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Neo-pragmatism and Science

Adam Govers

Master of Arts

Faculty of Arts

School of Historical and Philosophical Studies

The University of Melbourne

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the philosophical doctrine of neo-pragmatism. It investigates three core aspects of the position: its methodological orientation, minimalist approach to truth and anti-representationalism. I relate these to the practice of science, investigating how neo-pragmatism ought to approach philosophy of science and understand scientific practice. In particular I seek to develop its minimalist stance. I do this in two ways. One is by fusing Arthur Fine's Natural Ontological Attitude with neo-pragmatism's account of truth, the other is by investigating how anti-representationalism impacts scientific discourse and how it ought to treat scientific vocabulary.

Declaration

- (i) This thesis comprises of original work towards the Master of Arts.
- (ii) Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all materials used.
- (iii) This thesis is 43,780 words in length as approved by the Research Higher Degrees Committee.

Signature:

Date:

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Introduction

This thesis investigates the philosophical doctrine of neo-pragmatism. It investigates three core aspects of the position: (1) its minimalist stance and methodological orientation, (2) its approach to truth and (3) its commitment to anti-representationalism. I relate these to the practice of science, investigating how neo-pragmatism ought to approach philosophy of science and understand scientific practice. In particular I seek to develop its minimalist stance. I do this in two ways. One is by fusing Arthur Fine's Natural Ontological Attitude with neo-pragmatism's account of truth, the other is by investigating how anti-representationalism impacts scientific discourse and how it ought to treat scientific vocabulary.

In this thesis I attempt to strengthen and develop the position of neo-pragmatism via a number of readjustments and arguments. In particular I focus on developing a minimalist thesis which uses neo-pragmatism as its guiding doctrine. To do so I attempt to relate neo-pragmatism (throughout the thesis) more directly to science, arguing that neo-pragmatism is a strong thesis capable of investigating science and offering some interesting implications for our understanding of the practice. Thus I will show how neo-pragmatism possesses a strong capacity to provide insightful details about science. While neo-pragmatist discussions are rich in detail and the position itself fast becoming a sophisticated doctrine, there has been very little cohesive discussion about the position in its entirety. Instead, neo-pragmatists have favoured applying their brand of pragmatism to various issues with little interest as to what exactly is meant by neo-pragmatism. Discussions often break down into anti-representationalist or deflationist dialogues on very particular issues. Thus another key aim of the thesis is to bring together the various neo-pragmatist arguments and to demonstrate how they fit together and form a single position called neo-pragmatism.

Finally, I hope to also move beyond the realism-anti-realism debate. The thesis will seek to capture the core intuitions of realism without having to adopt either a correspondence theory of truth or representationalism, two often held core theses of realism. It will seek to avoid realism's elaborate metaphysics, offering a minimalist position which will be more than able to account for science, satisfying realist intuitions without having to accept any problematic realist thesis. I will therefore attempt to work out a number of persisting issues for this minimalist position of neo-pragmatism.

The thesis structure therefore is as follows:

In chapter one I argue (the case) for neo-pragmatism. I do two things in the chapter to achieve this. First, I offer some explanation of the various ways the thesis can be formulated. This will provide the necessary background for the arguments to come in the thesis. In this part of the chapter I investigate what neo-pragmatism is. I question what its core theses are and seek to establish a set of core principles that can define the position. In doing this I will explain what kind of neo-pragmatism I am proposing to develop, while noting how my reading of the doctrine revises neo-pragmatism to overcome some challenges that I identify. My brand of neo-pragmatism will therefore be capable of tackling the challenges that I will investigate in chapters two and three. Then, in the second half of this chapter, I turn critical. I investigate a flaw that I have identified in minimalistic realisms which are similar to, though distinct from, neo-pragmatism. I explain the problem and explicate the significance it has. I will show why it should motivate an attempt to develop a neo-pragmatist inspired minimalist position that can appeal to modest realists and capture the core intuitions that motivate their position yet refrain from accepting any of realism's key commitments.

In chapter two I take Arthur Fine's Natural Ontological Attitude (NOA) and develop it into a more robust minimalist position. I provide my own special reading of it, interpreting the Natural Ontological Attitude as a proto neo-pragmatist position which in many ways can act as a starting point for neo-pragmatists to develop. Following this, I focus on two particular issues that concern the Natural Ontological Attitude and its approach to science. The first is to focus on the relevance that neo-pragmatism's account of truth has for the position. It can come to the aid of NOA to defend it against a number of criticisms that have been brought against it. I explain what these criticisms are while demonstrating how the neo-pragmatist can assist Fine in resolving them. Then, in the final part of the chapter, I focus on the question of whether science has a general aim and whether it is truth. I argue that while NOA contends that there is no general aim of science, we can exploit neo-pragmatist investigations into truth to show that truth does constitute an idealised, quasi-general aim of science. I explain how this works and why it is an attractive idea.

In chapter three I discuss neo-pragmatism's commitment to anti-representationalism. I focus on how the thesis impacts and relates to the practice of science, explicating the significance that anti-representationalism has for scientific representations and the related assertoric

practice that surrounds it. I assist neo-pragmatists in developing a global application of anti-representationalism by resolving some issues that confront the position when it comes to science. Thus the aim of the chapter is to improve the prospects for a global anti-representationalism. To accomplish this I address what I perceive to be a challenge that prevents the global anti-representationalist from applying the thesis to science. There are two inter-related issues that confront global anti-representationalism: one is that we want to affirm that science is genuinely assertoric. The other is that science is still descriptive and about the world. I explain how we can uphold these intuitions regarding science under global anti-representationalism, offering a solution on how science's seemingly significant descriptive dimensions can be subsumed within anti-representationalism despite its endorsement of expressivism. Thus I show that scientific vocabulary and its use of assertoric practices can be made sense of according to anti-representationalism.

Chapter 1: The case for Neo-pragmatism

1.0 Introduction and overview

This chapter sets the groundwork for the thesis by investigating what neo-pragmatism is, thereby allowing the following chapters to focus on and develop its minimalist and anti-representationalist elements. In section 1.1 I will explain what neo-pragmatism is and look at how the position can be formulated. I offer a coherent analysis of neo-pragmatism and question what its core theses are. In section 1.2 I elaborate its distinctive methodological orientation, showing why it is an appealing minimalist approach while offering my own interpretation of how it is to be appropriately applied. Then in the second half of the chapter I look at realism and a fundamental flaw which I identify in it. In section 1.3 I briefly cover what realism is, after which in section 1.4 I then explore two competing ways we can interpret realism and a fundamental interpretative flaw that develops from them. This interpretative flaw in realism and the consequences it has for realism will help to motivate the move into minimalism, encouraging the deflationist and neo-pragmatist approach that I will have covered in sections 1.1 and 1.2.

1.1 What is neo-pragmatism?

The version of pragmatism that I will be restricting my thesis to is a particular brand of pragmatism which is born from the works of Rorty, Sellars and Wittgenstein: Neo-pragmatism. Contemporary exemplars of the position are Price and Brandom and at times Williams, Horwich, and Blackburn. While these pragmatists have inherited their pragmatism from Rorty, it is a mistake to think of contemporary neo-pragmatism as the expression of his formulation. At many instances they seek to distance themselves from Rorty, in particular from his reductions of truth and objectivity to epistemic notions. Stout explains the neo-pragmatist program well with respect to Rorty when he notes that they have to deal with a balancing act: on the one hand they take Rorty's anti-representationalism seriously and seek, as he did, to 'humanise' discourse but not at the cost of losing all notions of objectivity.¹ On the other hand, they seek to reform these objective notions, like truth, without lapsing into some form of realism. Neo-pragmatism seeks a more modest approach, one which turns away from metaphysics whether it be realist or antirealist. Hence they seek an overall

¹ J. Stout, "On Our Interest in Getting Things Right: Pragmatism." in *New Pragmatists*, ed. Cheryl Misak (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), page 8,9.

deflationist/minimalist approach. In this section I investigate and compare various characterisations of what the position is.

Neo-pragmatism has a number of core theses. However there are multiple variants of the position. And it is often the case that neo-pragmatists do not necessarily take all of them together at the same time. Price and Macarthur, for example, characterise neo-pragmatism as a combination of (1) Linguistic Priority and (2) anti-representationalism.² This is a brief characterisation but it captures the overarching methodological approach that the neo-pragmatists take. Williams adopts Price's characterisation, however at times he provides a different characterisation which adds more to this simplistic one. He maintains that there are three additional core elements which can be added to the position: (3) they adopt a deflationist approach to truth and semantics in general. (4) They are inferentialist about meaning and, most importantly, (5) have an epistemic orientation, which could be said to be what underlies all these later characterisations of neo-pragmatism.³

(1) Linguistic Priority

Neo-pragmatism adopts a unique methodological approach which is linguistic in nature. I will elaborate this element of neo-pragmatism in the next section when I directly engage with neo-pragmatist methodology. However for now it should suffice to note that their methodology begins with language and the discursive practice that relates to the language. It focuses on particular areas of discourse, investigating what we are doing in using the vocabulary and related linguistic items before questioning what the language and practice are about. It therefore has a strong interest in how core concepts and ideas of the practice impact it and its speakers. This methodological approach maintains that rather than assuming that there is a metaphysical issue to the language and practice, we ought to begin with investigating what is distinctive about the language itself. For example, rather than questioning the nature of values we investigate what is distinctive about evaluative language.⁴ Neo-pragmatists therefore privilege pragmatics over semantics and use over content, seeking to overturn the assumption that there is an underlying metaphysical issue. By looking at how

² H. Price, "Pragmatism, Quasi-realism, and the Global Challenge," in *Naturalism without Mirrors*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 233. See here for Price and Macarthur reprinted.

³ M. Williams, "Realism: What's Left?" in *Truth and Realism* eds. Patrick Greenough and Michael P. Lynch (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 81-83.

⁴ M. Williams, "How Pragmatists can be Local Expressivists," in *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism* ed. Huw Price (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 128

the concepts are used and implemented within practice this approach fits well with pragmatism's general practice-orientated focus and anti-representationalism.

(2) Anti-Representationalism

Representationalists explain meaning in terms of word-world relations such as reference which, in turn, explain the (proper) use of vocabulary items. This is rejected by anti-representationalists who eschew the use of semantic notions as explanatory primitives. All vocabularies – semantic vocabulary included – are to be characterised (explained) functionally, in terms of their use properties. Generalising, as Williams has put it, “meaning does not explain use, rather use explains meaning”.⁵ Neo-pragmatists therefore emphasise a use-theoretical approach towards meaning and a non-descriptivist view of language and our discursive practices. As such, expressivism is often taken alongside anti-representationalism with the basic thought being that rather than descriptive, referential or truth conditional, a claim possesses explanatory *basic* non-descriptive functions. By this I mean that the explanation of meaning begins with and privileges the non-descriptive elements. This isn't then a rejection of representations having a descriptive function or of possessing referential elements. It only means that our explanation begins with and privileges the various non-descriptive functions. Inferentialism rests alongside this non-descriptivism, since “judgements of causal necessitation [for example] issue inference tickets: i.e. *express* commitment to the goodness of certain kinds of material inference” (italics are mine).⁶ Hence we understand such judgements as inferential moves *before* recognising them as metaphysical claims. This means that we therefore understand such judgements via “appreciating what we do with them rather than what we say”.⁷

Thus there are two core parts to anti-representationalism:

(i) A particular view about the function of language. Anti-representationalism maintains that language is principally a tool to cope with reality, rather than to mirror it, thus meaning that it fulfils some non-descriptive function. This requires subtlety in understanding since it can distort what the key idea here is. Naturally, the lines between coping and copying blurs (as will be shown in chapter 3) when we recognise that representing the world can help us to cope. Nonetheless, the principle stands that language is primarily a tool designed to enable us to do various (non-descriptive) things rather than to track the world with the addendum that

⁵ Williams, “How Pragmatists can be Local Expressivists,” 128

⁶ Ibid, 129.

⁷ Ibid.

this function of coping enables us to admit that one way in which this is achieved is through representing the world. The point anti-representationalism stresses however is that descriptive functions are only possible thanks to basic non-descriptive functions. Thus this core aspect of anti-representationalism entails a rejection of correspondence theories of truth and the related *privileging and emphasis* of referential semantics.

(ii) Anti-representationalism advocates for adoption of a non-representationalist semantics (use-theoretic semantics) by providing explanations of meaning in terms of use. Meaning is a product of pragmatics resulting in explanations requiring no need to investigate the actual content of representations. This is often taken alongside inferentialism and expressivism to shape their alternative program. The explanatory emphasis therefore is on how the speaker's context and surrounding practice confers meaning.

Traditionally, the function of statements was considered to be to 'represent' the world or states-of-affairs, with true statements doing just that (Representationalism). However anti-representationalists turn away from this program. They favour investigations into the performance of speaking. By this I mean not only the linguistic actions themselves (rather than their content) but also the surrounding practice that governs them. It is inclusive of the practice and all related aspects and concepts that play a role in it. They therefore attempt to characterise the various conditions which must be met for a speaker to be counted as successfully adhering to the practice and to elaborate how the practice works so as to enable this.⁸ This is quite a different philosophical program when compared to standard approaches towards analysis of particular areas of inquiry. It does not start with the content of representations or go looking for referents, truth conditions or truth makers. It begins with the practice that surrounds the language and what is being done within it, or, rather, the actual act of talking itself (for example, what the speakers are doing in making assertions).

Another element of anti-representationalism is that it is ontologically conservative: that is, they posit only trivial ontological commitments.⁹ Typically, representationalist explanations will not be conservative because their explanations of meaning often inherit certain commitments of the vocabulary in question. For example, moral predicates under representationalism will typically lead to talk of moral properties and hence are led into metaphysical concerns about their existence and nature. This is because representationalists

⁸ R. Brandom, *Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) 9, 12-14.

⁹ Williams, "How Pragmatists can be Local Expressivists," 130.

will refer to truth makers, prompting reference to that which makes the claims true (objects and properties) thereby leading them to questions regarding their nature and related metaphysical concerns that surround them. Anti-representationalism however avoids such a situation. Values and normative properties under expressivism only enter via our taking up certain attitudes rather than problematic metaphysical properties or entities. Of course expressivism is typically a local doctrine whereas the neo-pragmatists are global in their anti-representationalism. However this isn't to say that there aren't global possibilities for expressivism.

A final point regarding anti-representationalism is that there is a good deal which they do not deny but are often mistakenly thought to. It is important to note that anti-representationalism is not an outright denial of instances of representation. It is not an outright denial of there being referential dimensions, descriptive functions or that such instances can do some sort of explanatory work. These are not at issue. What anti-representationalists do reject is that descriptive dimensions are theoretically basic in explaining meaning. Thus when a representationalist confronts an anti-representationalist with incomprehension over how one could deny that a map represents the world, or that the explanation of our successful navigation is due to such representational content, the anti-representationalist does not disagree. They only disagree if these are taken to suggest representationalism. Allusions to representationalist idioms then can only come later in the explanation.

Blackburn has provided what I think is a very telling lesson both for those unfamiliar with anti-representationalism and for anti-representationalists who get overzealous in their position and require some common sense reminders that representations in general need not be viewed with suspicion. Too often philosophers ignore the division between the everyday and philosophical theory with an alarming degree of nonchalance. What begins, Blackburn notes, as philosophical objections to correspondence theories of truth, claims regarding the primary explainer of meaning, and claims over the function of language, quickly morph into unreasonable rejections of representation in their totality.¹⁰ There can be perfectly fine everyday instances of representation. And we should not be so quick to follow Rorty's upheaval at the cost of this perfectly fine activity we do all the time (Blackburn's 'Wittgenstienian' reminder, as he calls it). Also, neo-pragmatists maintain that as such we should not be misled into confusing these simple instances to be reflective of language in

¹⁰ S. Blackburn, "Pragmatism: all or some?" in *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism*, ed. Huw Price (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 70.

general. Anti-representationalists, particularly because of their expressivism, are not unaccustomed to the idea that language plays tricks on us. Hence they adopt the Wittgensteinian idea that such instances give the ‘clothing’ of language which mistakenly give the impression that this is a sign of significance for theory.

This line of thought points to another. Blackburn thinks the real problem is that we are often mistakenly led to think that given anti-representationalists’ belief that representation has no “...proper use in answering the external-sounding question, since it introduces metaphysics, then it must have no proper use in the internal workings of the discourse itself.”¹¹ This is wrong. Vocabularies themselves *can use* representationalist idioms like “reference”. But, when analysing and explaining *those vocabularies* in philosophy, the meta-vocabulary employed ought to be a pragmatic, use-theoretic styled one which looks at the vocabulary from this perspective of investigating not what is said but what is done (more on this in 1.2). The pragmatist *should ask* what we are doing when we form representations (which I will do in chapter three). Blackburn maintains that *within* discourse itself representations and representationalist idioms find a perfectly fine use. At the same time, it is because of this that Blackburn insists that everyday instances do not offer a ‘self-extracting’ philosophical ‘ism’ – representationalism – though it does mean that neo-pragmatist critiques of representationalism better be sure not to include the everyday then.¹² These themes of anti-representationalism will be the focus of chapter three. In particular I investigate this matter of representational content within their program and the implications the thesis has for scientific representations.

(3) Deflationist Theory of Truth

Neo-pragmatists adopt a deflationist theory of truth, though this is a somewhat poor characterisation for two reasons: Firstly, there can be instances where a deflationist theory is rejected (e.g. Rorty).¹³ This demonstrates how contemporary neo-pragmatists distance themselves from Rorty and his reduction of truth to an epistemic notion. Secondly, they do not strictly identify with deflationism, at times preferring to be called minimalist, or simply pragmatist with respect to their account of truth. This is because beyond the claim that there is no actual ‘theory’ needed for truth, neo-pragmatists are interested in the concept of truth

¹¹ Blackburn, “Pragmatism: all or some?” 71.

¹² Ibid, 71-72.

¹³ H. Price, “Truth as Convenient Friction,” in *Naturalism without Mirrors*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 163. Price aptly explains how Rorty undermines the idea of truth being distinct from justification and warranted assertibility.

and how it impacts practice.¹⁴ A good example of this is Huw Price's account of truth as a norm of assertoric discourse.¹⁵ He maintains that truth as a concept plays an indispensable normative role within our practice of inquiry; that of ensuring that disagreements are not rendered faultless. In recognising that we subject ourselves to a norm beyond mere subjective (or even communal) warrant – that of truth – we adhere to a norm beyond ourselves which demands that when we encounter disagreement, we assume that at least one person is at fault and that there is a need to resolve the conflict. Price calls this a necessary 'friction' that the concept of truth provides via this norm which, whilst not demanding an explicit theory, does require some (pragmatic-anthropological) storytelling. A deflationist theory of truth then, is something of a starting point for neo-pragmatists rather than exhausting their account of truth.

This deflationist approach reflects a number of pragmatist considerations. First, it does nothing more than give an account of the concept of truth. Rather than assuming that there is a metaphysical issue – that it requires identification *with* something, the neo-pragmatist instead begins with how we use the concept in practice. Second, it also reflects their wider commitment to semantic minimalism – semantic idioms are deflated and incapable of doing the heavy lifting that metaphysicians want them to do. This is motivated by their linguistic priority because in taking the issue of truth to be one of language use, rather than of metaphysical importance, they thereby refrain from assuming there is a metaphysical issue. This means they are predisposed to deflationism since this semantic minimalism complements their methodological approach.

(4) Inferentialism

Neo-pragmatists are typically inferentialist about meaning. This helps reinforce their anti-representationalist argument that meaning is not derived from word-world relations first and foremost but is instead a product of discourse. The kind of inferentialism adopted is simply Brandom's 'Broad' inferentialism: "...Beliefs derive their content from the ways in which they relate to other beliefs, licensing them and being licenced in turn – but also from being observationally licensed, and by licensing actions."¹⁶ The inferentialist therefore privileges inference over reference in explanations, emphasising how practices confer conceptual

¹⁴ P. Horwich, *Truth, Meaning, Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 14, 15. Horwich's deflationist account therefore fits quite well; especially where it concerns a recognition of the various uses that truth possesses– disquotation, blind ascription, agreement.

¹⁵ Price, "Truth as Convenient Friction", 170-171.

¹⁶ Williams, "Realism: What's Left?" 83.

content to the expressions, performances and stances of a practice.¹⁷ This reflects their practical orientation as well as their epistemic focus since it adopts an ‘interpretivist’ approach to beliefs and meaning – that is, that meaning is “whatever emerges from our practices of interpretation and rationalisation.”¹⁸ Beliefs therefore attain their content from how they relate to other beliefs in this system of licensing them and being licensed in turn. Thus a semantic holism is adopted to complement such an approach.¹⁹ It is here that representations play a more internal, functional role.

(5) Epistemic Orientation

Williams argues that neo-pragmatists, while not interested in traditional epistemology, are still ‘epistemically orientated’. That is, they are interested in epistemology rather than metaphysics in a practical sense. Strongly anti-sceptical, they turn away from traditionally held epistemic problems like the need for foundations for knowledge, and instead start with practice orientated epistemic notions (rather than semantic ones like truth or reference). One example of this which is core to their position is Brandom’s ‘game of giving and asking for reasons’ upon which one then explicates semantic notions. Neo-pragmatism seeks to locate knowledge, meaning and beliefs within practice (our practice of inquiry) – within discourse, argumentation and interpretation. The neo-pragmatist therefore starts with these elements of practice, looking at what we have, where we are within practice and how we can thereby come to have knowledge rather than with sceptical problems of what knowledge is or if we can ever attain it. It takes for granted what we have and from there figures out what we know.²⁰

There are a number of further details of neo-pragmatism which can be derived from these core theses: as a result of their anti-representationalism they typically adopt a functional pluralism when it comes to the various things different vocabularies can do. Another key conclusion is that their anti-scepticism amplifies their anti-representationalist motivated rejection of correspondence theories of truth (and of realism therefore) because they perceive it to be an invitation for scepticism which encourages the problem. Neo-pragmatists

¹⁷ R. Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 11.

¹⁸ Williams, “Realism: What’s Left?” 83.

¹⁹ Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*, 15.

²⁰ This isn’t then some sort of internal realism. To think so thoroughly confuses the neo-pragmatist program. Neo-pragmatism doesn’t share the same starting point which generates internal realism. It doesn’t seek to constrain us to our concepts or conceptual frameworks nor does it uphold the internal realist’s scepticism about unmediated access with the external world. Rather it begins with a dismissal of the whole sceptical program of questioning these issues.

recognise that we could get things wrong but think that such an admission can only go so far until it becomes unreasonable. The neo-pragmatist does not think, for example, that *all* our beliefs could be wrong, for if we did not have some straightforwardly true beliefs we wouldn't have any at all (thereby taking a more holistic approach). To entertain the thought that we could be wrong about everything is at odds with their inferentialism thereby making the thought one which is deemed too unreasonable to genuinely consider. This is not however intended to be a collapse into anti-realism since they do not seek to make our beliefs true in virtue of ourselves.²¹ They meet some ways with realists but refrain from this final step which, they maintain, invites scepticism.

1.2 Neo-pragmatism's methodological orientation: philosophical anthropology and linguistic priority

In this section I look at the methodological orientation of neo-pragmatism.²² I will elaborate the various ways that it can be characterised and what relevance such a methodological outlook offers philosophy. Known at times as philosophical anthropology or linguistic priority, the approach has a distinctive linguistic orientation. It seeks to adhere to the guiding principle of neo-pragmatism that pragmatists should limit themselves to the practice itself and what is being done within it rather than what it is about. It is through this that their metaphysical quietism and semantic minimalism are developed, which additionally helps to develop their anti-representationalism, thereby explaining why these various elements fit so well together. I hope to demonstrate how this methodological orientation is fundamental to neo-pragmatism, whilst arguing for my own particular version which maintains that the approach offers philosophy in general a valuable tool for philosophical analysis. Thus I will both justify and defend this approach while drawing connections to its impact on the wider position of neo-pragmatism.

There are two ways this 'philosophical anthropology' is described: the first is in eliciting the notion of linguistic priority. Price and Macarthur for example state:

"The pragmatist we have in mind wants to dismiss or demote such metaphysical puzzles in favour of more practical questions, about the roles and functions of the matters in question in human life. But what are these 'matters', precisely? Not the metaphysician's objects or properties themselves,

²¹ This doesn't mean they default to or support idealism. A rejection of realism does not equate to anti-realism. These neo-pragmatists want to get beyond the realism-anti-realism debate after all.

