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Facts and the Function of Truth

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Preface

Some years ago I worked on the philosophy of probability. For a long time I thought about probabilities – what kinds of things they could be, and so on. Then it struck me that this might be the wrong approach. We didn't have to assume that there must be something that probabilistic judgements are characteristically *about,* and so concern ourselves with the nature of that distinctive subject matter. Instead we could interpret probabilistic judgement in terms of a characteristic way of talking and thinking about other things. At the time it seemed quite a revelation. Of course I soon realized that others had expressed the same view about probability, as about several other topics. But in the case of probability, at least, the view was not well developed. I went on to write a thesis (Price 1981) that argued its advantages over other views of probability, and defended it against certain objections raised against similar 'non-factualist' views in other areas.

By contemporary standards the unusual feature of this view of probability is that it takes a linguistic approach to metaphysical issues. Non-factualist theories were a common and characteristic product of the mid-century linguistic movement in philosophy; but these days that movement is widely felt to be discredited. Contemporary metaphysics regards itself as free of the peculiar concern with language that characterized that period. So as I eventually came to appreciate, a defence of such a treatment of probability (or indeed other topics) calls for some defence of the linguistic stance. More importantly, it calls for an elucidation of the cluster of notions whose proper application non-factualists are concerned to dispute – notions such as *assertion* and *statement of fact.* In this respect, as in others, the linguistic approach needs to be grounded in the philosophy of language.

I found that such a grounding had not in practice been obtained. This was not simply because it had usually not been sought. Contemporary philosophy of language has appeared to have reason to dismiss non-factualism – a reason that turns on the role of the notion of truth in Fregean linguistic theory. In effect, non-factualism and contemporary philosophy of language have wanted to draw the limits of fact-stating discourse at different places. This conflict has not had the attention that it deserves, I think. The linguistic approach to difficult areas of philosophy has more to be said for it than its reputation suggests. And the philosophy of language has much more to learn from the encounter than the history would indicate.

This book is in part an attempt at mediation. I try to show that with a proper understanding of what an account of statement of fact should amount to the conflict can be resolved. Neither side escapes unscathed. The resolution turns, in particular, on the rejection of a shared assumption about the appropriate goal of an elucidation of the notion of statement. But both sides benefit from the new perspective thus required. The major benefit is a particularly fruitful perspective on the nature and origins of truth.

I appreciate that the approach may seem misguided. Many philosophers will feel that the conflict described is long since decided in favour of the philosophy of language. I suspect that others, on both sides of the fence, will not have noticed that it ever existed. I can only urge such people to read the book – or at least to read chapter 1, which contains a more detailed guide to the nature and origins of the conflict, and the structure and benefits of the resolution I propose.

In order to make it a little easier to read the book, I have starred a number of sections of a more technical or incidental nature. These may be omitted without serious discontinuity. Chapter 1 mentions a further possibility, which involves beginning at chapter 6.

The book was written during my tenure of an Australian National Research Fellowship, in the School of Philosophy at the University of New South Wales. The Editor of *Mind* has kindly allowed me to reproduce parts of 'Truth and the nature of assertion' (Price 1987), which appear mainly in chapter 2. I am also indebted to Philip Pettit, whose assistance and encouragement long since transcended the merely editorial; and to Peter Menzies and Phillip Staines, for their insight and patience in many conversations on this material.

1

Introduction

1.1 WHY READ THIS BOOK?

Few areas of contemporary philosophy have not been touched by the suggestion that their distinctive problems are in part a product of some sort of misconception about language. One view of this kind has been particularly widespread. It is the claim that in virtue of their grammatical form, certain uses of language are mistakenly construed as descriptive, or fact-stating. Perhaps the most familiar cases arise in ethics. Moral philosophers have often argued that despite the syntactical resemblance that ethical utterances bear to genuinely descriptive uses of language, such expressions should not be interpreted as statements of fact. There are actually several *versions* of this view, differing as to what they take it that ethical judgements really are. One at least of these is common currency among non-philosophers. Known to philosophers as 'emotivism', this version holds that moral claims are 'value judgements' – expressions of attitudes of approval, disapproval, or something of the kind. The Prime Minister might say for example that the Soviets have the best possible system of government, with the exception of all the rest. An emotivist would interpret the remark as an expression of the PM's own political preferences, of her marked antipathy to the Soviet state, rather than as a factual claim in comparative political theory.

