The Question of Realism

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My aim in this paper is to help lay the conceptual and methodological foundations for the study of realism. I come to two main conclusions: first, that there is a primitive metaphysical concept of reality, one that cannot be understood in fundamentally different terms; and second, that questions of what is real are to be settled upon the basis of considerations of *ground*. The two conclusions are somewhat in tension with one another, for the lack of a definition of the concept of reality would appear to stand in the way of developing a sound methodology for determining its application; and one of my main concerns has been to show how the tension between the two might be resolved.

The paper is in two main parts. In the first, I point to the difficulties in making out a metaphysical conception of reality. I begin by distinguishing this conception from the ordinary conception of reality (§1) and then show how the two leading contenders for the metaphysical conception—the factual and the irreducible—both appear to resist formulation in other terms. This leads to the quietist challenge, that questions of realism are either meaningless or pointless (§4); and the second part of the paper (§§5-10) is largely devoted to showing how this challenge might be met. I begin by introducing the notion of ground (§5) and then show how it can be used as a basis for resolving questions both of factuality (§§6-7) and of irreducibility (§§8-9). I conclude with some remarks on the essential unity of these two questions and of the means by which they are to be answered (§10).

1. Reality

Among the most important issues in philosophy are those concerning the reality of this or that feature of the world. Are there numbers or other abstract objects? Is everything mental or everything physical? Are there moral facts? It is

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through attempting to resolve such questions that philosophy holds out the promise of presenting us with a world-view, a picture of how the world is and of our place within it.

However, as is so often true in philosophy, the difficulties begin with the formulation of the question rather than with the attempt at an answer. The antirealist about numbers maintains:

> There are no numbers.

But most of us, in our non-philosophical moments, are inclined to think:

> There are prime numbers between 2 and 6.

And yet the second of these claims implies that there are numbers, which is incompatible with the first of the claims. Similarly, the antirealist about morality maintains:

> There are no moral facts.

But he also thinks:

> Killing babies for fun is wrong.

And yet the second claim implies that it is a fact that killing babies for fun is wrong and, since this is a moral fact, its existence is incompatible with the first claim.

How, in the light of such possible conflicts, should the realist and antirealist claims be construed? Should we take the conflict between antirealism and received non-philosophical opinion to be a genuine conflict or not? And if not, then how is the apparent conflict between them to be dispelled?

If we take the conflict to be genuine, we obtain what has been called an "eliminative" or "skeptical" conception of antirealism. The antirealist will be taken to dispute what we ordinarily accept, the realist to endorse it. Thus the antirealist about numbers will be taken to deny, or to doubt, that there are prime numbers between 2 and 6; and likewise, the moral antirealist will be taken to deny, or to doubt, that killing babies for fun is wrong.

Of course, the mere rejection of what we ordinarily accept is perverse and so presumably the interest of antirealism, on this conception, must derive from the assumption that philosophy is able to provide us with some special reasons for doubting what we ordinarily accept. Thus the antirealist may attempt to convince us that we have no good reason to believe in a realm of abstract objects with which we can have no causal contact or that, in moral matters, we can have no justification for going beyond the mere expression of approval or disapproval. Our world-view will therefore be the product of dealing with these doubts, either by laying them to rest or by retreating into skepticism.

Anti-realism, as so understood, has a long and illustrious history; and certainly its interest is not to be denied. However, in this age of post-Moorean modesty, many of us are inclined to doubt that philosophy is in possession of arguments that might genuinely serve to undermine what we ordinarily believe. It may perhaps be conceded that the arguments of the skeptic appear to be utterly compelling; but the Mooreans among us will hold that the very plausibility of our ordinary beliefs is reason enough for supposing that there *must* be something wrong in the skeptic's arguments, even if we are unable to say what it is. In so far, then, as the pretensions of philosophy to provide a world-view rest upon its claim to be in possession of the epistemological high ground, those pretensions had better be given up.

Is there room for another form of antirealism—and an-

other account of philosophy's pretensions—that does not put them in conflict with received opinion? If there is, then it requires that we be able consistently to affirm that something is the case and yet deny that it is really the case.[1] It requires, in other words, a *metaphysical* conception of reality, one that enables us to distinguish, within the sphere of what is the case, between what is really the case and what is only apparently the case.

But what might this metaphysical conception of reality be? Two main answers to this question have been proposed. According to the first, metaphysical reality is to be identified with what is "objective" or "factual." The antirealist, on this conception, denies that there are any facts "out there" in virtue of which the propositions of a given domain might be true. The propositions of the domain are not in the "business" of stating such facts; they serve merely to indicate our engagement with the world without stating, in objective fashion, how the world is. As familiar examples of such a position, we have expressivism in ethics, according to which ethical judgements are mere expressions of attitude; formalism in mathematics, according to which mathematical statements are mere moves within a system of formal rules; and instrumentalism in science, according to which scientific theories are mere devices for the prediction and control of our environment. According to the second conception, metaphysical reality is to be identified with what is "irreducible" or "fundamental." On this view, reality is constituted by certain irreducible or fundamental facts; and in denying reality to a given domain, the antirealist is claiming that its facts are all reducible to facts of some other sort.

[1] I here ignore the possibility that reconciliation is to be achieved by modifying our view of received opinion, either by not taking it to be matter of what we *believe* or by supposing that its content is other than what we naturally take it to be. These attempts at reconciliation, to my mind, merely shift the conflict with received opinion to another place.

Thus the ethical naturalist will claim that every ethical fact is reducible to naturalistic facts, the logicist that every mathematical fact is reducible to facts of logic, and the phenomenalist that every fact about the external world is reducible to facts about our sense-data.

We might see the antifactualist and reductionist as indicating two different ways in which a proposition may fail to "correspond" to the facts. For it may fail even to point in the direction of the facts, as it were; or it may fail to indicate, at the most fundamental level, how the facts are. In the one case, the propositions of a given domain will not even *represent* the facts, while in the other, the propositions will not *perspicuously* represent the facts—there will be some divergence between how the facts are "in themselves" and how they are represented as being. If either of these metaphysical conceptions of reality is viable, then it would appear to provide a way of upholding a non-skeptical form of antirealism. For it will be perfectly compatible with affirming any given proposition to deny that it is genuinely factual or genuinely fundamental. The expressivist, for example, may affirm that killing babies for fun is wrong and yet deny that, in so affirming, he is making a factual claim; and the logicist may affirm that 5 + 7 = 12 and yet deny that he is thereby stating something fundamental. Truth is one thing, metaphysical status another.

But the problem now is not to defend the antirealist position but to see how it could even be intelligible. Consider the antifactualist in ethics. Since he is assumed to be non-skeptical, he will presumably be willing to affirm that killing babies for fun is wrong. But then should he not be prepared to admit that he is thereby making a claim about how things are? And is not this a claim about how things are in the world—the only world that we know, that includes all that is the case and excludes whatever is not the case? So is he

not then committed to the proposition's being factual?

Of course, the antirealist will insist that he has been misunderstood. He will maintain that the proposition that killing babies for fun is wrong does not make a claim about the real world as he conceives it and that, even though it may be correct to affirm that killing babies for fun is wrong, there still is no fact "out there" in the real world to which it is answerable. But the difficulty then is in understanding the intended contrast between his world—the real world "out there"—and the world of common mundane fact. For what room is there, in our ordinary conception of reality, for any further distinction between what is genuinely a fact and merely the semblance of a fact?

Similarly, the reductionist in ethics will claim that ethical facts are reducible to facts of another sort and, on this ground, deny that they are real. Now it may be conceded that there is a sense in which certain facts are more fundamental than others; they may serve to explain the other facts or perhaps, in some other way, be constitutive of them. But how does this provide a ground for denying reality to the other facts? Indeed, that they had an explanation or constitution in terms of the real facts would appear to indicate that they themselves were real.

What then is this conception of reduction for which the reducible will not be real?[2] Just as there was a difficulty in understanding a metaphysical conception of the facts, one that might serve to sustain a metaphysical form of antirealism, so there is a difficulty in understanding a metaphysical conception of reduction. In either case, we appear to avoid the absurdities of skepticism but only by buying in to the obscurities of metaphysics. One kind of problematic high ground has simply been exchanged for another.

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[2]Many philosophers do not take reduction to have antirealist import. Their concept of reduction seems to correspond more closely to what I later call "ground."

2. Factuality

Is there any way out of the previous difficulties? Can an intelligible form of antifactualism or reductionism be sustained? Let us discuss each question in turn.

In the case of antifactualism, it has commonly been supposed that there is some feature of nondeclarative pronouncements—such as 'Ouch!' or 'Get out of here!'—that obviously renders them nonfactual and is also possessed, though not so obviously, by the declarative propositions of a given domain.[3] Thus despite these propositions being declarative in form, they are to be classified with the nondeclarative pronouncements as nonfactual. So for example, on the traditional account of this sort, a "noncognitive" or "nonfactual" proposition is taken to be one that is not a candidate for being true or false, and the antirealist is taken to deny that the propositions from a given disputed class are candidates for being true or false.

But the problem with this approach is that what is regarded as a non-obvious feature of the disputed propositions is in fact a feature that they obviously lack. Thus, given that killing babies for fun is wrong, it follows—in the ordinary, straightforward sense of 'true'—that it is true that killing babies for fun is wrong; and so the proposition that killing babies for fun is wrong is a candidate for being true or false after all. The traditional noncognitivist must therefore either be using the terms 'true' and 'false' in some special metaphysically inflated sense that still needs to be explained, or he should reckon himself a complete skeptic who is unwilling to affirm any proposition whatever from the disputed domain.

Nor does it help to appeal to other obvious factual characteristics of propositions in place of candidacy for truth or

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[3]I here slide over the difficulty of whether the bearers of nonfactuality can properly be said to be propositions.

falsehood. One might suggest that a factual proposition is one capable of being believed or asserted, or of figuring in inferences, or of being embedded in larger linguistic contexts. But the same point applies. For in the ordinary sense of 'believe', 'assert', etc., we do have moral beliefs and make moral assertions, we do draw moral conclusions, and we do embed moral propositions in larger linguistic contexts; and similarly for the propositions of mathematics or of science or of other disputed areas. Indeed, once given one of these characteristics, the rest seem to follow—their possession is, for the most part, a "package deal." There therefore seems to be no reasonable hope of identifying a non-skeptical form of factuality in terms of the possession of some of these characteristics as opposed to the others.

