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# Epilogue: Ramsey's Ubiquitous Pragmatism

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A FEW WEEKS BEFORE I ARRIVED in Cambridge in 2011, as Simon Blackburn's successor in the newly named Bertrand Russell Professorship, there was an opportunity to apply for conference funding from a new University scheme. With Fraser MacBride, I came up with a proposal that seemed not only an excellent fit with our own interests, but astonishingly inclusive within recent Cambridge philosophy more generally. From my side, it connected my work not only to Blackburn (that link was obvious) and to several of his and my apparently disparate predecessors in the chair, such as Mellor, Anscombe, von Wright, and Wittgenstein, but also to many other distinguished Cambridge philosophers of the past century or so—Frank Ramsey, Bernard Williams, and Edward Craig, for example. (From MacBride's side, it connected to his interest in neglected figures in Cambridge philosophy in the inter-war period.)

What was this appealingly broad church? It was the view that for some interesting topics, the path to philosophical illumination lies not, as others have thought, in an inquiry into the nature of the (apparent) subject matter, but in asking about the distinctive role of the concepts in question—how we come to have such concepts, what roles they play in our lives, and so on. This view is very familiar in Blackburn's work on topics such as morality and modality, for example—Blackburn now calls it expressivism, and traces it in both these cases to Hume. But it also turns up, in places, in the work of a very wide range of other Cambridge philosophers: at least arguably, for example, in that of Mellor on tense, Anscombe on the first person, Craig on knowledge, von Wright on causation, Williams on truth, as well as Wittgenstein and Ramsey, famously, on various matters.

The view in question seems appropriately called a kind of *pragmatism.* It proposes to understand the concepts in question in terms of their *use*, and their practical role in our lives, rather than in terms of any 'corresponding' metaphysics. So, a little cheekily, we labelled our project 'Cambridge Pragmatism'. As we were aware, the cheek was double-barrelled. One could find such views outside Cambridge, of course, and many of the Cambridge philosophers on our list would not have regarded themselves as pragmatists. But despite or perhaps because of these blemishes, it served our purposes very well. With the generous support of the Cambridge Humanities Research Grants Scheme, MacBride and I organized a

highly successful conference at the end of May 2012. It was held in the Winstanley Lecture Theatre at Trinity College, a few steps from Wittgenstein's remote rooms in Whewell's Court.

For me an additional advantage of the label Cambridge Pragmatism was that it made it easy to raise a question that had interested me for a number of years, namely that of the relation between the self-avowed 'expressivism' of Humeans such as Blackburn, on the one hand, and Robert Brandom, on the other. Blackburn and Brandom seemed to mean different things by the term 'expressivism' (Brandom taking his inspiration from Hegel, not Hume). Yet there seemed to be obvious connections, even if very little dialogue. Moreover, Brandom linked his own expressivism to pragmatism, while Blackburn certainly counted as a Cambridge Pragmatist, in my sense. So, with Brandom himself present, our conference was able to enquire into the relationship between Cambridge Pragmatism and modern American pragmatism (the latter now embodied most famously by Brandom himself, of course).

Even better, an early and (if I may say) inspired invitation to Cheryl Misak yielded dividends at the other end of our historical spectrum, as she took up the issue of the influence of the early American pragmatists (especially Peirce) on the early Cambridge pragmatists (especially Ramsey). With Misak's help, our slightly tongue-in-both-cheeks theme had found its historical feet.

## Ramsey and the psychological turn

Later, building on these happy foundations (and feet), Misak and I accepted a kind invitation from the British Academy to host the 2014 Dawes Hicks Symposium, of which this volume is the product. As appropriate in this national forum, we broadened the scope of this second meeting, considering the impact of the Cambridge, MA, pragmatists on British philosophy as a whole (at least in principle, even if our gaze hardly got beyond Oxford). It is a big topic, and we have only scratched the surface. But with that caveat, what have we learnt?

One lesson, obviously, is that pragmatism is a choir with many voices. David Bakhurst usefully distinguishes five. As he notes, the different voices appeal to different people, and the question of the relationships among them is a complex one. I'll come back to that, but at this point I want to single out the voice that I had most in mind when I proposed the term Cambridge Pragmatism.