We shall need a name for the general philosophical strategy that emotivism here exemplifies. I shall call it 'non-factualism'. 'Anti-realism' would be a little less ugly, and is perhaps more widely used in this context. However, it is widely used for other programmes as well. 'Non-cognitivism' suffers from the opposite problem, being largely confined to the ethical case. A non-factualist thus holds that

there are certain utterances whose grammatical form is that of statements of fact, but whose linguistic role is actually quite different.

Further philosophical consequences will usually be held to flow from this linguistic insight. If nothing else it allows the non-factualist to dismiss previous philosophical concerns about the nature of the 'facts' in question. An emotivist will say for example that the traditional philosophical problem of the nature of good and evil rests on a misconception about the language of morality. As I said, ethics is by no means the only branch of philosophy whose practitioners have been attracted to non-factualism. Aesthetic judgements, mathematical statements, theoretical sentences in science, Lockean secondary qualities, knowledge claims, meaning ascriptions, indicative and subjunctive conditionals, and probabilistic and modal judgements: all of these topics have been given non-factualist treatments, and readers may well be able to add to the list.

This book is not about any of these topics as such. Its initial concern lies rather at the next level of generality, with the foundations and hence the viability of non-factualism itself. In particular it is concerned with the nature of the distinction between factual and non-factual uses of language. I am going to argue that the view of this distinction normally taken for granted by non-factualists is radically mistaken. Non-factualists have taken the issue to concern the distribution in language of a property that we may call 'statementhood'. Their claim is then that this property is less extensive than we ordinarily assume. Certain classes of utterance – moral judgements, or whatever – appear to possess it but actually lack it. Once the issue is couched in these terms the important questions become 'What does the property of statementhood consist in?' and 'How do we determine that a particular kind of discourse possesses or lacks the property so construed?' In other words, non-factualism then calls for an *analysis* of statement of fact – preferably, of course, an analysis that serves to support the view that there are fewer statements in language than we initially suppose.

The main task of the first part of the book will be to challenge this analytic perspective. I shall argue that of the available ways of cashing out the notion of statement of fact, none provides what the non-factualist evidently requires: a means to exclude the possibility

that there are actually more statements than the non-factualist holds there to be. Indeed, we shall see that none of the available analyses can exclude the possibility that *all* linguistic utterances are fact-stating.

More in a moment on the structure of this argument. I want to make it clear first of all that the book is not against non-factualism as such. On the contrary, I am going to defend a version of non-factualism, albeit an unorthodox one, and argue that it vindicates the non-factualists' concern with language as a route to enlightenment on a range of philosophical topics. At the very least it vindicates the intuition that there is something unusual about the language of morality, probability, conditionals and a range of other topics with which non-factualists have been concerned.

In particular, therefore, the book is not aligned with the influential view that in virtue of some rather simplistic mistakes about language, non-factualism itself is misconceived. As I shall explain, this view stems particularly from the Fregean tradition in modern philosophy of language. Like non-factualism itself, this tradition is committed, by and large, to the existence in language of a distinction between fact-stating or assertoric discourse and discourse of other kinds. The conflict arises as to where this distinction should be drawn. A non-factualist wants to narrow the class of genuine statements. A Fregean, on the other hand, is inclined to do exactly the opposite – to construe the bounds of assertoric discourse as widely as possible. We shall see that this inclination is grounded particularly in the role that truth plays in Fregean linguistic theory. Its effect is that non-factualism, the epitome of philosophy in the linguistic style, comes ironically to be rejected by the philosophy of language itself.