²² Of course neo-pragmatists adopt more basic and general pragmatist principles. However my focus in this section is on neo-pragmatism's own distinctive methodology.

presumably, but the words, concepts and thoughts in terms of which (as we ordinarily put it) we talk and think about such things and properties. In other words, a pragmatist about causation doesn't ask about the role of causation itself in human life, but about the role and genealogy of the notion, term or concept 'causation'."23

They add to this later by claiming the following:

"...pragmatism begins with questions about the functions and genealogy of certain linguistic items... It begins with linguistic behaviour, and asks broadly anthropological questions: How are we to understand the role and functions of the behaviour in question, in the lives of the creatures concerned? What is its practical significance? Whence its genealogy?"24

Williams too shares in these notions, stating that:

"Charting the different functions that different forms of discourse fulfil is the (naturalistic) project of 'philosophical anthropology'."25

Williams therefore agrees that this project adheres to linguistic priority:

"When dealing with metaphysical issues, don't start by asking about (say) the nature of values: examine what is distinctive about evaluative language."26

The second way in which philosophical anthropology is expressed is via the Carnapian notion of external questions which Blackburn in his characterisation explains. He describes this pragmatist method as follows:

"How does it come about that we go in for this kind of discourse and thought? What is the explanation of this bit of our language game? And then you offer an account of what we are up to in going in for this discourse, and the account eschews any use of the referring expressions of the discourse... or any semantic or ontological attempt to 'interpret' the discourse in a domain, to find referents for its terms, or truth-makers for its sentences. *Instead*, the explanation proceeds by talking in different terms of what is done by so talking. It offers a revelatory genealogy or anthropology or even a just-so story about how this mode of talking and thinking and practising might come about, given in terms of the functions it serves. Notice that it does not offer a classical reduction, finding truth-makers in other terms. It finds whatever plurality of function it can lay its hands upon." 27

²³ Price, "Pragmatism, Quasi-realism, and the Global Challenge," 230-231. Again, Price and Macarthur are reprinted here under Price.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 231.

²⁵ Williams, "How Pragmatists can be Local Expressivists," 132

²⁶ *Ibid*, 128.

²⁷ Blackburn, "Pragmatism: all or some?" 75.

The above descriptions by Blackburn and Williams both share similarities with Price and Macarthur's original description, which influences their characterisations²⁸. Each of them focuses on limiting the analysis to the talk itself and the speakers within the practice (alongside related aspects of the practice) while avoiding what it pertains to. Each draws attention to the focus on roles and functions of vocabularies and concepts. Williams and Price and Macarthur cash out this idea by way of 'linguistic priority' which maintains that we need to begin by looking at the language itself alongside what is being done with the language before questioning the objects or properties found in the talk. The emphasis for them is on this notion of function; what the roles of certain vocabularies or linguistic items are and how they fulfil such functions. Questions such as what is it we are doing in speaking in certain ways and what such vocabularies and practices enable us to do through their use is therefore the focus. Both Williams and Price and Macarthur elicit this sense of 'practical significance'. This reflects neo-pragmatism's interest in analysing certain vocabularies and areas of discourse in ways that highlight the importance they have for practice; why it is that they earn their keep as valid forms of talking via what functions they satisfy. It is because of this that their 'linguistic priority' earns the label of anthropology. It is anthropological because it asks broad anthropological questions like what are certain practices and vocabularies designed to do. It doesn't just look at the practice itself but asks questions which have a very particular interest in what difference the practice's various aspects make for speakers. It additionally seeks to offer certain anthropological-styled answers to these questions: providing genealogies of the language and practice.

Blackburn's characterisation is very similar to Price and Macarthur's. It too draws attention to the need for neo-pragmatists to ask questions like: Why do we talk in certain ways? What functions does such talk satisfy? What is it that such manner of talk equips speakers and discourse with? A prominent theme in Blackburn is that he explicitly describes this approach as anthropological. He raises the idea that these analyses are in many ways 'genealogies' which trace their development through history, explaining how they came to fit within practice by offering analyses of the practice and language in terms of what they let us do. This demonstrates the distinctive character that pragmatist explanations and investigations provide. They are devoid of metaphysics whilst still offering philosophy a greater understanding of discourse in a way that other methodologies cannot provide. This practical

²⁸ Williams "'How Pragmatists can be Local Expressivists,'" 128. Williams directly adopts Price and Macarthur's characterisation.

significance is only realised when the pragmatist asks the question of what difference this makes to practice by demonstrating how things would be different if we lacked such ways of talking and such actions capable of being performed. Uncovering such implications reveals the significance they have for the practice and demonstrates what this pragmatist method can provide.

This methodological orientation is therefore linguistic-based, however it is a mistake to think that this means that there is only the talk itself. For neo-pragmatists, this priority is simply an orientation of where their interests lie. It is not a denial of content. It only refrains from commenting on what the linguistic items refer to or what the vocabulary in general may be denoting. Instead, their investigations restrict themselves to analysing the practice as it currently is, describing how things are, whilst drawing attention to why they are those ways and why this is of importance. A core reason for doing all this is that it seeks to understand and legitimise forms of discourse without having to refer to what they are about or, therefore, without having to resolve any apparent metaphysical issues that might surround the target area of discourse. Neo-pragmatist investigations into truth are a good example. They trace the impact and consequences that the concept of truth has upon practice, and explain not only what it does but why what it does is indispensable to our practice. All of this is done without identifying it with anything or trying to give it a theory about its nature. It is these kinds of analyses that neo-pragmatists are interested in.

Given these similarities, there are four elements that can be identified in all these various versions of neo-pragmatism's anthropological perspective:

1. Focus on use rather than content

The program put forward seeks to focus on the 'doing' of talking. Both in terms of being on a wide scale where certain vocabularies are questioned – what role certain areas of discourse do in general (scientific discourse, moral discourse, evaluative language), and on a more local scale in terms of particular concepts (like truth) and linguistic items. It views speaking as a performance, with linguistic items and vocabularies equipping speakers with expressive, descriptive and inferential tools as well as equipping practice with normative force (for example, truth providing 'friction' in assertoric discourse). Offering a genealogy or anthropological account of the practice seeks to elucidate why such a vocabulary or concept came about; providing explanations in functionalistic terms by way of what such areas of discourse enable us to do. Here, the interest beyond this functional talk is to explain how such

a practice could come about and why it is a valued or justified area of discourse by drawing consequences and conclusions about it.

2. They resist semantic or ontological interpretations

Neo-pragmatists insist that the pragmatist needs to resist interpreting the practice in a semantic or ontological manner. The point is that the neo-pragmatist avoids interpretation in the typical sense of attempting to find referents or truth makers as well as avoiding any attempt to reduce the talk to identification with anything else (like truth with correspondence). Such attempts are bound up with metaphysics and thereby need to be avoided. Of course they still have ontological and (minimalistic) metaphysical commitments, though these are trivial. More importantly, possession of ontological commitments shouldn't be confused with accepting elaborate metaphysical or ontological interpretations.

3. Referring expressions of the discourse are avoided

This methodology adopts a pragmatic meta-vocabulary when it analyses vocabularies and areas of discourse. This means the practice is explained via a meta-vocabulary that looks at what is done, and explains the abilities used in that area alongside what is required for successful use of the vocabulary (the conditions that must be met to be counted as successful). This therefore opposes using a semantic meta-vocabulary to interpret what is said via other terms. This pragmatic meta-vocabulary does not employ any referring terms or expressions of the target discourse under analysis and resists the temptation to employ representationalist idioms and, most importantly, resists translating the target vocabulary into other terms. Brandom describes the project which follows from this orientation (thereby fleshing out what we do) as:

“The idea is to formulate in the favoured vocabulary necessary and sufficient conditions for doing what one needs to be doing in order thereby to be saying what can be said using the vocabulary, rather than (as with a semantic meta-vocabulary) for saying in different terms what they can say in that vocabulary... Instead of worrying about what the vocabulary says about how things are with whatever it is it talks about, how it is describing or representing the world as being... we describe how the use of the vocabulary is taught and learned. If there is nothing mysterious about that, and if we can say in our favoured terms just what one needs to do in order to use the vocabulary correctly, Price argues,

then the vocabulary should count as naturalistically acceptable, regardless of whether we have anything to say about what it represents.”²⁹

This approach draws upon anti-representationalism to motivate how this pragmatic meta-vocabulary is used in the analysis. The explanatory emphasis is placed upon elaborating how the vocabulary is used and what conditions must be met to be considered saying what ‘can be said’ via using the vocabulary – i.e. saying what the vocabulary is designed to allow the speaker to communicate. It also notes how the vocabulary and practice can be viewed as acceptable by naturalistic lights without having to refer to the content of the vocabulary. Thus by placing the emphasis on pragmatics in their analysis they can avoid inheriting questionable ontological commitments which are woven into the vocabulary alongside avoiding any metaphysical issues that might surround it. Given these details, it is wrong to confuse Brandom’s characterisation of the meta-vocabulary with the object-language-meta-language distinction. This is because the object-language-meta-language distinction traffics in translating terms from one vocabulary into another. Pragmatic meta-vocabularies don’t. They turn away from translation. Rather than trying to translate the targeted language into another, it is telling us what *kind* of vocabulary we should deploy to analyse and explain other vocabularies and areas of discourse and how we are to make sense of it (via its use rather than content). This demonstrates why anti-representationalism fits so well with this orientation: it maintains that all vocabularies are fundamentally non-descriptive, supplementing this analysis of expressive and inferential functions.

4. Metaphysically quietist

As a consequence of the previous points, neo-pragmatists are metaphysical quietists. By quietist I mean that they refrain from any significant metaphysical thesis. Quietism however should not be confused with minimalism. Their difference is subtle yet important. Minimalism maintains that there is little to say on a particular subject, or that we can simply do more with less and that a minimalistic approach is more than adequate with any further efforts undermining one’s investigation. Minimalism therefore recognises that the subject matter is something worth questioning even if we assert a minimalistic framework. Quietism, on the other hand, is quite different. Quietism is the simple insistence that there is nothing to be said on a particular subject. Or, more specifically, it is an abstinence from philosophical

²⁹ R. Brandom, “Global Anti-representationalism?” in *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism*, ed. Huw Price (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 86

commentary. According to quietism, we maintain that we either should not or cannot make *any claims* relating to the issue at hand, minimalist or otherwise. Unlike minimalism then where we affirm a minimalistic framework of understanding towards metaphysical issues, claiming that these minimal frameworks are enough, metaphysical quietism is the belief that there is nothing to be said on the matter and thus no framework is necessary. Of course for neo-pragmatists this isn't to say that they completely ignore or discredit them (as we will see shortly). Regardless, the point is not to answer questions about the function of language or of the practice in ways that encourages metaphysics.

Metaphysical quietism and how this methodological orientation ought to be implemented

I want to elaborate this commitment of metaphysical quietism. I will explain why the methodology is metaphysically quietist and what significance this has for our current concerns. The short answer is that the method seeks to sidestep metaphysical worries and discussions that one might have about certain elements of an area of discourse, allowing us to get straight to our investigations on the practice itself. This is due to the methodology leading to the belief that metaphysical issues are issues we need not and cannot have. *Need not* because this method side steps them. *Cannot* because there is the potential for this method to render them a moot point (like expressivism in ethics). It therefore doesn't inherit the ontological commitments of the target vocabulary thereby enabling us to investigate the vocabulary while being ontologically conservative and freeing us from any issues that may persist within the discourse. This is important because it means that we can avoid getting involved in the realism-anti-realism debate while still making sense of areas of discourse and justifying them as legitimate.

By limiting oneself to the use of vocabularies and how practices functions, rather than the content of the vocabulary and what a practice is about, the neo-pragmatist refrains from inheriting any ontological commitments beyond those that are trivial. They can bracket the ontological commitments and assumptions that the vocabulary under question has. Through this avoidance, and their deployment of a pragmatic meta-vocabulary, the neo-pragmatist is able to analyse an area of discourse without getting roped into the metaphysical problems that surround the practice explicitly because they don't question what is behind the content. Their overarching semantic minimalism reinforces this view as: "minimalism simply assures us that a pragmatist who has completed his explanation need not worry at finding truth, or other

semantic notions, woven into the target discourse.”³⁰ Cast another way; because the neo-pragmatist does not employ a representationalist semantic meta-vocabulary in their analysis but instead an anti-representationalist pragmatic one which focuses on what is being done, at no point do questions of objects or properties arise. The neo-pragmatist can coherently analyse what is being done, explain its purpose and what it enables the speaker to do without having to posit and debate any objects or properties that are woven into the target vocabulary. It is capable of making sense of the practice and surrounding vocabulary, justifying it in virtue of the functions it offers us without having to refer to any of the content that it is about. Thus while a vocabulary can employ representationalist idioms itself, the meta-vocabulary used to analyse it avoids application of the terms in question and hence avoids the worries that the vocabulary itself faces.

This is an advantage of neo-pragmatism and is therefore a useful means of analysis at the philosopher’s disposal since it enables one to investigate an area of discourse and make sense of the surrounding practice without being drawn into metaphysical debates or questions. This focus on pragmatics explaining semantics and the overturning of the explanatory direction between content and usage offers a robust means of analysis that can justify an area of discourse regardless of any metaphysical worries that might surround it.

Before jumping the gun however, this methodology of neo-pragmatism requires subtlety in understanding. One may think that this methodology is calling for a return to the linguistic turn. It is not. There may be a shared, broad interest in language here. However one’s attention must be drawn towards the significant anthropological rather than linguistic aspect of the doctrine. The predominant interest to the neo-pragmatist is in the various practices and systems of inquiry that speakers can be a part of and how they produce knowledge. And, therefore, their interests are in how they work, what speakers can do (rather than say) *with* language (rather than *what* the language is about). Thus it is not a return to the linguistic turn, nor is it an advocacy of pure language studies. But rather a supplementary tool and set of principles for investigation into these particular aspects of human life. This potential confusion over what the methodology seems to be implying does, as a consequence, prompt there to be three possible readings as to what this methodology is suggesting. The underlying question here is whether all ‘worthwhile’ questions are of the kind that this linguistic priority suggests: are all metaphysical questions either illegitimate or misguided given this approach

³⁰ Blackburn, “Pragmatism: all or some?” 75.

and its principles? The first and most harsh reading maintains that these are the only legitimate questions for philosophy, while those outside its scope are misguided. Thus this reading holds that we must start with language. The second reading maintains that we ought to begin with language simply because we may be able to resolve future issues. But it rejects this idea that other types of questions are illegitimate. The final reading, being the most minimal, is simply that this presents philosophy with an optional yet useful and supplementary method. It is a method which can be applied whenever one encounters difficulties and requires assistance in their investigations.

When we focus on what neo-pragmatists have said, it seems there is no consensus on which is the appropriate reading. Rorty, we could say, would identify mostly with the first and strongest claim since it greatly reduces what philosophy is in the business of investigating. However contemporary neo-pragmatists vary greatly. Price and Macarthur I think would rest between the first and second readings due to Wittgensteinian influence. For them, these are the only questions that concern *pragmatists*, suggesting that they may simply adopt an overarching quietism in response to other types of questions. However elsewhere Price has said that these metaphysical questions themselves can be interesting ones with important and illuminating results.³¹ He recognises that as such they can be discussions worth having. But he dismisses them as they are not the neo-pragmatist's questions. I agree with these elements in Price's view so long as he is suggesting this more modest view (though textual fidelity is not particularly important here as my interest is in what we can get out of these ideas). For Williams's part I think that he is closer to the second reading, since he himself has participated in discussions concerning realism. Whilst Blackburn would be placed closer to the third reading due to his own pragmatism being strictly local in its application. However I find no problem in taking these insights of Price, Williams and Blackburn together to formulate what I think is not only a modest but quite attractive reading of this methodology.

There is no reason preventing application of this methodology globally to all areas of discourse when read in a modest fashion. It would assist our investigations into any area where applied because it can provide another tool to the philosopher in his efforts to analyse any particular area of inquiry and discourse. The first reading is simply too unreasonable and at odds with this driving intuition that it offers a new but not exclusive tool to philosophers. It is this first reading that reflects why some may worry that the approach comes too close to

³¹ Price, "Pragmatism, Quasi-realism, and the Global Challenge," 231.

being trapped within the linguistic turn, even if the methodology doesn't amount to us being trapped within language and having language as the only topic of interest for philosophy. As noted, this is not only uncharitable but quite misguided in its understanding of the methodology, particularly of its anthropological character. As neo-pragmatists I think that this methodology *ought* to be applied, but that is only because *as pragmatists* (in the general sense) our interests should lie here. It makes sense therefore for us to look at the language and practice first. Thus the first reading *should* be dismissed because it *does* reflect something close to an admission of the linguistic turn which, as noted, distorts neo-pragmatism's key principles. Because of this, I find that the most reasonable interpretation is a nuanced middle ground of acceptance between the second and third readings.

What motivates my interpretation is through questioning why anyone who is not a neo-pragmatist should care and whether this program is exclusive to neo-pragmatism? The answer to the second question largely settles the first. As far as exclusivity is concerned, it is thoroughly rejected. Metaphysicians themselves can ask these functional questions and can take up this practice-orientated outlook that avoids reference to the objects or properties. Blackburn has suggested a number of ways one might employ this program. His most interesting one of relevance here is in his notion of a 'patchwork' deployment of pragmatism.³² When one encounters difficulties, one can turn to this methodology and 'pen' a genealogical essay about the vocabulary's origins, basing it around how it came about by way of functional uses and how it fulfils certain roles which in turn justify the area of discourse. Blackburn believes this patchwork system is where one can pose this strictly local question without having to be a global pragmatist who employs the method everywhere. Thus I maintain that it is not only plausible but quite a viable option for non-pragmatists, thereby supporting my reading that this methodological approach is one which is more in line with the second and third interpretations. Of course, in making the system 'patchwork' by enabling pragmatist explanations to carry one another, this local employment does come close to a global neo-pragmatism. This would thereby (potentially) threaten non-pragmatist efforts at avoiding a collapse into global neo-pragmatism. Blackburn himself admits it comes close but refrains from thinking of this as global neo-pragmatism.³³ I agree there is no threat towards non-pragmatist efforts since even if it does move towards global neo-pragmatism, it's no longer mutually exclusive with metaphysics. Metaphysical quietism needn't equate to

³² Blackburn, "Pragmatism: all or some?" 80, 81.

³³ Ibid.

a complete rejection after all. The opportunity provided to non-pragmatists is one which I think, while not in line with my own global inclinations, is one which is not in contention with neo-pragmatism and its global program. This patchwork system can be employed therefore by philosophers who wish to benefit from this approach and treat it like a new, useful tool in their armament.

As a result, the program should not be thought of as anti-realist for its approach to metaphysics. It is a pragmatist, linguistic and deflationist based program, but is not at odds with the efforts of others. It is wrong to think that this program somehow denies that discussions about objects or properties can be had. Such questions could be of interest from a scientific or philosophical perspective. The only point of neo-pragmatists, given their global commitment and approval of this program to all areas of discourse, is that these are not their questions, not their interests. And, the telling lesson to be taken away by metaphysicians and pragmatists alike is that this is an interesting and plausible way to tackle metaphysical issues – by not assuming that there are any in the first place. That we ought to take a step back and analyse the talk itself, what is being done in such talking and what functions it serves, with all this rendering a practice and its vocabulary acceptable is a real advantage and step forward. And what harm could this do? When understood as I am suggesting, this offers the potential to resolve metaphysical issues and offer new facts regarding discourse without overthrowing metaphysics or philosophy.

In summary, neo-pragmatism according to my reading offers a new way we can approach and make sense of areas of discourse. It enables us to question what one is doing with the language, tracing consequences that such ways of speaking have upon practice and from there extracting what such language offers speakers. The neo-pragmatist can offer new, philosophically illuminating facts about areas of discourse, their vocabularies and on indispensable concepts that relate to them in such a way that resists any lapse into metaphysical worries and questions that lie behind the language. Because of this, such metaphysical quietism does not equate to philosophical quietism, nor should it be viewed as hostile to metaphysics. Blackburn and Kraut each note the worthwhile point that neo-pragmatists themselves should view metaphysics like all other human practices, questioning what it is we are doing in metaphysicalising and realising that it too is an acceptable practice with certain uses.³⁴ The lesson here is only that one must not confuse this as being in direct

³⁴ Blackburn, “Pragmatism: all or some?” 69.

contention with the neo-pragmatist. Once we realise this, the program seems much more approachable for non-pragmatists and pragmatists alike. Under my reading then, the neo-pragmatist can offer this methodology as a tool to philosophy, adding another methodological approach that can help resolve philosophical issues and provide new facts about our assertoric practices. Neo-pragmatism then can be far less zealous in how strongly it adheres to this principle of linguistic ‘priority’ while still being as impactful as the thesis promises and thereby just as valuable a tool for philosophy. This approach therefore need not be thought of as polarising. It seeks to address the questions it sets for itself, and claims no arrogance to being the single methodology which can resolve all philosophical problems. Finally then, this methodology fully achieves a deflationist and minimalist thesis, resolutely avoiding any collapse into realism or antirealism while also laying the foundations for anti-representationalism to be adopted and developed.

1.3 Realism; a diagnosis

Having begun the case for neo-pragmatism and why it is an attractive minimalist thesis, I now want to provide further encouragement for developing a neo-pragmatist styled minimalist position through distancing itself from similar but distinct minimalistic realisms. In the remainder of this chapter I do two things; provide some context for the arguments to come in my thesis and provide some explanation as to what motivates this minimalist stance of neo-pragmatism. To do this I briefly explain what realism is, what its core theses are and then diagnose what is wrong with it. Of course many criticisms have been brought against realism and I will not be covering these in detail. Instead I address what I take to be a central interpretative problem surrounding realism and explain why, given this problem, realists (and others) should adopt neo-pragmatism and the minimalist stance I develop in this thesis.

What is realism?

The question of *what realism is* is a complex question itself. Many have debated what its core theses are, resulting in many different formulations. I don’t want to debate these various formulations or attempt to settle what realism is. These are not the questions of interest here. Instead my interest lies in the core realist theses and a fundamental problem I have identified which plagues all *minimal* realisms that adhere to its basic theses. Thus while my brief and simple characterisation is just that, it should hopefully provide enough of an understanding of what I mean by realism when I speak of it. When I talk of realism then I am primarily concerned with realism in general rather than any particular realism about a domain of

entities and will only mean realism about a particular domain when I explicitly say so. Thus I will focus more on the core position of realism, that is, what core (minimal) theses must be adopted to be a realist in the first place.

There are, roughly, four core theses of Realism:

(1) A metaphysical thesis – There is a single, objective, mind-independent reality which we are a part of but whose existence, features and structure are not dependent upon human thought, language or concepts.³⁵

(2) An Epistemic thesis – We can have genuine knowledge of such a reality.

A mind-independent reality alone is uninteresting until it is related to what significance it has for ourselves and our practices. How we attain epistemic access to such a reality then is central to realism; as Rescher argues, a core premise of realism is that “...we can to some extent secure adequate descriptive information about this reality” and that this is genuine knowledge and not merely some sort of communal agreement.³⁶ This is more than a rejection of scepticism. Realists aim towards having rich knowledge of reality. Williams puts it well when he notes that the metaphysical thesis of realism is rather trivial without relevance to ourselves. Realism only becomes something philosophically interesting when taken with this epistemic claim.³⁷ This is often a claim bound up with fallibilism, which maintains that while adequate, our investigations into reality are imperfect. While it follows trivially from mind-independence, Rescher takes such modesty very seriously, holding it to be ‘the key contention of realism’ precisely because it gives some shape to the type of epistemic access realists have in mind.³⁸

(3) Correspondence Theory of Truth

A correspondence theory of truth is core to realism because it helps to develop, achieve and demonstrate the metaphysical and epistemic theses. While some, like Devitt, may dispute its relevance, philosophers typically take realism to entail a correspondence theory of truth. Musgrave is one such thinker, arguing that truth is *the issue* that the realist is preoccupied

³⁵ M. Devitt, *Realism and Truth*. 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 24. Devitt notes two core realisms: common-sense and scientific realism are both metaphysical realisms which can be said to form the starting point for all other realisms. I’ll address this shortly.

³⁶ N. Rescher, *Realism and Pragmatic Epistemology* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 14.

³⁷ Williams, “Realism: What’s Left?” 77.

³⁸ Rescher, *Realism and Pragmatic Epistemology*, 47.

with and that realism is *the position* which adopts truth as correspondence.³⁹ Rorty too takes it to be central. He maintains that related semantic issues such as whether we ought to adopt a representationalist, truth-conditional semantics or a non-representational semantics largely determines the matter of both truth and realism: “for ‘ontological commitment’ and ‘really exists’ are part of the same cluster of concepts that include ‘linguistic representation,’ ‘fact of the matter,’ ‘correspondence to reality,’ and ‘truth-making.’”⁴⁰ It is here where semantics is bound up with epistemology because a primary means of demonstrating epistemic access is via successful reference (thereby bringing in an accompanying correspondence theory of truth). Many therefore take realism to include a correspondence theory of truth as a result of there being a mind-independent reality: that in having this distinct objective reality, whenever certain state-of-affairs are obtained, or particular terms succeed in referring to entities, these are signs of correspondence and of such entities being ‘real’. Of course realism does not demand that a correspondence theory of truth be accepted. But it does fit well with the wider thesis. It is therefore a common inclusion which many realists hold to be a core aspect of their position.

(4) Representationalism

Representationalism is a core realist commitment. Opposing the commitments of anti-representationalism that I covered, it maintains that the referential relations and descriptive dimensions of representational content acts as a fundamental explainer of meaning. As such its representational content is what determines the proper use of the terms and statements involved. Consequently, it encourages the view that the primary function of language is to be descriptive and represent the world. Representationalism therefore is able to do the heavy lifting in metaphysics that realists desire; that is, in supporting such semantic idioms as ‘correspondence’ and ‘truth’ as being capable of doing explanatory work. It is often considered that when a term fails to refer to some particular object, fact, or state of affairs, that provides reason to be anti-realist with respect to those entities. Because of this, representationalism underlies a correspondence theory of truth since it is what ensures that the referential relations can play an explanatory role and thereby enable them to establish instances of correspondence. The view has numerous connotations and is often taken to be a

³⁹ A. Musgrave, “NOA’s Ark – Fine for Realism,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 39, 157 (1989), 383.