The central refrain of this voice is, as I put it earlier, the claim that for some philosophically interesting topics, the useful form of inquiry is not about the nature of the (apparent) *objects* of our talk, but about the role of the *concepts* concerned in our practical lives. In earlier work I have sometimes put this, perhaps a little melodramatically, in terms of a contrast between metaphysics and anthropology. My use of these terms may have raised unnecessary hackles among philosophers fond of the former and suspicious of the latter.

At any rate, when Ramsey comes this way he speaks of psychology, not anthropology. Here he is in 'General Propositions and Causality' (GPC, 1929), reflecting on a possible response to the account of causation he has just sketched—an account that we might now call expressivist, or pragmatist.

> What we have said is, I think, a sufficient outline of the answers to the relevant problems of analysis, but it is apt to leave us muddled and unsatisfied as to what seems the main question—a question not of psychological analysis but of metaphysics which is 'Is causation a reality or a fiction; and, if a fiction, is it useful or misleading, arbitrary or indispensable?'

> (GPC, 141)

Ramsey doesn't address this concern directly, but I think it is clear that his view is that metaphysics is the wrong mode of inquiry, in this case. The illuminating inquiry is what he calls 'psychological analysis'—an investigation into how we come to *think* and *talk* in causal terms, conducted in a manner in which we do not presuppose that the helpful answer will lead us back to the objects. (In other words, we do not presuppose that the answer will be 'We talk this way because we are keeping track of the causal facts', or anything of that kind.)

This 'psychological turn' is Cambridge Pragmatism, in the narrow and yet surprisingly inclusive sense that MacBride and I had originally in mind: narrow, in the sense that it is not necessarily consistent with all the other things that pragmatists say or think (more on this below); but inclusive, in the sense that we can find many Cambridge philosophers saying this kind of thing about some topics. As usual, Ramsey is well ahead of the field—among other things, in his clarity about this crucial feature of the methodology of the view, that it is psychology not metaphysics.

As I said, I think that in contemporary terminology we can call Ramsey an expressivist about causation, in Blackburn's sense of the term. Like Blackburn, I think, Ramsey is aware of the distinction between a non-metaphysical view and a negative metaphysical view. In other words, he is aware that the expressivist need not and should not say that the view amounts to *anti-realism* about causation. Blackburn is often admirably clear about this point, noting that the expressivist makes sense of ordinary talk of causality (or whatever), and then simply denies that there is any other sense in which the further metaphysics question—'Is causation a reality or a fiction?', as Ramsey puts it—can meaningfully be asked. This is Blackburn in his remarkable early piece, 'Morals and Modals', for example:

> What then is the mistake in describing such a philosophy [quasi-realism] as holding that 'we talk as if there are necessities when really there are none'? It is the failure to notice that the quasi-realist need allow no sense to what follows the 'as if' except one in which it is true. And conversely he need allow no sense to the contrasting proposition in which it in turn is true.

> (1987: 52)

For Ramsey, the point could easily be linked to his famous jibe about the *Tractatus*: 'If you can't say it you can't say it, and you can't whistle it either.' Once the expressivist story is on the table, it is easy to insist that the language of causation cannot be used for the further purpose the metaphysical inquiry requires. It is simply not that kind of talk.

Ramsey also anticipates the project that Blackburn famously articulates under the label quasi-realism. This is the task of explaining why, if our talk of causation starts where the expressivist says that it starts, it nevertheless ends up in a form that we easily mistake for something doing a different kind of job—something that we mistake for a proposition, to use the term that Ramsey himself employs in GPC. Here he is, making a start on that project, and explaining it in terms of a distinction between propositions and sentences with different jobs:

> Many sentences express cognitive attitudes without being propositions; and the difference between saying yes and no to them is not the difference between saying yes or no to a proposition . . . In order therefore to understand the variable hypothetical and its rightness or wrongness we must consider the different possible attitudes to it; if we know what these are and involve we can proceed easily to explain the meaning of saying that such an attitude is right or wrong, for this is simply having such an attitude oneself and thinking that one's neighbour has the same or a different one.
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> (GPC, 135–6)

## Is Ramsey a global pragmatist?

In earlier work with Richard Holton (Holton and Price, 2003), I argued that in this respect, Ramsey's position is unstable: the considerations about infinity to which Ramsey appeals in GPC would have led, via what we now know as the rule-following considerations, to the conclusion that if unrestricted generalizations are not propositions then nothing is a proposition, in the assumed sense. For the rule-following considerations turn on the fact that the 'infinitary' character explicit in generalizations is actually universal in language. Holton and I proposed that Ramsey could have accommodated this realization not by retreating but by pushing further in the same direction—by allowing what is effectively the quasi-realist project to become 'global', in the sense that I have long recommended to Simon Blackburn.