In criticizing the usual presentation of non-factualism, how then do I fail to align myself with its Fregean critics? By rejecting the principle that non-factualists and Fregeans have in common, namely that there is a real property of statementhood, or some such, whose distribution in language can be a matter for dispute. As I said, I argue in part I that however we try to characterize this supposed property, we are left with no basis on which to show that it applies to some utterances but not to others. In particular, we cannot exclude the possibility that all utterances are statements: an admission that

would be as unacceptable to (most) Fregeans as it would be to non-factualists.

I shall describe the conflict between non-factualism and Fregean semantics in more detail in the next two sections. Its effect, I think, has been to stunt the development of an adequate theory of the linguistic notions on which non-factualism depends. Both sides suffer as a result. For its part, non-factualism has not died out. It remains popular in traditional strongholds, such as ethics and aesthetics, and it continues to win converts elsewhere. As always, however, it lacks adequate conceptual foundations. On the other side, I think that contemporary philosophy of language has suffered from a failure to take seriously the non-factualist's concerns. The notions non-factualism appeals to – factuality, statement, truth, and so on – are central to an understanding of language. By focusing on some of the hard cases, non-factualism offers a particularly fruitful perspective on these notions. To dismiss non-factualism is to miss this perspective.

The book thus approaches the philosophy of language by way of linguistic philosophy. The needs of non-factualism, as viewed in the light of part I, lead in part II to a novel account of truth. One of the advantages of this account is its ability to deal with these difficult cases, but its interest and application is more general. Its novelty, by contemporary standards, lies in the fact that it is explanatory rather than analytic. By this I mean that the question it addresses is not so much 'What is truth?' as 'What use is the concept of truth, to creatures like us?' In other words it seeks to explain our possession of the notion of truth in terms of its function in a linguistic community. It is a genealogical theory. It asks why we should ever have developed such a notion.

I shall have more to say later on about the distinction between analytic and explanatory theories. In case naturalists in the audience are already tempted to leave, however, I emphasize now that the proposed account will be thoroughly naturalistic. For any concept in common use there are (at least) two possible naturalistic accounts of how it got there. One approach is to analyse the concept concerned in naturalistic terms, and hence explain its use in terms of some general account of our reaction to our natural environment. But another – often overlooked, I think – is to find some non-referential

function for the concept in the lives of natural creatures such as ourselves. The latter approach is most clearly appropriate in cases in which we have reason to deny referents to the concepts concerned – religious concepts, or those of certain former scientific theories, for example. It is not excluded in other cases, however, and the proposed account of truth will be of this kind.

In view of the wide importance of the notion of truth in contemporary philosophy, this may seem a case in which a solution outgrows the problem from which it stems. Some readers will inevitably feel that in grounding such an account of truth on the needs of non-factualism, I use a small tail to wag a very large dog. Others, more favourably disposed to the general approach of part II, will feel that the dog is quite capable of wagging itself.

To the former objection I would reply that if the argument of part I goes through then it is not simply non-factualists who need a new approach to truth and related notions. Their Fregean opponents should be equally concerned by the failure of the usual ways of construing assertoric discourse. That said, non-factualism provides a valuable guide to and constraint on alternative approaches. One of the advantages of the account of truth proposed in part II is that it does make very good sense of non-factualist intuitions. Moreover, non-factualist concerns are a powerful antidote to another non-analytic approach to truth which has had significant support in recent years. This approach reacts to the perceived failure of attempts to analyse truth by dismissing the problem, recommending instead that we change the subject and stop worrying about truth. In drawing our attention to the limits of truth, non-factualism does much to counter this unhealthy temptation to let a sleeping dog lie.