⁴⁰ R. Rorty, “Truth and Realism: Remarks at St. Andrews,” in *Truth and Realism*, eds. Patrick Greenough and Michael P. Lynch (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 239.

contentious element of realism, particularly by pragmatists who hold it to be responsible for the flaws of realism.

Given these four theses some further conclusions can be drawn. Despite realists rejecting scepticism, it looms uncomfortably since realism recognises a significant epistemic gap between ourselves and the world. This will become the focus later as a part of the problem I present. Another conclusion to be drawn is that common-sense and scientific realism are to be included in this ‘starting point’ of the metaphysical thesis of realism. This is because I see little difficulty in how realists attain this inclusion from the basic metaphysical thesis. Firstly, a metaphysical realism without a common sense realism is too sparse and indeterminate.⁴¹ Hence no realist is going to limit themselves to such a vague and empty metaphysical reality and will, at the very least, include common-sense objects. Given this inclusion of common sense entities, it is a far simpler step towards scientific realism. I take the most convincing reason for this to be Kitcher’s Galilean Strategy.⁴² The Galilean strategy blurs the distinction between observables and unobservables, arguing that unobservables should be treated in the same way as common sense objects once we realise that scientific unobservables are no different from distant planets or mountains. By this Kitcher means that how something (a planet, mountain or atom) can appear is no reason to exclude it as being considered different to typical common-sense objects. The use of a telescope to see them is no reason for scepticism but rather to recognise that some things are beyond our current reach. The claim can obviously be disputed by those who simply reject realism about unobservables. However, I will not defend the claim here. Instead I intend to assume this as a standard inclusion realists make and proceed.⁴³

1.4 Two perceptions of realism and the problem of Flux

In this section I explain how realists and neo-pragmatists diverge in their understanding of realism and these basic realist theses. I show that there are two competing interpretations (or ‘expressions’) of realism – one modest and reasonable, the other problematic and flawed. Following this, I argue that this mismatch in interpretation is due to ambiguity in realism’s core theses and not because either realists or pragmatists have misunderstood what realism is.

⁴¹ M, Devitt, “Aberrations of the Realism Debate.” in *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 61 (1991), 44. This is similar to what Devitt calls a ‘Fig-Leaf Realism’ which is merely a commitment to ‘something’ being independent.

⁴² P. Kitcher, “Real Realism: The Galilean Strategy”, *The Philosophical Review* 110, 2 (2001), 173-175.

⁴³ My arguments in this thesis will not depend upon such an assumption but will indirectly benefit from it since it will enable this neo-pragmatist position to more directly engage with realism.

I show how there is an inbuilt ‘flux’ of realism – that realism is a position that fluctuates between these two competing interpretations due to it being vague and indeterminate in how it articulates itself. In keeping in line with my definition of realism, I will therefore make a generalised claim of all *minimalistic* realisms which adheres to my formulation and which adopt a similar expression to Kitcher’s, though one which permits exceptions due to possible variance. This will constitute a flaw in the basic thesis of minimalistic realisms and will motivate the move into a neo-pragmatist styled minimalism.

The interpretative ‘disjunct’ between realists and neo-pragmatists.⁴⁴

The interpretative problem with realism is often overlooked and rarely addressed within philosophy. It questions what realism is and challenges whether realism actually has a coherent and concise thesis. I want to address this interpretative problem and provide a diagnosis of minimalistic realisms in light of it. The interpretative problem is as follows:

The interpretative disjunct of realism: Realists and pragmatists diverge in their understanding of what realism is. How each claim that realism is expressed from these core theses is quite different when compared to one another. The ‘realism’ that realists appear to have in mind seems to be very different from the ‘realism’ that the neo-pragmatists have in mind.

This problem is often viewed as a misunderstanding on account of either realists or pragmatists – that one has misunderstood what ‘realism’ means, or that their characterisation is wrong or uncharitable and therefore fails to understand what the position really is.

Typically it is viewed as an either/or case – either the realists have gotten the characterisation of realism right and its critics are attacking not realism but an unreasonable caricature which no realist would ever recognise. Or, its critics have understood realism properly, their criticisms are justified and it is the realist who has failed to realise that their position entails problematic elements. Devitt is one that can be said to support this view via his analysis of Rorty – he maintains that Rorty is right to reject the position he criticises, but maintains that *that* position is not realism.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ I am aware that my use of the phrase ‘disjunct’ is a little off compared to how the term is typically understood. This is intentional. My use of the term is intended to elicit a sense of the two interpretations involved in the interpretative flaw as disjoint and distinct. I therefore elicit the sense that these two competing interpretations that comprise the interpretative mismatch reflect an either/or dichotomy of expressing two alternatives: of reflecting a disconnection.

⁴⁵ Devitt, *Realism and Truth*, 207. This even prompts Devitt to conclude that Rorty is a ‘realist’

I however favour a different interpretation (and one which will help explain why neo-pragmatism's minimalist elements feel some affinity with realism while their anti-representationalism is hostile to it). This alternative is to deny that they are two different expressions, instead maintaining that they are actually one and the same while explaining away why there is this interpretative mismatch. Realism, according to this reading, oscillates between the two expressions: one which we will see is modest (the realists' interpretation) and the other a problematic expression (based on critic's interpretation). Rather than claiming that someone has misunderstood realism, we can claim that at times the thesis appears modest while at others problematic, meaning *both realists and critics have got it 'right'* despite each overlooking this interpretative issue. How radical the position appears then is dependent upon how one discusses and describes the core doctrines of realism. Under this approach we therefore view the competing problematic and modest interpretations of realism to signify a genuine flaw in realism (in general) which I shall call a 'flux'.

Interpretative flux: due to inherent ambiguity and vagueness in how realism articulates itself alongside generalised indeterminacy in how the position is to be interpreted, realism is always fluctuating *between* the modest and problematic characterisations (expressions).

Why is there a flux? It happens due to ambiguity and vagueness in the position but why is it so indeterminate in the first place? In modest characterisations there is a tendency to invoke technically loaded terms like 'representation', 'correspondence' and 'independence' in a way that appears common-sense or obvious despite these being very theoretical, problematic and disputed concepts. These terms are riddled with significant connotations and the realist's efforts to invoke simple or indisputable arguments involving them begins to show signs of a problematic version in disguise. What often happens with modest characterisations is that in using such loaded terms and invoking arguments similar to the problematic versions, there is always a risk of the realist falling into the problematic version even if their intentions are to avoid it. This thereby undermines realist intentions to render it modest or unproblematic. While they may genuinely appear different, this fluctuating between the problematic and modest expressions obstructs efforts to distinguish itself because of the interpretative ambiguity of the realist thesis and these technical terms. As a consequence, criticisms directed against the problematic formulation stand in modest formulations because even when characterised in the modest manner that realists desire, the position will lapse (fluctuate) back into the problematic expression.

I intend to argue therefore that both realists and critics are right in each of their interpretations and that their mismatch is due to this interpretative flux of realism's deployment and usage of technical terms. This will constitute a criticism against realism. These ideas will in turn motivate an acceptance of neo-pragmatism as it will encourage and explain our efforts to develop a minimalist stance which satisfies the intuitions that motivate minimal realisms but which refrains from the position and the flaws it entails. Thus the first step of this argument will be to show the interpretative disjunct; to show the two competing expressions of realism. Then the second step will be to show the interpretative flux and how realism fluctuates between the competing expressions, thereby demonstrating why my interpretation explains the mismatch. To do this I will show how realism is ambiguous and indeterminate in its articulation and deployment of technical terms.

Step 1: Demonstrating the interpretative disjunct.

So how do realists understand and interpret 'realism'? They view their position as common-sense, unproblematic and at times almost trivial. Devitt for instance thinks that it is almost incomprehensible how one could reject it; that it should be obvious that the world exists independent of us all. Many also perceive their position to be metaphysically light. Kitcher stresses that his 'real realism' involves no heavy metaphysics whatsoever.⁴⁶ It claims to only draw our attention to how one can realise that the world is beyond themselves and that in order to successfully and systematically explain one's success in such a world, we require correspondence truth and representationalism. This interpretation therefore comprises what shall be referred to as the modest expression of realism; to take the core theses at face value, as simple and straightforward.

The problematic expression of realism on the other hand, reflects critical arguments directed against realism which are derived from criticisms of representationalism and correspondence theories of truth. I want to stress my intention here is only to explain the critic's interpretation rather than try to justify it. Critics maintain that the problem correspondence theories of truth and representationalism have is that they encourage a flawed realist thesis and unattractive metaphysics.⁴⁷ Critics argue that because representationalism views language as

⁴⁶ P. Kitcher, "On the Explanatory Role of Correspondence," in *Preludes to Pragmatism: Towards a Reconstruction of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 112.

⁴⁷ There are also the more typical anti-representationalist objections that representationalism wrongly thinks that the purpose of language is to represent the world, thereby overlooking the significant non-descriptive elements of language and the various ways they constitute meaning, hence mistakenly thinking that such referential content exhaust meaning.

fundamentally descriptive, it leads to the view language is meant to mirror reality. This suggests, according to critics, that the possession of non-trivial representations which mirror the world implies that we require nature's own vocabulary. This results in the world demanding to be talked of in a particular way, thereby requiring us to aim for a 'view from nowhere' – a perspective-free perspective from which we can notice these non-trivial representations. This is because these referential relations are supposed to be non-trivial, therefore having a certain inherent authority "...in virtue of its supposed intelligibility independently of the role the representings in question play in our reason-giving practices."⁴⁸ While this enables them to have the explanatory power they purport to have, Brandom argues (drawing upon Rorty) "...there is no way to cash out this sort of intrinsic authority in terms of the practices of using expressions or interacting with each other or our world."⁴⁹ The authority is 'mysteriously' gained, often drawing upon the representation as being epistemically foundational despite (Rorty maintains) such claims having been overthrown by Quine and Sellars. Each, Rorty argues, undermines this notion of epistemic foundations grounding representations, whether they be 'given' sensory experiences or transparent mental meanings.⁵⁰ Realism then first and foremost requires such epistemic foundations; but since this need is undermined according to critics, realism falls with representationalism.

In virtue of these criticisms Arthur Fine claims that "...realism commits one to an unverifiable correspondence with the world". Why unverifiable? Because the required perspective (this perspective-free perspective) is deemed out of our reach and in no way related to ourselves. In creating such an epistemic gap between ourselves and the world the realist invites scepticism.⁵¹ And this, according to critics, only exacerbates the problem. The realist, Fine states; "...tries to stand outside the arena watching the ongoing game and then tries to judge (from this external point of view) what the point is. It is, he [the realist] says, about some area external to the game."⁵² The realist, they claim, therefore expects us to uncover how the meaningfulness of concepts (particularly normative) depends upon practice-independent properties.

⁴⁸ Brandom, "Global Anti-Representationalism," 92.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid. See here for well communicated summary of Rorty.

⁵¹ A. Fine, "The Natural Ontological Attitude" in *The Shaky Game*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 116.

⁵² Fine, "The Natural Ontological Attitude" 131

The resulting metaphysical picture is one which Fine calls the ‘World’ – a reality wholly off limits to us and completely unlike the world which we are familiar with.⁵³ Because of these claims of unverifiable correspondence and efforts to stand ‘outside the game’ and to judge our practices from such an external perspective, the ‘World’ is inaccessible and unfamiliar. Such a metaphysics is problematic since it invites reading realism as endorsing something very similar to a Kantian noumenal view - as Rorty claims, this is very similar to the notion of the thing-in-itself; “...something completely unspecified and unspecifiable...”⁵⁴ Because of such inaccessibility and indeterminacy it invites scepticism, which Rorty holds is inevitable unless one falls back upon this idea that there can be intrinsically intelligible representations which can act as a foundation.

This problematic and negative interpretation of realism is quite different from realist’s own perspective. Realists reject a number of the arguments made, often maintaining it as an unreasonable caricature. First, they reject that there must be a perspective-free vocabulary, or that they need some external standpoint to play the game. They typically assert that instances of correspondence can be simple and trivial rather than problematic and leading to such a problematic picture. Kitcher maintains that his own correspondence theory of truth is ‘modest’ and without substantial metaphysics because it limits itself to ‘everyday’ examples.⁵⁵ In addition to this, Kitcher’s incorporation of Jamesian pluralism demonstrates the subtlety of modest realisms when it comes to how we can conceptualise and speak of the world.⁵⁶ It rejects the view that realism thinks that there is a single way of talking about the world which is demanded, or that there could be a single, privileged vocabulary for all.⁵⁷ Secondly, the notion of privileged representations or epistemic foundations can be abandoned by realism without, realists claim, compromising their position. Finally, Fine’s ‘World’ is denied. Realists maintain that it is the familiar world which is the mind-independent reality. Thus to all these points realists will question why we ought to accept this reading, claiming that it’s an overstatement of their position.

⁵³ A. Fine, “Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science” *Mind* 95, 378 (1986), 151-152.

⁵⁴ Williams, “Realism: What’s left?” 96. See here for Williams’s summary of this point of Rorty’s.

⁵⁵ Kitcher, “On the Explanatory Role of Correspondence”, 111-113.

⁵⁶ P. Kitcher, “Pragmatism and Realism: A Modest Proposal” in *Preludes to Pragmatism: Towards a Reconstruction of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 139-141. See his example of Manhattan.

⁵⁷ K. Westphal, “Can Pragmatic Realists argue transcendently?” in *Pragmatic Naturalism and Realism*, ed. John R. Shook (New York: Prometheus Books, 2003), 153

Step 2: Interpretative flux and the realist's ambiguous use of technical terms.

Having covered the sharp mismatch in interpretation between these two competing expressions of realism, I now turn my attention to how we ought to view their incompatibility – that we can understand the interpretative disjunct as a result of inbuilt interpretative flux of the thesis. As explained, the interpretative disjunct can be understood as resulting from realism's ambiguous use of technical terms and indeterminate articulation of its position which serves to create a fluctuation between the two competing interpretations. In order to demonstrate this flux and vague use of technical terms in minimalistic realisms, I will draw upon Philip Kitcher's 'Real Realism' and his Natural Epistemic Attitude (NEA henceforth). Kitcher's position can be considered an exemplar of modest, minimalistic realisms which adheres well to the formulation of realism that I presented. His formulation reflects the kind of minimal realism which I want to distinguish from neo-pragmatist's own minimalism so as to show that neo-pragmatism is the true champion of minimalism. Kitcher's 'real realism' can therefore be viewed as a paradigm of these kinds of realisms whose flaws can be thought of as being presented in similar formulations. Aside from Kitcher I will also draw upon Michael Williams analysis of Kitcher's realism to inform and develop my arguments. Williams has argued that Kitcher's realism continuously hints at the more radical incarnation because it struggles to define itself due to unclear usage as to what it means when using certain loaded terms. My arguments therefore are partially derived from his analysis. However this argument of 'flux' – of realism fluctuating between the two interpretations I identified due to this ambiguity in articulation – is not what Williams argues in his discussion of Kitcher. He realises the problem of vagueness, but thinks that this isn't anything significant or problematic. I will be somewhat radicalising his argument to say that given these insights, we ought to understand what is going on as an endemic problem of minimalistic realism's which adhere to Kitcher's formulation.

Ambiguous term 1: 'Representation'

Representation is a key term that Kitcher uses in a casual manner despite it being one with significant (and disputed) connotations. Take his articulation of NEA, which is intended to be the starting position which leads into realism:

“Physics, physiology, and psychology, even in relatively humdrum and elementary forms, combine to give us a view of the relations between human beings (and also other sentient organisms) and their environments. We are animals that form representations of the things around us; that is, the world

sometimes puts human beings into states that bear content. Those states, in turn, guide our behaviour. In observing, or thinking about, other people, we take it for granted that their representational states sometimes adequately and accurately represent objects, facts, and events that we can also identify. We understand that among such objects are things that are only detected with difficulty. In some instances, people misrepresent the panoply of things around them. This Natural Epistemic Attitude has been commonplace at least since the early modern period, and it involves no weighty metaphysics.”⁵⁸

We can see that Kitcher fails to adequately elaborate what he means by ‘representation’ in this passage. Does he mean just an everyday sense of representation? Or does he intend for representation to entail something of greater significance – representationalism? In using phrases such as “we animals that form representations...” or “...we take it for granted that their representational states sometimes adequately and accurately represent objects, facts and events that we can also identify” or even that this view is ‘common place’ and “...involves no weighty metaphysics” Kitcher opens the way to various interpretations of what he means.

As a result, there are two ways we can understand this claim.⁵⁹

1. People have beliefs which assist them in dealing and coping with the world. Some of which result from observing the environment around us as well as from observing others who, in the same environment, recognise the same objects. Of course things can still go wrong, and we do get things wrong. All of this however is trivial and prompts no real metaphysics and warrants no substantial ontological commitments of the kind that realists have in mind.
2. Another is that Kitcher is subtly using technical and loaded terms like ‘representation’ which carry more theoretical weight, by implying acceptance of representationalism and commitment to a theory of reference and representation, yet which are placed into the mouth of the supposed ‘plain man’.⁶⁰

The first claim is so minimal it does not seem to reach the realists’ theses, while the second interpretation certainly does but can be disputed by minimalists as being ‘mandated’ by psychology and science as Kitcher appears to be claiming. This is because we can quite easily admit that certain representations are helpful in the sense that they can assist us to cope with the world. However it is another thing to then take this and conflate it into a more substantial

⁵⁸ Kitcher, “Real Realism: The Galilean Strategy”, 153-4.

⁵⁹ Williams, “Realism: What’s Left?” 93-94. Here he notes his comparison of possible interpretations of NEA.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

theory of representation. As explained in section 1.1, anti-representationalists do not reject such claims and can equally account for them. Anti-representationalism is not, as noted, a denial over the existence of representations or that they can perform various roles. So too can minimalists account for this position of NEA without a correspondence theory of truth. Recall Blackburn's idea presented in 1.2 that we shouldn't confuse the everyday with theory. He stressed that it was wrong to take the simple presence of representations to signify representationalism. It is improper that Kitcher doesn't distinguish between the everyday and theory. He uses the exact same examples as Blackburn does – using maps and other trivial instances yet Kitcher takes them to signify something philosophically interesting. Of course Kitcher thinks this is acceptable. He states in response to challenges that we cannot extrapolate from the everyday to metaphysical conclusions the following:

“Just this way of posing the question seems to me to be misguided, for... antirealism thrives on supposing that there is an enormous gulf between the realist's claims and everyday ideas and judgements, on portraying realists as importing unnecessary metaphysics.”⁶¹

The problem, drawing upon Blackburn's idea in 1.2, is that Kitcher has failed to understand that there are actually two issues at hand here rather than one. The first is the problem of realists debating whether they've erected this 'massive gulf'. The second is that the use of representations, while admittedly necessary for the explanation of the maps success, does not demand that we endorse representationalism or that we must be realists to accept them. Kitcher can therefore refer to the everyday for arguments. This act alone is acceptable. However this principle does not entitle him to take the presence of representations as demanding representationalism. Thus reference to these 'everyday examples' to develop a metaphysically light position which doesn't create this 'gulf' can occur. However such a position should be considered so minimalistic (in using these everyday examples) that the approach isn't really realist because he cannot use the everyday to signify representationalism. His attempt to say they still elicit realism would mean realism must be so trivial that it is improper to insist on keeping it distinct from simple deflationism of the kind neo-pragmatists adopt.

Kitcher's use of a map not only exemplifies this problem but also possesses an additional problem: his efforts to use a simple example of a map become problematic because he elicits

⁶¹ Kitcher “Real Realism: The Galilean Strategy”, 181.

the phrase ‘correspondence’ in a nonchalant manner to similar effect.⁶² ‘Correspondence’ possesses significant connotations yet is used by Kitcher quite casually. This makes it difficult to distinguish whether he does intend to use it in a merely casual fashion or whether he takes it to signify a correspondence theory of truth. Interestingly, later in the paper he does question whether a correspondence theory is required. He admits that “...insofar as the truth of our beliefs explains our practical successes, the explanation requires no specific theory of truth; in particular it doesn’t need the metaphysics of truth as correspondence (enshrined in my double extrapolation from NEA).”⁶³ He admits deflationists, like Horwich, have demonstrated the capacity to construct an explanation of successful intervention in terms of an instrumental belief. But, Kitcher also thinks (as a ‘simple’ addendum) that for a ‘deeper’ level of understanding a correspondence theory of truth is required. The problem is that it seems then that NEA *doesn’t entail* a correspondence theory of truth yet Kitcher wants to include it in his *realism* nonetheless. But if NEA is intended to lead to realism it seems an additional step is missing. Kitcher fails to elaborate in detail how the two fit together, thereby compounding the problematic usage of a map as an example.

Given these considerations, it is reasonable to suggest therefore that Kitcher is taking such loaded terms as signifying Representationalism and a Correspondence theory of Truth while trying to pass them off as obvious by placing them in this ‘plain man’.⁶⁴ Kitcher himself appears to confirm this conclusion since he does admit his desire to be more than minimalist, taking NEA to lead us to a position more ‘ambitious’ than minimalism.⁶⁵ Already then we can see how realism in this modest characterisation is struggling to establish itself as distinct from the problematic form identified. This is because trying to be too modest will render them not even realist, as the first way of understanding NEA demonstrates – because no explicit theses of realism have been endorsed. While trying to beef up such notions into a more substantial ‘realism’ (as the second reading of these passages noted) it runs the risk of lapsing into the radical form. Thus NEA is in tension with itself.

The underlying problem here is that Kitcher does not define what he means by ‘realism’. He attempts nothing like I did in 1.3, he presents no clarification over the possible variants of realism or what possible core theses the position can adopt. In this passage on NEA Kitcher

⁶² Kitcher, “Real Realism: The Galilean Strategy”, 181.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 193.

⁶⁴ Williams, “Realism: What’s Left?” 94. Williams agrees that Kitcher attempts this.

⁶⁵ Kitcher, “Real Realism: The Galilean Strategy”, 155.

fails to clarify whether he intends for this to be an argument for representationalism. He talks of realism in a general sense which is far too vague and fails to recognise the great variance that 'realism' can entail. Of course not all realisms fall prey to this. Sankey offers multiple, clearly defined core theses of realism.⁶⁶ This isn't proof against my claim however because Sankey's formulation is a richer formulation which is quite distinct from Kitcher's minimalistic realism due to its possession of multiple nuances in its formulation. It is therefore improper to treat Sankey's specific scientific realism as the same kind of realism as Kitcher's more general and minimalistic realism. Thus it fails to be counted as one of these 'minimal' realisms which I wish to contrast and distance from my own neo-pragmatist minimalism. Nonetheless, it demonstrates the point that 'realists' can provide clearly defined theses thereby constituting a further flaw in these minimalistic formulations.

Instead of giving any such definition, Kitcher chooses to take a 'piecemeal' approach.⁶⁷ This, while often acceptable, undermines his potential to resolve this issue. Piecing together his realism as he proceeds fails to clarify what core assumptions he has made and what indispensable theories have been accepted which act as contributing to his realism. Kitcher's failure to disclose these key details only exacerbates the problem of indeterminate use of key terms. And, the most unfortunate failure in this respect, is that he at times eludes to the fact that he is aware of this competing, alternative interpretation of realism.⁶⁸ One of his aims throughout the paper is to develop a modest realism that dispels perceptions that it entails a heavy or problematic metaphysics. So it seems strange then that he would fail to question why these perceptions arise rather than to simply show how realisms critics are wrong.

Ambiguous Term 2: 'Mind-independence'

The concept of 'independence' is another technical term which receives vague articulation. There are two competing aspects to what 'independence' can mean, each undermining one another to create a flux between the world and Fine's inaccessible 'World'. The first is independence as ontological/existential independence. Here 'mind-independence' is taken as an existential claim about the entities in question. The question is whether certain objects or

⁶⁶ H. Sankey, *Scientific Realism and the Rationality of Science*. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 13-17. Sankey presents multiple aspects of his definition of realism.

⁶⁷ Kitcher, "Real Realism: The Galilean Strategy", 152.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 153. Kitcher notes how he will contrast his realism with those 'doctrines' ascribed by 'uncharitable opponents'. Also see; 156, where he states: "my aim has been to identify the kinds of considerations that incline people to realism and to defuse the accusation that realist theses only emerge from metaphysical mystery-mongering."

properties are mind dependent for their existence. By this, 'mind dependence' is understood as dependency upon human thought, language or concepts for existence. And, while many of the things we talk about could be categorised differently, this isn't to say that the objects themselves somehow only exist thanks to us.