Any reasonable, non-skeptical view should therefore grant that propositions of the kind that figure in realist disputes will possess all of the obvious trappings of factuality: they will be capable of being true or false, believed or asserted, embedded in larger linguistic contexts, and so on. The antifactualist should therefore be a *quasi-realist* and attribute to the nonfactual all those features that were traditionally thought to belong to the factual. But if the nonfactual is not to be distinguished from the factual in terms of the obvious trappings of factuality, then how is it to be distinguished? What, in a word, is the difference between *quasi* realism and *genuine* realism?

Various more sophisticated criteria that appear to avoid these difficulties have been proposed.[4] I shall focus on one, Dummett's, according to which realism for a given area of discourse is primarily a matter of its conforming to the Principle of Bivalence, the principle that every statement of the

discourse should be either true or false.[5] I shall argue that the criterion, even when supplemented, is unsatisfactory, and then attempt to draw some broader conclusions.

We should note right away that the proposal, even if otherwise acceptable, does not answer to our needs. For we were after a non-skeptical form of antirealism, one that was not at odds with received opinion. But in regard to many areas of discourse, the received opinion is that the statements *are* subject to Bivalence; and so any form of Dummettian antirealism must to that extent be skeptical. Thus in so far as philosophers have wished to espouse a completely non-skeptical form of antirealism, the Dummettian criterion must be considered unsatisfactory.

Another problem concerns the application of the criterion to particular statements. For surely we wish to be able to affirm or deny that a particular statement—such as '7 + 5 = 12'—has realist import, that it is or is not answerable to an "external" reality. But how is the criterion to be applied in such a case? Presumably by associating the statement with a particular area of discourse. But which one? The answer may well depend upon what we say. In the case of '7 + 5 = 12', for example, the area of discourse could be the language of equational arithmetic (without variables or quantifiers), the first-order language for addition, or the first- order language for addition and multiplication. But the finitist may well accept Bivalence for the first language though not the others, while the constructivist may well accept Bivalence for the first two languages though not the third. Thus no stable answer is assured. (The problem here is analogous to the problem of determining a reference class for "single case"

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[4]A useful survey of such criteria is given in Wright [1992] and some general critiques of them are to be be found in Rosen [1994], Dworkin [1996] and Stroud [2000], chaps 1-2.

[5]A similar proposal has been made by Gaifman [1975]. It should be noted that Dummett [1993b], p. 467, is not inclined, as I am, to assimilate the nonfactualism of a sophisticated form of expressivism with the nonfactualism of a constructivist position. However, none of my criticisms will turn upon making this assimilation.

probabilities, and it besets several other criteria for realism as well.)

Even in application to areas of discourse, Bivalence is not, on its own, sufficient for realism. A simple counter-example runs as follows.[6] Suppose that an antirealist becomes completely opinionated about the given discourse: he acquires a view (for reasons internal to the discourse, though perhaps very bad ones) on the true/false answer to every particular question that might arise. He would then be committed to each instance of Bivalence, and as long as he was aware of having become completely opinionated, he would also be committed to Bivalence holding of every statement of the discourse. But it seems absurd to suppose that, on that fateful day in which the last question falls under the sway of his opinion, he is destined to become a realist. How can his being an antirealist prevent him from forming an opinion on the matter?

Clearly, acceptance of Bivalence for a given area of discourse is not enough to guarantee realism. It has to be acceptance for the right reason. But is there any way to supplement Bivalence so as to ensure that the acceptance will be for the right reason? Two proposals for supplementing Bivalence have been considered (often in combination)—one epistemic and the other semantic.

According to the epistemic proposal, the notion of truth that figures in Bivalence must be such that it is possible for a statement from the given discourse to be true and yet unknowable—or even lacking in any possible evidence in favor of its truth. Indeed, if a given statement were true and yet unknowable, then that would appear to provide a strong

reason for taking the statement to have realist import quite apart from any discourse in which it might be placed.

But I believe that even this plausible proposal is subject to counterexample, though of a more sophisticated sort. Consider a semantics in which the meaning of a sentence is given by the evidential situations in which its assertion is warranted. The guiding principle of the semantics is that one is warranted in asserting a sentence in a given evidential situation iff the possibility of its vindication is never foreclosed, i.e., iff for any improvement in one's evidential situations there is a further improvement in which its assertion would be warranted.[7] It should then be clear that the Law of Excluded Middle, and hence the Principle of Bivalence, will be valid, i.e., be warranted in any evidential situation.[8] For take any improvement in that situation. Then either it warrants $\neg A$ and hence has an improvement (viz. itself) that warrants $(A \vee \neg A)$, or it has an improvement which warrants A and hence warrants $(A \vee \neg A)$.

Clearly, such a semantics might be adopted by an antirealist. And so it remains to show how such an antirealist might be justified in maintaining that there is no possible evidence for or against the truth of a given statement A. It is not clear how this might be, for any given evidential situation will either warrant not-A or will permit an

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[6]See Edgington [1980-81] and Winkler [1985] for further criticisms of Bivalence as a sufficient condition. I also believe that there are problems with Bivalence as a necessary condition for realism even when the obvious sources of truth-value gaps (such as vagueness or reference-failure) are removed, but this is not something I shall discuss.

[7]Let us use '$t \models A$' for 't warrants A' and '$t \geq s$' for 't improves s' (I assume that any situation is an improvement upon itself). Molecular formulas within the proposed semantics may then be subject to the following clauses:
    (i) $t \models B\&C$ iff $t \models B$ and $t \models C$
    (ii) $t \models B \vee C$ iff $(\forall t^* \geq t)(\exists u \geq t^*)(u \models B$ or $u \models C)$
    (iii) $t \models \neg B$ iff $(\forall t^* \geq t)(\text{not-}(t^* \models B))$.
Given that atomic formulas p satisfy the non-foreclosure condition:
    (*) $t \models p$ iff $(\forall t^* \geq t)(\exists u \geq t^*)(u \models p)$
then so will every formula A.

improvement that warrants *A*. Our antirealist, however, may be working with an "objective" notion of warrant. It may be an objective matter—one to which he does not necessarily have epistemic access—what the possible evidential situations are and hence what they warrant. The statements in question might concern the external world, for example, and the evidential situations might be given by the courses of experience which someone might actually undergo. Our antirealist might then argue that even though I am objectively warranted in believing that McCavity was not here, at the scene of the crime, since no counter-evidence *would* ever present itself, still I can have no evidence for his having not been here, since I can have no basis for excluding the possibility of counter-evidence. Of course, our antirealist is to some extent a realist—for he is a realist about the objective possibilities of experience, but he is not a realist about the external world, which is what is here in question.

The second strategy is to provide a semantic supplement to Bivalence: not only must Bivalence hold, but it must be a semantical matter that it holds. But our previous counter-example still stands, since the validity of Bivalence *is* a semantical matter under the antirealist semantics that I proposed (given that there is a semantical underpinning for applying the Law of the Excluded Middle to statements of warrant). It therefore appears necessary to go deeper into the mechanism by which the language is to be interpreted. But what might that be? One suggestion is that we require "acceptance of classical two-valued semantics [...] in its entirety" (Dummett [1993], p. 468). This would require not only Bivalence but the exclusion of empty terms, the standard clauses for the connectives, and so on. But the problem now is that,

given that our antirealist is willing to accept Bivalence, it is not clear why he should be unwilling to accept the rest of the classical semantics—though, of course, under his own understanding of what this comes to. Another suggestion is that we require that our understanding of the language should be truth-conditional, that our grasp of the meaning of a statement should consist in knowledge of its truth-conditions. But although philosophers use this phraseology as if they knew what it meant, it is not at all clear that it can be explained in such a way as to both imply realism and yet not presuppose that the truth-conditions are already to be understood in realist fashion. One can, of course, insist that the relevant notion of truth should conform to Bivalence or be evidence-transcendent. But this then leads us back to our previous difficulties.

What, I believe, has made these various criteria so appealing is that it is often hard to see how one could plausibly maintain that a given criterion is satisfied (or not satisfied) and yet still be a realist (or antirealist). Realism about mathematics, for example, is a reason—and perhaps the only good reason—for holding that every mathematical statement is true or false or that there might be mathematical truths that are beyond our ken. But it should be recognized that, even though the existence of an external reality may make it plausible that our linguistic and epistemic contact with that reality is of a certain sort, this is not in what the externality of the reality consists. In thinking about these matters, we need to restore ourselves to a state of innocence in which the metaphysical claims are seen to be about the subject-matter in question—be it mathematics or morality or science—and not about our relationship to that subject-matter.

Indeed, a broader conclusion may be justified. For we

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[8]Dummett [1978], pp. 365-67, has reservations about making the transition from the Law to the Principle, but I do not believe that they apply in the present

case.

have seen that, even as we piled on the conditions, we were unable to find a sufficient condition for factualism (nor, I might add, for nonfactualism, not that this is a case that I have considered). This therefore suggests that there can be no sufficient condition at all for being factual (or nonfactual)—unless, of course, for the trivial reason that the condition cannot be satisfied or for the question-begging reason that a problematic conception of factuality has already been presupposed.

If this is right, then it means that it will not even be possible to provide an adequate formulation of any particular factualist or antifactualist position, i.e., one that will imply that the position is indeed committed to factualism or to antifactualism for the domain in question; and examination of the actual formulations of such positions bears this out. Consider expressivism, for example. The expressivist wishes to maintain that moral affirmations are expressive in much the same way as expressions such as 'Ouch'. But, of course, the mere claim that moral affirmations are expressive does not serve to distinguish his position from that of the moral realist, since even he may be willing to maintain that moral affirmations are used to express our moral attitudes as well as to report the moral facts. The expressivist must therefore be claiming that moral affirmations are *merely* expressive, that they have no other feature that serves to make them factual. Now in the case of 'Ouch' we can see why this should be so, since 'Ouch' is not used to say anything true or false. But it is on this exact point that moral affirmations differ from expressions such as 'Ouch'. Thus it remains completely opaque what exactly it is in the expressivist's position that obliges him to embrace the nonfactuality of moral discourse; and similarly for the other particular forms of antifactualism that have been proposed.