Blackburn himself has been close to this global expressivism at various points in the past, in my view—especially so in those contexts in which he has interpreted the later Wittgenstein, apparently approvingly, in this spirit (see, e.g., Blackburn, 1998: 167). In his chapter in this volume he embraces it explicitly. Another recent convert is the other great Humean expressivist of Blackburn's generation, Allan

Gibbard: 'As I use the term "expressivism", I, like Price and Horwich, am a universal expressivist,' as Gibbard puts it in a recent interview.[1]

Cheryl Misak maintains with considerable plausibility that on this point, too, Ramsey was ahead of us all. She argues that the Holton and Price reading of Ramsey—as a 'localist', still committed to the bifurcation between propositions and other kinds of sentential claims—is misleading and superficial. The real Ramsey was already the figure that Holton and I imagined as a later Ramsey, who had had time to realize that the bifurcation was a mistake (for reasons to do with the rule-following considerations, in our story). In Misak's version, Ramsey had already got there from a different direction: from an account of beliefs as action-guiding habits.

Here I want to enter a note of caution. We want two things from an account of belief, presumably: first, a *generic* account of what it takes to be a belief (i.e. of what beliefs have in common); and second, a *specific* account of what distinguishes one belief from another—beliefs about Cambridge, UK, from beliefs about Cambridge, MA, for example. The latter job, we think, falls to an account of *content*—an account of the proposition-shaped filling that distinguishes the belief that P from the belief that Q.

The apparent message of GPC is that not all *apparently* proposition-shaped expressions are 'genuine' propositions—that is, not all of them are whatever it is that Ramsey has in mind when he says of the variable hypothetical that 'if it is not a conjunction, then it is not a proposition at all' (GPC, 134). They all have the surface form of propositions, however; and, as we have seen, Ramsey makes a start on what we now think of as the quasi-realist project of explaining why that should be so.

Against this background, couldn't there be an account of belief that combined a Ramsey-style dispositional answer to the *generic* question with a deeply bifurcated answer to the *specific* question? This view would maintain that, generically considered, beliefs are mental dispositions of a certain kind—instrumental habits with which we meet the future, as Ramsey says. When it comes to content, however, we need to recognize that these dispositions divide into two categories. There are those for which something proposition-shaped or content-like lies 'upstream' in the order of explanation, a necessary part of a characterization or genealogy of the relevant disposition; and those for which the relevant propositional shape emerges only 'downstream', explained as Ramsey begins to explain the content of general propositions, in terms of what we *do* with the dispositions in question.

I don't want to *recommend* this combination of views—i.e. dispositional about belief, with a bifurcated view of content—but merely to argue that it cannot immediately be ruled out of court. In support of this claim, I want to suggest two philosophers who might be held to exemplify it. The first is an imaginary philosopher,

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[1] 'Thinking How to Live', *3:AM Magazine,* available at www.3ammagazine.com/3am/thinking-how -to-live/ (accessed 5 January 2017).

a kind of hybrid of Ramsey and Ruth Millikan. With Millikan's voice, this hybrid insists that the content of at least some of our beliefs is to be understood in terms of the states of the world they have evolved to represent—that is, the states of the world that figure in an account of the biological proper function of the mental states in question. With Ramsey's voice, the hybrid insists that there are many beliefs, such as causal beliefs, for which this account of content won't work—the causal relation itself not being the kind of thing that can figure in a biological account of the kind that Millikan has in mind, perhaps. For causality, generality, morality, and perhaps much else, then, we need a different account of content—a use-based pragmatist or expressivist account. But on both sides of the line, the interesting thing to say about belief—about what makes something a belief, rather than some other sort of attitude—is that it is a certain kind of disposition with which an agent meets the future.

My second example is a real philosopher, Millikan's teacher, Wilfrid Sellars. In places, as I have noted elsewhere (e.g. Price, 2013, ch. 8), Sellars sounds a lot like Ramsey and Blackburn. He says that Hume got something right about both causal talk and moral talk, in thinking that neither is genuinely descriptive; and he insists that such talk is nevertheless cognitive—'a mode of rational discourse', as he puts it (Sellars, 1958: §82)—and 'not *inferior,* just *different*' (1958: §79). All of this sounds a great deal like quasi-realism, or the kind of proto-quasi-realism we can see in GPC.