The second aspect of 'independence' is epistemic independence. Epistemic independence means we do not have immediate epistemic access with this existentially independent reality. By this I mean rather than the kind of direct access an idealist, for example, might maintain, realism endorses there being an epistemic gap between ourselves and the world that ensures that the world cannot be taken for granted (though this is a somewhat contentious claim). This epistemic independence therefore opposes idealism because it denies that we have immediate knowledge or access to such existentially independent objects and properties. Realists therefore tie these two aspects closely together. As a consequence, a direct correlation between the two of them is produced from their interaction with one another where an increase in existential independence is due to (and correlates to) a greater degree of epistemic independence (and vice versa). Thus the existential dimension is shaped into a more realist conception via the epistemic dimension.

Due to this there is a risk of inflating epistemic independency into epistemic inaccessibility since an increase in realist defences of existential independence (and a lack of strict clarity) risk overinflating the significance of epistemic independence into inaccessibility. Because of this the sceptic is granted a platform of legitimacy to challenge that if the world is radically independent from ourselves, completely removed, then it makes reality epistemically inaccessible. This results in something similar to a Kantian notion of noumena and leads to a metaphysics of the 'World'. Of course realists will reject this setup, maintaining both robust existential independence with accessibility. Kitcher himself at times expresses his realism as having 'direct' access with reality. This however seems to undermine this core idea of robust independence given the principle that there is an epistemic gap of sorts that prevents any kind of idealist-styled sense of immediate access. This reflects Kitcher's ambiguous articulation of independence and interpretative flux. At times appearing to emphasize a robust notion of independence which is more than trivial, while at others stressing that we've nonetheless got direct access with such a reality. If we can demonstrate that realists fail to adequately handle this notion then, we have good reason to think that realism does fluctuate towards a problematic form akin to Kant's noumenal world as Rorty claimed.

Returning to Kitcher then. The next step in his position reinforces my argument. Focus, in particular, on the lack of clear meaning that ‘independence’ and ‘representation’ possess in the final step from NEA to real realism and the ambiguous tension they create:

“Consider the paradigm situation in which we observe... another person who is responding to an environment that we can also observe... The subject may form representations that are either accurate or inaccurate, for there are entities independent of her of which they may or may not be correct. Further, we appreciate the force of the suggestion that our subject’s successes in responding to and shaping the environment would be inexplicable unless some of her representations were accurate... What difference does our presence (or imagined presence) make? If we were absent would her representations vanish, would her successes disappear, or would the connection between success and accuracy of representations be affected? It would be presumptuous to think so. We observe what is going on, but our presence isn’t critical to the things the subject does or to the properties of her representations. But we too could be viewed from the outside and assessed in a similar fashion. We thus envisage a world of entities independent not just of each of us but of all of us, a world that we represent more or less accurately, and we suppose that what we identify as our successes signal the approximate correctness of some of our representation. So we arrive at real realism.”⁶⁹

Williams notes that as far as the minimalist or neo-pragmatist is concerned, they won’t deny much of this. They too will concede we can get things wrong, can recognise that the world does not end with us and that the world is physical and beyond ourselves – idealism is rejected.⁷⁰ Given this, it seems reasonable for Williams to argue that nowhere yet have we reached the metaphysics of realism – no substantial ontology is committed to beyond minimalism, and the rejection of idealism shouldn’t commit us by default to realism. Nowhere here does there seem to be any demand for any of the core theses of realism. As Williams states, Kitcher’s ‘world of entities’ which is independent of all of us is therefore vague.⁷¹ If all it amounts to is that the world is big, complicated and that things don’t always go as planned then, he claims, there is no problem. But again, this isn’t really philosophically interesting or significant. Williams therefore rightfully assumes that Kitcher must be seeking a stronger notion of existential independence than this explicitly because his own deflationist

⁶⁹ Kitcher, “Real Realism: The Galilean Strategy”, 154-155.

⁷⁰ Minimalism does not think, for example, that the assertion that P is equivalent to ‘we all believe that P. Often, as Williams notes, claims about what is believed have ‘distinct inferential powers’ but that this does not mean that neo-pragmatists are realists.

⁷¹ Williams, “Realism: What’s left?” 95, 96.

position, which neo-pragmatists share, has limits to the notion of ‘independence’.⁷² What then is this stronger notion? It is a greater degree of existential independence as expressed through greater epistemic independence which, in turn, increases difficulty in access and moves closer to epistemic inaccessibility. Existential independence can become a more distinct realist conception which possesses more than a merely trivial sense through risking an excessive degree of epistemic independency as inaccessibility. This is where we see the emergence of flux between this seemingly modest characterisation of realism and the more radical one. Williams states the following of Kitcher:

“Kitcher’s notion of the ‘independence’ of the world is meant to imply that we can imagine that all our beliefs are false, or our concepts inadequate. However, this thought points to a strange idea of ‘the world’. Arthur Fine calls it ‘the *World*’, and makes attachment to the idea of the *World* a defining characteristic of realists. The *World* is not our world of familiar things – shoes and ships and sealing wax – but a world wholly independent of all of common-sense and scientific beliefs and concepts. As Richard Rorty says, this idea of the *World* is ‘the notion of something completely unspecified and unspecifiable – the thing in itself in fact.’ All pragmatists agree with Rorty that such a world is well lost.”⁷³

The point that Williams makes is that if Kitcher is after more to the notion of ‘independence’ than the minimalist conception, then the only real alternative is to be found in movement towards the problematic expression. This is because inflation of epistemic independence correlates to increased difficulty in access which results in a stronger case for scepticism and inaccessibility. It therefore also correlates to a seemingly less familiar world, prompting the critics interpretation of realism amounting to the ‘*World*’, because with greater epistemic independence to increase the degree of existential independence the world becomes more out of reach and less familiar. This is the problem that Kitcher and modest realists have: in trying to avoid a deflationist position or something even more minimal and not even philosophical in order to distinguish the position ‘realism’, they creep closer to this flawed and problematic form identified by neo-pragmatists. But, on the other hand, if the realist concedes *too* much to distance himself from this problematic incarnation they will no longer be realist but deflationists. This is therefore the flux at work, undermining Kitcher’s intentions of a modest realism.

⁷² Neo-pragmatists cannot, for example entertain the idea that all of our beliefs could be wrong. Williams holds that this is simply too much against their inferentialism. They maintain that if we didn’t have some straightforward true beliefs, then we would not have any at all.

⁷³ Williams, “Realism: What’s left?” 96.

Why scepticism gains traction because of interpretative flux and ambiguous articulation of realism.

I want to elaborate this issue of scepticism that surrounds the concept of independence. I want to elaborate how scepticism takes root to undermine realism because of this interpretative flux and the ambiguous treatment of the concept of ‘independence’. I will therefore explain another way in which realism fluctuates between the two competing expressions. Kitcher admits, as do realists, that the world is radically existentially independent of anything that we think about it or (are able) to conceive of it. This appears to suggest that Kitcher is inviting scepticism – that we could be, at least in principle, wholly deluded due to a resulting radicalisation of epistemic independence. When Kitcher emphasises that his account is required to explain success, a similar result is produced. Williams argues that:

“... [Kitcher] does not claim that our successes give us reason to suppose, but only ‘what we think of’ as successes. If scepticism is in the air, this is as it should be. To credit ourselves with success in dealing with the everyday world would be to leave the *World*, begging the sceptic’s question. If we are to raise and answer a fully general sceptical question, we cannot take the everyday world for granted: we have to argue from feature of our representations to the conclusion that these representations more or less accurately mirror the *World*.”⁷⁴

Kitcher has a balancing act to deal with; he has to maintain the realist mantra that because the world is radically existentially independent of us we could always be wrong, while at the same time finding a way to explain the fact that we can and do have success in such a world. If Kitcher moves towards the familiar world we know and recognises and acknowledges success, he runs the risk of no longer being realist because he is ‘begging’ the sceptic and threatening epistemic independence which would correlate to a diminished degree of existential independence.⁷⁵ This is because a decrease in epistemic independence via crediting success corresponds to a diminishing of scepticism. On the other hand, to take scepticism seriously equates to an increase in epistemic independency which correlates to a greater degree of existential independency. But an increase in epistemic independence risks inaccessibility (due to scepticism now being an issue) which produces a resulting degree of existential independence that seems so extreme that it appears similar to Fine’s ‘World’.

⁷⁴ Williams, “Realism: What’s left?” 97.

⁷⁵ To reiterate the entailment of *existential* independence to scepticism we can say that the relationship between existential independence and scepticism is indirect, mediated between the epistemic independence dimension of the concept. Thus an increase (or decrease) in existential independence correlates to an increase (or decrease) in epistemic independence which causes scepticism to gain (or lose) traction.

Realism then is in an undesirable position; it requires scepticism to be an ever present possibility since it ensures the kind of independence required – forever ensuring that we cannot take the everyday world for granted and that the world is radically existentially independent. However the difficulty of then having this scepticism always looming runs the risk of going too far into this notion of the ‘World’, making it inaccessible due to the resulting increase in epistemic independency. Scepticism therefore is an underlying issue: take it seriously as the realist does and his conception of mind-independence relating to ontological independence transforms into epistemic inaccessibility once scepticism gains traction.

The dilemma then is as follows: either we grant ourselves success and dismiss the sceptic at the cost of diminishing robust epistemic independence and thereby threatening radical existential mind-independency. Or we recognise that we could be wrong about anything and everything since the world is radically existentially independent but then must take scepticism seriously because in having the world existentially independent it thereby inflates epistemic independence to an alarming degree of looming inaccessibility (because it is now difficult to attribute success).

Put another way, the problem is we either credit ourselves success and maintain that we’ve lots of knowledge – making knowledge accessible and dismissing the sceptic. The cost however then is that it seems without the sceptic to enforce the significance of the epistemic gap the radical existential independence of the world diminishes as idealism becomes a possibility. Or, we maintain that the world is radically existentially independent but, as a result, claiming that we can still have epistemic access seems far more difficult to attribute due to scepticism gaining traction. And, therefore, inflating epistemic independence into inaccessibility. If it is existentially independent in a more than minimal manner then access will naturally be more difficult. Idealism is repelled, but scepticism becomes legitimate and Fine’s ‘World’ looms.

The basic problem then is how realism handles scepticism. Realism grants ground to scepticism. This admission that we could be wholly wrong about our beliefs, or that radical existential independence erects an epistemic gap that correlates to a robust epistemic independence, allows the sceptic to undermine the realist. This helps explain what I meant previously by realism allowing scepticism to gain traction. It isn’t that realism lacks or has poor arguments at its disposal against the sceptic. It’s that its enabled scepticism to become

legitimate – that it now requires arguments against it. Realists have therefore offered the wrong kinds of arguments.⁷⁶ Because of their stance on scepticism interpretive flux perpetuates. Scepticism looms as a threat by *challenging* whether mind-independent objects can be known to us if they are radically existentially independent and completely removed from ourselves. Because of the standard admission that for any given thing we could in principle be completely wrong, entertainment of such doubt is to genuinely consider scepticism, even if in principle. By granting the sceptic such a platform of recognition via this thought it quickly runs out of control. Even if realists have responses – which Kitcher does have, and dedicates a large portion of his paper towards elucidating – the fact remains that scepticism has only gotten such traction because we’ve begun with the setup of questioning realism’s metaphysical thesis.⁷⁷ And, in doing so, scepticism perpetuates the interpretative flux of realism by undermining their attempts at clear articulation of the concept of ‘independence’ and its implementation to develop a realist metaphysics.

For Williams’s part he concludes that it is unreasonable to say that Kitcher’s theory results in Fine’s World: the fact that scepticism is not of interest to Kitcher is a hint, as is the fact that we have this sense of immediacy with ourselves, representations and the world. Instead Williams maintains that Kitcher has gone down the other route of being so minimal that he is difficult to distinguish from minimalists. But the damage is done as it means that minimal realisms like Kitcher’s fluctuate between overt minimalistic interpretations and Fine’s World. Williams holds that Kitcher moves towards the ‘World’ when he attempts to distinguish himself from minimalists and avoid a lapse into the position. But no sooner does he pull away from the ‘World’ when scepticism and issues of inaccessibility loom. This demonstrates how this flux between modesty and radicalisation is an ever present problem for realist positions of the kind discussed. Williams is wrong then to conclude that Kitcher *really* is modest. It is

⁷⁶ In this sense an epistemic contextualist whose response to scepticism is that it simply isn’t a position worth considering due to scepticism raising the standards of knowledge to such an unreasonable degree (which no one adheres to) is the best approach. This refusal to acknowledge the sceptic as legitimate is due to their emphasis that scepticism does not ‘play the same game’ that everyone else does (does not adhere to the same common standards which we do), instead rigging the game in their favour which thereby delegitimises their argument. It is this kind of response which can undermine scepticism so as to render it a non-issue. Realism does the exact opposite. It recognises that it is a valid issue in need of arguments against it.

⁷⁷ Kitcher, “Real Realism: The Galilean Strategy”, 156, 157. He notes these IRAs (inaccessibility of reality arguments) each voice a concern of epistemic accessibility in the realist position. He considers five different kinds of IRAs and seeks to address how each is an inadequate argument. The problem here isn’t that his arguments fail to defend realism. They go a good length at overthrowing the sceptic and anti-realist positions (like constructivism) that draw upon them. The problem is that Kitcher’s responses to the IRAs is that they begin with the concession that scepticism is a genuine threat which does require responses. This undermines the realist’s efforts at developing their position. They allow the epistemic gap they’ve created to be open to problematic interpretations and lead to ever increasing degrees of Fine’s World.

more appropriate to say he has the trappings of modesty yet includes this problematic interpretive ambiguity which undermines his position.

These considerations show that the interpretative mismatch is not due to the expressions of the two interpretations *really* being different. Rather it shows realism having this tendency to be indeterminate in what it maintains when eliciting technical terms with such nonchalance. The degree of interpretation required to get this far for such a minimal realism should show this. Given this indeterminacy, it should be understood not as just vagueness on behalf of minimal realists, but that the position itself and its core theses struggle to form an explicit theory – there is always a blurring of commitments in these minimal formulations between the modest and radical expressions. Realism is, rather, this problematic expression whose flaws are subtly hidden in modest forms by such indeterminacy. This flux then of Kitcher, as of other modest realists, is something that the position is forever doomed to struggle with alongside similar efforts to tie down its commitments in any concrete way so as to avoid such a flux.⁷⁸ What determines whether a realism is modest or not then, is not (based on) whether it really does deny particular arguments entailed within the problematic version, but rather is based upon perspective. Where a particular realism appears to be within this interpretive flux is simply word play. Their position is susceptible to the problematic expression only not in a prevalent way.

One may question then that if one was to abandon Realism's commitment to a Correspondence Theory of Truth and Representationalism so as to avoid this radical and problematic realism, would the modest form still be able to be formulated? I think not, for correspondence truth and representationalism comprise a core and indispensable part of what it is to be realist (though some realists have denied this, i.e. Devitt). Conceding them would barely result in a position that could warrant the label 'realism'. Such an approach would be so minimalistic, so lacking in core realist theses, that it is not really philosophically interesting or deserving of being called 'realist' (Devitt in part recognises this – he concedes that his position is trivial). This is why neo-pragmatists agree with anti-representationalist criticisms of realism, while also feeling an affinity for modest realisms on account of their minimalism and its shared similarities. The flux inherent in realism explains why neo-pragmatists have this love-hate relationship – when realism moves towards the problematic form, neo-pragmatists identify its flaws, but when in its modest incarnation, neo-pragmatists

⁷⁸ By 'commitment' I do not mean any of the realist theses I've identified but rather the right *expression* of them.

find similarities because the position passes itself off as modest and metaphysically light, just as Williams himself felt with Kitcher.

Concluding, the case for neo-pragmatism has now been established as a viable alternative. This fundamental flaw in realism explains the motivation for the neo-pragmatists minimalist stance, while the positive program of philosophical anthropology shows how rigorous neo-pragmatists can be in their analysis of assertoric discourse while explaining why their position is emerging as one of the most promising minimalist thesis around. Having set the stage for the position to be developed. I now seek to develop the position by turning the focus upon the practice of science in chapter two and scientific vocabulary in chapter three.

2. Neo-pragmatism's minimalist approach to science

2.0 Introduction and overview

In this chapter I seek to develop a minimalist/deflationist stance with respect to ontology which draws upon neo-pragmatism as its guiding thesis. This chapter focuses on scientific ontology and, in particular, how minimalism can be a much richer and sophisticated position than many believe. Embodying this stance well is Arthur Fine's Natural Ontological Attitude (NOA henceforth) which develops and gives shape to neo-pragmatism's overarching deflationist commitments to truth and semantics. Neo-pragmatists rarely engage directly with philosophy of science (though there are exceptions). By revising NOA into a more neo-pragmatist thesis I intend to remedy this. The chapter therefore seeks to develop and strengthen the position via a number of readjustments and defences. This is accomplished via reading NOA as a good starting point for neo-pragmatism to develop. I seek to provide a particular reading of NOA which views it as a proto neo-pragmatist thesis that, when supplemented with contemporary neo-pragmatist arguments, can be strengthened into a suitable expression of neo-pragmatism towards science. As a result of the chapter, the position should not only appeal to neo-pragmatists and minimalists as a strong expression of their position, but also appeal to modest, minimal-minded realists as a theory which captures the intuitions which motivate their thesis in an improved manner.

The chapter structure therefore is as follows: in section 2.1 I address what I take to be the best instance of the minimalist stance – NOA – and explain its thesis while reading it as a neo-pragmatist position. In section 2.2 I provide critical discussion, both seeking to defend the thesis against some criticisms Alan Musgrave has raised while also showing why NOA is a suitable expression of neo-pragmatism's minimalism and can be thought of as proto neo-pragmatist. NOA has garnered a good deal of criticism because it rejects both realism and anti-realism. I seek to uphold and defend its deflationist stance from collapse into either camp. I therefore address these issues so as to diffuse their capacity to prevent one from accepting this minimalist position. Finally in section 2.3 I show how neo-pragmatism can offer philosophy of science some new, interesting contributions to the field. In this section I look at NOA's stance on the question of whether science has a general aim. I argue that while NOA denies that any generalised aim of science exists, we can exploit neo-pragmatist investigations into truth to claim that the concept of truth does provide a quasi-general,

idealised and indirect aim of science. I explain how this works and why it is an attractive approach to the issue of aims.

2.1 What is the Natural Ontological Attitude?

The Natural Ontological Attitude is a straightforward though subtle minimalist thesis. There are roughly three distinct parts which are often bound up with one another. These are: (1) its diagnosis of the realism-anti-realism debate which motivates the move into minimalism – a particular attitude towards ‘hermeneutics’. (2) Its overarching deflationist approach towards scientific ontology.⁷⁹ And (3) its relevant claims about truth. In this section I explain (1) and (2), while in the next section I will address (3). I show how the position is best thought of as a proto neo-pragmatist position by drawing similarities with contemporary neo-pragmatism. By supplementing NOA with neo-pragmatism, it will offer a strong minimalist thesis when it comes to science.

NOA approaches the realism-anti-realism debate in a particular manner, maintaining that both realism and antirealism add additional but unnecessary interpretations onto science. Here, NOA is a particular attitude towards what Fine calls ‘hermeneutics’, using the term in a fashion intended to imply excessive philosophical interpretation (which is made upon certain philosophical commitments and assumptions). It insists that realism and antirealism each seek to interpret the practice of science upon their own set of prior ‘extra-scientific commitments’.⁸⁰ These, Fine stresses, share the view that science is a practice which is in need of a generalised and overarching interpretation. Fine’s arguments all rest upon the claim that both realism and antirealism add on additional claims that are not needed by the shared starting point from which the debate begins. Why? There are two reasons. One is that Fine attributes to realism and antirealism the persisting idea that science is in need of interpretation and requires grand narratives in order to be made sense of. The other is that these narratives are also needed for the practice to gain authority. Fine maintains that such authority cannot be found in these external interpretations. Its foundations are to be found within science, with the practice itself providing all the authority it needs even in light of the practice being historical and contingent. NOA insists that science can do more with less and that its own

⁷⁹ It should be noted that neo-pragmatists are minimalist in two ways, while NOA is only explicitly minimalist in one. Neo-pragmatists are both semantic minimalists and metaphysical deflationists. NOA however is predominately metaphysically deflationist and says little on semantic minimalism. Thus while my neo-pragmatist reading of NOA will include both, the discussion in this section will be predominantly concerned with NOA’s own minimalism.

⁸⁰ Fine, “Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science.” 171.

position which provides this core starting point is more than enough. NOA therefore is a minimalist thesis. It seeks to refrain from any further hermeneutics than this core position, maintaining that it provides more than enough by way of a philosophy of science. There is a good deal of synergy here with neo-pragmatism's deflationary attitude. This perspective on realism and antirealism is very similar to neo-pragmatism's own metaphysical quietist dimension alongside its methodological orientation that is minimalist in nature. NOA therefore fits well with neo-pragmatism's belief that we should refrain from interpreting science beyond what is minimally required. With respect to this claim of Fine's regarding authority however, there are multiple problems. Realists wouldn't deny this idea that science finds all the authority it needs from within itself. And, Fine's claim that realists/antirealists offer explanations in order to *grant* or *confer* authority fails to realise that many realists only think they are providing explanations as to how the practice works. Thus for this point neo-pragmatists would do well to remove Fine's confused understanding of realism from NOA (and is the first of a number of corrections neo-pragmatists should make of NOA).⁸¹

With respect to this issue of minimalism and quietism, subtlety in understanding is required. First, NOA's acceptance of quietism is not equal to complete philosophical quietism but only metaphysical quietism. Second, with respect to their minimalism, NOA isn't just the claim that there is little to say. It isn't just a deflationary thesis which lacks significant substance. It, more importantly, tells us what kind of things are and are not acceptable. It is largely critical. And it goes to great lengths to communicate the point that realism and anti-realism simply aren't needed. It is therefore a reminder of the necessity to refrain from excessive interpretation and musing. In doing so, the thesis is largely therapeutic – it is continually trying to help wean us off the need for realism, theories of truth, representationalism or heavy metaphysics.

So what is the *natural ontological attitude*? NOA maintains that just as we trust our senses as a source of evidence with respect to the existence and features of everyday objects, so too do we share similar confidence in science and its system of inquiry.⁸² NOA advocates a face value approach towards science and scientific ontology; that if the scientist tells us that a particular object exists then, in trusting them, we too accept the results of such a claim along

⁸¹ I will readily concede to realists that Fine's discussion of realism is an uncharitable caricature. His insistence that what is special about realists is that they just shout 'really' when they assert something to exist is a poor characterisation. Such discussions of Fine do not however impede his worthwhile minimalist alternative.

⁸² Fine, "The Natural Ontological Attitude," 126-127.

with all related relations and properties such a claim entails with respect to the object. Fine states that what it means to accept confirmed scientific theories in the same way as accepting the evidence of our senses is "...to take them into one's life as true, with all that implies concerning adjusting one's behaviour, practical and theoretical, to accommodate these truths."⁸³ NOA therefore maintains that we ought to treat scientific truths as on par with homely truths, to take them on board in the same manner with all the consequences it implies:

"When the homely line asks us, then, to accept the scientific results "in the same way" in which we accept the evidence of our senses, I take it that we are to accept them both as true. I take it that we are being asked not to distinguish between kinds of truth or modes of existence or the like, but only among truths themselves in terms of centrality, degrees of belief, or such."⁸⁴

No interpretation of what truth means is made here beyond the neo-pragmatist's minimalist manner. We do not compare or contrast the different kinds of claims which we accept as true, nor do we question whether they possess different 'modes of existence'. Instead, NOA focuses on the practical aspects of accepting truths – how we readjust our behaviour and beliefs (as well as how central they are or how strongly we hold them) when we accept the consequences of taking something as true. We are therefore to accept them 'in the same way' in a *practical sense*. This is reflective of neo-pragmatists wider approach to truth who, like NOA, seek to treat truth in a similar fashion – in an 'everyday' and practical sense which fits with our standard conception of truth. Hence NOA follows neo-pragmatism by providing an anthropological-pragmatic account of truth, whilst refraining from identifying it with anything. I will elaborate the significance of this in the next section. However, for now, it should suffice to appreciate that when NOA argues that we treat scientific results as 'true' in the same way as other non-scientific beliefs, that this follows the typical *conception* of truth (though not necessarily any particular theory of truth) as it is found within practice along with its standard rules of use and related implications for inquiry.

It is because of this that we arrive at the idea that both realists and antirealists must adhere to this 'homely line' of accepting scientific results as on par with more everyday typical claims. Fine calls this the 'core position' which realists and antirealists take and add to by incorporating their own theses. They make such additions via providing their own particular theory of truth and accompanying metaphysics to elaborate the core position into their own

⁸³ Fine, "The Natural Ontological Attitude." 127.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

realist or antirealist one. NOA however maintains that the core position alone is more than enough and that the additional claims made by realism and antirealism are not only unnecessary but actually undermine the core position. This is especially the case for certain kinds of antirealism which endorse a reduction of truth into an epistemic (or instrumental) notion. This undermines the core position because such antirealists not only wrongfully seek to identify truth *with something* – to provide a theory of truth (which realists also attempt) – but it also offends against the everyday conception of truth which this core position embodies. I will elaborate this idea in the next section by demonstrating how neo-pragmatism shows how antirealist reductivist theories of truth offend against the very fundamental normative role that the concept of truth plays. They fail to uphold the needed friction in discourse to make disagreements engage with one another. NOA, as the core position then, ‘mediates’ between realism and antirealism, rejecting both whilst still acting as the shared starting point for their theses.