I have more sympathy with the latter objection – the view that the proposed account of truth might be motivated without reference to the needs of non-factualism. I would simply encourage the reader whose interest is more in the dog than the tail to feel free to begin at part II. Chapter 6, sections 1 to 5 of chapter 7 and chapter 9 deal largely with the general account of truth. They make little reference to non-factualism and the concerns of part I, and might be read independently. The remainder of chapter 7 and chapter 8 apply the general account to the non-factualist cases, and might be read next. Part I would then recommend itself to the reader who found the

orientation implausible, but was curious to see where I had gone astray. This approach to the book aside, I have starred a number of sections to indicate that they may be omitted without serious discontinuity.

Who then might profitably read this book? First, I think, anyone with an interest in non-factualism in any of the areas in which it has been applied. I imagine that most such readers will take it that they have a reasonably clear conception of what distinguishes fact-stating discourse, and therefore as to why a non-factualist interpretation might be judged appropriate in any particular case. Part I aims to shake such confidence, and part II to show what might replace it. Secondly, I recommend the book to those with an active disinterest in non-factualism – those in particular who take its misconceptions to have been exposed by contemporary philosophy of language. Here too part I aims to undermine such prejudices. And thirdly and no doubt most numerously, I recommend it to anyone with an interest in truth. The account of truth here offered is novel and potentially important. The route will be unfamiliar to most readers, but I think the result will repay their efforts.

The remainder of this chapter is in four sections. The next, section 1.2, outlines the historical background to the conflict between non-factualism and contemporary philosophy of language. In section 1.3 I explain how the conflict can be thought of as a disagreement concerning the extension of the property of statementhood in language, and therefore how I propose to attack the common assumption that there is such a property. Section 1.4 is then a brief guide to the argument of part I, and section 1.5 some remarks about orientation of the alternative programme to be developed in part II.

1.2 NON-FACTUALISM AND FREGEAN SEMANTICS

With the benefit of hindsight, at any rate, it is clear that non-factualism predates the linguistic movement of the mid-twentieth century. In ethics it traces its origins at least to Hume, who may be regarded as an early emotivist. Hume seems to have taken a similar view of causal judgements: namely that they do not refer to a realm of causal facts, but rather express our expectations, formed on the

basis of observed regularities. But the great popularity of non-factualism in this century – indeed the recognition that Hume should be seen in these terms – seems largely associated with the linguistic turn. In those halcyon days after the war the non-factualist techniques were applied to a wider and wider range of traditional philosophical topics.

In the 1960s, however, non-factualism acquired a reputation as a cheap approach to subtle philosophical problems: too quick to claim new territory, and too slow to justify its existing claims. The reputation is not entirely undeserved. The non-factualists of the 1950s do seem to have paid too little attention to the foundations of their own position. But it also owes something to the fact that the approach had the misfortune to coincide with what, from the non-factualist's point of view, was a particularly inhospitable period in the philosophical study of language itself. For non-factualism is at odds with a view that at this period philosophers of language had increasing reason to uphold – the view that assertion or statement of fact is the central and primary use of language, rather than one use among others of equal significance.

At first sight, indeed, a reader might gain the impression that there is no place for the notion of a non-fact-stating use of language in contemporary philosophy of language. Writers will refer, for example, to the task of specifying the truth conditions of 'the sentences of a language', as if there were no such thing as a sentence without truth conditions – as an utterance whose point is not to state that certain conditions obtain. As it stands, however, this may be said to reflect a benign idealization, not inconsistent with a more pluralistic view of natural language. The real basis of the doctrine of the primacy of assertion lies deeper, I think, in the Fregean use of the notion of truth.

Once truth is part of a philosopher's repertoire, there are at least two routes to the primacy of assertion. One turns on the fact that a systematic approach to the theory and taxonomy of language will need to distinguish the 'genuine' uses of languages, to which the theory should be expected to apply, from various sorts of pseudo-linguistic noise – for example the kind of noises we make for dog rousing, baby settling and the like. A natural suggestion is that the genuine uses of language are the sentential utterances. (Thus

Davidson 1984, p. 60: 'In defining sentencehood what we capture, roughly, is the idea of an independently meaningful expression.') In order to apply this suggestion, we have to know what to count as a sentence. If the notion of truth is already at hand, it may suggest the following solution: a sentence is the bearer of a truth value. The significant utterances are those that are capable of being true or false: in other words (or so it seems), the assertions, or statements.