3. Reducibility

We turn to the second of the two metaphysical conceptions of reality, the conception of reality as irreducible. This conception can be no better off than the concept of reduction with which it is associated; and so we may ask, "What is it for one proposition (or statement or sentence) to be reducible to others?"

Three main lines of response to this question have been proposed. According to the first, reduction is a matter of logical analysis. To say that one sentence reduces to, or is analyzable in terms of, another is to say that they express the same proposition but that the grammatical form of the second is closer to the logical form of the proposition than the grammatical form of the first.[9] Thus reduction reveals a discrepancy between the "apparent" grammatical form of the sentence and the "genuine" logical form of the proposition and serves to bring the two in closer alignment. To take a paradigm example, the sentence 'The average American is 5 feet tall' will reduce to 'The sum of heights of all Americans divided by the number of Americans is 5 feet', since the latter brings us closer to the logical form of the proposition that is expressed.

This approach suffers from at least two problems of detail. First, it is unable to deal with one-many reductions. The philosopher who does not believe in conjunctive facts will want to say that the truth of the conjunction $S \& T$ reduces to the truth of its conjuncts S and T. But here there is no question of a single proposition being expressed on left and right. It is also unable to deal with one-one reductions in which the reducing sentence is merely sufficient for the sentence to be reduced. For example, when S is true and T false, we may wish to say that the truth of the disjunction $S \lor T$ reduces to

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[9]Sometimes the emphasis is on a correspondence with "facts" rather than propositions.

the truth of the disjunct *S*. But again, no single proposition is expressed.

A second difficulty concerns *de re* reductions. Just as there are *de re* modal claims that are to be distinguished from their *de dicto* counterparts, so there are *de re* reduction claims that are to be distinguished from the corresponding *de dicto* claims. Thus we may wish to claim not merely that the sentence 'The couple Jack and Jill is married' is reducible to the sentence 'Jack is married to Jill', but also that the satisfaction of the open sentence '*z* is married' by the couple Jack and Jill is reducible to the satisfaction of the open sentence '*x* is married to *y*' by Jack and Jill. But it is hard to see, on the proposed view, how this could be a case of logical analysis. For the proposition expressed by the open sentence '*z* is married' under the assignment of the couple to *z* is presumably the singular proposition that that couple is married and the proposition expressed by the open sentence '*x* is married to *y*' under the assignment of Jack to *x* and Jill to *y* is presumably the singular proposition that Jack is married to Jill; and yet these two propositions should be taken to be distinct since, without a fine-grained notion of propositional identity, we will be at a loss to explain how one grammatical form can be closer to the genuine logical form than another.[10]

It might be thought odd that we express a reduction of couples to their members by making reference to couples, since is not the point of the reduction to show that couples are a "logical fiction" and hence not really existent? But this line of thought represents a confusion between the skeptical and non-skeptical forms of antirealism. There being a logical fiction, in the relevant sense, does not prevent us from making *non-philosophical* claims about couples, such as that all the couples in the room are married; and no more should it prevent us from making *philosophical* claims about couples of the sort typified by reductions. It is merely that consistency demands that these claims themselves should, at some point, be reduced.[11]

The most serious difficulty with the present approach is that it rests upon a problematic conception of logical form. To maintain that a sentence concerning nations, say, expresses the same proposition, or states the same fact, as one concerning individuals and yet is less close in its form to that proposition or fact is already to buy into a metaphysically loaded conception of logical form. There is nothing beyond a metaphysical basis for making such a claim. One might attempt, of course, to provide an account of logical form in metaphysically neutral terms—perhaps in terms of what is required for a satisfactory explanation of 'truth-conditions' or valid inference. But in so far as the account is successful in this respect, its metaphysical significance will be unclear. Why should the most satisfactory account of valid inference or of truth-conditions have any implications for how the world really is unless this is something that is already required of such an explanation?

According to the second approach, reduction is a *semantical* matter. It is taken to be a relation that holds in virtue of the meaning of the sentences to which it applies; and what is most distinctive about this relation is that, given that one sentence reduces to others, it should be possible to acquire an understanding of the reduced sentence on the basis of an understanding of the sentences to which it reduces.

Such an approach avoids the previous difficulties over

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[10]The significance of de re reductive claims has not been properly appreciated. They enable one to achieve a huge simplification in the formulation of many reductions and in certain cases—such as the bundle theory of particulars—they are essential to understanding the very point of the reduction.

[11]Similarly, it is perfectly in order for the ethical antifactualist to express his view that there are no genuine moral properties in the form "For any moral property and any possible bearer of the property the bearer's possession of the property is a nonfactual matter." We quantify over all moral properties in order to express the view that none of them are "real."

one-many and one-one reductions, since there is nothing, in general, to prevent a sentence from simultaneously reducing to several sentences that jointly provide a sufficient condition—though perhaps not a necessary condition—for the truth of the given sentence.[12] But it still flounders over the problem of *de re* reductions. For where *c* is the couple Jack and Jill, *a* is Jack and *b* is Jill, there is no semantic connection between *c*'s being a married couple and *a*'s being married to *b*,[13] since there is nothing semantic that might serve to indicate that *a* and *b* are the individuals that compose *c*. There is, of course, a semantical implication from *a*'s being married to *b* to *a*-and-*b*'s being a married couple. But this is not what we are after, since we want direct reference to the couple *c* on the right and not indirect reference, via the components *a* and *b*. Or again, it may be an analytic truth that for any couple *c* there are individuals *a* and *b* that compose *c* and are such that *c*'s being married reduces to *a*'s being married to *b*. But this is a general claim and still leaves unexplained what it is for the particular reductions to hold. We might also note that the general formulation of the reduction in such cases is not always an analytic truth. For we may want to say that, for any quantity *q* of water, there are H_2O molecules m_1, m_2, ... such that the existence of *q* at a given time reduces to the existence of m_1, m_2, ... at that time; and this generalization is not *a priori* and hence presumably not analytic. Thus it is not even as if particular reductions can always be given a semantic backing.

Nor is it even clear that the existence of an analysis provides a *sufficient* condition for reducibility in the metaphysical sense. For let us grant that what it is for someone to be a bachelor is for him to be unmarried and to be a man. Are we

then obliged to say that the fact that someone is a bachelor *reduces* to the fact that he is unmarried and the fact that he is man and that there is therefore no real fact of his being a bachelor? Perhaps not. For we might believe that there really are complex attributes in the world and that their attribution cannot, for this reason, be reduced to the attribution of the simpler attributes of which they are composed. Thus even though we may explain their identity in terms of the simpler attributes, we do not reductively account for their attribution in those terms.

The lesson to be learnt from the foregoing criticisms, I believe, is that reduction should be construed as a metaphysical rather than as a linguistic or a semantical relation. In making claims of reduction, we wish to talk, not about our representation of the facts, but about the facts themselves. Thus in claiming that two nations' being at war reduces to such-and-such military activity on the part of their citizens, we are not making a claim about our language for describing nations and citizens, or even about our concepts of a nation or a citizen, but about the nations and citizens themselves and the connection between them. Again, we need to restore ourselves to a state of metaphysical innocence in which reduction is seen to concern the subject-matter itself and not the means by which it might be represented or cognized.

According to the third, more recent approach, reduction is a *modal* matter. One class of propositions will *reduce to*—or *supervene upon*—another if, necessarily, any truth from the one is entailed by truths from the other.[14] This approach avoids the previous difficulties over the possibility of *de re* reductions, since the propositions may themselves be *de re*; but it suffers from difficulties of its own. For one thing, it

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[12]Dummett propounds such a conception in [1993], pp. 56-7.

[13]Or to put it more linguistically, between the satisfaction of the condition '*z* is married' by *c* and the satisfaction of the condition '*x* is married to *y*' by *a* and *b*.

[14]Advocates of this approach include Armstrong [1997],p. 12, Chalmers [1996], p. 48, and Jackson [1998], p.5. Many philosophers, I should note, do not take supervenience to capture a metaphysically significant notion of reduction.

faces the earlier problem of the "reference class," for whether one proposition is reducible to others will depend upon the classes of proposition with which they are associated. It will also not be properly applicable to necessary domains, such as mathematics, since it is always a trivial matter that a necessary truth is entailed by any propositions whatever.

But even if we limit its application to contingent domains, there are two other serious shortcomings to the approach. In the first place, it is not able to capture the idea that the truth of a proposition must reduce to something more basic. Velocity at an instant, for example, supervenes on velocity over an interval and vice versa, and yet we cannot say, without circularity, that each reduces to the other. Nor does it help to insist that the supervenience be one-way. For suppose that there are three parameters and that the value of any one parameter supervenes on the values of the two others but not on the value of one of them alone. Then the value of each parameter will one-way supervene on the values of the others, and yet we cannot, without circularity, say that the value of each parameter is reducible to the value of the others. As a particular example, we might take the parameters to be the mass, volume and density of a given body.[15]

Finally, the approach is no better able than the first to capture the antirealist import of reductive claims. For as long as reduction is regarded as getting us closer to what is real, we will wish to deny the reality of any fact that reduces to something else. But then how could the mere existence of certain modal connections between one class of propositions and another serve to establish the unreality (or the reality) of the facts from either class?

Indeed, a broader conclusion may be justified, just as in the case of factuality. For it is hard to see how there could be

any sufficient condition for one proposition to be reducible to others (trivial and circular cases aside). For whatever the sufficient condition might be, its satisfaction would appear to be compatible with the adoption of a thorough-going realist position, one which took every single fact to be real, and hence compatible with the rejection of any given reductive claim.[16]

4. The Quietist Challenge

We see from the previous discussion that the prospects for defining the notions of factuality and reducibility in fundamentally different terms, or even for providing conceptually unproblematic sufficient conditions for their application, do not look good. Although we arrived at this negative conclusion as a result of detailed investigation, the conclusion could perhaps have been anticipated from the start. For we were after a form of antirealism that was not necessarily skeptical, at odds with received opinion. Now, presumably there is nothing special about the opinion's being received in this regard. In so far as an antirealist position is independent of such opinion it should be independent of all similar opinion, whether received or not. Indeed, central to our present understanding of antirealism is a distinction between what one might call "first-order" propositions, which merely say how things are without regard to their metaphysical status, and the corresponding "second-order" claims, which merely comment on the metaphysical status of the first-order propositions. What would then appear to guarantee the possibility of a non-skeptical form of antirealism is the *general* independence of the second-order claims, in this

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[15]For further discussion of these points, see Kim [1993], pp. 144-46, and the references contained therein.