How then are we to approach and understand science as being treated ‘in the same way’ to our senses? NOA argues that it is via our typical, everyday notion of truth. It is here where NOA’s conception of truth begins to get fleshed out:

“To begin showing how NOA makes for an adequate philosophical stance toward science, let us see what it has to say about ontology. When NOA counsels us to accept the results of science as true, I take it that we are to treat truth in the usual referential way, so that a sentence (or statement) is true just in case the entities referred to stand in the referred-to relations. Thus, NOA sanctions ordinary referential semantics and commits us, via truth, to the existence of the individuals, properties relations, processes, and so forth referred to by the scientific statements that we accept as true.”⁸⁵

NOA maintains that when we question what it means to treat science in *the same way*, NOA intends for this to mean that we view science in the usual referential way in which when an object stands in a referred-to relation, we can accept the existence claim along with the resulting commitments to related properties and claims.⁸⁶ Given this approach, what can be concluded? NOA does not demand that we adopt any specific ontological commitments. Instead NOA provides a method for how we are to understand and approach science. It therefore “...has only an attitude to recommend, namely, to look and see as openly as one can

⁸⁵ Fine, “The Natural Ontological Attitude.” 130.

⁸⁶ There is much to this claim of Fine’s and it is here where many criticisms of NOA arise. One is Musgrave’s claim that NOA appears to be sold on realism (addressed in the next section). This is predominantly drawn from Fine’s mention of a deployment of ‘usual referential semantics’, which seems to imply a particular theory of truth.

what it is reasonable to believe in, and then to go with the belief and commitment that emerges.”⁸⁷ We could in principle then have many scientific commitments, rich in what they stand for. But this doesn’t compromise its minimalism since at the philosophical level we do not prescribe any ontological commitments or demand that we posit anything as real.

As a consequence of this, NOA permits a reasonably radical pluralism in that any two people who accept NOA could potentially disagree over what exists.⁸⁸ However this would be no different to how scientists can disagree amongst themselves. Furthermore, Fine notes:

“One NOAer might even find specific grounds in certain cases for bracketing belief in favour of commitment, for instance, while another might go for some measure of belief. These could both be reasonable attitudes, and there may even be no good way to choose between them.”⁸⁹

Fine may be showing here a little too much enthusiasm for this point of such competing attitudes because his point of ‘no good way to choose’ implies faultlessness. This is another correction to NOA that ought to be made. Faultlessness carries with it potentially problematic consequences which receive no actual support within NOA, but only passive admission to the possibility. It seems strange then that Fine would add this final amendment, especially given that NOA is (1) a positive attitude towards science, (2) recognises the undoubtable success of the practice and (3) maintains that we are to trust science as on par with the evidence of our senses. Thus while it seems to fit that NOA could permit competing beliefs within the practice, this is a far cry from the subtle relativism (of each being justified and accepted despite such difference) that Fine is hinting at if he is alluding to this idea of faultless disagreement via the admission of there being ‘no good way to choose’. Given that at any moment the practice will have its own standards for judging a claim to be true coupled with the fact that competing theories are taken to be viewed, as per the neo-pragmatist account of truth, as genuine disagreements in which at least one party is assumed to be at fault, it would seem that admitting to there being no way to choose between them is simply a pessimistic dismissal and a failure to appreciate the objective standards which the practice holds itself to. At the same time, taking Fine to be implying a more modest approach could permit that a faultless disagreement needn’t mean that it couldn’t ever be resolved. Only that currently two

⁸⁷ Fine, “Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science”, 176.

⁸⁸ H. Price, “Metaphysical Pluralism.” in *Naturalism without Mirrors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 35, 36. In many ways this is akin to a Quineian styled ‘pluralism’ which Price calls a ‘horizontal pluralism’ so as to be kept distinct from ‘vertical pluralism’ which concerns issues of reduction, dependency and primacy.

⁸⁹ Fine, “Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science”, 176-177.

competing ontologies were capable of being equally accepted. Neo-pragmatists therefore have no need to support this argument from Fine. Instead, I think it is more than acceptable for NOA to stop at the recognition of competing ontologies without taking it to be a sign of an irresolvable faultless disagreement. If NOA really does claim to be taking science at face value, along with standard referential semantics, then it would follow suit and take science to be a genuinely factual domain which rules out faultless disagreements. Of course this isn't at odds with neo-pragmatism's anti-representationalist commitments, for, as I will show in chapter three, they have a more than suitable explanation for the apparent factual dimension of scientific discourse which is compatible with their overarching global and non-representational semantics.

This is a different approach when we compare it to realism or anti-realism, where their theses dictate which commitments are to be accepted in virtue of what they are realist/antirealist about. This thereby determines how we are to understand ontology along with what ontological framework we adopt and what commitments we ought to have (because their position forces a particular interpretation upon the science due to their prior commitments to their metaphysical theses). NOA however demands no particular ontology. Though again, minimalism should not equate to complete quietism. The position provides more than enough guidance in terms of which commitments we ought to have. We can have many scientific commitments even if on the philosophical level no particular ones are demanded. Finally, it is also able to account for how scientists can themselves have competing ontologies. NOA reflects the practice of science, though this isn't to say people are free to have just any ontologies. Rational and accepted science is still the only candidate for any given NOAer's ontology, even if NOA demonstrates a degree of flexibility that enables readjustment in light of ongoing science.

NOA restricts itself to determining its ontological commitments and interpretive stance towards them from within science. Hence "all that NOA insists is that one's ontological attitude... be governed by the very same standards of evidence and inference that are employed by science itself..." and not, therefore, extra philosophical evidence or interpretation which are unavailable to science.⁹⁰ This is a minimalistic yet very liberal and flexible attitude since it permits differing opinions and "...all the varieties of doubt and

⁹⁰ A. Fine, "And Not Anti-Realism Either", *Nous* 18, 1 (1984), 63.

scepticism, that science tolerates.”⁹¹ What it doesn’t allow are doctrines that externally limit the commitments of science however or attempt to provide special readings of it.

NOA therefore seeks to allow science to “speak for itself”, adopting the mantra that we are more than capable of understanding the practice without having to ‘rely’ upon any additional or external “...metaphysical or epistemological hearing aids.”⁹² NOA’s claim to being ‘natural’ then is best understood as ‘no additives’. It is not to be understood as being somehow a default position which we *already* possess, as Kitcher thinks his Natural Epistemic Attitude is (like a ‘natural state of things’). If anything, NOA fights against our urges to adopt antirealism and realism, telling us that our aims in adopting them can be satisfied without needing their metaphysical frameworks and related claims. Even a modest realism, which could be said to be close in its attitude to NOA, is resisted by NOA. Thus a good example of this core principle would be refraining from further interpretation of Kitcher’s NEA to get to his ‘real realism’. As shown in section 1.4, a strong case can be made into reading NEA as not mandating any significant realist theses but instead embodying an overtly minimalistic thesis. This is the kind of holding back NOA recommends. To stay at the level of a minimalistic reading of NEA, not allowing it to be inflated into suggesting a correspondence theory of truth, representationalism or a resulting more robust realist metaphysics.

NOA then is in many ways therapeutic in that it can help us transition away from realism whilst still feeling as if we are fighting for the same side. The ‘greatest virtue’ of NOA, according to Fine, is that it demonstrates how minimal an adequate philosophy of science can be.⁹³ NOA can make science seem both rational and intelligible, making it capable of satisfying our intuition that science is an objective affair without being realist or requiring any of its theses. Neo-pragmatism can be a suitable alternative to realism.

The position can be thought of as incorporating core insights of realism and antirealism (for example, humanising the practice as one we are responsible for), while still being a pro science attitude and without committing to either realism or antirealism’s metaphysical commitments or the means by which they accomplish them. Fine thinks less along these lines, instead taking NOA to genuinely oppose realism. However, this is only because Fine’s interpretation of realism is the ‘problematic’ variant. Once we see that realism has modest

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Fine, “And Not Anti-Realism Either”, 63.

⁹³ Fine, “The Natural Ontological Attitude”, 133.

expressions like Kitcher, and the realisations from Williams are taken to heart (that it is reasonable, in a sense, to treat it as similar to NOA), NOA is best understood as fighting on the same side as realism, and providing realists and neo-pragmatists with realist inclinations a new alternative which satisfies our realist intuitions without actually adopting their thesis. NOA is able to uphold standard truth talk while locating science within human practice as a historical and contingent practice (in line with antirealist intuitions), enabling us to turn inwards. This is all accomplished without adopting any significant metaphysical theses, realist or antirealist. This position of NOA then fits well with neo-pragmatism, particularly in its minimalist character.

2.2 Is NOA realism in disguise? The issue of Truth

Musgrave has provided a very convincing attack against NOA claiming that it is a realist thesis given what the position says regarding truth. This argument embodies a wider perception that minimalism is simply a modest realism without knowing it. Williams's comparison of NOA with Kitcher's real realism demonstrated how similar they are. However here Musgrave threatens to undermine NOA's ambitions of distinguishing itself as being a genuinely deflationist and minimalist position, running the risk of collapsing it into realism and compromising its other theses. By elaborating NOA and neo-pragmatism's view on truth I will demonstrate that such criticism is unfounded. I will also show just how robust neo-pragmatism can be with respect to notions like objectivity. As a result, a neo-pragmatist NOA will become a much stronger and coherent thesis.

Musgrave argues that Fine has failed to understand that the issue of truth is a determining factor in the realism-anti-realism debate. A particular theory of truth, for Musgrave, can largely settle the debate by determining which camp one falls into. I agree with Musgrave. Yet it is precisely because of this that neo-pragmatism resists identification with realism or antirealism. Since the neo-pragmatist's methodological orientation I covered in chapter one and its linguistic priority towards metaphysical issues (like truth) *resists* identification with any *theory* of truth they therefore avoid being realist or anti-realist. Due to this, the arguments Musgrave presents can be defended against. Musgrave maintains two interrelated criticisms towards the claim that NOA is actually realist: (1) that NOA cannot be endorsed by antirealists, thereby disproving that it is a 'core, neutral starting position' meaning that NOA passively defaults to realism. (2) That NOA's own thesis actually is a realist thesis. I will explain each argument and provide some discussion on how neo-pragmatism enables NOA to

get around these criticisms. In doing so it will be demonstrated that neo-pragmatism can come to NOA's assistance to help defend it.

Musgrave criticism 1: NOA is not a 'core position' which realism and antirealism start from – it sides with realism.

Musgrave argues that the 'core position' of NOA cannot be adopted by antirealists because their own interpretations of truth undermine NOA's core thesis. Fine's claim then that realists and antirealists add on their own conceptions of truth upon this core position is wrong because, as Musgrave claims, adding to NOA a particular theory of truth for science will 'demolish' the position.⁹⁴ NOA's 'usual referential way' and 'standard use' of the concept of truth implies that the antirealist is incapable of following such an account. This happens because often-held antirealist conceptions of truth will offend against the core position and thereby be incompatible with it.⁹⁵ Musgrave explains this as follows:

"As usually understood, realists can accept Fine's core position, but antirealists cannot. Positivists deny the existence of the 'theoretical entities' of science and think that any theory which asserts the existence of such entities is *false*. Instrumentalists think that scientific theories are tools or rules which are *neither true or false*. Epistemological antirealists like van Fraassen or Laudan concede that theories have truth-values, even that some of them might be true, but insist that no theory should be *accepted as true*. None of these antirealist positions... [are] consistent with Fine's core position."⁹⁶

Musgrave's point is that antirealists wouldn't be able to accept the core position once they realised that it committed them to accepting some scientific 'truths' or theories in the 'usual referential way'.⁹⁷ Thus these various antirealist approaches to truth will fail to uphold NOA's idea of embracing a face-value approach which upholds standard truth talk. These positions will interpret what it means to take science as 'on par' with homely truths as meaning something quite different to what Fine has in mind, as demonstrated by the various ways antirealists fail to engage with NOA.⁹⁸ This means that they would not be able to take the claim at face value. The hope then that NOA is in some ways the starting and core position is overturned. Instead it suggests that it is passively endorsing realism rather than being an actual middle ground. It seems then that if NOA truly is to be the core position something

⁹⁴ Musgrave, "NOA's Ark – Fine for Realism," 384.

⁹⁵ As in 2.1, I put to the side antirealisms which ignore or are unconcerned with the issue of truth.

⁹⁶ Musgrave, "NOA's Ark – Fine for Realism," 383.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ So too would traditional pragmatist approaches to truth like James or Peirce as well as contemporary 'revisions' of them like Rorty's epistemic reduction of truth.

here needs to change. If not, we may need to abandon the fundamental thesis of NOA that it is the core minimal position which all must accept and that minimalism is more than enough.

I agree with Musgrave's claim that anti-realism cannot adopt NOA. However I feel that he has overlooked an alternative way in which we can understand Fine.⁹⁹ When we isolate NOA, Musgrave is right that it cannot be the core position insofar as this means being a starting point for antirealism. Its approach to truth *is* largely incompatible with many anti-realist approaches to truth. If, however, we situate NOA within neo-pragmatism, we can still maintain Fine's primary assertion here, albeit with a different sense to what he has in mind. We can bring attention to the neo-pragmatist's account of truth rather than to Fine's now evidently muddled understanding of anti-realism. This is because my reading so far has seen NOA as a minimalist thesis worth developing under neo-pragmatism which views his position as a proto neo-pragmatist position that can be updated. Thus, recall that the neo-pragmatist account of truth maintains an anthropological-pragmatist approach. It refrains from any attempt to investigate the nature of truth, refrains from any attempt of identifying truth with anything, and therefore, refrains from offering a particular theory of truth. Instead it favours an analysis of how the concept is used and understood within practice. One of the core elements of the concept which neo-pragmatists have identified through these investigations is that the concept fulfils an indispensable normative function in practice.¹⁰⁰ It provides a norm of discourse and inquiry. Truth, in being understood as an irreducible objective concept, demands that when we see two speakers in disagreement, we assume that at least one must be wrong. And, as per this norm of truth, there is a need to resolve the disagreement. It thus ensures that disagreements are not rendered 'faultless'. As Huw Price has claimed, truth provides the necessary friction in disagreements to ensure that we further discuss and attempt to resolve the disagreement rather than give up at the sign of any disagreement as being merely faultless, incompatible opinions.

Why is this of importance? Because these elements of the concept are indispensable, without which discourse would collapse into 'Merely Opinionated Assertions' (MOAs).¹⁰¹ The result would be that discourse would break down. It would collapse into a practice where people merely asserted their opinion and would fail to ever engage with one another. It could be said

⁹⁹ Although it is by no means what Fine would necessarily have in mind, I think it is a more appropriate way.

¹⁰⁰ Price, "Truth as Convenient Friction", 170-173, 175.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 173. Also see; H. Price, "Three Norms of Assertibility, or How the Moa became extinct." *Nous* 34 (1998), 247, 248.

then that the neo-pragmatist account of truth provides philosophy (and realists/antirealists) a starting point, a set of core insights which mustn't be offended. If they do, then the resulting position is ruled unreasonable and thereby dismissed. Anti-realist approaches to truth (instrumental, reductivist, subjectivist), in lacking the concept and norm of truth, find their resulting practice to be one which is reduced to MOAs. They fail to uphold the norm which is distinctive of truth because identifying truth according to these anti-realist construals, such as communal warrant, will permit contradicting opinions. So when disagreements appear, the apparent contradiction of their two claims does not generate any perception of fault. Competing statements fail to engage with one another as assertoric discourse, in many ways, dissolves into a practice of merely stating one's opinion, offering justifications for them yet lacking any concern or distress about their incompatibility with others. It is because of this that neo-pragmatists dismiss antirealisms which seek to diminish the importance of truth. Antirealists simply fail to respect and account for this indispensable norm that we possess and which is derived only from the concept of truth. Thus we cannot say that truth is communal agreement or warrant as someone like Rorty might. Nor can we reduce truth to an instrumentalist tool or rule. Only when kept distinct from such notions can truth provide this norm and normative force.

To offend against these elements fundamental to truth is therefore to fail to understand a core part of the concept. Any further investigations by antirealists or realists must respect and uphold this prior realisation about truth. We can then uphold the claim made by Fine (now for different reasons from his own) that this minimalist stance *is* a core position and starting point. This complements Musgrave's claim that minimalist theories of truth are the starting point that makes realism possible. At the same time, we can also agree with Musgrave that antirealisms do destroy and undermine *this* core position, and as a result ought to be ruled out as a viable thesis. Anti-realism then, rather than NOA, is the cause of the problem: it isn't that NOA failed to become the core position, it was antirealism which failed to begin with these important insights to truth and the resulting minimalist position that is derived from it. NOA along with this neo-pragmatist conception of truth then can be said to rule out antirealism despite still being the core position.

With this revision in mind, does this mean that neo-pragmatists are realists? I think this is jumping the gun. This rejection of antirealism should not be taken as a move towards realism. NOA does not simply default to realism because it rejects anti-realism. At no point does neo-pragmatism seek to identify truth with correspondence. Nor is any core realist thesis adopted.

Furthermore, since we can in this new interpretation of NOA say that the minimalist approach to truth is a core starting point which must be upheld and is indisputable, then we should not think of this as realist, otherwise we run the risk of two things: (1) making realism the ‘default’ position, which it is not since realism’s core theses need to be fought for.¹⁰² And, (2) runs the risk of rendering robust realisms indistinguishable from minimalism since it seeks to equate these minimalist/deflationist elements of truth which require no metaphysical analysis or discussion with a more substantial theory of truth and its resulting metaphysical framework. Thus whilst these elements may be adopted by realists it is a mistake to confuse these neo-pragmatist insights as being only available to realists or to demand their resulting position. We can conclude then the following: NOA is not the shared starting point for both realism and antirealism. Musgrave is right to claim that antirealism cannot adopt NOA. However we can still say that NOA is still *the* core position and starting point for any respectable and viable position, with the inclusion of the claim that antirealism is simply not one of these. This sense of being a core position then is quite different to what Musgrave or Fine understands it as. It is ‘core’ because any thesis must include it to be respectable rather than being ‘core’ as in fundamental for both realism and antirealism.

NOA as a precursor to neo-pragmatism

One may think that I am mixing together neo-pragmatism with NOA in a rather lacklustre way by taking two unrelated and different theses and simply meshing them together. However we have seen NOA act like a proto neo-pragmatist position in its deflationist and quietist view towards metaphysics and minimalist stance. Fine, interestingly, does suggest this neo-pragmatist approach to truth himself, albeit in a simpler manner. This explains why he didn’t realise this potential means of shaping his position to avoid Musgrave in the first place. NOA’s approach to truth then is best understood as a precursor to the neo-pragmatist approach. I now flesh out how Fine understands truth and how it relates to the neo-pragmatist approach. In demonstrating the synergy NOA has with neo-pragmatism, such synergy will in turn supplement the claim that NOA is a particularly accurate and worthwhile expression of minimalism for neo-pragmatism.

¹⁰² NOA is under no illusions that it can simply be adopted without arguments. However there is a sense in which this differs to that of realism. These neo-pragmatist observations of truth, coupled with NOA’s face-value approach, are observations drawn from the concepts found within practice. They are not theories or interpretations, they are anthropological accounts. Through these pragmatist analyses we come to learn these things about the practice. As such, the position is only fought for in the sense that the neo-pragmatist has to demonstrate that they are indispensable parts to the practice.

Firstly then, NOA, like neo-pragmatism, refuses to provide a theory of truth or to amplify the concept by doing any metaphysical analysis in which truth is *identified with* something.¹⁰³ NOA's approach is rather quietist. Fine himself is fond of the label.¹⁰⁴ He notes that his conception is 'open ended' and 'growing with science' and practice. It rejects all interpretations, theories and construals of truth – the approach is a 'no-theory' conception. At times Fine does equate this claim to being similar to Rorty's cautionary use of truth. Neo-pragmatists however want more than quietism. They think that the concept of truth is a rich and interesting one which is in need of analysis, but that their pragmatist discussions provide more than enough by way of this. Their analysis does not require nor imply a metaphysics. It seeks an anthropological styled account of the concept of truth rather than an analysis of its nature. Both realist and antirealist approaches to truth are equally rejected then. NOA limits itself to how the concept is understood within practice and only from there provides a discussion of the concept, as Fine claims: "...NOA recognises in "truth" a concept already in use and agrees to abide by the standard rules of usage."¹⁰⁵ This thereby enables standard truth talk to be upheld. What it means to say something is true is to draw attention to the practical properties of truth along with the logical relations that the claim entails and the circumstances which ground such judgements. It is interested in what it means to take something as true rather than to investigate what truth is. Hence methodologically NOA approaches truth in a similar fashion to neo-pragmatism by not assuming that there is a metaphysical problem in the first place or that truth is something in need of a wide reaching theory. Reflecting these ideas Fine claims of NOA that:

"The general idea is to accept entrenched uses but to refrain from the project of seeing those uses as grounded in 'the nature of truth', some deep truth making properties, or the like. Thus, NOA does not think that truth is an explanatory concept, or that there is some general thing that makes truths true."¹⁰⁶

There is much to this claim of Fine's which shares similarities to neo-pragmatism. One is that NOA also thinks that truth is not an explanatory concept. For neo-pragmatism this is founded upon its anti-representationalism and semantic minimalism which denies that the primary explainer of meaning is referential relations and deflates semantic items rendering them

¹⁰³ Fine, "The Natural Ontological Attitude", 133.

¹⁰⁴ Fine, "Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science", 175.

¹⁰⁵ Fine, "The Natural Ontological Attitude", 133.

¹⁰⁶ Fine, "Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science", 175.

unable to do the heavy lifting realists want them to do. This compounds the claim that NOA isn't realist. It is also similar to how deflationism rejects the claim that truth has some innate property which all claims that are 'true' possess – as Fine notes some general thing which makes truths true. This is very similar to Horwich who appropriately explains how, while there is no common property which two sentences that share the property of truth have, there is still a sense that they both possess the property of being 'true'. To demonstrate, it is better to think of the property of truth as being like the property of 'existence' rather than the property 'mammal'. My pet cat and the Sydney opera house each have the property of existence. But their explanations are quite different (one is via its parents conceiving it, the other from the work of architects and historical circumstances). Contrast this to the property 'mammal' in which there is a shared and identifiable explanation as to why two animals would share this property. Fine has in mind a similar approach. He notes above how it rejects there being some identifiable property or sign of truth, while accepting its 'entrenched uses'. Thus another instance of agreement with neo-pragmatism is that it fits well with Horwich's identification of truth's various established uses; of it being a tool for disquotation, of agreement, of emphasis, concession, and of blind ascription for example.¹⁰⁷

Fine is right to think that we can adhere to this standard use of truth along with this norm it provides without having to convert to realism.¹⁰⁸ And we can conclude that NOA is more than complementary for neo-pragmatists when it comes to the issue of truth. Of course much of these elements found within Fine fail to receive the elaboration that they do in the neo-pragmatist discussions I have presented. Nonetheless, NOA can be thought of as being a precursor to the neo-pragmatist approach to truth, offering some first, undeveloped ideas which neo-pragmatism can subsume under their own conception. This demonstrates two points for our current concerns: (1) that NOA's approach to truth is more continuous with neo-pragmatism than first thought thereby strengthening its overarching approach as a viable one for neo-pragmatists to adopt. And (2) that there are convincing reasons to be found in neo-pragmatism that can aid NOA in its defence against Musgrave's claim that it passively encourages realism or that given its denial of antirealism the only alternative is realism.

¹⁰⁷ Horwich, *Truth, Meaning, Reality*. 14, 15. Also see; R. Brandom, "Pragmatism, Phenomenalism and Truth Talk." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 12 (1987), 79. Brandom adds to Horwich's various uses by noting how truth talk can be expressive by establishing "...one's own relation to a claim..." The commitment to taking something as true means to "...rely on the belief or claim in question in guiding practical activity." It can then be used in practical inferences whose conclusions are actions rather than further claims.

¹⁰⁸ Fine, "Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalists Attachments to Science", 176.

Musgrave criticism 2: NOA actively encourages realism

Musgrave provides another criticism advocating that NOA is realist but for quite different reasons. He argues that aside from his first criticism that NOA rules out antirealism, thereby passively endorsing realism, it also actively advances realism. He maintains that the conception of truth entailed within NOA – this minimalist approach, is itself sold on a realist conception. He claims NOA does not leave it open on how truth is to be understood. Rather, it adopts a very specific conception of it – a realist conception.¹⁰⁹ He demonstrates this by drawing attention to the passage of Fine’s where NOA understands and treats truth in the ‘usual referential way’ and how NOA seeks to recognise the concept of truth which is already in use, promising to abide by the standard rules of its usage.¹¹⁰ He alludes to how Fine draws attention to Tarski and referential semantics as underlying this approach yet fails to directly address them. As such, Musgrave contends that NOA has already adopted a specific theory of truth. He states:

“The key point is that referential semantics yields precisely the notion of truth that *realists* want to apply across the board both to homely truths and to scientific ones. Antirealists of any ilk could not accept the core position once they realised that this committed them to accepting some scientific theories as true in the *usual referential way*. NOA, the core position all by itself, is already a thoroughly realist position.”¹¹¹

This certainly would appear to suggest that, the neo-pragmatist conception of truth aside, NOA in including this element is realist-apt. It would be reasonable to say (as many like Tarski and Musgrave have) that the above characterisation in terms of reference would provide the start of a correspondence theory of truth, especially when realists themselves have shown how simple and minimal a correspondence theory can be.¹¹² It is fair for Musgrave to claim then that NOA is bringing in a correspondence theory of truth despite its claims.