In practice this route to the primacy of assertion is overshadowed by another. The notion of truth not only promises to delineate the raw material for a systematic theory of language; it also offers an approach to problem of meaning – an approach developed since the 1960s in the influential work of Davidson and his followers. (See particularly Davidson 1984, essays 1 to 5; and Evans and McDowell (eds) 1976.) Davidson proposes that a systematic theory of meaning for a language – a theory that relates meaning to syntactic structure, in such a way as to show how the meanings of complex sentences depend on those of their constituents – should be a systematic theory of the truth conditions of the sentences of the language concerned. He suggests also that this truth theory be modelled on Tarski's definition of truth for formal languages. Such a theory is bound to accord a central place to those linguistic expressions that can be said to have truth values (and hence truth conditions). At first sight, indeed, there seems to be room for nothing else.

It may seem then that whichever route it takes to the doctrine that assertion is the primary use of language, a Fregean theory of language should be embarrassed by the existence of utterances such as questions and commands. These would appear to be complete, independent, meaningful uses of language, and yet not to be assertions – to lack truth values, for example. However, there are at least two ways in which a Fregean theory might deal with these cases. One way, obviously, would be to claim that questions, commands and the like do have truth values after all. Questions and commands would thus be construed as special kinds of assertions – perhaps as reflexive assertions about their speakers. As we shall see in chapter 3, this option has been explored by some of the proponents of the truth-conditional approach to general semantics.

On the whole, however, advocates of Fregean general semantics have preferred a less radical solution, turning on the Fregean

distinction between sense and force. Roughly, the idea is to confine the significance of the notion of a truth condition to the determination of a certain core factor in the meaning of an utterance (its *sense);* and to regard the complete meaning of an utterance as a product of this factor and another (its *force).* Thus the meaning of the question 'Has the dog been fed?' will be explained as a product of the interrogative force (here indicated by the interrogative mood) and of a sense that the sentence shares with its assertoric transform, 'The dog has been fed.'

This solution enables a Fregean theory of meaning to accommodate non-assertoric utterances. Indeed, in principle it allows for the assertoric mode of utterance to be treated as simply one among many. Each mode calls for an account of its peculiar *pragmatic* significance. The assertoric mode might be said to be distinguished by the convention that in using it, speakers aim to utter true sentences; the imperative, by the convention that speakers utter sentences they require their audience to make true; and so on. In principle, the list could be very long indeed.

In practice, however, the theorist has a strong incentive to peg the boundaries of the class of assertions as widely as possible, at the expense of non-assertoric varieties of force – to expand the semantic component of a theory of meaning at the expense of the pragmatic. Faced with a new linguistic expression, the theorist has to decide whether its contribution to the meaning of a sentence consists in a modification of sense or an effect on force. The former answer has the advantage, for a Fregean, that it brings the case within the scope of the core component of the general theory of meaning. It avoids the need for a further addition to the supplementary theory of force. The latter answer, on the other hand, is a threat to the simplicity and comprehensiveness of the Fregean approach.

Most seriously, however, the latter answer would undermine the Fregean's claim to provide a systematic account of meaning. As Davidson emphasizes, the great advantage of the truth-theoretic approach is that it promises to account for the finite-based 'creativity' of language use – the ability of speakers to use and interpret a potentially infinite number of novel utterances. It does so by linking syntactic structure to conditions for truth. The significance of sentence-forming components is explained in terms of their

contribution to the truth conditions of sentences in which they occur. On this view then, the open-endedness of language simply mirrors the open-endedness of possible truth conditions. This elegant solution would be crippled by the admission of a dimension of linguistic creativity not matched to a range of truth conditions. If sentences expressing moral judgements do not have truth values, for example, then the infinity of novel utterances we can generate from moral sentences (using the ordinary logical connectives, say) cannot be matched to a corresponding infinity of truth conditions; and our capacity to understand such sentences cannot be explained in terms of such a correspondence.

