectively a-objective.

f. Conclusion

I have spent these last two paragraphs addressing objections to my argument about how to meet the Objectivity Demand, and with these objections taken care of we have now reached the end of our journey. *The ultimate conclusion is twofold.* First, developing a full theory of material validity would be continuous with the analytic pragmatist tradition in semantics (given the considerations from §§2 and 3 above). And second, the Pincer Objection can be adequately addressed once an account of the

Modal Component of material validity is provided that justifies my three points about ideal justification above (given the considerations from the present section). *In sum, there is hope for a naturalistically viable way of pursuing the analytic pragmatist approach to semantics.*

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