Musgrave has pre-empted the standard criticism against anti-representationalism that the seemingly apparent instances of successful reference are overlooked by anti-

¹⁰⁹ Musgrave, “NOA’s Ark – Fine for Realism,” 385.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Kitcher, “On the Explanatory Role of Correspondence”, 119-121. His discussion of Ophelia’s navigation is a good example.

representationalists. Despite their apparent opposition, they fail to notice typical everyday instances where standard referential semantics seems more than acceptable, thereby failing to account for this seemingly important element of language. Musgrave mocks such a stance, noting the example of the moon. He states: “What exactly is the problem here? Somebody says ‘There is a full moon tonight’ and I look up into the night sky and ascertain that the statement is true.”¹¹³ He proceeds to say that he has access to the terms of the relation and access to the moon in the world. Jackson has a similar claim: those in a philosophy conference who are talking of rejecting reference are in a strange situation given how they used a map to get to the conference.¹¹⁴ The point of each is that anti-representationalists are either failing to see such obvious instances of successful reference or NOA’s claim of abiding by usual reference and standard use sounds outright representationalist and therefore realist. This issue of reference however can find a suitable response in neo-pragmatism so as to defend its approach to truth.¹¹⁵ NOA can, with the aid of neo-pragmatism, uphold standard rules of use without being realist.

Fine is not wrong to talk of the ‘usual referential way’. However how this is to be understood requires clarity by neo-pragmatists otherwise NOA invites criticism. There are a number of core points to anti-representationalism and neo-pragmatism’s deflationist theory of truth that require emphasis and which can act as a response to the problem:

(1) Deflationism fails to attain a realist metaphysics by itself. Take the example: “snow is white” is true iff snow is white. Here, both sides of ‘true’ “...express the same thing” under deflationist theories.¹¹⁶ Thus “On this view, the equivalence thesis does not, despite appearances, pair each sentence with a certain situation.”¹¹⁷ This is why Price has stressed that the reason why we are free to move up and down the semantic ‘ladder’ so easily is because it takes us nowhere.¹¹⁸ Without adopting an additional thesis (like a theory of reference) minimalist theories can keep referring to instances of reference in a fashion which goes no further than deploying only deflationary terms which, once significantly deflated, are

¹¹³ Musgrave, “NOA’s Ark – Fine for Realism,” 391-392.

¹¹⁴ Blackburn, “Pragmatism: all or some?” 68. Jackson’s claim can be found here in Blackburn. Blackburn additionally elaborates the appropriate response neo-pragmatists ought to give.

¹¹⁵ This is therefore a core intuition and motivation for realism, which neo-pragmatists can satisfy without relapse into representationalism.

¹¹⁶ Devitt, *Realism and Truth*, 33. This is interesting since, as a realist, Devitt’s scepticism of deriving realism from theories of truth (in general, much less a minimalist theory) can be exploited and used against Musgrave.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ H. Price, “Naturalism without Representationalism”, in *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism*, ed. Huw Price (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 10.

incapable of ensuring a realist thesis. This is because they will lack any sort of correspondence relation. By retaining merely deflationary terms we can ensure that the equivalence thesis lacks a correspondence relation to a mind-independent reality of the sort realists desire. Thus, the key is accepting the presence and existence of reference without it entailing a correspondence relation – we refrain from going any further than the deflationist requires, refusing to provide a theory of reference in this sense.

Another example can be found in Horwich where we can explain an individual's success in terms of the truth of an instrumental belief that wholly lacks any correspondence relation.¹¹⁹ He uses the example of Bill who in nodding satisfies his desire for a beer. The explanation (simplified) can go as follows:

Bill desires a beer.

Bill believes that if he nods he will have a beer.

Due to these premises Bill nods.

(Assuming for argument's sake) Bill's belief is true.

Thus: "Bill nods \rightarrow Bill has a beer" is true iff Bill nods \rightarrow Bill has a beer.

Therefore: Bill nods \rightarrow Bill has a beer, thereby meaning Bill has a beer.

From the theory of truth:

Given that Bill has a beer and "Bill has a beer" is true iff Bill has a beer: "Bill has a beer" is true.

Such an explanation needn't ever consider a correspondence relation or reference to a mind-independent world. Instead "...all of the facts whose expression involves the truth predicate may be explained... by assuming no more about truth than instances of the equivalence schema."¹²⁰ These two examples (of "snow is white" and of Bill) therefore each demonstrate how the deflationist can prevent reference to a correspondence relation. The key idea then for NOA to exploit is that 'usual referential way' needn't entail a correspondence relation thereby preventing it from being an outright realist approach to truth. It is also important to note that it isn't only deflationists who argue this. Kitcher concedes that "despite the insights... of Musgrave's essay it seems... that Fine is not so easily assimilated, in part because of his reluctance to embrace the characteristically realist idea of reference as a relation between language and *mind-independent* objects."¹²¹ The point again is that without

¹¹⁹ P. Horwich, *Truth*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 22-23.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Kitcher, "Real Realism: The Galilean Strategy", 153.

a correspondence relation that pertains to this more significant metaphysical notion of reference to mind-independent objects we can prevent the deflationist from being realist. Thus, while the possibility of compatibility of deflationist theories of truth exists with realism, it does not mean that it necessarily follows from it.

(2) Recall (from section 1.1.) that instances of reference are not denied by neo-pragmatists. In Musgrave and Jackson's examples, the referential relations and representations can play (to a lesser extent) an explanatory role. Anti-representationalists do, however, deny that such referential relations are explanatory primitives to their inferential relations, or that this means that truth is an explanatory concept. Remember both Horwich and Fine stressed that truth is not considered an explanatory concept (unlike realism, thereby compounding this defence). In addition, the cases of Musgrave and Jackson are not unfamiliar to neo-pragmatists. They are accepted, but shouldn't be confused as reflective of language in general – that is, that *all* representations primary function is to be descriptive or that these referential relations are fundamental to the explanation. As expressivists they are familiar with the idea that language can mislead us into thinking that these instances of reference are reflective of meaning in general thereby mistakenly implying Representationalism. The practice of forming representations is but one language game, and even if it is a perfectly fine activity, Wittgenstein's idea that such clothing of language shouldn't be taken as a sign of language in general is heavily emphasised. 'Usual referential way' then is not a sign of representationalism. The simple acceptance of successful reference does not demand a more substantial theory of truth, representationalism or a theory of reference. We should not generalise therefore from these apparent instances to a referential semantics, and then to realism. Remember that Blackburn insisted that everyday instances do not offer a 'self-extracting' philosophical 'ism', whether it be representationalism or realism.

These examples therefore will receive the explanation that Musgrave is expecting. Blackburn endorses an example of a map which is very similar to Kitcher's.¹²² He notes that the sailors' successful navigation is reasonably explained via reference to the maps successful referential relations. But the point remains that such instances do not demand that we adopt a representationalist semantics or realist conception of truth. A deflationist explanation is possible with the important non-representational elements contributing to meaning. The fundamental point is that the explanatory focus is on use rather than content. They do not

¹²² Blackburn, "Pragmatism: all or some?" 73. See his sailor example.

deny that there is content and reference, only that the order of explanation is different. Neo-pragmatists emphasise (as we saw in 1.1 and 1.2) the various use-based aspects of this inferentialist game of ‘giving and asking for reasons’. These non-descriptive elements are considered fundamental to our assertoric and discursive practices and are privileged (in the explanation) before any referential relations become relevant. I will elaborate this later when talking of anti-representationalism directly. To provide a short pre-emptive answer, there is a two-tier process going on. At its root assertions are non-representational but can have additional descriptive dimensions which can be reflective of a particular domain.

We can conclude the following in defence of NOA: these instances of reference are not denied. They can be successfully *subsumed under* neo-pragmatism. Musgrave’s claim that usual reference or standard rules of use are signs of realism is rejected, for it isn’t the case that only under realism can they receive adequate explanation.¹²³

2.3 *The aim of science*

In this section I offer a new approach inspired by NOA and neo-pragmatism towards the question of whether truth is a general aim of science. Since neo-pragmatists have said nothing on this matter I will begin with NOA’s approach which will act as a starting point for my position. Thus I will first explain how NOA tackles the question of general aims. Following this I offer my proposal and its suggested revisions. I will show that while science lacks any general aim, it does possess a quasi-general aim insofar as neo-pragmatist analyses of truth can be exploited. With neo-pragmatist insights at hand, a new approach can be formulated on the back of NOA to provide what I think is a worthwhile approach to this question of whether science has a general aim.

How does NOA approach the question of aims? It begins with an anti-essentialist view of science. NOA views science as a historical and contingent practice which lacks any generalised essence or nature.¹²⁴ It maintains that we ought to ‘opt out’ of inventing factors whose possession would make a practice scientific. NOA’s anti-essentialism is fragile however since it runs the risk of yielding antirealism and relativism due to science quickly

¹²³ Putting aside the issue of truth, if we reflect on how (as shown in chapter one) neo-pragmatism is metaphysically quietist, dismisses scepticism and holds limits to how far we can take the idea of mind-independency, we can see there are additional reasons available as to why they are not realist.

¹²⁴ Fine, “Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science”, 174.

becoming viewed as a mere cultural product.¹²⁵ NOA isn't, however, calling for an end to philosophy of science. It seeks to simply view the practice as constraining our understanding given its history. Unfortunately, in later works Fine does succumb to anti-realism, revising his anti-essentialism into a 'relativistic' approach.¹²⁶ Delicacy in handling this element of NOA is therefore required, though my own proposal and revisions will greatly help reform NOA to ensure this balance is upheld.

NOA's rejection of the supposed excessive and 'grand' interpretations of realism and antirealism persist when it comes to the aim of science. In approaching this question of whether the aim of science is that of truth, NOA steps back from the question, instead questioning whether science needs a general aim at all.¹²⁷ Of course the denial of general aims is not unusual.¹²⁸ Realists can lack the need to go looking for any general aim. Furthermore, NOA still accepts that there are local aims: that of the aim to resolve a particular problem, to produce certain results or to construct a better tool, for example. But it echoes Nietzsche, noting that it is improper to move from the realisation that 'they all have aims' to 'there is an aim they all have'.¹²⁹ This point is reinforced by the consideration that science couldn't aim for the truth for the simple sake of attaining it. Though this isn't to say that science couldn't uncover the truth, only that their aim is never simply for it.

To desire a general aim (regardless of whether it is truth, empirical adequacy or otherwise) is a 'hankering' for an essence of science. This NOA is against. Why might one think that we require such a general aim for science? Fine thinks the debate is motivated by a concern for authority. Those who invest in this debate feel the need to establish a rationale for science, to show that it is an appropriate means to achieving its ends. If there is this need, then they assume that there must be ends in the first place. Fine however questions that if there was no such aim, we would not be required to invent one in order to feel assured that science is rational. He states:

¹²⁵ A. Fine, "The Shaky Game", in *The Shaky Game*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 9. He notes how NOA opts out of investing factors that would make a practice scientific.

¹²⁶ A. Fine, "Relativism, Pragmatism and the Practice of Science." in *New Pragmatists*, ed. Cheryl Misak (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 52,53.

¹²⁷ Fine, "Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science", 173. Also see; Fine, "And Not Antirealism Either", 61. Here he notes how the question runs us into an irresolvable problem. It doesn't make sense to ask in light of such a rich and varied practice.

¹²⁸ P. Lipton, "Does the Truth Matter in Science?" in *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 4, 2 (2005), 175, 178. Lipton shows how it is not uncommon for philosophers to think that the relevance of truth in science is little.

¹²⁹ Fine, "Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science", 173.

“But why should we feel insecure? What actually frightens us here? The method that NOA follows is to search for the roots of our concerns, to try to trace the motivational pattern both historically and personally. With regard to the rationality issue, I suspect the historical link is to various foundational programmes and their attempts to overcome scepticism and relativism.”¹³⁰

NOA and neo-pragmatism however maintain that relativism and scepticism do not pose such a threat that we require this authority.¹³¹ As a result they lack any desire to attempt to provide any more authority to science than is already found within practice. Of course this is not to say that science is without authority in a more localised, non-essentialist way: “...the rationality of science-in-the-small is frequently apparent to its students and practitioners.”¹³² Science is more than capable of standing up for itself and does not require realism or antirealism to provide science with extra philosophical assurance against scepticism. It is not, as Fine puts it, ‘needy’ in this way. Its indisputable success and capabilities are more than enough alongside this minimalist attitude.

Another way we can talk of aims is to look at the practice and question what it is about, what it means and what it is in aid of. The idea then is that one may question a practice’s aims insofar as to ensure that it is not pointless. To this question Fine thinks that the answers may not be so ready at hand. We can, of course, test answers against the ongoing practice. But this should be done in modesty, refraining from excessive interpretation. He provides an excellent example of an art gallery with all those inside questioning what a tiny red dot on a particular painting means, failing to step back and realise that it is simply the price tag for the piece. Of course NOA does not hold science to be pointless. All it is claiming here is that nothing is added to our understanding of science if we look for such general aims, even if such efforts may tell us something about the positions that do.¹³³ In many ways then the aim is an illusion, a construct and a product of excessive obsession and fear of scepticism and relativism threatening to undermine science (which can be a useful illusion nonetheless, as will be shown shortly).

As an ever evolving and ongoing practice, those within the practice alongside those that question it and view it from outside are all a part of the practice’s direction and development. Fine puts it well when he says that if science is a performance, then it is one in which both

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ In Chapter 1 I elaborated why neo-pragmatists thought this. Note that in addition to this claim, Fine thinks that no such authority is to be found within NOA anyway.

¹³² Fine, “Unnatural Attitudes: Realist and Instrumentalist Attachments to Science”, 173

¹³³ Ibid, 174.

the crew and the audience play a part.¹³⁴ These interpretations and evaluations are thereby needed – though the lesson is an anti-essentialist one:

“Directions for interpretation are also part of the act. If there are questions and conjectures about the meaning of this or that, or its purpose, then there is room for those in the production too. The script, moreover, is never finished, and no past dialogue can fix future action. Such a performance is not susceptible to a reading or interpretation in any global sense, and it picks out its own interpretation, locally, as it goes along.”¹³⁵

This complements the idea that NOA ought to abide by the same standards that science does: to revise and make amendments in light of future evidence and challenges. Thus, to this point I am in agreement as it will permit my own approach to this question of aims that I will cover shortly. We can therefore take an internally driven approach to aims which renders it a practice we are responsible for (but also to) thereby upholding its objective nature while humanising the practice. No aim is ever set in stone and in light of ever arising challenges can only determine its path from where it currently stands. History, while a useful guide, is incapable of dictating to the practice its direction. Thanks to a lack of a general aim, the practice is capable of determining its aims flexibly, as it proceeds.

Having covered NOA’s approach to the question of aims, I now want to offer my proposal. There is a promising and interesting idea which is a result of my efforts to redesign NOA as a neo-pragmatist position. If we return to the neo-pragmatist account of truth and the normative role that the concept plays within practice I think that such function of constituting friction does have some relevance to this issue of a general aim. This function of truth does provide something by way of a general but still contingent and historically embedded *aim of inquiry*. The concept goes beyond merely providing these basic norms and constitutes an idealised goal. As an *aim* it sees a greater focus on the concept offering an idealised aim to strive for, alongside a greater focus on resolution and epistemic improvement rather than (the basic functions of) friction and engagement.¹³⁶ As part of the normative role truth provides, it can be said therefore to offer a general direction for inquiry. This is still in line with NOA’s anti-essentialism because we could imagine a discursive practice that could have lacked this norm

¹³⁴ Fine, “And Not Anti-Realism Either”, 61.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 61-62

¹³⁶ K. Popper, *Realism and the Aim of Science*. (London: Hutchinson Publishing Group, 1983), 132. This is similar, in part, to Popper’s idea of satisfactory explanations being a loose aim. Especially when he agrees that there is no general aim of science. Also see; 134. He notes this leads to the idea of seeking to improve satisfactoriness. *Improvement* is similar to my idea here since it captures a more sophisticated sense of basic epistemic improvement.

of truth. But, since the concept of truth *as it is currently understood within practice* is fundamental to our discursive practices, it is reasonable to think of truth as something of an aim when expressed as a rule of discourse – for resolution of competing views and epistemic improvement of our beliefs.¹³⁷

Prima facie there is a conflict here. NOA holds there to be no general aim of science yet neo-pragmatists according to my reading are (in a roundabout way) taking truth to be a general aim. Subtlety in understanding is required since this conflict is only surface level. Truth, as understood as a fundamental concept to practice, can be considered an aim of inquiry insofar as it provides this friction and its related conversational norms of intolerance of disagreement and the demand for further argumentation and eventual resolution of the disagreement. The focus needs to be on this idea of it being an aim of inquiry in general, not of the practice of science. Yet because science deploys and uses basic assertoric and discursive practices we can say it is an indirect, somewhat fictive and quasi-general aim of science. It is, in short, an idealised concept. It is a key part of the language game of making assertions. Thus, it is a linguistic norm, a conversational norm and a key linguistic (rather than ontological or metaphysical) concept that constitutes a fictive, idealised and non-linguistic aim. Understood in this manner, it is an aim of resolution of disagreements and difference as well as epistemic improvement of knowledge. These can then be coupled with the satisfaction of local aims to provide scientific practice with enough direction.

Truth therefore can be said to be a general aim. But this ‘aim’ is much more a product of the practice we are in rather than some innate essence of science. NOA’s anti-essentialism is upheld, as this idealised aim of science is in many ways a contingent illusion. This fact that discursive practices carry with them this normative force then *supplies* science with a fundamental norm that assists the practice *rather than attributes* an essence of science. The concept itself provides inquiry a sense of direction, albeit one without a good deal of substance but nonetheless vital importance. Neo-pragmatists had shown, after all, that discourse would be quite different if it lacked this concept. It would, as shown in the previous section, deteriorate and collapse. Thus in many ways it is a precondition for the practice.

Assertoric practices are but one part of science’s wider practice. Science is, after all, very experiment based. Linguistic practices like assertoric discourse, related norms and rules of

¹³⁷ This is because as noted in 2.2, discourse would break down into a practice of merely opinionated assertions (MOAs) without the concept of truth.

discourse, and concepts like truth, form only a part of the practice of science. Nonetheless, the lesson here is that even if science isn't predominantly linguistic based, truth is still a core concept that ensures its practice can take off. In being a practice that uses general assertoric practices, science requires the concept and would be incapable of having more sophisticated, non-linguistic elements without this important concept. And, the argument I've presented here, is that the common aspect of truth being fundamental to our discursive practices transforms into a fundamental largely non-linguistic concept for the practice in general by functioning as an aim of scientific inquiry.

Interestingly, Kuhn expresses something similar to what I am trying to communicate here. While his remarks are a little different to what I am claiming, they offer some complementary points that can help shape my idea. He states:

"...we must learn to get along without anything at all like a correspondence theory of truth. But something like a redundancy theory of truth is badly needed to replace it, something that will introduce minimal laws of logic (in particular, the law of non-contradiction) and make adhering to them a *precondition* for the rationality of evaluations. On this view, as I wish to employ it, the *essential function of the concept* of truth is to require choice between acceptance and rejection of a statement or a theory in the face of evidence shared by all."¹³⁸ (Italics are mine)

We can see emerging ideas in Kuhn here that, while underdeveloped considering he only briefly covers them, are similar to my argument and strongly complement my proposal. First, he stresses how the concept provides an important function: of demanding there be a requirement that competing or contradicting claims cannot be both accepted. This is very similar to the norm of intolerance that provides the necessary friction that neo-pragmatists have stressed is provided by truth. His mention of 'introducing minimal laws of logic' and of 'non-contradiction' complements the pragmatist point that possession of the concept of truth is a precondition. The second point worth noting here is that he explicitly refers to this as an essential function of the concept, and thereby refrains from attributing these aspects of truth to any metaphysically heavy theory. Thus Kuhn is in line with the pragmatist's deflationist and anthropological orientation.

¹³⁸ T. Kuhn, *The Road Since Structure*, ed. James Conant and John Haugeland (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) 99.

These ideas are similar to Popper's idea that truth is a 'regulative idea'.¹³⁹ Popper claims that even if we lack any aim or resulting criteria of truth we do have plenty for falsehoods. One example he gives is the idea of self-contradiction. This is similar to Kuhn's point of minimal laws of logic and how this is an effect of the concept of truth. Popper stresses that because of this seeking truth is a 'critical search'. He argues that while "...we don't get very much truth when we have refuted a theory, as a rule", we do nonetheless "...know where the truth is not to be found, and we can go on with our search. So truth works in the main as a regulative idea in the search for truth, or in criticism."¹⁴⁰ Thus we get to my point that truth is an idealised aim. One which is not something we attain, but which constitutes certain functions that we can benefit from. In this case of Popper's therefore, it helps to *motivate* further inquiry and improvement via criticism.

Kuhn continues this line of thought, stating:

"In this reformulation, to declare a statement a candidate for true/false is to accept it as a counter in a language game whose rules forbid asserting both a statement and its contrary. A person who breaks that rule declares him – or herself outside the game. If one nevertheless tries to continue play, then discourse breaks down; the integrity of the language community is threatened. Similar, though more problematic, rules apply not simply to contrary statements, but more generally to logically incompatible ones. There are, of course, language games without the rule of non-contradiction... even within the declarative-statement game, [there are] recognised ways of bracketing the rules, permitting and even exploiting the use of contradiction. But in the sciences and in many more ordinary community activities, such bracketing devices are parasitic on normal discourse. And these activities – the ones that presuppose normal adherence to the rules of the true/false game – are an essential ingredient of the glue that binds communities together..."¹⁴¹

There are two points Kuhn is communicating here that are of relevance.

1. He notes, just as neo-pragmatists have stressed, that discourse 'breaks down' without truth. He affirms that truth is a necessary concept that enables discourse and inquiry to actually take off and without which discourse would collapse. Recall Price's distinction of a MOA practice. Kuhn's claim that the 'integrity' of the community is 'threatened' complements these pragmatist ideas.

¹³⁹ K. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem: In Defence of Interaction*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 97.

¹⁴⁰ Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem: In Defence of Interaction*, 97.

¹⁴¹ Kuhn, *The Road Since Structure*. 100.

2. He mentions that elaborate activities, such as science's capacity to potentially 'bracket' these demands are 'parasitic' on this general assertoric practice. This demonstrates the idea that even if the concept of truth is of little relevance to scientists themselves, much of their practice is only capable thanks to this basic concept and related norms and functions it provides. This complements the point that, even if largely non-linguistic, scientific practice relies upon these basic, universal concepts and the roles they satisfy. His point that truth is an 'essential ingredient' that binds the community together complements my point that the concept of truth is a requirement, a precondition, for science, regardless of whether it is derived from a linguistic practice and only constitutes a quasi-general aim.

In summary, no aim of truth insofar as it implies an aim of getting closer to the 'real' or of attaining convergence upon how things are has been affirmed. My proposal hasn't sought to explicate what truth is. It only focuses on the functions that the concept provides – one of which (for this section's concerns) being a pre-condition for successful 'discourse' via offering a general aim of discourse that science exploits as a quasi-general aim of its practice. No allusions to any metaphysical thesis of truth have been made. The account keeps in line with the principles of neo-pragmatism. But it also affirms NOA as a starting proto-pragmatist position, since my arguments support NOA's denial of a general aim of science and refrains from attribution of an essence. We can therefore assert that science has a sense of a shared direction yet one attained without any adoption of any realist or anti-realist thesis. The allowance of rolling local aims along with this function of the concept of truth and its idealised concept offers a complementary approach for pragmatists to take when it comes to the question of aims. Finally, given these insights, I think a case can be made that these elements of truth are what explains in part why many assume that truth is a genuine general aim of science in the first place. It seems reasonable that this quasi-general aim of discourse is the cause for the false intuition of truth being a real aim of science. This is because these contingent functions of the concept are susceptible to misreadings which attribute them as reflective of a proper essence of science. Thus my account goes some way to offering an explanation as to why the idea that truth is a general aim of science has gained such traction in the first place.

Conclusion

Given how this minimalist position attempts to play off realism and antirealism against one another, it is not enough for the neo-pragmatist to then sit back and think that they are without worries. What arises in light of this is a very temperamental balancing act. Jeffery Stout has noted it well, claiming that neo-pragmatists:

“...explicate cognitive aspirations and conceptual norms pragmatically – as artifacts arising in human discursive practices of a certain kind. In framing their explications, they rigorously avoid resorting to metaphysical talk about correspondence to the real. But they also want to be able, at the end of the day, to affirm coherently that inquiry is an *objective* affair, that it is *successful by its own lights* only to the extent that it *correctly* characterizes the subject matter it has taken up...”¹⁴²

Rorty failed to find a balance in having crossed over into antirealism and sacrificing notions of objectivity. Neo-pragmatists need to be careful in how they approach these issues. We can see from Fine’s anti-realist tendencies and Musgrave’s claims of collapse into realism that the position is beset on both sides. To tread between realism and anti-realism is a significant challenge that the neo-pragmatist faces. When it comes to their general claims, I think they often overlook the domain of science, generalising arguments that, when applied to science, begin to break down. What I have aimed to do in this chapter, is to provide assistance to this cause.