So if creativity is to be confined to the semantic part of a theory of meaning, non-assertoric expressions can be tolerated only on the condition that they do not proliferate. Like questions and commands, non-assertoric expressions must not significantly combine with each other (or indeed with assertoric sentences) to generate further such expressions. However, this condition clearly excludes the cases of interest to non-factualists: expressions that behave like fact-stating sentences, at least to the extent of participating in the usual modes of supra-sentential complexity. Truth-conditional general semantics thus has a powerful incentive to oppose non-factualism in general, and to dispute its claims in individual cases. The same applies, incidentally, if truth is replaced with a notion such as 'assertibility'; the resulting theory will have the same reason to confine creativity to what it regards as the non-pragmatic component of a theory of meaning.

As a distinctive product of the linguistic movement in philosophy, non-factualism was thus overwhelmed by developments in the philosophy of language itself: by the growing interest in the project of a general theory of meaning, and the growing popularity of a Fregean approach to that project. This conflict has not had the attention it deserves, I think. Proponents of truth-conditional general semantics, and indeed of other Fregean approaches to a general theory of meaning, have shown a degree of professional blindness to the attractions of non-factualist treatments of particular topics; while on their side, non-factualists often seem to have been unaware of the problem of reconciling their theories with a workable approach to general semantics.

There are signs of renewed interest in non-factualism, of a new respectability. At least one source of this interest lies within the philosophy of language itself: in recent interest in Wittgenstein's later views on meaning, and in particular in the suggestion (notably by Kripke 1982) that the notion of meaning itself might require a non-factualist treatment. However, it seems to me that without proper attention to its foundations, and to its place in a general semantic programme, the approach will prove no more durable at the end of the century than it was in the middle. This book, then, is in part an investigation of these foundations, in the light of the conflict just described.

1.3 THE NATURE OF STATEMENT: CONFLICTING CONSTRAINTS AND A SCEPTICAL PROGRAMME

As I noted earlier, some Fregeans think that all discourse is assertoric (and hence, in effect, that all language is fact-stating); but most prefer to distinguish assertions from utterances such as questions and commands. The more common view is thus that the fact-stating/non-fact-stating distinction roughly corresponds to the English indicative/non-indicative distinction.

A major advantage of this view has been thought to be that it gives us an account of grammatical mood. Mood is a striking feature of natural languages, whose existence we might expect a theory of language to be able to explain. It has been widely assumed that an adequate explanation would come in two parts. The first would identify some property characteristic of just those speech acts for which we do employ the indicative mood; while the second would consist in the claim that, by convention, the indicative mood is used to 'mark' the performance of a linguistic act with this particular property. This view of mood – the *marker view,* as I shall call it – thus takes the indicative mood to be the conventional sign of a certain property, or factor, in the meaning of an utterance. The following remarks are representative; they come from a recent text on mood by the linguist F. R. Palmer.

> It is undoubtedly the case that most, perhaps all, languages have a clear way of indicating that the speaker is making a

> statement that he believes to be true. This is what may be called the Declarative – the grammatical form that is typically used for such statements. . . . In languages that have systems of mood, the indicative . . . typically indicates a declarative. (Palmer 1986, pp. 26-7)

> Where a language has an indicative and an imperative mood, these are the formal grammatical markers associated with the notions of statement and [command], though there is no exact one-to-one correspondence. (1986, p. 24)

As Palmer notes, the marker view needs to be qualified, in practice, to cope with various additional grammatical devices. In English, for example, stress and inflexion enable us to do many things with indicatives normally done with non-indicatives, and vice *versa*. However, a proponent of the marker view will take this to mean that in practice the marks are just more complicated than the initial account recognized. For present purposes we may ignore such refinements. As long as we don't criticize the marker view on the grounds that it misses these complexities, we won't go wrong in criticizing the simpler version.