[16]We should note an asymmetry in the two cases, however. For even though there may be no guarantee of nonfactuality, there will be a guarantee of nonreducibility. For if R is reducible to S then S will necessarily imply R and so the possible truth of S and $\neg R$ (a purely modal fact) will guarantee that R is not reducible to S.

sense, from the first-order propositions with which they deal. So, as long as the criterion of factuality or reducibility is stated in first-order terms, its inadequacy will simply follow from this general form of independence.[17] Skepticism has a very long arm; and if we are altogether to escape its grip, we must embrace doctrines of nonfactualism or reducibility that are free from any first-order encumbrance.

These results appear to be deeply disturbing, however. For if factuality or reducibility are not to be understood in ordinary first-order terms, then how are they to be understood? How are we to make sense of the idea that behind every putative fact there may or may not be something real in the world to which it corresponds? The results seem especially disturbing in the case of factuality. For there will be no first-order difference between factual and nonfactual propositions. The nonfactual propositions will be in the nature of imposters—with all of the usual trappings of factuality but none of the substance. They will be like "zombies" that display all of the outwards signs of consciousness without themselves being conscious. But then how are we to distinguish between the two? At least in the case of the zombies, we can perhaps tell from our own experience what it is like to be conscious. But in the present case, there would appear to be no special vantage point from which we could draw a distinction between what is real and what is merely a "shadow" cast by our language or thought. There is no stepping behind the putative facts to see what is really there.

It is considerations such as these that have led several present-day philosophers—the "quietists"—to conclude that the metaphysical notions of factuality and reducibility are devoid of content.[18] And, of course, once these notions go, then so does the metaphysical enterprise associated with them. Philosophy, on this way of thinking, should abandon its pretension of presenting us with a higher-order view of how the world really is. Or rather, if there is a view, it is that there is no such view to be had.

However, tempting as such a conclusion may be, it is not warranted by the evidence. For the difficulty in defining the notions may derive, not from their lack of content, but from their distinctive character. Indeed, it is hard to avoid the impression, once one surveys the various attempts at definition, that we have, in the conception of reality as objective or fundamental, a distinctively metaphysical idea. From this point of view, the attempt to define these notions in other terms would be akin to the naturalistic fallacy; and just as it would be a mistake to infer the unintelligibility of normative notions from the difficulty of defining them in naturalistic terms, so it would be a mistake, in the present case, to infer the unintelligibility of the notions of factuality and reducibility from the difficulty of defining them in non-metaphysical terms.

Of course, the quietist may have a general hostility to metaphysical concepts, but he, of all philosophers, is not in a good position to justify such hostility in a principled way. For the usual basis for rejecting the intelligibility of a whole sphere of concepts is that they cannot be rendered intelligible within some chosen world-view—one that sees only the physical or only the psychological, for example, as real. Now one might attempt to motivate the rejection of metaphysical concepts by adopting a world-view that sees only

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[17]Ronald Dworkin has pointed out to me that first-order morality is naturally taken to include the claim that if there are no objective moral facts then anything goes (or some other such moral conclusion) and, given that this is so, the second-order claim that there are no objective moral facts will not be independent of morality. However, for present purposes, I would not take the above conditional to be strictly first-order.

[18]Their number include Blackburn [1992], pp. 7, 34, 168, and [1998], p. 319; Dworkin [1996]; A. Fine [1984], pp. 97-100; Putnam [1987], p. 19. Other philosophers, such as Rosen [1994], have flirted with quietism without actually embracing it.

the first-order facts—as given in ethics or mathematics or science, etc.—as real. But the adoption of such a view already presupposes the intelligibility of a metaphysical concept of reality. Thus there is a real danger that the quietist's position rules out as unintelligible the only ground that could possibly make it plausible.

There is also strong intuitive evidence in favor of intelligibility; for the fact that a notion appears to make sense is strong *prima facie* evidence that it does make sense. Indeed, the indispensability of the notions in formulating certain metaphysical issues would appear to make their intelligibility almost impossible to deny. Consider the issue dividing the "A- theorist" and the "B-theorist" as to whether temporal reality is intrinsically tensed. This is an issue that cannot be rendered intelligible without invoking the metaphysical conception of "fact." For the A-theorist will want to affirm, and the B-theorist to deny, that there are tensed facts in the world; and it is only the metaphysical rather than the ordinary notion of "fact" that can properly serve to represent what is here at issue. I might also note that appeal to the metaphor of an Archimedean standpoint is almost irresistible in this context. For the B-theorist will want to adopt an Archimedean standpoint in which temporal reality is described *sub specie aeternitatis*, while the A-theorist will deny that there is any such standpoint to be had. Granted the intelligibility of the issue, we should grant the intelligibility of the notion and of the metaphor in application to this particular case. And if in this particular case, then why not in general?

But even though the charge of unintelligibility cannot reasonably be sustained, there is another more moderate objection that can be and that is equally devastating in its

implications for the pursuit of metaphysics.[19] This quietism is methodological rather than conceptual in orientation. The charge is not that there are no meaningful notions of factuality or reducibility but that there is no way of ascertaining what is or is not factual or what does or does not reduce to what.[20] Given that nonfactual propositions are in the nature of imposters, how are we to tell them apart from the real thing? And given that reductions have antirealist import, how are we to establish that any proposed connection between propositions will have such import? Judgements concerning factuality and reducibility would appear to be metaphysical in the pejorative sense of floating free from any considerations that might tell for or against their truth.

The methodological quietist can perhaps concede that there is a general presumption in favor of a proposition's being factual. He might also concede that we appear to have a metaphysical bias against certain kinds of propositions' being factual—e.g., those concerning matters of taste; and he might be willing to grant the plausibility of certain conditional judgements, such as 'If it is factual matter whether *P* then it is factual whether not-*P*? or "If it is factual matter whether snow is white then it is factual matter whether grass is green'. But it will be agreed on all sides that such considerations will not take us very far. What is needed are detailed considerations for or against a given realist view; and what is not clear is what these considerations might be.

Of course, the philosophical literature appears to be full of arguments for or against this or that form of realism. It is often maintained, for example, that it is easier for the antifactualist about mathematics to account for the possibility of

[19]Rorty [1979],p. 311, is someone who has espoused a more moderate form of quietism.

[20]It is an oddity in the logical positivist's critique of metaphysics that these two charges were linked. For if there is no way of settling metaphysical questions, then who cares whether or not they make sense?

mathematical knowledge, since the factualist faces the problem of explaining how we can be in appropriate contact with an external realm of mathematical facts; and it is often thought to be an advantage of the expressivist view in ethics that it can account for the motivational role of moral belief. But all such arguments, in so far as they are taken to bear upon the non-skeptical issue, would appear to be subject to a devastating critique. For it is unclear how they turn upon adopting a metaphysical, as opposed to an ordinary, conception of reality and hence why they establish a non- skeptical, as opposed to a skeptical, form of antirealism. Thus even if we employ the thin, ordinary notion of a fact, there would still appear to be a problem of explaining how we could have knowledge of mathematical facts; and it remains unclear how this problem becomes greater once we substitute the thick metaphysically inflated notion for the thin ordinary notion. Or again, it is unclear what is it about belief in the MORAL FACTS (the real thing) as opposed to belief in the moral facts (the ordinary thing) that makes it any the less plausible to suppose that moral beliefs are a kind of attitude.

This, I believe, is the truly serious problem raised by quietism. It is not that the notion of factuality is senseless, but that it is useless; and realist metaphysics should be abandoned, not because its questions cannot be framed, but because their answers cannot be found. The real world of the metaphysician is akin to Kant's noumenal world, a something-we-know-not-what, and no progress is to be made by inquiring into its constitution. We might add that if the methodological problem could be solved, the conceptual problem would then lose much of its bite. For how can we seriously doubt the intelligibility of a given discourse, when its employment in resolving disputes is not otherwise in doubt?

What I would like to do in the remainder of the paper is to show how these concerns can be met. I wish to make clear the role of the concepts of factuality and reducibility in realist disputes and thereby show how we might make progress in settling such disputes. Thus it is not my aim to defend the coherence of these concepts. Indeed, for the purpose of dispelling methodological doubts, it is better to throw conceptual caution to the winds and adopt whatever models or metaphors might help us understand how the concepts are to be employed. Nor it is my aim to show how we might *actually* settle realist disputes. After all, this is not something of which we normally consider ourselves capable in even the most unproblematic areas of philosophy. Rather I wish to show how we might proceed. We need to know what it would take to settle the disputes, even if we can have no assurance of settling them in any given case.

Most anti-quietists have attempted to allay the quietist's concerns by producing criteria for factuality or reducibility in terms of which questions of realism might then be posed. One question has simply been substituted for another. Our strategy for dealing with the quietist is quite different. We attempt to see how questions of realism might turn on other, more tractable questions, without presupposing that they are to be rendered intelligible in terms of those other questions. We do not thereby commit ourselves to the view that the key metaphysical concepts *cannot* be defined in fundamentally different terms. But clearly, in so far as we can remain neutral on this question, our defense of realist metaphysics is likely to be far less contentious, and we lessen the danger, to which all philosophy is prone, of making an issue clear only by misrepresenting what it is.

5. Ground

Metaphysical questions of realism are to turn on other questions of a less problematic nature. But what are these ques-

tions? I suggest that they concern relationships of *ground* and so, before we proceed further, let us attempt to explain what these are.

I recommend that a statement of ground be cast in the following "canonical" form:

> Its being the case that *S* consists in nothing more than its being the case that *T, U, ...*

where *S, T, U, ...* are particular sentences. As particular examples of such statements, we have:

> Its being the case that the couple Jack and Jill is married consists in nothing more than its being the case that Jack is married to Jill.

> Its being the case that Britain and Germany were at war in 1940 consists in nothing more than ...,

where '...' is a compendious description of the warring activity of various individuals.

In such cases, we say that the propositions on the right *(collectively) ground* the proposition on the left and that each of them *partly grounds* that proposition. I shall normally assume that the grounded proposition and its grounds are true, though one may also talk of "ground" when the grounding propositions *would* ground the grounded proposition *were* they true.