The attractions of this minimalist position and of neo-pragmatism that I have sought to develop should now be apparent. The position is capable of fusing many motivations and insights of realism and antirealism while resisting any move into either camp. On the one hand the position can be thought of as fighting on the same side as realists. It is able to provide a pro-science attitude which is capable of upholding the normative force of our concepts of objectivity and truth. We can remain committed, as neo-pragmatists, that science is an objective affair. And, it is able to provide a means of making sense of science with as little readjustment to our common intuitions as possible. Yet it can accomplish all this with barely any metaphysics. The lesson that neo-pragmatism tells us is that we can capture these elements without having to commit ourselves to realism. We can instead enjoy what the neo-pragmatist thesis has to offer towards philosophy without worrying that it offends against scientific practice. We can adopt neo-pragmatism’s various theses and still achieve this approach towards science and scientific ontology. As such it is wrong to identify NOA and realism as being simply two different types of the same position, even if the final step

¹⁴² Stout, “On Our Interest in Getting Things Right: Pragmatism,” 7.

towards realism from neo-pragmatism is simpler than many think. Because of this I see both seeking to uphold a similar attitude about science. The position is one which is in many ways sympathetic to the realist cause even if it is critical of how the realist gets there. Neo-pragmatism's rejection of correspondence theories of truth, representationalism and the resulting metaphysical picture demands that we recognise that the transition from realism into neo-pragmatism does, at least, require important realist commitments to be abandoned.

At the same time the position can also incorporate many of Rorty's antirealist insights in a more appropriate manner without collapse into antirealism. His core claim that neo-pragmatists ought to be therapeutic, in a sense, in assisting philosophy in moving away from the realism-anti-realism debate is upheld. The position is anti-essentialist and starts its analysis of science by viewing it as a human practice which we are responsible for. Finally, it should hopefully provide something of a starting point to enable us to begin to move on from the realism-anti-realism debate with both sides incorporated in a sense.

This chapter began with the consideration that neo-pragmatism didn't often relate its position (and related theses) to the practice of science or engage with philosophy of science. I sought to remedy this throughout the chapter by directly apply neo-pragmatism to certain questions regarding science. Having covered this potential to reform NOA as a neo-pragmatist thesis, alongside this worthwhile approach to aims in science, I have shown that neo-pragmatism has much to offer the philosophy of science and our understanding of scientific practice. And, via reforming NOA and my investigation into truth, I have attempted to develop a suitably minimalist approach to science on the back of neo-pragmatism. NOA, as we've come to see, fits well with neo-pragmatism and therefore acts as a good approach to science, as well as a strong expression of minimalism for neo-pragmatism to work with.

3. Anti-representationalism and scientific vocabulary

3.0 Introduction and overview

Anti-representationalism is a distinctive and fundamental commitment of neo-pragmatism. In order to provide a satisfying and well-rounded account of this minimalist position towards science, which draws upon neo-pragmatism as its guiding doctrine, something needs to be said about how anti-representationalism impacts and engages with science. In this chapter I situate the anti-representationalist thesis within a scientific context, extracting the relevance it has for scientific discourse. While there are many aspects to anti-representationalism (see section 1.1), this chapter tackles a very specific issue that confronts anti-representationalism. I focus on what anti-representationalism has to offer towards scientific assertions, declaratives and the basic functions they serve. Thus the chapter is primarily concerned with assertoric discourse and its related linguistic practices as used by scientific practice.¹⁴³

In this chapter I seek to provide a case for a global application of anti-representationalism by resolving a problem that confronts neo-pragmatists who have global ambitions for anti-representationalism – that scientific representations and vocabulary appear to be in tension with its core thesis. By moving away from a common local expressivism into a global application, scientific assertions appear to be rendered (1) no longer genuinely assertoric due to anti-representationalism's non-descriptivist view. This results in (2) there being a failure to make any qualitative distinction between various vocabularies and the extent of their capacity to be 'world-tracking' and descriptive. I address these issues in this chapter. I discuss concerns that anti-representationalism is a thesis that can only be applied locally to particular, queer domains like moral statements where non-cognitivism can gain traction. I show that it can be applied globally to include scientific vocabulary. I will therefore develop and strengthen global anti-representationalism as a viable and successful thesis, offering neo-pragmatists a more sophisticated version of anti-representationalism which enables them to explain how their claims impact scientific assertions and its related vocabulary. In doing so I will allay any fears that it may result in an unattractive image of science.

¹⁴³ Given this I don't intend to equate science with being only an assertoric practice, nor even a wider linguistic practice. It simply means the focus is on scientific language, the functions it satisfies and the related assertoric practices which pertain to it. In virtue of this, neo-pragmatists are capable of taking what they have uncovered in their anti-representationalist investigations and applying them to science.

In addressing this specific question that confronts anti-representationalism, the chapter does not get into debates between representationalism and anti-representationalism. Instead, it seeks to come to the aid of anti-representationalists who have overlooking this particular problem that pertains to scientific assertions and its apparently descriptive vocabulary. Thus I will assume anti-representationalism. And, the intent of the chapter will be to offer anti-representationalists some readjustments to their position which will help them deal with problems that face the thesis when it comes to scientific vocabulary. That being said, I hope to show that such an assumption can pay off. By demonstrating how it can provide a satisfying account of scientific discourse, anti-representationalism will demonstrate its worth.

The outline of the chapter therefore is as follows: In section 3.1 I outline the problem the chapter investigates in greater detail. I explain what kind of solutions are available as well as which one I will adopt and develop. In doing so, I build upon the definition of anti-representationalism that I provided in chapter one by explaining the standard bifurcation drawn in language which divides local from global programs of anti-representationalism. This will constitute the background necessary for my proposal to be developed. In section 3.2 I analyse how global anti-representationalists can understand assertions and assertoric practice. In particular I look at how neo-pragmatists can exploit clarifications over the types of assertoric forms to maintain that scientific assertions and statements are non-descriptive, with their descriptive environment tracking representational content only possible on the back of the non-descriptive elements. I argue that scientific vocabulary is not therefore purely descriptive in function. Like all other areas of discourse, it relies upon non-descriptive elements of the linguistic practice. In section 3.3 I look at how this account does not reduce the discursive norms that concern the objectivity of scientific representations. I look at how objectivity can still be upheld within assertoric discourse, that we can affirm that the linguistic practice is still an objective affair despite the revisions made in 3.2.

3.1 The problem of science for global anti-representationalism

The problem, more specifically, is that there appears to be an inherent incompatibility built into the basic anti-representationalist picture when we turn its claims on scientific vocabulary. When it comes to assertoric discourse we want to say that scientific assertions are genuinely assertoric and genuinely descriptive. Typically, we're led to the belief that scientific vocabulary requires a representationalist semantics. Through explaining content in terms of reference relations and truth conditions, representationalism complements the

picture we have of science. This is because its thesis enables science to be recognised as genuinely descriptive (because the core function is to mirror the world) and therefore is genuinely assertoric (since it pertains to determinate word-world relations).

Anti-representationalism appears to offend against this standard view of science, especially since scientific vocabulary is often taken to be an exemplar of a genuinely representational vocabulary. Anti-representationalism's non-descriptivism and use-theoretic approach seem at odds with science's descriptive functions, suggesting any apparent genuine assertoric form of a vocabulary is somehow mistaken. Thus the question which arises is how scientific assertions can be recognised as genuinely assertoric and descriptive within (and according to) the seemingly counter intuitive theses of anti-representationalism and global expressivism. This is the problem the chapter seeks to resolve.

There are two possible solutions to this problem. The first is to adopt a global application of anti-representationalism which would apply its thesis to all areas of discourse and subsume scientific representations under their thesis. This approach would explain away the problem by upholding anti-representationalism's non-descriptivism while explaining how, when it comes to science, there can still be descriptive, genuine assertions. The other approach is to adopt a local anti-representationalism which applies the thesis only to particular vocabularies and areas of discourse. This could then exclude science from its positive program, leaving it largely untouched and representationalist-apt when it came to science. This approach therefore only accepts anti-representationalism on a case by case system where anti-representationalism is applied to particular areas where we feel it is most appropriate. The underlying question therefore to these solutions is what is the right expression of anti-representationalism.

Traditionally, a classification of language functions was made in anti-representationalism, with what is known as the bifurcation thesis being adopted: "the doctrine that there is a line to be drawn in language, between descriptive and non-descriptive uses."¹⁴⁴ This division thereby tied into traditional local formulations of anti-representationalism which sought to identify which (non-descriptive) vocabularies were capable of receiving an anti-representationalist explanation. Robert Kraut has noted that the bifurcation thesis captures two different kinds of declarative sentences: declaratives which are genuine (called d-type

¹⁴⁴ H. Price, "Two Expressivist Programs, Two Bifurcations." in *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism*, ed. Huw Price (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 30. Also see; R. Kraut, "Varieties of Pragmatism," *Mind* 99, 394 (1990), 159.

sentences) and other declaratives (called e-type sentences) which are in some sense non-descriptive.¹⁴⁵ By this non-descriptive means that they ‘do something’ other than describe or refer. There are a number of ways this can be expressed:

D-type declarative sentences

- Describe the world
- Ascribe real properties
- Are genuinely representational
- Are about ‘what’s really out there’
- Have determinate truth conditions
- Express matters of fact

E-type declarative sentences

- Express commitments or attitudes
- Manifest a ‘stance’ (praise, condemnation, endorsement etc.)
- Are expressive rather than descriptive
- Do not ‘picture’ the world
- Lack truth conditions, but possess ‘acceptance condition or assertibility conditions’
- Merely enable us to cope with reality
- Are true or false by convention
- Do not express facts of the matter

To demonstrate, consider the following examples:

Declarative 1: “Theft is wrong”. According to anti-representationalists this statement reflects an E-type form. Here, the statement is understood not as referential, truth-conditional or descriptive (about the world) but as expressive. This particular example’s function expresses a negative attitude – that theft is something bad due to “wrong” manifesting a ‘stance’ of condemnation.

Declarative 2: “Species A demonstrates convergent evolution with species B”. This scientific declarative reflects a D-type form. The declarative is not only descriptive and about the world – that is, about certain species that occur in the world, describing a certain aspect of them.

¹⁴⁵ Kraut, “Varieties of Pragmatism.” 158, 159. Also see; H. Price, “Prospects for Global Expressivism,” in *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representation*, ed. Huw Price (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 149-150. Price presents a similar list derived from Kraut.

But is also ascribing determinate properties – of sharing convergent evolutionary traits between these two species. As a consequence it is truth conditional – in that the statement could be either determinately true or false – thereby compounding the fact that it adheres to a D-type formulation.

We can see from Kraut's definition and the two examples provided that when a vocabulary is taken to fall upon the non-descriptive side, expressivism (or some other form of non-cognitivism) is taken to be the appropriate approach to explaining the language's function, thereby encouraging a use-theoretic approach to meaning. These local applications of anti-representationalism then, in acknowledging the bifurcation, allow some claims (D-type) to be considered genuinely descriptive. Identifying domains which appeared suitable for anti-representationalism to be applied over truth-conditional/referential semantics was the program for local anti-representationalists. Bifurcationists encourage this dichotomy because they are typically motivated to accept this setup due to the functionally diverse view of language that results from it. The various things we can do with language, all the while clothed in seemingly descriptive trappings is of key interest.

The bifurcationist will note that this scientific example shows no signs of adhering to an E-type form. As a result, local anti-representationalists maintain that the E-type declarative form is completely irrelevant for science (though the E-type/D-type distinction itself is fundamental), and only pertains to those areas of discourse where the representations appear queer and susceptible to anti-representationalism. Thus, science is typically considered to possess only a D-Type form and is taken to be an exemplar of a descriptive vocabulary. This is why it appears to benefit from representationalism and why these local anti-representationalists and expressivists adopt the bifurcation in the first place: to show that the anti-representationalist picture (of a focus on E-type form) is only applied to non-descriptive fields unlike science. Thus the bifurcation thesis' relevance for science is that it is used by local anti-representationalists to help delineate those E-type forms as different to science's D-type form.

Typically, according to local anti-representationalists (and representationalists), to be *genuinely assertoric* requires a certain content based representation – that is, to possess a descriptive function which is thereby about the world and possesses determinate truth conditions. Thus the D-type form is what is *typically* taken to reflect *genuine assertoric form* and genuine descriptiveness. This is why global anti-representation appears to be at odds with

science. In taking a non-descriptivist view of language – seeking to apply a broad inferentialist and expressivist account that explains assertions as adhering to E-type forms and functions – the anti-representationalist appears to present a counter intuitive picture of science. Thus many anti-representationalists choose only a local application. Endorsing the bifurcation, identifying queer domains that adhere to E-type form and then applying their thesis only to those areas. This was the traditional approach: to leave science alone. This is the first solution available as it can then uphold our common understanding of scientific vocabulary as genuinely descriptive, genuinely assertoric and factual.

I however will not follow this local approach. I will not argue against the common belief that science is descriptive, genuinely assertoric or about the world. Instead I will argue against the idea that science possesses a pure D-type form. Instead, I will show how these D-type functions of being descriptive and relating to the world are only possible *given* possession of certain E-type functions. Thus I favour the first approach of a *global* anti-representationalism which *subsumes* these perceptions about scientific vocabulary into the anti-representationalist thesis. The global program I will develop and defend will follow Price and Brandom’s formulation of global anti-representationalism to reject the bifurcation drawn in language that local anti-representationalists adopt and replace it with their two forms of representations. The idea, put simply, will be to adopt a multifunctional two layered conception of scientific declaratives with representational content being a later ‘add-on’ to the internal non-descriptive elements. I will therefore clarify and revise anti-representationalism in alternative terms in order to achieve the global move, all the while demonstrating how it fits with the methodological orientation I outlined in chapter one.

Why do I take this approach? There are a number of reasons. First is to keep in line with the principles of neo-pragmatism. Neo-pragmatists are global anti-representationalist due to their complete rejection of representationalism. An acceptance of localising their approach would mean that they have allowed representationalism to be accepted and would undermine their wider position. Thus in order to strengthen neo-pragmatism as a worthwhile approach towards science, strengthening their global formulation is my intention. The second reason is more argumentative. As Price maintains, this bifurcation, especially its claim that some assertions are really descriptive, “...plays *no role at all* in the positive story...” towards applying anti-representationalism to supposedly non-descriptive domains.¹⁴⁶ Thus their

¹⁴⁶ Price, “Two Expressivist Programs, Two Bifurcations”, 30.

positive program isn't dependent upon this game of matching representations to the world (or of failing to do so) ever being a useful model of the world and language. Nothing is stopping us from ditching the model completely and adopting a global expressivism. Of course one may worry that a rejection of the bifurcation is problematic since it could undermine the basic expressivist interest in a multi-functional view of assertoric language because attempts to dissolve the bifurcation threatens the potential diversity it offers. However (as will be shown in section 3.2) global anti-representationalists can equally account for language's various functions without the bifurcation thesis.

3.2 Why scientific vocabulary is not purely descriptive: scientific representations according to global anti-representationalism

This section looks at how anti-representationalism can approach and understand scientific representations and the related assertoric practice science uses. In doing so I resolve the two problems that I explained in the previous section. I therefore explain how (1) under anti-representationalism scientific representations can still be considered genuinely assertoric despite their insistence that the basic function of assertions is fulfilling certain non-descriptive inferential and functional roles. And (2) that scientific representations, while non-descriptive in function, can still possess significant descriptive elements. They can, according to a global anti-representationalism, still have a qualitative difference in their extent of 'world-tracking' when compared to other vocabularies.

I accomplish (1) by applying the methodological approach of neo-pragmatism towards the question of what an assertion is. I elaborate the significance of anti-representationalism's account of what assertions are to science and its discursive practice, showing how it reinforces their non-descriptivism while allowing scientific declaratives to be considered genuinely assertoric. Following this, I proceed to demonstrate (2) by investigating how neo-pragmatists have uncovered two different types of representations that are often confused with one another. By exploiting this division, scientific vocabulary's descriptive dimensions can be explained under anti-representationalism. As an exemplar of a descriptive and assertoric vocabulary, I will explain (away) how its descriptive content can be subsumed under anti-representationalism. I will demonstrate how scientific representations' descriptiveness is *reliant* and *parasitic* upon non-descriptive use-based elements. As a result, it will be shown how scientific representations are not *purely* descriptive in function and that there is a significant non-descriptive element to assertoric practice which requires explanation

but which can only be given through anti-representationalism. In doing so I will show that anti-representationalism is a position that can comfortably account for science's apparent descriptive nature all the while affirming its core thesis that the assertoric practice it deploys rests upon non-descriptive elements.

This will be a different philosophical program undertaken when compared to representationalism. It does not begin with representation's content, or go looking for referents, truth conditions or truth makers. It begins with how the representation is used and what it enables speakers to do. It thereby puts aside the issue of content and semantics, choosing to analyse pragmatics. It begins with looking at what we are doing *in talking* and *in making assertions*. Hence it starts with this functional perspective.

Assertions according to Neo-pragmatism

How can scientific assertions still be genuinely assertoric according to neo-pragmatism? We can apply the principles of their brand of anti-representationalism to investigate the important non-descriptive elements of a practice that serve to shape the vocabulary. This overturns the explanatory direction between content and use so as to get away from the representationalists preoccupation with content. Having abandoned the bifurcation thesis as a useful model, and instead applying neo-pragmatism's thesis and its principles to the question of what is an assertion, we get a very different definition. Typically, neo-pragmatists begin with Blackburn's insistence that apparent E-type declaratives, even if not genuinely descriptive, can still earn the right of its assertoric and descriptive form due to its ability to empower speakers with capacities to perform various actions with the language. From here, neo-pragmatists attempt to offer an account of what an assertion is in general, regardless of whether they be D-type or E-type. And, in addition, they want an account which avoids any reference to the content of assertions, instead focusing on the *doing* of giving an assertion. Under this approach, an assertion is to be understood as a particular linguistic move that we can perform in the discursive practice. It is, as Brandom has often put it, a certain linguistic move in this game of 'giving and asking for reasons'. By this he means this practice of assertoric discourse – of making assertions which act as performatives with inferential articulation. An assertion therefore is to be understood as a certain action that we can perform in discursive practice which is something that can stand in need of justification but can also act as justification for other claims. It can then play logical-computational roles, inferential roles, and, therefore, functionalistic roles. It allows the speaker to make a move in the

linguistic game, which makes a mark in scorekeeping – enabling one to keep track of a speaker’s related commitments, entitlements and other actions.¹⁴⁷ A global non-descriptivism therefore is a consequence of this view of assertoric discourse since it is applied to all vocabularies.

This approach reflects the neo-pragmatist methodological orientation and principles that I outlined in chapter one. It elaborates what an assertion is in virtue of the action we perform and what is done in making one rather than what kind of content it has. Under representationalism (and local expressivisms), what made an assertion genuine was that it was of a D-type form. However when questioning what makes an assertion genuine in this neo-pragmatist program, our attention is directed towards the role assertions play in practice and the functions they perform. One of these being that assertions possess the inferential function of enabling assertions to entail other claims (by allowing them to constitute reasons for other claims) in virtue of being inferentially articulated.¹⁴⁸ It can also then enable us to use assertions in a fashion that can challenge other claims by asking for reasons. The account needn’t speak of whether the content refers to the world and is descriptive therefore. It eschews the standard approach of describing an assertion in terms of being a statement of fact or of being a statement with descriptive content and reference relations.¹⁴⁹ Thus no reference to representationalist idioms (such as “refers to” are mentioned in the pragmatist definition). The definition of an assertion as being a certain content-determined representation is rejected. In this sense both D-statements and E-statements are to be recognised as equally genuine assertions.

This is important because Brandom is attributing to assertoric discourse a single, fundamental function that language plays in general regardless of vocabulary. This language game of making assertions, using them to licence other claims and be licenced in turn by others, delineates a basic function and language game of assertoric discourse – of adhering to inferential rules which have been instituted by the practice. The bifurcation question of whether it is genuinely descriptive or not has yet to enter the picture. The basic function is to act as an inferential tool which can help to licence other assertions and can be justified in light of other claims. It is a non-descriptive function of being a particular performative that

¹⁴⁷ J. Peregrin, “What is inferentialism?” in *Inference, Consequence, and Meaning: Perspectives on Inferentialism*, ed. Lilia Gurova (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 9. Peregrin notes that Brandom’s use of ‘scorekeeping’ is slightly different from how the concept was originally used by Lewis.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Thus the account keeps in line with neo-pragmatism’s use of a pragmatic meta-vocabulary in its analysis.

equips speakers with the capacity to do various things (linguistic moves) in the game of making claims and offering justification. As a consequence, the bifurcation thesis collapses. All apparent assertions, whether they be of a D-type, E-type, or of a Blackburn styled quasi-type are now all to be considered genuine assertions whose basic function is now fulfilling this non-descriptive linguistic and performative action of counting as a move in the discursive game.

Brandom emphasises that this function is fundamental and should be thought of as the starting point or ‘downtown’ of discourse with more sophisticated functions being parasitic upon it. As such we should not be so quick to think that it is at odds with the functional pluralism of bifurcationists and traditional non-cognitivist because it is a core function. Price recognises that traditional expressivists uncovered the misunderstanding that representationalists made - that the position obscured the features of language users (their circumstances) that a particular assertoric game which generates certain content proves itself useful.¹⁵⁰ Yet they failed to understand what was uncovered. Not E-type declaratives or non-genuine assertions but real assertions with particular use-based elements, though not exactly use-conditions. Functional diversity is in no ways compromised. This basic practice of making assertions is not the only thing we can do with the language. But, the point of neo-pragmatism is that this is a central and indispensable practice which other functions are founded upon: it is the linguistic activity upon which all others rest. Without this assertoric form, inferential articulation and non-descriptive function other functions would not be possible. Neo-pragmatists are not at odds with traditional anti-representationalists and expressivists then, this fundamental game is still what Price calls a ‘multifunctional tool’ – it has many different and distinct applications and uses, each fulfilling different purposes in virtue of this non-descriptive form of assertions.¹⁵¹ They can then be taken and used in a variety of ways (e.g. expressive function of enabling condemnation). Content therefore shouldn’t receive the same functional story regardless of the vocabulary in question. We can still believe that different vocabularies are for different kinds of practices, each satisfying different tasks. But they come in this assertoric form fulfilling this basic function of being this particular linguistic move. We no longer divide vocabularies therefore into D-type or E-type (descriptive or non-descriptive) forms – we don’t, for example, divide moral discourse

¹⁵⁰ H. Price, “Pluralism, ‘World’, and the Primacy of Science,” in *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism*, ed. Huw Price (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 52.

¹⁵¹ H. Price, “One Cheer for Representationalism?” in *Naturalism without Mirrors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 310. Price stresses that there is no tension therefore between Brandom and Blackburn.

into E-type, scientific discourse into D-type. Neo-pragmatists seek a unified yet multi-functional approach which can appreciate the many ways in which language can be used yet still share the *same* assertoric form. Because of this the bifurcation thesis dissolves, now replaced with a single unitary form of assertoric practice, yet one which can be put to use in many different ways depending upon the vocabulary in question.

Return then to the example of the scientific declarative I gave previously: “Species A demonstrates convergent evolution with Species B”. Here, the example no longer adheres to a D-type form. Instead, it fulfils a more fundamental, non-descriptive function of constituting a particular linguistic move that can be performed. It enables the speaker to perform a particular kind of linguistic move that lets speakers make a move in the discursive games scorekeeping. Thanks to this it can then possess vocabulary-specific uses. It can be ‘put to work’ in different fashions – expressing certain commitments about species A and B which are susceptible to further uses and rules of the practice. Regardless of the assertions content then, that is, regardless of the fact that it is about species A and species B, the claim can perform a number of non-descriptive roles before we even get to these questions of content simply because of the assertoric form it has. For example, its form can fulfil an inferential role of licensing other claims – such as “that the two habitats of Species A and B each, in respectively sharing features J, K, L, are cause for similar phenotypical expressions”. Its form can also be licenced by other claims in the inferential network – “Species A and B occupy the same habitat X”, “species A and B’s physiology is similar – each possesses property K” thus supporting the declarative that species A and B demonstrate convergent evolution. These kinds of functions are attained regardless of the assertions content. Instead, they are attained in virtue of being a particular performative – an assertion. Thus it can be said that before being descriptive – of describing certain features of Species A and Species B – the claim is fundamentally non-descriptive in what it enables that speaker to do.

There are three core advantages to understanding assertions in this manner. The first is that it provides Blackburn’s quasi-realism with the much needed answer to the question of what an assertion is in general, regardless of whether it is descriptive or quasi descriptive. It answers what an assertion is *before* getting into the question of whether its descriptive trappings are genuine or not. The second is that it enables a global non-descriptivism for all assertions. The fundamental explanatory focus (the explanatory primitive) is on this non-descriptive, non-content based explanation rather than with D-type form. At the root of the explanation it begins with this non-descriptive function of being counted as a move in the discursive game.