In drawing the bounds of assertoric discourse at the limits of the indicative mood, most Fregeans thus align themselves with the marker view; and marker theorists will often characterize their position in terms of the Fregean force categories. The views thus have a common interest in the elucidation of these categories; in particular, in an account of assertion in terms of which the status of a given utterance can be established. For both views want to defend the claim that the non-indicatives are not assertions; and to be able to show, *pace* the non-factualist, that all indicatives are assertions.

The marker view will be the second front for the argument of the next four chapters. Our main target will be non-factualism, as usually presented. However, I want to show that the untenability of this position can be traced to its dependence on the analytic presupposition – on the view that there is a real property of statementhood, about whose distribution in language we are liable to be misled. I think that expressed in other terms, non-factualism contains important insights about language. So I shall need to exclude an alternative response to the argument – that of rejecting

non-factualism, while retaining its usual analytic footings. The marker view makes this response particularly appealing. In other words, we have to show that the failure of orthodox non-factualism is not attributable to the success of the marker view.

Fortunately the same style of argument works on both fronts. In effect, indeed, we shall be able to encompass both targets in a single advance, arguing first that the available analyses do not enable the non-factualist to hold a line short of the marker view itself; and secondly that they do not enable the marker theorist to hold the line at the indicatives (and so to exclude the possibility that all discourse is factual discourse).

I emphasize that the conclusion we are aiming for is not that all discourse is factual discourse; merely that neither non-factualists nor marker theorists can exclude this possibility. The argument will thus be a sceptical critique of the analytic assumption these views have in common – a demonstration that in neither case can analysis serve its intended purpose, in justifying a particular division of language into fact-stating and non-fact-stating parts.

1.4 GUIDE TO PART I

The structure of the next four chapters is as follows. In view of the importance of the notion of truth in general semantics and to the proposal of part II, chapter 2 treats non-factualists and marker theorists in tandem, examining the suggestion that assertions be distinguished in virtue of their connection with the properties of truth and falsity. Both sides have found this idea appealing. I argue, however, that without a prior understanding of the nature of assertion, we cannot restrict the notion of truth in such a way that not every utterance has the appropriate connection with these properties.

With truth out of the way it is then convenient to separate our targets. Chapter 3 concentrates on the marker view, arguing by way of *reductio* that if there were an underlying property of the kind the view requires – a property marked by the indicative mood – we could not exclude its possession by non-indicatives. This shows, in effect, that the line cannot be held at the limits of the indicative

mood. If all indicatives are fact-stating then there is no way to exclude the possibility that non-indicatives are also fact-stating. The remaining task is then to show that the line cannot be held within the indicative mood – that of the various possible accounts of the nature of statement, none suffices to show that some indicatives are not statements of fact.

In chapters 4 and 5, with this end in mind, we take the side of the non-factualist's opponent in particular cases. Chapter 4 argues that in two important and arguably representative cases (probability and moral judgement) such an opponent forces the non-factualist to rely on a psychological characterization of statement of fact – on the claim, essentially, that statement is the expression of belief. Chapter 5 then examines some possible bases for the required distinction between beliefs and other propositional attitudes. We find that the attempt to make good this distinction leads the non-factualist once more to appeal to truth – in effect, to the proposal rejected in chapter 2. The chapter concludes with a look at some recent arguments that seem to favour non-factualism about conditionals – confirming that here too non-factualism lacks the basis it requires.