However, Sellars tries to combine this view with an avowedly Tractarian conception of a core factual use of language, which he takes to involve a kind of 'picturing'. In one sense, then, his account of content remains deeply bifurcated, though the view might be best expressed, like his account of truth, as the idea that there are actually two kinds of content: Tractarian factual content, possessed only by core descriptive uses of language, in this sense; and generic semantic content, possessed by all claims (including the core descriptive claims).

For present purposes, what matters is not the plausibility of Sellars's two-level semantic layer-cake—'left-wing' Sellarsians regard the Tractarian component as a mistake on Sellars's part—but simply that it isn't *obviously* incompatible with Ramsey's dispositional account of the generic aspect of belief. At least at first pass, then, dispositionalism at the generic level seems compatible with bifurcation at the specific level, and hence with a reading of the Ramsey of GPC as someone who does retain a distinction between real propositions, on the one hand, and other meaningful, cognitive but non-propositional claims, on the other.

I think that there are various paths to the conclusion that this is an unstable position, but the one that hews closest to Ramsey and his Peircean pragmatism seems to be the one that Holton and I proposed in our piece. In effect, it is simply the recognition that what Ramsey says of *beliefs* applies also to our grasp of *terms.* It, too, is a matter of dispositions, of habits with which we meet the future—dispositions to use or apply the term in question in certain cases and not others. As such, it too has the kind of open-endedness that had persuaded Ramsey

that unrestricted generalizations are not propositions. And—being necessarily acquired on the basis of finite experience, our own or our ancestors'—it too has a kind of contingency. In the end, the dispositions are simply *ours*. As a result, there is at least this one sense in which 'the trail of the human serpent is thus over everything', as James famously puts it—the rule-following considerations ensure that all of language provides work for the Cambridge Pragmatist. Particular parts of language may also be marked by the trail of the serpent for other reasons, but the ubiquity of this factor ensures that no part escapes entirely unmarked.

As Holton and I say, these are the lessons of the rule-following considerations. Other writers have also seen the rule-following considerations as an argument for global pragmatism. Philip Pettit (1991), for example, takes them to imply that all our concepts are to some degree response dependent (and interprets that as a kind of pragmatism). In early work, I myself drew a similar lesson from the finitistic considerations underlying both the rule-following considerations and Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of meaning. As I put it, 'no finite level of experience can determine the application of a linguistic term to all possible cases, or exclude the possibility that two speakers—fully competent speakers, by existing community standards—will diverge in their application of the term concerned to some future case' (Price, 1988: 194). I suggested that this undermined a certain conception of factual discourse: 'To recognize ineliminable indeterminacy of meaning seems to be to recognize that our utterances are at best approximations to genuine . . . statements of fact' (1988: 194).

I noted that this point had global implications:

> The indeterminacy of meaning thus seems to be the basis for a form of universal non-factualism . . . This topic-neutral form of non-factualism should not be confused with the form that Quine himself extracts from the indeterminacy thesis: the view that there are no genuine facts about meaning . . . Ignoring for a moment our scruples about the analytic viewpoint [i.e. ignoring my own insistence that the worthwhile project was explanation of linguistic practice, not analysis or metaphysics—in other words, the psychological turn], we might say that the present view, in contrast, is that in virtue of the nature of meaning there can be no genuine facts about anything.
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> (1988: 194–5)

But this was not by my lights an argument for global scepticism, of course. It was an argument for the bankruptcy of a certain picture of language, within which the implications of the rule-following arguments appear to be sceptical. I mention this here for two reasons: first, because I am happy to point out that I have long been on the page on which Misak so plausibly situates Ramsey; but second, because I think that finitism plays an important role in getting us there, and I'm not yet persuaded that Ramsey had made that connection.