The notion of ground should be distinguished from the strict notion of reduction. A statement of reduction implies the unreality of what is reduced, but a statement of ground does not. Thus in saying that the fact that *P & Q* reduces to the fact that *P* and the fact that *Q*, we are implying that the conjunctive fact is unreal; but in saying that the fact that *P & Q* is grounded in, or consists in, the fact that *P* and the fact that *Q*, we are implying no such thing. We are adopting a

metaphysically neutral stand on whether there really are conjunctive facts (or truths). Thus our view is that there is sense in which even a realist about conjunctive facts may be willing to concede that the fact that *P & Q* consists in the fact that *P* and the fact that *Q*; there is a position here that may be adopted by realist and antirealist alike.[21]

The notion of ground, like the notion of reduction, is also to be distinguished from logical analysis. Indeed, the paradigm of logical analysis ("the average American") is not for us a case of ground, since the propositions expressed on both sides of the analysis are presumably the same and yet no proposition can properly be taken to ground itself. For us, the potentially misleading surface appearance of grammar is entirely irrelevant to questions of ground, since we are looking to the propositions expressed by the sentences rather than to the sentences themselves. Thus we distinguish between the essentially linguistic matter of determining which proposition is expressed by a given sentence (whether, for example, a term is a genuinely referring expression) and the essentially metaphysical matter of determining what grounds what.

We take *ground* to be an explanatory relation: if the truth that *P* is grounded in other truths, then they *account* for its truth; *P*'s being the case holds *in virtue of* the other truths' being the case. There are, of course, many other explanatory connections among truths. But the relation of ground is distinguished from them by being the tightest such connection. Thus when the truth of *P* causally explains the truth of *Q*, we may still maintain that the truth of *Q* consists in something more (or other) than the truth of *P*. Or again, the fact that someone broke a promise may "normatively" account for his having done something wrong, but that is still compatible

[21]Some philosophers have thought of supervenience as a metaphysically neutral counterpart to the notion of reduction and to this extent, at least, what they have in mind may correspond to our notion of ground.

with his wrongdoing's consisting in something more than his having broken the promise. There is, however, no explanatory connection that stands to ground as ground stands to these other forms of explanation. It is the ultimate form of explanation; and it is perhaps for this reason that we are not inclined to think of the truth of a grounded proposition as a *further fact* over and above its grounds, even though it may be distinct from its grounds and even though it may itself be a real fact.[22]

Although we have talked of the truth of one proposition as being grounded in the truth of others, this is not strictly necessary. For we might express statements of ground in the form '*S* because *T*, *U*, ...', as long as the 'because' is taken in a suitably strong sense, and thereby avoid all reference to propositions or facts or to the concept of truth. The word 'ground' would, in effect, be a sentential operator, in the same way as 'if-then' or 'unless'.[23] This point is of some philosophical interest, since it shows that there is no need to suppose that a ground is some fact or entity in the world or that the notion of ground is inextricably connected with the concept of truth. The questions of ground, upon which realist questions turn, need not be seen as engaging either with the concept of truth or with the ontology of facts.

6. Settling Questions of Factuality

In this and the next section we examine how questions of factualism may be settled on the basis of considerations of ground. Our approach is somewhat indirect. We begin by presenting an abstract argument to the effect that any reasonable disagreement on the factual status of a given proposition will lead to a disagreement on what grounds what;

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[22]I should note that I do not take all judgements of ground to be a priori. Thus the philosophical investigation of reality should only be based upon those judgements that are a priori or that can be given some kind of a priori backing.

[23]I hold a similar view concerning the notions of factuality and irreducibility.

and we then attempt to show how the ensuing questions of ground might themselves be resolved. It will be seen that these latter questions turn on whether it is the factualist or the antifactualist who is able to provide the better account of our "practice."

We have suggested that there can be no conceptual guarantee of factualism or nonfactualism on the basis of essentially different considerations, and so in attempting to trace out the possible differences between the factualist and the antifactualist, it will be necessary at some point to appeal to what is plausible rather than to what is conceptually required. Let us therefore suppose that two philosophers differ on the factual status of a given true proposition. We then wish to show that their disagreement, as long as their respective positions are themselves plausible, will lead to disagreement on some question of ground.

We may illustrate the idea behind our argument with the proposition that abortion is wrong. Although the antifactualist will take this proposition to be nonfactual, he will presumably agree with the factualist on the factuality of the proposition that so-and-so said that abortion is wrong. However, whereas the antifactualist will wish to say in what the truth of this proposition consists without making any reference to wrongness, the factualist will hold that no such account can be given. Thus they will differ on what may ground this further proposition.

Let us now attempt to state the argument in general form. It will proceed in stages; and, at each stage, we shall make explicit the possibly problematic assumptions that are employed. Articulating these assumptions will help make clear the "dialectical space" or logic within which questions of factuality are to be resolved; and once we have completed the exposition of the argument, we shall attempt to show that these assumptions are indeed defensible.

Stage 1. Let P be the true proposition upon whose factual status the factualist and antifactualist disagree.[24] Say that a true proposition is *basic* if it is not grounded in other propositions. We now ask the factualist, "Is the given proposition P basic?" If he says "Yes," then we proceed to the second stage. If he says "No," we ask him, "Which basic propositions collectively ground the proposition P?" Granted that

> (a) any true nonbasic factual proposition is grounded in basic propositions

there will be some basic propositions that ground P; and so let us suppose that they are $Q, R, S, \dots$.

If the antifactualist denies that these propositions ground P, then we already have a disagreement on ground. So suppose he agrees that they ground P. Then he must take one of them, say Q, to be nonfactual, since

> b) no nonfactual proposition has a ground consisting entirely of factual propositions.

The factualist, on the other hand, will take all of them to be factual, since

> (c) no factual proposition is partly grounded in a nonfactual proposition.

Thus the two philosophers will differ on the factual status of the proposition Q; and we may substitute the present Q for the previous P and proceed to the next stage.

Stage 2. Our factualist and antifactualist will differ on the factual status of the proposition P, which the factualist takes to be basic. Given that the antifactualist takes the proposition P to be nonfactual, he must acknowledge that at least one of its constituents is nonfactual,[25] since

> (d) any nonfactual proposition will contain a nonfactual constituent.

Thus in the case of the proposition that abortion is wrong, the nonfactual constituent would presumably be the attribute *wrong*.

Let $C, D, \dots$ be the constituents of the proposition which our antifactualist takes to be nonfactual. Now it is conceivable that our factualist might also take some of the constituents $C, D, \dots$ to be nonfactual despite believing the given proposition to be factual. But any plausible factualist and antifactualist position will surely agree on the question of whether the given proposition *would* be factual if the constituents $C, D, \dots$ were nonfactual. Thus even though they may disagree on the factuality of the proposition that abortion is wrong, they will agree that the proposition would be nonfactual *if* the attribute *wrong* were nonfactual. But given that the factualist holds the given proposition to be factual, and since he agrees with the antifactualist that the constituents $C, D, \dots$, if nonfactual, would render the proposition nonfactual, he must take one of those constituents to be factual.

Stage 3. Our factualist and antifactualist disagree on the factual status of some constituent, say C, of the given proposition P. Say that a proposition *essentially* contains a given

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[24]For simplicity, we assume that P (and its successor P^{+}) are true, though all that is strictly required for the argument is that they be possibly true.

[25]Intuitively, a nonfactual constituent is one which can be a source of nonfactuality in a proposition to which it belongs. Perhaps the factuality of constituents can be defined in terms of propositional factuality in the following way. With any constituent c may be associated the class of propositions P_c in which c has its primary employment. A constituent c is then nonfactual iff any proposition of P_c is nonfactual.

I have presupposed that propositions are structured entities built up from their constituents. Those who do not like this assumption may conduct a parallel argument with sentences and their terms in place of propositions and their constituents.

constituent if its replacement by some other constituent induces a shift in truth-value. Thus Socrates is a essential constituent in the proposition that Socrates is a philosopher though not in the proposition that Socrates is self-identical. Now any plausible antifactualist view will presumably maintain that

      (e) any nonfactual constituent C is essentially contained
         in some true factual proposition P^+.

In the case of the ethical antifactualist, P^+ might be the proposition that so-and-so said that abortion is wrong (or attributed *wrongness* to abortion) or the proposition that the word 'wrong' refers to *wrongness*. The factualist, moreover, is plausibly taken to agree with the antifactualist on this matter. There need be no disagreement about the proposition essentially containing the given constituent or its truth; and the factualist would appear to have even less reason than the antifactualist for taking the proposition P^+ to be nonfactual. Indeed, let us suppose that the only other constituents in the proposition, besides C, are those that both agree are factual. Then the proposition P^+, for the factualist, will only contain factual constituents and must therefore be factual.

    Stage 4. Our factualist and antifactualist agree on the factuality of the proposition P^+ and yet disagree on the factual status of its constituent C. Say that a proposition is *imperfectly factual* if it is factual but contains a nonfactual constituent and that it is *perfectly factual* if it is factual and contains only factual constituents. Thus the proposition P^+, for the antifactualist, is imperfectly factual. But then he will believe that it has a perfectly factual ground, i.e., one consisting entirely of perfectly factual propositions, since

      (f) any true imperfectly factual proposition has a per-
         fectly factual ground

The factualist, on the other hand, is plausibly taken to believe that the proposition has no ground one of whose propositions does not involve the constituent C, since

        (g) whenever a constituent occurs in a true basic factual
           proposition and also occurs essentially in some true
           factual proposition, then any ground for the latter
           proposition must contain the constituent.

Thus our antifactualist will maintain that there is some ground—R, S, T, ...—for P^+ that does not involve the constituent C, while our factualist will deny that R, S, T, ... is a ground for P^+. Disagreement on a question of ground is thereby secured.