1.5 THE EXPLANATORY TURN

One option at this point would be to blame the problem for the failure of the analytic solution – to conclude that there is simply nothing of philosophical interest to be said about a distinction in language of the kind non-factualism requires. Such 'quietism' has an evident appeal: to dismiss a problem is to save oneself the trouble of finding a solution. It is the relief the lapsed theist might feel in being able to put theological problems aside. But of course this advantage is like the claimed psychological benefits of religious faith itself. It is a motive for wanting a particular conclusion to be true, but not a reason for believing it so. In the present case there seem to be two good reasons to remain at least open-minded. Quietism cannot explain the significance of mood, or the continuing attraction of non-factualist approaches to particular philosophical topics.

Part II therefore explores a different response. This concentrates on the assumption that non-factualism needs to be couched as a

claim concerning the distribution of a certain property in language. I think that the prevalence of this assumption among non-factualists is particularly a product of their native tendency to set aside linguistic appearances. Non-factualists want to say that appearances are deceptive, that assertions cannot readily be distinguished in virtue of their syntactical form. This is needed to explain how more traditional philosophical theories can have been led astray. And there must be something in the picture for these theories to have been wrong about – in other words, it seems, some underlying property that syntax can mislead us about. Ask what property this is, and one is committed to what I have called the analytic programme.

The solution, I think, is to recognize that there is room for deceptiveness at the syntactical level itself. An expression that behaves as an assertion in most respects and circumstances might none the less behave differently in minor respects or unusual circumstances. If the differences are then overshadowed by the likenesses, it is easy to see how interpreters might be led astray. With the deceptiveness of linguistic appearances explained in these terms, non-factualism doesn't need to appeal to linguistic categories underlying usage. So the non-factualist no longer owes us an analysis of statementhood. Non-factualism simply doesn't need to appeal to any such property. True, it ought to explain the syntactical anomalies to which it does now appeal – the features of usage that distinguish moral judgements, probabilistic claims, or whatever. As we shall see, however, these anomalies can be explained without being taken to reflect any underlying semantic distinction.

What are these anomalies in usage, and what is the standard pattern from which they depart? We shall see that both involve the notions of truth and falsity. Dealing first with the ordinary use of these notions, I shall propose that we explain it in functional and evolutionary terms. The main idea will be that in virtue of the normativity of truth and falsity, speakers are encouraged to resolve disagreements. This has long term survival advantages. On the whole, it improves the behavioural commitments with which language users meet the world. As I said earlier, this is not intended to be an analysis of truth. It is a genealogical theory, an explanation as to why a language community might come to possess such a notion. It is comparable for example to a biological view of the

origins of morality – the view say that human societies tend to evolve such a value system in virtue of the communal advantages that flow from its regulative effects.

Returning to non-factualism, we shall see that this account of truth leaves room for certain borderline cases – cases in which the use of truth and falsity departs from the standard pattern. These variations turn out to be explicable in similar terms to the standard pattern itself. Moreover, they appear to correlate well with the cases in which non-factualism has seemed attractive. The explanatory perspective thus provides a sympathetic reconstruction of non-factualist intuitions – while vindicating, in a sense, the popular conception that truth is at the basis of the fact-stating/non-fact-stating distinction. It also finds a place for the non-indicatives.

It will be necessary to defend this account against the charge that it merely offers another analysis of the nature of statement. An obvious source of such a charge will be the fact that the account professes to explain variations in a pattern of usage across language. Hence it needs apparently to appeal to some more basic differences between utterances, or possible uses of language. Could not these differences themselves be made the basis of a characterization of fact-stating discourse? The reply to this will turn particularly on holistic considerations – the crucial point being that the relevant underlying difference need not show up in the individual case.

We began with the conflict between non-factualism and the Fregean programme for general semantics over the scope of the fact-stating/non-fact-stating distinction. In the final chapter I shall indicate how this conflict is resolved by the proposed treatment of truth. I shall locate the proposed account in relation to some recent discussions of realism and objectivity. And I shall finish with some comments on the significance of the explanatory perspective in other areas – particularly its relevance to the problem of the status of folk psychology.

PART I

A Sceptic's Guide to the Matter of Fact