So, although Misak makes a strong case that by 1929 Ramsey had long been suspicious of the Tractarian picture—he was well ahead of the game as a left-wing Sellarsian, as in so much else—I am not convinced that he had already put

together all the ingredients he needed, to defeat the bifurcated picture. However, as an indication of how close he gets, we might note some remarks of Wittgenstein that Anna Boncompagni (Chapter 3, this volume) cites, from a lecture delivered, as it happens, the day after Ramsey's death—remarks that presumably reflect Ramsey's influence, as Boncompagni notes:

> Every sentence we utter in everyday life appears to have the character of a hypothesis . . . The point of talking of sense data and immediate experience is that we are looking for a non-hypothetical representation. But now it seems that the representation loses all its value if the hypothetical element is dropped, because then the proposition does not point to the future any more, but it is, as it were, self-satisfied and hence without any value.

It is easy to hear this as a criticism not merely of 'sense data and immediate experience' but of Sellars's Tractarian ambitions for a core factual language. Thought of as bare isomorphisms, pictures just don't 'point to the future' in the way that '[e]very sentence we utter in everyday life' does.

So, even if Ramsey didn't quite have time to put the pieces together, we can be confident that he was looking in the right place. He had begun an inquiry that might be expected to have led, as Misak suggests, to a view that improved on both Wittgenstein and Kripke in two respects: in doing more than Wittgenstein does to *explain* the normative practices associated with meaning, practices that we build on top of dispositionalist foundations; and in abandoning the distinction on which Kripke still relies, between factual and merely apparently factual uses of assertoric language.

In the latter case, the advantage is that of simply side-stepping the metaphysical question that still forces Kripke to label his proposal a form of anti-realism about meaning. Properly construed it is neither realism nor anti-realism, in the old sense, for the pragmatism has abolished the contrast on which that distinction relies. I noted earlier that Blackburn often makes this point very well, but it has roots in the dawn of pragmatism. Blackburn (2005) rightly rejects David Lewis's charge that quasi-realism is a form of fictionalism. Here is Schiller rejecting Vaihinger's fictionalism, on much the same grounds:[2]

> The truth is that Prof. Vaihinger's ingenuity, in detecting fictions everywhere, over-reaches itself. He leaves no 'facts' to be contrasted with his 'fictions,' and in consequence the latter become facts *optimi juris*, and their procedures 'truths'.
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> (Schiller, 1912: 99–100)

## Upstream or downstream?

Earlier I characterized the bifurcated view of content as the proposal that we need two kinds of accounts of propositional content. For some of our claims

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[2]  I am grateful to Tim Button here.

and beliefs, on this view, something proposition-shaped or content-like lies 'upstream', needed to explain and specify the particular kind of disposition that amounts to a belief with that content. For other claims and beliefs, propositional content emerges only 'downstream', being explained as Ramsey wants to explain the content of general propositions—that is, in terms of what we *do* with the dispositions in question. Global pragmatism, in contrast, amounts to the view that the downstream model is appropriate in all cases.

Here is Brandom, making what I take to be the same distinction in terms of direction of explanation:

> An account of the conceptual might explain the use of concepts in terms of a priori understanding of conceptual *content*. Or it might pursue a complementary explanatory strategy, beginning with a story about the practice or activity of applying concepts, and elaborating on that basis an understanding of conceptual content. The first can be called a *platonist* strategy, and the second a pragmatist (in this usage, a species of functionalist) strategy . . . The *pragmatist* direction of explanation, by contrast, seeks to explain how the use of linguistic expressions, or the functional role of intentional states, confers conceptual content on them.
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> (Brandom, 2000: 4)

Brandom says that his own view is 'a kind of conceptual pragmatism': 'It offers an account of knowing (or believing, or saying) *that* such and such is the case in terms of knowing *how* (being able) to do something . . . —in general, the content by the act, rather than the other way around' (2000: 4). Unhindered by the piecemeal starting points of Humean expressivism, Brandom simply takes for granted that this kind of pragmatism should be global in nature.

## Psychology or metaphysics, again

On the other hand, as I have argued at some length elsewhere (Price, 2008, 2011), Brandom is not as clear as he might be about the distinction between 'psychological analysis' and metaphysics, and has a tendency to wander backwards and forwards across the border between the two, as if unaware that it is a great gulf. For example, referring to various aspects of his account of the referential, objective, and normative aspects of discourse, he says that '[n]one of these is a naturalistic account'. On the contrary, as he puts it elsewhere, his view is this:

> Norms . . . are not objects in the causal order . . . Nonetheless, according to the account presented here, *there are norms*, and their existence is neither supernatural nor mysterious.
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> (1994: 626, emphasis added)

On the face of it, this sounds like a defence of a non-naturalistic realism about norms. However, the passage continues with what is, by the Cambridge Pragmatist's

lights, exactly the right explanation of what keeps Brandom's feet on the ground: 'Normative statuses are domesticated by being understood in terms of normative attitudes, which *are* in the causal order' (1994: 626).