    Let us now attempt to defend the assumptions (a)-(g) upon which the argument depends. In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that our argument is not fool-proof (and hence not philosopher-proof either). We have not attempted to show that any factualist and antifactualist positions on a given proposition will lead, on conceptual grounds alone, to a disagreement on some question of ground, but only that any *plausible* factualist and antifactualist positions will lead to such a disagreement. Indeed, if a factualist, let us say, were conceptually compelled to accept some statement S of ground which the antifactualist was not compelled to accept, then not-S would entail that the given proposition was not factual without also entailing that it was factual and so our stand on the "independence" of realist metaphysics could no longer be maintained. Thus there are certain points in the argument where we must appeal to what it is plausible for the factualist or antifactualist to accept in a given case rather than to what they are compelled to accept. I should also point out that even if my specific line of argument fails, there may be others like it that will succeed.

Assumption (a), that the nonbasic is grounded in the basic, is controversial but also dispensable. For, as will become clear, the assumption will hold with 'fundamental' (or 'irreducible') in place of 'basic', even in the presence of an infinite regress of grounds.[26]

The truth of (b), that the factual can only ground the factual, seems clear. For how can the truth of a nonfactual proposition consist entirely in the truth of factual propositions? Would that not be enough to render the proposition factual? Of course, this is not to rule out senses of 'ground' or 'depend' in which the nonfactual might be grounded in, or depend upon, the factual. Thus even an expressivist might agree that the truth of any moral claim is "normatively" grounded in the truth of certain naturalistic claims. But this is not the relevant sense of 'ground'; it is not being claimed that the truth of the moral claim *consists in no more* than the truth of the naturalistic claims. Indeed, this latter view would commit one to a form of naturalism and hence to a denial that moral and naturalistic claims might differ in their factual status.[27]

The truth of (c), that the nonfactual cannot partially ground the factual, also seems clear. For how can the truth of something factual partly consist in something nonfactual?

Would that not be enough to render the original proposition nonfactual? A possible counterexample to the conjunction of (b) and (c) is the disjunction P of a factual truth P_1 and a nonfactual truth P_2. For given that P_1 grounds P, it must be factual by (b); and given that P_2 grounds P, it must be nonfactual by (c). However, our view in such a case is that it is the two propositions P_1 and P_2 together that collectively ground P.[28]

The truth of (d), that any nonfactual proposition contains a nonfactual constituent, is likewise apparent, since if a nonfactual proposition contained only factual constituents, its nonfactuality could have no source; there would be nothing that could sensibly be said to render it nonfactual.[29]

Assumption (e), asserting the existence of a suitable imperfectly factual proposition P^+, is the main point of the argument at which considerations of plausibility enter in, since there is nothing to force the antifactualist into acknowledging the factuality of any given proposition. But it is surely very plausible that he will be willing to acknowledge the factuality of some propositions of the required sort. Perhaps he has doubts about belief-attributions. But can he not then consider semantic attributions instead? Perhaps he has

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[26]It then becomes less clear whether the factualist need take the constituent C to be "ineliminable" at stage 4. But as we shall see, the only plausible cases in which it is eliminable are ones in which it gives way to constituents which the factualist and antifactualist will recognize as equivalent, in their factuality status, to the given constituent.

[27]When P is the disjunction $P_1 \vee P_2$ of a true factual proposition P_1 and a false nonfactual proposition P_2, it will be grounded by P_1 alone and we will then wish to say, in conformity with (b), that P is factual. Thus factuality, on our current understanding, is a contingent matter. (On an alternative understanding, a proposition might be taken to be nonfactual when it *could* be nonfactual in our current sense.) I might add that we do not think of vagueness as a source, per se, of nonfactuality, since a vague proposition may still be aimed at the real world. Thus cases in which a vague truth is grounded in a precise truth are also not counterexamples to (b).

[28]The truth of $P \vee \neg P$ when P is nonfactual is also not a counterexample to (c) since $P \vee \neg P$, in this case, should be taken to be nonfactual.

[29]Consider the proposition that the last thing the Pope said is true and suppose that the last thing that he said was that abortion is wrong. Then this proposition is nonfactual (if ethics is nonfactual) and so we are obliged by this assumption to treat some constituent of the proposition—presumably either 'thing' or 'true'—as nonfactual. This is awkward, since it means that the proposition is imperfectly factual even when the last thing that the Pope said was factual. There is a related difficulty for the thesis that no 'ought' can be derived from an 'is'. For from the assumptions that the last thing the Pope said is true and that the last thing the Pope said is that abortion is wrong, we can derive the conclusion that abortion is wrong. Thus the first assumption should be taken to be an 'ought' even though it apparently contains no moral terms. Perhaps there is some other way of dealing with such cases.

doubts about these. But then can he not consider the question of when it is *appropriate* to make such attributions? Indeed, I shall later suggest that there are factual considerations concerning any given domain that are almost bound to arise, whatever one's view of the factuality of the domain itself.

One might, of course, flatly declare all propositions to be nonfactual. But this global form of antifactualism is not, in the present dialectical setting, a viable option. For in attempting to argue for the nonfactuality of a given circumscribed range of propositions, the antifactualist should not take for granted the nonfactuality of other propositions, just as in arguing for the nonveridicality of a given range of perceptual experiences, one should not take for granted the nonveridicality of other perceptual experiences. Thus the antifactualist should concede—if only temporarily, for the sake of argument—that propositions outside of the given range are factual.

On this way of thinking, there is a general presumption in favor of factuality and if global antifactualism is to be established at all, it is in piecemeal fashion rather than by a general line of argument. One must successively chip away at the apparent edifice of factuality; and it is only then, when each part has been removed, that a global form of antifactualism might emerge as a viable alternative.

According to assumption (f), any imperfectly factual truth must have a perfectly factual ground, i.e., one that can be stated in factual terms alone. For consider any truth containing a nonfactual constituent. If one asks the antifactualist why he takes it to be factual notwithstanding the nonfactual constituent, then the only completely satisfactory answer he can provide is that it has a perfectly factual ground. The underlying metaphysical thought here is the inessentiality of the nonfactual in describing the factual. Even

if the nonfactual were altogether expunged from the ordinary world, we could still provide a complete account of factual reality in terms of what remained; and this would then provide a ground for all factual truths, whether formulated in factual terms or not.

It is important, in this connection, not to be misled by our example of someone's saying that abortion is wrong. For one might think that an antifactualist in ethics could take this proposition to be ultimately grounded in some facts relating the person to the concept *wrong*. But in so far as this is plausible, the original proposition should be taken to concern the concept *wrong,* which the antifactualist can legitimately take to be a factual element, rather than *wrongness* itself. To clear up any possible confusion on this score, take the proposition to be that the person attributes *wrongness* to abortion. It would then be bizarre in the extreme for the antifactualist to suppose that this proposition was ultimately grounded in some facts relating the person to *wrongness*. For how could there be real facts in the world relating the person to *wrongness* and yet no real facts relating *wrongness* to things that were wrong?

We may argue for assumption (g), concerning the ineliminability of essential constituents, in the following way. If a given constituent *C* occurs in a true basic factual proposition then it must be a fundamental element of reality. But if some true factual proposition contains *C* essentially, it must be true in virtue of some feature of *C*. But given that *C* is a fundamental element of reality, this feature of *C* cannot be grounded in something that did not itself involve *C*.[30]

[30]A related assumption (which he regards as a fallacy) has been adumbrated by Horwich [1998], p. 21. This is that "whenever a fact has a certain component, then whatever constitutes this fact must contain either the same component or alternatively something that constitutes it." Assumption (g) says that the constituting fact must contain the same component when that component is itself fundamental, i.e., such as to occur in an unconstituted fact. But if the constitut-

One possible kind of counterexample to this assumption is illustrated by the proposition that '5' refers to 5. For could not a realist concerning numbers take its truth to consist simply in '5' being the fifth counting-term, where this was something that did not involve the number 5? However, a much more plausible view for the realist to take is that its truth consists both in '5' being the fifth counting-term and in 5 being the fifth number. It is the connection between their both being fifth in the respective series that then helps ground the fact that the one refers to the other. Similarly, an ethical realist might suppose that the fact that someone attributes *wrongness* to abortion is somehow grounded in his behavior. But again, the ground is not plausibly taken to be complete until the connection between his behavior and the attribute *wrongness* is explicitly given.[31]

It is worth remarking, in conclusion, on the critical role played by the notion of ground in the above argument. If we had used a weaker explanatory notion, then there would be no reason to suppose that the various principles upon which the argument depends would hold. There would be no objection, for example, to a nonfactual proposition's having an entirely factual, though normative, ground. This point is important for understanding how the factualist and antifactualist should be seen as facing different explanatory demands. For unless these demands are understood in terms of the strict metaphysical notion of ground, there is nothing to prevent the factualist and antifactualist from meeting them in the very same way.[32]

7. Settling Questions of Ground

We have shown how to devise a "critical experiment" to test whether to accept or to reject the hypothesis that a given proposition is factual. For the claim that the proposition is factual will imply that a certain related proposition has one kind of ground while the claim that it is not factual will imply that the proposition lacks such a ground. By ascertaining the correct answer to the question of ground, we may thereby ascertain the correct answer to the question of factuality.

But how are the questions of ground to be settled? The notion may not be conceptually problematic in the same way as the notions of factuality or reduction; for its application carries no realist or antirealist import. But several of our previous arguments against a definition or guarantee of reduction apply equally well to the notion of ground; and in the absence of a definition or guarantee, we may have similar methodological misgivings about how the notion is to be applied.

There are, I believe, two main sources of evidence for making judgements of ground. The first is intuitive. We appear to be in possession of a wealth of intuitions concerning what does or does not ground what. Some examples have already been given, but there are many others. Thus what grounds the truth of a disjunction is the truth of those

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ing fact does not contain something that constitutes the component in his sense, there is no reason to suppose that it is fundamental in my sense. Thus accepting (g) is perfectly compatible with rejecting his fallacy.

[31]On certain deflationary views, of the sort proposed by Field [2001], chapters 4 &5, these propositions would not even be taken to involve a relationship between a term or concept and an entity.

[32]Thus Putnam's argument for scientific realism ([1978], p.100) and the argument that Harman [1977], chapter 1, considers against moral realism both turn on whether the best explanation of some phenomenon (the success of science, our moral responses) does or does not involve reference to the facts that are in dispute. But in so far as the relevant notion of explanation is not metaphysical, it is unclear why the factualist or antifactualist should differ on this question. I also doubt, though this is a separate matter, that these arguments can plausibly be brought to bear on the skeptical form of antirealism.

of its disjuncts that are true, and what grounds the occurrence of a compound event at a given time is the occurrence of its component events. We also have intuitions about a wide range of negative judgements (quite apart from modal considerations). It is implausible, for example, that what grounds facts about volume are facts about density and mass or that what grounds the truth that a given object is red is the fact that it is red or round and the fact that it is not round, even though the one logically follows from the others.