In my view, Brandom should have said in the first place that his account is simply *silent*, in itself, on the question as to whether there are norms. It is not metaphysics, and neither affirms nor denies that there are norms. On the contrary, it simply explains our ordinary use of normativity vocabulary. To this, Brandom could add that of course in his street voice he affirms that there are norms (or at least would be prepared to do so if someone could demonstrate that such an assertion had any point, in the language games played on the street), but that he is sceptical, like Blackburn, about the availability of a vocabulary for any further metaphysical question. Putting the matter in these terms simply bypasses concerns about naturalism (unless, as is clearly not the case for Brandom, the account offered of normative ascription was somehow in tension with the thought that we ourselves are natural creatures). Brandom's account only *looks* non-naturalistic because he tries to conceive of it as metaphysics. If he stays on the virtuous (in Ramsey's terms, 'psychological') side of the fence—being clear about what is being said in his philosophical voice—there is no appearance of anything non-naturalistic, and no need to retreat.

This lack of clarity about the distinction between the metaphysical and psychological voices is striking in Brandom's case because he is elsewhere so clear about the character of the pragmatist project. To add one more example on the latter side, here he is again on the way in which, as he puts it, 'linguistic pragmatism reverses the platonist order of explanation'.

> Starting with an account of what one is doing in making a claim, it seeks to elaborate from it an account of what is said, the content or proposition—something that can be thought of in terms of truth conditions—to which one commits oneself by making a speech act.

> (Brandom, 2000: 12)

Many other pragmatists could also do with some additional clarity on this point, in my view. If there's a general message that pragmatism needs at this point—both for its self-understanding and for its message for potential recruits—it is that the distinction that Ramsey characterizes as that between psychological analysis and metaphysics needs to be crystal clear. Otherwise, we risk further years of talking at cross purposes. (It is much better to be clear about one's differences with metaphysicians than to paper them over.)

For this reason, I propose an addendum to David Bakhurst's list of five characteristic pragmatist tenets. I agree that pragmatists tend to hold (i) 'a doxastic theory of truth', (ii) 'a broadly empiricist account of meaning', and (iii) 'a fallibilist, dynamic, inquiry-centred account of knowledge'. But I would add that they have the option, not always clearly recognized, to go on one side of Ramsey's line

or the other, in each case. With this addition, Bakhurst could characterize his plausible observation about the shift in Strawson's view of truth as the thought that he began on the side of 'psychological analysis' (though the term is admittedly a little strained in this case), offering us an account of the use of the term 'true'; but that he strayed back over the line in later life.[3]

Adding the psychological turn—Cambridge Pragmatism in my narrow sense—also makes it easier to find other potential recruits in Oxford (and to see that there, as in Cambridge, it need not accompany any general sympathy for pragmatism). For example, we might enlist Ayer and Hare on ethical language, and Ryle both on mental vocabulary and on 'inference tickets' (there are obvious affinities with Ramsey, in the latter case and arguably in the former). Or we might recruit J. L. Austin, Oxford champion of the Wittgensteinian thought that we do many things with words, here praising Pilate for walking away from the metaphysical question, 'What is truth?':

> 'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. Pilate was in advance of his time. For 'truth' itself is an abstract noun, a camel, that is, of a logical construction, which cannot get past the eye even of a grammarian. We approach it cap and categories in hand: we ask ourselves whether Truth is a substance (the Truth, the Body of Knowledge), or a quality (something like the colour red, inhering in truths), or a relation ('correspondence'). But philosophers should take something more nearly their own size to strain at. What needs discussing rather is the use, or certain uses, of the word 'true'. *In vino*, possibly, '*veritas,*' but in a sober symposium '*verum*.'