The other main source of evidence is explanatory in character. As we have mentioned, the relationship of ground is a form of explanation; in providing the ground for a given proposition, one is explaining, in the most metaphysically satisfying manner, what it is that makes it true. Thus a system of grounds may be appraised, in much the same way as any other explanatory scheme, on the basis of such considerations as simplicity, breadth, coherence, or non-circularity. Perhaps the most important virtue in this regard is explanatory strength, the capacity to explain that which stands in need of explanation and would otherwise be left unexplained. And here it is not simply relevant that one grounds and hence accounts for certain truths but also that, in so doing, one may account for the presence or absence of certain necessary connection between the propositions that are so grounded.

Thus questions of ground are not simply to be settled on a case-by-case basis but also on how well their answers fit into a general pattern of explanation. Our critical experiment might have seemed to have held out hope that a question of factuality could be decided on the basis of a single question of ground. But in so far as we lack intuitions on that question, any proposed answer must be placed within a larger context of such answers and evaluated on the basis of largely holistic considerations.

But what is this larger context and what are the considerations by which its answers are to be assessed? In so far as the factuality of a given proposition is in doubt, it will be because it is thought to contain certain nonfactual constituents that occur in such a way as to render the resulting proposition nonfactual. Let us call the class of propositions whose factuality is similarly in doubt the *given* domain and the constituents which it is thought might be responsible for their nonfactuality the *contested* constituents (or elements).

Associated with a given domain and a class of contested elements will be another class, which we call the *extended* domain, consisting of all those propositions which (essentially) contain the given elements but which are agreed to be factual. We have already seen two kinds of example of such propositions—the proposition that so-and-so said that abortion is wrong and the proposition that 'wrong' refers to *wrongness*. In so far as the given domain is taken to describe the "facts" of a given area, the extended domain might be thought to describe our "practice" of dealing with those facts. Thus where the one concerns morality, science, or mathematics, let us say, the other will concern our moral, scientific, or mathematical practice.

Two significant parts of our practice relate to our representation and cognition of the given facts.[33] Thus, in the case of morality, the extended domain might include representational propositions to the effect that we believe such-and-such a moral principle, or that we have made such-and-such a moral claim, or that a moral term means what it does, and

[33]Another aspect of our "practice" concern the metaphysical status of the propositions from the given domain. Thus even if a antifactualist takes a proposition to be nonfactual, he may still take it to be a factual matter that it is nonfactual or that it is contingent or that it is grounded in certain other propositions. The question of the metaphysical status of these metaphysical claims, though of enormous philosophical interest, is not normally so relevant to adjudicating disputes over the factuality of a given first-order domain.

it might also include cognitive propositions to the effect that we know or are justified in holding a given moral belief, or that we are morally sensitive, or that we are biased in our moral views. The extended domain may also include propositions peculiar to the area in question. Thus it may include propositions to the effect that we have been motivated by such-and-such a moral belief in the moral case or propositions involving the application of mathematics in the mathematical case.

For certain radical forms of antifactualism, many of these aspects of our practice might themselves be taken to be nonfactual. Thus an antifactualist about meaning might well take all propositions concerning meaning, reference, and justification to be nonfactual. But I suspect that, even in these cases, it will be possible to find aspects of our practice upon whose factuality the parties to the dispute can agree. In the first place, it seems to me that the antifactualist—in common with the factualist—should be willing to acknowledge that there is a *factual* standard of correctness. Of course, the obvious standard of correctness will be nonfactual; for the correctness of the judgement that abortion is wrong, say, will simply amount to abortion's being wrong—which, for the antifactualist, is a nonfactual matter. But this nonfactual standard of correctness lives in the shadow, as it were, of a factual standard. For the correctness of our judgements must somehow engage with the real world; there must be something which we aim for in belief and whose realization is a factual matter. So for the expressivist, for example, the factual standard of correctness for a judgement might be that it faithfully reflects one's (possibly implicit) commitments; while for the mathematical formalist, it could be that the judgement is in accordance with the rules of the game. Thus, even in these cases, there is something of a factual sort that counts as getting things right.

Similarly, there would appear to be a factual sense in which someone may be said to be responsive to the facts. Again, the most obvious sense of being responsive to the facts for the antifactualist is one that is itself nonfactual, since it will rest upon what one takes the facts to be. But in the shadow of this sense, there is a another sense that is factual. For our epistemic activity must somehow engage with the real world; there must be something that we aim for—in aiming to be well-placed epistemic agents—whose realization is a factual matter. So for the expressivist, it might consist in being appropriately sensitive to one's (implicit) commitments in the formation of one's ethical beliefs; while, for the formalist, it might consist in being appropriately responsive to the rules of the game in executing a proof.

Granted that they can agree upon a common practice, the factualist and antifactualist each owes us an account of what it is, of that in which it consists. Or to put it more precisely, each should provide us with an account of what might ground the propositions from the extended domain. But their accounts are subject to very different constraints. The antifactualist must provide an account of the practice without making any reference to the contested constituents. The expressivist, for example, must be able to say what having a moral belief might consist in without making any use of moral vocabulary, and the formalist must be able to say what possessing a mathematical proof might consist in without making any use of mathematical vocabulary. It is this constraint that explains why a antifactualist must be able to provide some alternative to a truth-conditional account of our understanding of language; for truth, in its application to the sentences of a given nonfactual domain, is nonfactual and must therefore be eliminable. It also explains why the standard formulations of antifactualist positions—expressivism, constructivism, formalism etc.—are commonly taken to be antifactualist, even though this is not strictly im-

plied by the formulations themselves. For they provide the general means by which the constraint may be seen to be satisfied. It is immediately clear from the expressivist's position, for example, how he would wish to account for ethical belief without making use of ethical terms.

The factualist, by contrast, is obliged to make reference to the contested elements (at least in so far as they are taken to be basic or fundamental). The moral platonist, for example, cannot give an account of what it is sincerely to ascribe *wrongness* to a given act in terms of having a con-attitude to that act, since the connection with the attribute is thereby lost; and the arithmetical platonist cannot give an account of what it is to refer to the natural numbers without making appeal to the natural numbers. It is also this constraint that explains why the factualist may find a truth-conditional account so congenial, since it will connect our understanding of language in the required way with the elements of reality with which it deals.

The factualist's account must in this sense be *representational*: it must link up the practice with the underlying facts or subject-matter, while the antifactualist's account will be *nonrepresentational*. In the one case, the practice must be seen as engaging with the possible facts and it must be understood—at least, in part—in terms of *how* it engages with those facts. In the other case, the practice is taken to be disengaged from the facts; and rather than understanding the practice in terms of how it represents the possible facts, the facts themselves should be understood in terms of how they are "projected" by the practice. It is in this sense that they are subjective or not "out there." For a nonfactual proposition is ultimately to be understood—not in terms of its grounds, of what in the world makes it true—but in terms of its role within a given practice. They are metaphysically incomplete propositions, as it were, and should be under-

stood, in much the same manner as Russell's "incomplete symbols," by means of the context of their use rather than by means of their isolated application to the world.

The question of whether or not to be a factualist is therefore the question of whether or not to adopt a representational account of what grounds our practice. And this question, in its turn, is largely a matter of determining which of the rival accounts is better able to meet the explanatory demands that may be placed upon it. Can the moral factualist account for the motivational role of moral belief or the moral antifactualist account for its inferential role? Can the mathematical factualist account for the referential capacity of mathematical language, or the constructivist for its application to science? Can the factualist about meaning provide an adequate account of the grounds for the meaning statements that we make, or the antifactualist an adequate account of the factual standards of correctness by which they appear to be governed? It is on their answer to these and many other such questions that the correctness of a factualist or antifactualist position will ultimately be settled.[34]

Given that the accounts are subject to different constraints, the factualist and the antifactualist will meet these demands in characteristically different ways. But can we be confident that these differences will enable us to adjudicate between their accounts? What is to rule out the possibility of a stalemate in which the advantages and disadvantages of the two accounts appear to be more or less equally matched? Or even if one account seems preferable to another, perhaps it is not itself so plausible as to be worthy of belief. Suppose, for example, that the most plausible representational account of our mathematical practice is epiphenomenal: it consists of

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[34]Other philosophers (principally Dummett, *passim*, and Blackburn [1984], p. 169, and [1998], p. 50) have also emphasized the role of practice in adjudicating realist disputes. What is distinctive about my view is the precise way in which it articulates what a practice is and what is involved in accounting for it.

a nonrepresentational part and a "parallel? mathematical part (e.g., the reference of '5' to 5 consisting in '5' being the fifth counting-term and 5 the fifth number). It is then hard to see how we are to choose between such an account and the corresponding nonrepresentational account.

It must be conceded that we have no *a priori* basis for excluding such cases. But nor do we have any good reason to expect them. Some philosophers, it is true, have been impressed by our repeated failure to solve the problems of realism in the past and have become completely pessimistic about our ability to make any progress on them in the future. But I suspect that these philosophers have not fully appreciated how much needs to be done before these problems can properly be addressed. For in providing an account of a given practice, we must come up with what is in effect a complete epistemology, philosophical psychology, and theory of language for the area in question; and in assessing such an account, we must in effect solve all of the major philosophical problems to which the area gives rise. Until we have settled the question of whether moral beliefs necessarily have motivational force, for example, we are in no position to say whether it is a point in favor of a given account of our moral practice that it endows them with such a force; and until we have decided whether mathematical beliefs can be known *a priori,* we will be unable to say whether it is a point in favor of an account of our mathematical practice that it allows them to have such a status. A realist or antirealist conclusion therefore represents the terminus of philosophical inquiry into a given area rather than its starting point; and so it is hardly surprising that such slight progress has been made within realist metaphysics, even by comparison with other branches of philosophy.

8. *Reality as Fundamental*

We have distinguished between two conceptions of reality—as factual and as fundamental. We now turn to the second of these and, after clarifying the concept in the present section, we attempt to show in the next section how questions concerning its application might be resolved.

It is natural to understand the concept of fundamental reality in terms of the relative concept of one thing being *less fundamental* than, or *reducible* to, another—the fundamental being whatever does not reduce to anything else (but to which other things will reduce). But we appear thereby to play into the quietist's hands. For how can an explanatory connection be determinative of what is and is not real? We may grant that some things are explanatorily more basic than others. But why should that make them more real?

What I would like to suggest, in the face of this difficulty, is that we reject the idea that the absolute notion of fundamental reality is in need of a relational underpinning. The conception of reality that we are after is simply the conception of Reality as it is in itself. Thus even though two nations may be at war, we may deny that this is how things really or fundamentally are because the entities in question, the nations, and the relationship between them, are no part of Reality as it in itself. One might think of the world and of the propositions by which the world is described as each having its own intrinsic structure; and a proposition will then describe how things are in themselves when its structure corresponds to the structure of the world.[35] Thus it is this positive idea of the intrinsic structure of reality, rather than the comparative idea of reduction, that should be taken to inform the relevant conception of what is fundamental or real.

[35]This is merely a picture. It need not commit one to the view that there are facts in the world whose structure might correspond to the structure of the prop-

It is also important to distinguish the notion of Reality in itself from certain other notions of intrinsic reality. In talking of the intrinsic nature of the physical world, for example, one might have in mind its nonrelational or nondispositional features, but these features may be no more a part of Reality in itself, on my understanding, than the relational and dispositional features. Or again, in talking of the intrinsic nature of the physical world, one might be after a description that is intrinsic to the world in the sense of being nonperspectival.[36] Thus color terms might be excluded on the grounds that our understanding of them is based upon a peculiar form of sensory awareness. But as long as these terms pick out fundamental physical properties, I would willing to countenance their use in the description of Reality in itself, however they might have been understood.

Given the notion of reality as primitive, it is then possible to define the notion of reduction. Intuitively, one proposition will reduce to others if they bring us closer to what is real. Now a necessary condition for the proposition *P* to reduce to the propositions *Q*, *R*, ... is for it to be grounded in those other propositions; and a necessary and sufficient condition for *Q*, *R*, ... to be closer to reality than *P* in such a case is that *P* be unreal and each of *Q*, *R*, ... either be real or "en route" to what is real. But the latter is presumably just a matter of the proposition's being grounded in what is real. Thus we arrive at the following definition:

> the true proposition *P* reduces to the propositions *Q*, *R*, ... iff (i) *P* is not real; (ii) *P* is grounded in *Q*, *R*, ...; and (iii) each of *Q*, *R*, ... is either real or grounded in what is

real.[37]

On this approach, reduction is to be understood in terms of fundamental reality rather than the other way round, and there is no mystery as to why reduction has antirealist import, since that import is built in to the notion itself. It is also able to avoid the problems that afflicted the previous accounts of reduction since it shares, with the underlying notion of ground, the capability of enjoying one-many instances, of applying to the *de re,* and of having explanatory import.

9. Settling What is Fundamental

Of course, the extreme quietist will not be happy with the concept of Reality in itself. But it should be recalled that our target is the moderate quietist. We have thrown conceptual caution to the winds and our only question is: Given that the concept *is* intelligible, then how is its application to be settled? How are we to determine, from all the possible truths, which are descriptive—or possibly descriptive—of such a reality, and which are not?

In attempting to determine what is real in this way, we cannot simply appeal to the fact that a given proposition is basic. For a basic proposition may be nonfactual; and clearly no nonfactual truth is descriptive of fundamental reality. However, any basic *factual* proposition will be real. For any true factual proposition is real or grounded in what is real; and so the proposition, if basic, will be real.

Our previous methodology for determining what is factual can therefore be of help in determining what is real. For once it is resolved that a given domain is factual, then any

ositions or sentences by which they might be described, as in the standard exposition of logical atomism (J. Wisdom [1969]).

   [36]See Williams [1978], p. 66, and [1985], p. 241.

   [37]One might express the notion of reality by means of a connective 'it is constitutive of reality that ...', just as in the case of the notions of factuality and ground. Considerable interest would then attach to developing the logic of such notions.

basic propositions from that domain can be taken to be real. But even without any help from that methodology, there is perhaps a general presumption in favor of any given proposition's being factual; and so the mere fact that a proposition is basic will give us reason to believe that it is real, in the absence of any reason to the contrary.

Just as we cannot read off what is real from what is basic, so we cannot read off what is unreal from what is nonbasic. Indeed, it is possible to imagine metaphysical scenarios in which the nonbasic, or grounded, is plausibly taken to be real. Suppose, to take one kind of case, that Aristotle is right about the nature of water and that it is both indefinitely divisible and water through-and-through. Then it is plausible that any proposition about the location of a given body of water is grounded in some propositions about the location of smaller bodies of water (and in nothing else). The proposition that this body of water is here, in front of me, for example, will be grounded in the proposition that the one half is here, to the left, and the other half there, to the right. But which of all these various propositions describing the location of water is real? We cannot say some are real and some not, since there is no basis upon which such a distinction might be made. Thus we must say either that they are all real or that none are. But given that the location of water is a factual matter, we should take all of them to be real, notwithstanding the fact that each is grounded in propositions of the very same sort.[38] Another kind of case involves "horizontal" rather than "vertical" considerations. Imagine an ontology that takes certain simple events and the causal relationships between them to be real. Suppose now that one

[38]In making out this case, it is essential to distinguish between ground and reduction. If a ground is taken to bring one closer to what is real, then it is hard to see how there could be an infinite regress of grounds (with nothing at the bottom). For how can one get closer to what does not exist? But once grounds are taken to be metaphysically neutral, there is no more difficulty than in the case of cause in conceiving them to form an infinite regress. (Cf. the discussion of Leibniz's position on this question in Adams's [1994], pp. 333-8).

simple event causes a compound of simple events. Then this presumably consists in its causing one component of the compound and in its causing the other component. Now suppose that a compound of simple events causes a simple basic event, even though no component of the compound causes the event. Then it is not clear what the ground might be. But if this causal relationship is taken to be basic and hence real, then compound events should also be taken to be real, and so causation of the compound—which is a real relationship between real relata—should also be taken to be real, notwithstanding its being grounded in other causal relationships.

So given that one proposition is grounded in others, how are we to ascertain whether or not it is real? What I would like to suggest is that there is a general presumption in favor of the grounded not being real. In the absence of any reason to the contrary, such as those illustrated by the cases above, we should assume that any given grounded proposition is unreal.

The presumption may be justified by reference to the general aims of realist metaphysics. For the distinction between what is and is not real represents a general strategy for making metaphysical sense of the factual world. For, of all of the structure that the world exhibits, some may be taken to be real, to belong to the world itself, and some to be only apparent and to be understood by reference to what is real. Let us call a division of all propositions into those that are real and those that are unreal a *world-view*. Thus a world-view will correspond to a particular attempt to see the world as intelligible in terms of the distinction between what is and is not real.

Let us now call a factual proposition *moot* if it is grounded and if there is no special reason to think it real. There are then three possible world-views one might adopt: the minimalist, which takes each moot proposition to be un-

real; the maximalist, which takes each moot proposition to be real; and the middling, which takes some moot propositions to be unreal and some to be real. (We do not need to consider nonfactual propositions since it is clear that they are unreal.) Now of these three alternatives, the third should be excluded on the grounds that it draws an arbitrary distinction between moot propositions, taking some to be real and others not when there is no basis for so doing. Thus it does not correspond to an intelligible metaphysical conception of the world. The second should also be excluded. It is not arbitrary in its treatment of moot propositions, but in treating them all as real, it effectively abandons the explanatory strategy for which the distinction between what is and is not real was intended. In terms of that strategy, it is effectively equivalent to adopting a position that refuses even to acknowledge the distinction between what is and is not real. Thus the only reasonable alternative is the first; and it is this that then justifies us in taking every moot proposition to be unreal.

10. *The Unity of Realist Metaphysics*

We see that questions of factuality and reality are to be answered by essentially the same means. It is not merely that the determination of what is factual is relevant to the determination of what is real but that, in both cases, the questions are largely to be settled through considerations of ground. In the one case, we must look to the propositions of the extended domain to see whether an account of their grounds is best given in representational or nonrepresentational terms; and in the other case, we must look to the propositions of the given domain, assuming them to be factual, and attempt to ascertain from the overall structure of their grounds how the division into what is and is not real is best effected. Thus once all questions of ground are decided, all questions of

what is real—either in the sense of what is factual or what is fundamental—can be resolved. Underlying this methodological unity is, I believe, a significant conceptual unity. We have so far treated the factual and the fundamental as independent conceptions of metaphysical reality. But they are intimately related. For it is clear that any (fundamentally) real proposition is factual and that any proposition grounded in the factual, and hence any proposition grounded in the real, is factual. But also if a proposition is factual, then it must be rendered true by the real world, and if it is not itself real, it must be grounded in the real. We therefore arrive at the following definition:

> a proposition is factual iff it is real or it is grounded in what is real.[39]

Realist metaphysics, on this view, has a single focus—the fundamentally real—and our interest in other categories of reality will derive from their connection with this more fundamental category. It is the explanatory axis, as it were, upon which an account of the world will turn. For a given proposition may either be identical to the real (the real itself) or be reducible to the real (the unreal) or be neither identical to nor reducible to the real (the nonfactual or irreal). And corresponding to each type of proposition will be a characteristic account of the proposition's metaphysical import—of *how* it relates to reality. It may either be real, in which case there is nothing further to be said, since the proposition bears its import "on its face"; or it may be unreal, in which case its metaphysical import is given by its grounds; or it

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[39]It is possible to envisage a semi-quietist position that accepts the concept of factuality but rejects the concept of fundamentality. The world would divide into an objective and nonobjective part, on this view, but the objective part would be an undifferentiated mass and could not be meaningfully be taken to possess any particular intrinsic structure. The above definition would not then be available and the study of what is factual would have to proceed independently of any consideration of what is fundamental.

may be irreal, in which case its metaphysical import is given by those factual propositions that reflect its use. The aim of realist metaphysics is to render the world intelligible in terms of the distinction between what is and is not real; and its task is complete once it becomes clear how what is apparent, or not real, is to be rendered intelligible in terms of what is real.[40]

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