<div align="right">(Austin, 1950: 111)</div>

Austin nicely exemplifies what I take to be a general lesson for would-be pragmatists. We need to be careful about our own methodology. Whenever we consider a notion already in common use—for example, truth, belief, or meaning—it is crucial that we keep in mind the distinction between (i) an explanatory, psychological account of how that *concept* is used in ordinary discourse—what its role is, what job it does for us; and (ii) an answer to the question 'What *is* truth (or belief, or meaning, or whatever)?' As I have emphasized, these are two very different projects, even though each may be approached in a pragmatist spirit, in some sense of that term. Sometimes we might want to pursue both, but if so, then our answers need to cohere, in the right sort of way. Some answers to the former question simply obviate the need for an answer to the latter. (One way in which both questions

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[3] I take this opportunity to call the reader's attention to a fascinating filmed discussion between Strawson and Gareth Evans (1973), available on YouTube. What is at issue in much of the conversation, effectively, is the question as to how to draw the distinction between propositions and other claims, if we follow Ramsey in deflating truth. Evans proposes that we do it in terms of whether an utterance expresses a belief. In reply, Strawson suggests that the same problem is likely to arise at that level. Misak's Ramsey would surely have agreed.

may have answers is if the term in question has become ambiguous—it may have an ordinary use, but also be put to new use, for example in psychological or linguistic theory.)

Moreover, it is not just would-be pragmatists who would do well to pay more heed to the distinction between these two questions, in my view. As a final example, let me call attention to someone who is noticing what is in effect the same distinction, and finding it in what many will regard as a surprising place. This is Jonathan Schaffer, writing about David Lewis's view of knowledge.

> Lewis (despite simplified statements as if otherwise) is not really presenting an account of *knowledge*, but rather of *knowledge ascription*. He is not really saying when s knows that p, but rather when a sentence of the form 's knows that p' is true relative to a context c. These are connected but distinct topics. As such he is *not* really saying that knowledge is elusive, or is destroyed by doing epistemology, or anything like that (despite seeming to say just these things). Properly understood, he is really saying something metalinguistic, about the contexts in which knowledge ascriptions come out true.
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> (Schaffer, 2015: 474)

Schaffer adds that in this respect, 'Lewis's account differs from most other classic relevant alternative theoretic accounts,' such as those of Austin, Goldman, and Dretske, 'which really are object language accounts of when *s* knows that *p*' (2015: 474 n. 4).

Schaffer notes that it might be objected that talking about the truth-conditions of knowledge ascriptions and talking about knowledge amount to the same thing, in virtue of the disquotational properties of truth. He replies that the usual disquotational move is not available here: 'disquotation . . . fails for contextually sensitive terms' (2015: 474 n. 3), as 'know' is by Lewis's lights. So Lewis's account is genuinely 'metalinguistic', as Schaffer puts it.

The distinction that Schaffer is applying here is very close to Ramsey's distinction between 'psychological analysis' and metaphysics. The similarity is disguised a little by the fact that Schaffer characterizes the metalinguistic project in terms of conditions under which a sentence is true. This is apt to confuse because truth has two faces, so to speak—a worldly or correspondence face, and a 'correct use' face. But once Ramsey's view is on the table—once we accept that '[m]any sentences express cognitive attitudes without being propositions', as Ramsey puts it—then it is clear that these faces come apart. There are many cases in which it is perfectly appropriate to ask about conditions of correct use, but not to ask the worldly question—the case of causal judgements, for example, as Ramsey, Sellars, and Blackburn all agree. And in these cases, the correct use face belongs on the side of what Ramsey calls psychological analysis.

Schaffer explicitly denies that the reading he proposes collapses back into the worldly interpretation—an account *about knowledge.* So it belongs on the side of correct use. In effect, Schaffer is putting Lewis's account of knowledge on the

same page on which we find the views of Ramsey, Sellars, Blackburn, Brandom, about many topics. In other words—if I may be permitted one final piece of cheek—he is reading Lewis as a Cambridge Pragmatist, in my sense of the term.

This conclusion will seem less surprising if we recall that Cambridge Pragmatism is a very broad church. Even within Cambridge, it encompasses aspects of the work of many distinguished philosophers who do not in general regard themselves as pragmatists. My hope is that by labelling the approach in this way, and calling attention to its character and its surprising ubiquity, I will do something to enhance its visibility. At the moment, as Schaffer's insight shows us, the dividing line on which Cambridge Pragmatism depends is so poorly recognized that there is widespread confusion not only about where a figure as important as Lewis lies with respect to it, but also about the fact that there is a distinction to be marked in the first place. Much in contemporary philosophy might be clarified, if we had a better understanding of these issues.

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