From here more robust anti-representationalist analyses can begin – questioning how the practice institutes such capacities or what conditions must be met for a member of the practice to be counted as successfully performing such a discursive move.¹⁵² The third advantage is that it enables us to say that while certain queer claims (moral claims for example) can continue to be thought of as non-world tracking in the expressivist sense, we can also admit that they are nonetheless genuine assertions in the only sense now available.

We can then successfully subsume one of the core intuitions about scientific vocabulary within an anti-representationalist framework; scientific declaratives can be considered (now like all other apparent assertoric practices, even queer ones) to be genuinely assertoric in a global anti-representationalism that rejects the bifurcation thesis. The only revision required is that what it means to be an assertion is readjusted into this new sense. Of course neo-pragmatists were interested mainly in the fact that moral discourse could be viewed as genuinely assertoric and earn the right of descriptive trappings despite not being descriptive. For my concerns however the significance is that it demonstrates that a core perception of science can be upheld without the need of Representationalism. Science can still enjoy being genuinely assertoric along with all that implies under anti-representationalism. Of course we are not finished. The global anti-representationalist has more to say on how assertions can possess descriptive content, even that it can be about the world, suggesting an olive branch to the representationalist. Nonetheless we have begun to move into anti-representationalism on a global scale: regardless of the vocabulary in question, all assertoric practices are to be explained with reference to what is being done and performed, adhering to this generalised non-descriptive function.

I-representations and e-representations – global anti-representationalism and how scientific representations can still have descriptive functions.

Neo-pragmatists like Price have argued that representationalists mistakenly run together two different and distinct conceptual ‘nodes’ under the notion of representation, failing to see the difference between them. Successfully pulling them apart makes the global ambitions neo-pragmatists have for anti-representationalism all the more plausible. Neo-pragmatists can revise our understanding of representations then to fit better with anti-representationalism whilst providing a complementary picture of science that doesn’t reduce its apparent descriptive, world-relating nature. With this revision, coupled alongside anti-

¹⁵² Brandom, “Global Anti-Representationalism?” 101,102.

representationalism's approach to assertions, anti-representationalism finds the capacity to ensure that science's descriptive and assertoric nature is upheld whilst abandoning representationalism and upholding this pragmatic, functionalistic perspective. Thus I now explain how scientific representations can still be genuinely descriptive according to global anti-representationalism while still affirming that the basic function of assertions is non-descriptive.

What are these two conceptual nodes? Price refers to them as e-representations and i-representations.¹⁵³

E-representation: evokes what we commonly think of as the environment tracking paradigm of representation. This environmental tracking is dependent upon covariance, much like a fuel gauge, a representing system which varies in parallel with some feature of the represented system. Put simply; to co-vary with some external environmental condition – Price uses the phrase 'system-link'.

I-Representation: This notion of representation turns away from external priority and looks internally. It gives such priority to the internal functional role of representation. According to this notion, a representation is recognised as one because of the position or role that it occupies in some kind of cognitive/inferential 'architecture'. Price notes a number of internal roles as examples: causal-functional, logico-inferential, computational.¹⁵⁴ Rather than as an environment tracker it has a certain functional role.

I-representations open the way for performing many different types of linguistic roles beyond 'describing', even if they take this generalised form. This therefore reflects the contingent features of the speakers situation – that they are decision makers (dealing with uncertainty), are agents, possess epistemic dispositions. A 'practical stance' then captures the situation that speakers must occupy if the language game in question is to play the role its intended to. This variation of stances equates to the variation of i-representations. Of course unlike traditional expressivism, where the variability was in use conditions, this program holds that while the utterances might not have truth conditions from the speaker's perspective it does in a sense still possess them, though these conditions are not to be identified with the use conditions or stance. Thus we can conclude that this new element of variability (of i-representations)

¹⁵³ Price, "Two Expressivist Programs, Two Bifurcations," 36. Also see; H. Price. "Moving the Mirror Aside," in *Naturalism without Mirrors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 20, 21.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

corresponds to the question of what features generate certain content that proves useful. It was this that was missed by traditional expressivists yet captured by neo-pragmatists.

This division can act as a new, more accurate bifurcation which is sensitive to Brandom's characterisation of assertions thereby reinforcing (global) application to all vocabularies. This is a significant step forward for neo-pragmatists and anti-representationalists. Brandom's account provides the needed details to what Price's *i*-representations are. In this sense then, we can think of *i*-representations as the kind of base assertions that reflect Brandom's characterisation. The emphasis is placed on this non-descriptive, internal role that the representation can play. The key to this notion of representation in particular is that *i*-representations need not be 'descriptive' in any sense. An *i*-representation is considered a representation in virtue of what it can do rather than what it says. Rather than world-relating or certain content dependence, its representational form performs a particular function within discourse or, as Price claimed, within the speaker's cognitive or inferential 'architecture'. How the division works then is that *all assertions are fundamentally i-representations*: they each adhere to this internal notion reflective of what it means to be an assertion, along with their significance directed towards the internal role they play rather than what they co-vary with (if with anything at all).

Neo-pragmatists have fleshed these two types of representations out by elaborating two key assumptions which underlie representations: a content assumption and a correspondence assumption.¹⁵⁵ It is here where *i*-representation's importance comes into its own. The content assumption is simply that beliefs and assertions have content and that language is therefore a medium for encoding and passing factual information in sentence structures.¹⁵⁶ The correspondence assumption is that these packets of information are about some aspect of the external world – each sentence will 'fit' with the world or certain facts or state of affairs: what is needed to make it true. It should come as no surprise that the view of language meant to be a means of mirroring reality quickly develops when these two assumptions are taken together. We can however divorce them from one another. We can align the content assumption with *i*-representations, in the sense that they possess content but need not have any correspondence relation whatsoever and can align with *e*-representations the seemingly natural association of the correspondence assumption. The key idea of neo-pragmatists is that a wedge can be driven between content and correspondence to demonstrate that *i*-

¹⁵⁵ Price, "Two Expressivist Programmes, Two Bifurcations," 37-38.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

representations do not require a correspondence dimension simply because they are still ‘representations’.

Anti-representationalism can exploit this clarification since assertions and representations can be thought of as contentful without representationalism being adopted. Of course i-representations are still ‘representations’ in the deflationary sense, they are still ‘about’ something. This sense of factual must however remain in line with neo-pragmatism’s minimalist understanding of truth. As such, i-representations are to be thought of as factual now in this sense provided, but fundamentally lack any correspondence in the e-representational manner. Price of course stresses that what grounds the content assumption is fundamentally non-representationalist – it is heavily grounded in inferentialism. As Price states:

“According to an inferentialist, contents and content differences are ‘instituted’, as Brandom puts it, by the complex inferential relationships among and between linguistic items. Roughly speaking, we might say that contents correspond to ‘nodes’ in an inferential network. But these nodes may themselves be associated with many different kinds of functional relationships, in the complex interaction between language users and their physical environment – *there is no requirement whatsoever that each node have an e-representational role*, where the correspondence assumption would gain some traction. This is not to say that they *cannot* have such a role...content and correspondence answer to different masters.”¹⁵⁷ (Italics are mine)

There is a good deal of detail here to what the difference is between i-representations and e-representations and why this new division should not be thought of as returning to representationalism. It emphasises how content is understood as derived from inferential relationships between linguistic items which are contingent and dictated by practice (hence ‘instituted’). There are two points to this idea that need to be stressed. A basic semantic holism underlies this view as the relationship of linguistic terms and their surrounding practice form a network which could have attached many different functional relationships between ourselves and our environment. Another core emphasis is that while there may be certain nodes that have an e-representational dimension (along with this element of correspondence) there is no demand that any particular ‘node’ have an e-representational role of ‘correspondence’ or descriptive function.

¹⁵⁷ Price, “Two Expressivist Programmes, Two Bifurcations,” 40-41.

Correspondence and e-representational roles can therefore be a particular function that a language can provide but will always come later in the explanation of its function upon the backdrop of this content based i-representational level. I-representations have content but not correspondence therefore. While e-representations take i-representational level and *add an additional* correspondence (e-representational level) dimension to the representation. Because of this, we can see just how multifunctional Brandom's account is when placed within Price's terms of i and e-representations: an e-representation is a particular kind of i-representation with the explicit function of being descriptive. I-representations therefore while first appearing to offer only one, non-descriptive function do actually offer many in this single form. Hence we get the idea of assertions being, under Brandom, a multifunctional tool with a single general function. Additionally, this isn't at the cost of sacrificing our notion of objectivity by ridding ourselves of correspondence since there still can be an e-representational level alongside a resulting demand of environmental answerability (more on this in section 3.3). These ideas shouldn't come as a surprise since, throughout the thesis, I have emphasised that neo-pragmatism enables us to expel the notion of correspondence from the explanatory story.

Implications for scientific vocabulary

These elaborations have interesting and important implications for scientific vocabulary and scientific representations. How can we subsume our intuition of science as being descriptive under this approach? There are two preliminary questions that can provide the beginning of an answer via elaborating the consequence of this view.

Q1. Can there still be real descriptive representational assertions in i-representations?

Price does not think so if description is taken to be synonymous with e-representations despite i-representations being real assertions. He does however note that this isn't to say there are no distinctions between vocabularies to be drawn in i-representational terms. But, any explanations in terms of *other features* of the vocabularies in relation to the differences of their functions – maybe e-representational functions – will not themselves rest at the i-representational level. Thus there can be different ways that the various vocabularies can play the game (of giving and asking for reasons) – of using assertions as a tool to do various things, each satisfying potentially different functions. However any such explanations will

not be at this ‘downtown’ of the i-representation function and practice.¹⁵⁸ They will instead be at their own additional function and resulting additional practice (inclusive of the additional rules that adhere to that vocabulary-specific practice).

Q2. Is there the possibility that a subset of representations at this i-representational level could also be e-representational?

This appears to be completely possible and is the best route for the global anti-representationalist to take when it comes to science. Price maintains that it is open to take moral and scientific claims to be on the same i-representational level in this inferentialist sense but that science also has an additional e-representational element which moral claims could lack. We do however need to tread carefully here. Scientific representations would not see i-representations and e-representations as coming to the same thing – Price maintains “these are still different notions, answerable to different masters...”¹⁵⁹ Nonetheless he concedes that both may be appropriate in some instances.

Under this program then, the most plausible approach to scientific vocabulary is to draw attention to the significant e-representational dimension of the vocabulary while reminding us that all of it is to be subsumed under the i-representational level. The e-representational level is, after all, only possible with the presence of i-representations. Thus the explanation must begin with i-representations for there to be e-representations. What we get therefore is a kind of two layered structuring of functional form. First, there is the general i-representational form which thereby means that no purely-descriptive vocabulary can exist since it must possess this non-descriptive functional form of i-representations. Then we can have an additional, e-representational level which science can possess. This can enable science then to remain descriptive without compromising anti-representationalism’s core principles and enables us to reinforce neo-pragmatism’s inferentialism.

Thus return to the two examples previously covered:

Declarative 1: “Theft is wrong”. According to this global anti-representationalism this declarative possesses a purely i-representational form. It lacks any sort of e-representational level thereby allowing us to affirm that an expressivist explanation is acceptable. It therefore enables the speaker to do various non-descriptive actions by performing a purely internal

¹⁵⁸ Price, “Two Expressivist Programmes, Two Bifurcations,” 38.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 39.

functional role from within the practice. The form itself enables the claim to play the certain kind of inferential roles I've covered as well as open the way to performing other actions signature to the vocabulary in question – in this particular case enabling the speaker to be expressive and communicating certain dispositions or stances. Thanks to this non-descriptive form (of being a part of a wider inferential network), the practice that surrounds the declarative (moral discourse) then institutes the practice-specific functions of being expressive.

Declarative 2: “Species A demonstrates convergent evolution with Species B”. Here we can conclude that this example possesses both an i-representational and e-representational level.

The i-representational level – reflects this assertoric form that neo-pragmatism has identified. On this level, the declarative attains its genuine assertoric nature. Thanks to Brandom's definition of assertions alongside Price's classification of i-representations, we can conclude that this non-descriptive form grants its assertoric nature, overturning the common perception that it is attained in virtue of possessing a D-type form. In addition, it possesses an i-representational level in virtue of (1) its place in the wider inferential networks that scientific practice possesses, (2) is a linguistic performative which can licence other claims (as was explained in the previous sub section). Thus “it is due to convergent evolutionary traits J and K that species A and B share a similar diet” (for example). It can also then be licensed in virtue of other claims (that might constitute further proof of the claim). (3) It is i-representational in that it is ‘instituted’ in so far as its form is granted through the practice, adhering to internal rules and norms that govern assertoric practices (for example truth as constituting a norm of friction). (4) It can then play latter internal non-descriptive roles – for example, possess an expressive and inferential role which expresses an endorsement over the validity and usefulness of the scientific terms involved and, by way of inference commits them to other various scientific commitments (which could potentially be contested by other scientists – a good example of this would be certain assertions that involve ‘strings’ and various ‘facts’ surrounding them).¹⁶⁰

In summary, in virtue of possessing this particular assertoric form (of being a particular performative that can be put to work in different ways depending on how a practice institutes it) multiple non-descriptive, linguistic and inferential functions are possible irrespective of

¹⁶⁰ This is similar in a sense to Brandom's logical expressivism where there is the function of making explicit what is implicit. In this case we can note how it can help to disclose certain inferential entailments otherwise hidden when isolated (under representationalism).

whether there is an e-representational level. It is the practice that confers the nuanced function the assertion can play, as well as determining the content it has.

The e-representational level – Given this basic i-representational form, science adds an additional function of being descriptive and of thereby possessing an e-representational level: of being about species A and B. This is only possible given the i-representational level in that it allows for particular practices to take this kind of discursive move and put it to work within their own practice so as to enable additional functions. In this case it describes a part of the world. It is about species A, species B, convergent evolution and phenotypical expressions. It therefore has the additional function of being descriptive and is capable then of possessing a correspondence relation. These all come later in the explanation of the assertion however. It is only thanks to playing these internal practical roles (i-representational functions and form) that a practice can then decide to deploy the form as having a descriptive function. Thus the explanatory focus privileges the i-representational level. If it lacked this i-representation form it couldn't possess this e-representational level and its related functions because it would require the more basic assertoric form which occupies a place within the various cognitive and inferential networks.

We can therefore remain fundamentally anti-representationalist since i-representations are non-descriptive, yet do scientific discourse justice by noting that it possesses a large e-representational dimension. We could then deploy explanations of meaning in terms of use globally, to all vocabularies and understand them according to this neo-pragmatist approach.¹⁶¹ This wouldn't compromise the referential and factual nature of science yet would capture the i-representational level in science which is missed by representationalists. Scientific assertions descriptive dimension therefore rests on the discursive practice which its members are responsible for because it adheres to standards and norms of the linguistic practice alongside social conventions rather than on environmental elements when it comes to *discourse*.¹⁶² The Price/Brandom approach enables us to still affirm that science is *genuinely* assertoric under this pragmatist account of assertions but without relying on reference to content or D-type form. With the inclusion of e-representational levels whose descriptiveness can be a function of the language we can say that science is 'descriptive' in a sense not far

¹⁶¹ The possibility of use-theoretic semantics being viable to domains like science is now not only viable but can supplement the significant referential elements to the vocabulary without explicit conflict.

¹⁶² This is true of scientific discourse, though not of the practice of science in its entirety. In having as part of science a reliance on assertoric discourse, it will buy into adherence to the linguistic norms that govern it, which, as we are seeing, are constructs.

from our basic intuition now. This possibility of recognising in anti-representationalism e-representational dimensions to particular vocabularies offers the opportunity to ensure that science is deemed descriptive and about the ‘world’ in a more than minimal/deflationist sense, unlike any other anti-representationalist could otherwise offer. Yet it is done in a way that prevents any collapse into representationalism thanks to the presence of i-representations. Of course the e-representation level is not necessary to any given domain. This additionally enables us to show how there can then be a qualitative difference in ‘descriptive-ness’ when compared to other domains like moral discourse. We can say, for example, that while both are genuinely assertoric and contentful in the i-representational sense that science nonetheless is more so in the business of world tracking in the e-representational sense (which, as non-cognitivists, neo-pragmatists would say moral discourse would lack). A key insight is that most forms of discourse can be quite successful with only an i-representational level which adheres to only practical and linguistic based constraints of the practice. There is no explicit need for an e-representational level, with our pragmatist explanations capable of comfortably stopping at the i-representational level.

Price prefers to view his revision as allowing the bifurcation thesis to live on in a readjusted manner under his ‘new bifurcation’.¹⁶³ I am however less inclined to think along these lines. If we accept that there can be no purely descriptive vocabulary, then it seems that we haven’t readjusted the bifurcation thesis. The distinction between descriptive and non-descriptive breaks down if all assertions are to be considered fundamentally non-descriptive with only additional descriptive layers upon it. No sharp dichotomy remains for a bifurcation to be drawn since all areas can receive an inferentialist/pragmatist explanation. Now bound up with one another, the distinction between coping and copying dissolves, especially in domains where there is an e-representational level upon an i-representation. The bifurcation thesis is no longer a useful model since so many readjustments have been made that it fails to provide any assistance in explaining the delineation of vocabularies and their functions. The result of completely abandoning the bifurcation thesis is therefore that it tells pragmatists that if they are to adopt anti-representationalism, the global program is now on equal footing with the local program since the starting point for anti-representationalism is no longer a default local application by beginning with the bifurcation.

¹⁶³ Price, “Two Expressivist Programmes, Two Bifurcations,” 38.

To conclude, I want to return to the core starting point that motivated my endorsement of this particular version of global anti-representationalism. Given the neo-pragmatists desire to oppose representationalism all the neo-pragmatist had to do to achieve a global incarnation was to show that at the base, all vocabularies were non-representational. This would be a win for anti-representationalism because it would ensure that there are no *purely* descriptive vocabularies and therefore no representationalist-suited semantics. The challenge that prevented my endorsement was that when it came to the domain of science, the global anti-representationalist appeared to fail to account for the apparent representational and assertoric dimensions of the vocabulary, thereby encouraging a strictly local application to only queer vocabularies. But this was only because we began, as traditional anti-representationalists did, with the bifurcation thesis. By adopting Price/Brandom's approach we can be global anti-representationalists without this compromising our intuitions regarding scientific vocabulary, discourse and representations. The common fear that anti-representationalism offends against our intuitions regarding science can be quelled while simultaneously advancing a thorough anti-representationalist approach to language and semantics. This anti-representationalist approach therefore checks all the boxes we first set out to please. It achieves a *global* anti-representationalism; enabling explanations to follow the pragmatic to semantic route everywhere alongside pragmatist investigations into all practices and vocabularies. It can account for the apparent descriptiveness of science and can thereby account for the representational elements of scientific discourse, providing a minimal account of the rationality of the vocabulary within this framework. By this I mean that speakers are justified in using the vocabulary since it fulfils certain functions that empower speakers to do various things. It also satisfies expressivist aims at diversity without needing the flawed bifurcation thesis that restricted anti-representationalism to local application. And, as a final accomplishment, shows how scientific declaratives are not as straightforward as originally thought. I've uncovered the nuances of scientific assertion thanks to neo-pragmatism: that there is a dependence on its non-descriptive form and functions.

3.3 Norms of i-representations and e-representations: resisting Rorty and a collapse into 'solidarity'

In this section I cover some additional details to the i-representation/e-representation distinction to strengthen this global program. In particular, this section focuses on the kinds of norms that govern assertoric discourse and these two kinds of representations. Rather than

looking at all aspects of the concept of objectivity or all norms and rules that govern the practice of science as a whole then, I will only investigate those that pertain to assertoric discourse, i-representations and e-representations. Thus I will abstain from discussing any non-linguistic norms of science (like norms of method). I will investigate how, despite the account of assertions provided, we have not followed Rorty's own global anti-representationalism which reduces the objective standards that assertions and i-representations adhere to. I show that despite i-representations lacking any environmental element, they still adhere to objective standards. Thus I will argue that this neo-pragmatist position has not followed Rorty in reducing the norms of assertoric discourse to mere norms of convention, agreement and solidarity. In doing so I will elaborate what the neo-pragmatist needs to provide in their account going forward: what further investigations are required for this emerging account of neo-pragmatism as a philosophy of science to become a more robust position.

Clarifying the problem; by emphasising i-representation's lack of any descriptive dimension (or correspondence relation), it seems that representations only require norms of convention, agreement and solidarity. I-representations purely internal relation to assertoric discourse appears to lack any required adherence to any objective standards or norms that we typically identify in scientific discourse and its use of assertoric practices.¹⁶⁴ It appears then that neo-pragmatism's global anti-representationalism has followed Rorty in diminishing the objective norms and standards of assertoric discourse that surround the practice of scientific representations. This threatens to undermine neo-pragmatism's global anti-representationalism and risks resulting in a counter intuitive view of scientific representations.

Despite this worry we've no cause for such concern. We can offer some extra details to i-representations and e-representations which can explain how the norms that pertain to them do not diminish the objective nature of scientific assertions. Under a global anti-representationalism we can uphold the objective standards of scientific vocabulary and scientific representations.

Supplementary Detail 1: External Constraint

¹⁶⁴ What do I mean by objective assertoric norms? I mean those norms like the norm of truth and standards of external constraint which we can contrast with norms of agreement, norms of sincerity and aims of solidarity (in short, those we would identify in the MOA practice I identified in chapter two).

The first supplementary detail is to clarify how i-representation and e-representations are externally constrained. Here, the neo-pragmatist recognises that our representations are ‘constrained’ – are held to account by our practices standards. This thereby upholds the objectivity of the assertoric practice that surrounds them. There are two kinds of external constraint relevant to these kinds of representations which neo-pragmatists have identified. The first is external constraint as environmental answerability, the second is practical (or ‘in-game’) constraint.¹⁶⁵

Environmental answerability: a particular element of the external environment forms a relationship with the representation and in doing so constrains it. This is a content based constraint in that the representation is held accountable by the environment similar to how a map or fuel gauge is covariant with the environment. Representations in this sense can adhere to standards that are determined by the environment. Of course it is a mistake to think that this is all there is to ‘external constraint’. Neo-pragmatists have identified another kind which can be exploited to uphold yet reform objectivity. This second kind is practical, in-game external constraint.

Practical Constraint: are constraints (norms, standards) derived from within assertoric practice. These are products of the practice and are a type of use-based constraint that are content irrelevant. These are not therefore environmental in nature but are instead conferred by our practices. Some examples of this kind of constraint are: truth, rules of scorekeeping, and rules that surround assertoric discourse such as assertability conditions. This inferential practice poses a practical constraint in that it determines the conditions speakers must meet in order to be counted as successfully playing the assertoric game of giving and asking for reasons. For example, if they are to make a successful ‘move’ in the discursive game – make an assertion – then it must be a performative of the (i-representational) form capable of being a claim which has the capacity for inferential licencing.

The neo-pragmatist account of truth is another good example of a practical constraint. Truth, in providing a norm of discourse (of friction and resolution as neo-pragmatists have identified), sets a standard that we adhere to which constitutes a practical constraint. It is a norm we all subject ourselves to yet is in no way a type of environmental answerability. We are therefore answerable to the norm, with failure to do so equating to disqualification – the

¹⁶⁵ Price, “Two Expressivist Programmes, Two Bifurcations,” 37-38. See here for these two types of external constraint.

speaker is deemed to have failed the language game. We are also responsible for it, since this practical answerability is a product of our practices. The norm constrains the practice by determining a certain *objective* standard which is independent of the speakers of the practice. Thus it is a normative constraint which we need to be subjecting ourselves to if we are to be ‘playing’ the game in the first place. Price uses the analogy of a game of chess. The ‘in-game’ notion is that of winning, where; we “...don’t understand the notion of winning unless [we] understand what it is to play the game.”¹⁶⁶ Similarly, truth is akin to winning: unless you are a participant of the discursive practice, subjecting oneself to the assertoric game of offering and demanding justification, one cannot understand truth. As a product of the practice one must abide by the norm of truth – which demands intolerance towards contradictory claims and requires resolution – in order to be said to understand what truth is and its related idea of being answerable to the standards of the practice. Only from within the practice, by playing the game, can these objective standards arise and be adhered to.

These two notions of external constraint align themselves to match the two notions of representation previously covered. Price affirms that external constraint as practical constraint belongs to i-representations “...which characterises representations in terms of their roles in networks of various kinds” therefore adhering to such practice based standards.¹⁶⁷ While the environmental answerability notion of external constraint fits with e-representations. Price wants to conclude that these are not competing notions but are two completely distinct ideas which need not oppose one another. The key idea is that i-representations can be contentful and answerable to objective standards of our practice without this leading into representationalism because (1) it has been analysed and characterised from within their pragmatist orientation and (2) is in line with the in-game notion of practical constraint that has no need to refer to the external environment and, therefore, the content of representations and their references. Price appropriately notes that practical constraint is often confused with environmental answerability and is thereby underappreciated. This is due to representationalism running together i-representations with e-representations together. Failure to keep them distinct will then lead to a failure to appreciate science’s i-representational dimension and the fact that science’s use of assertoric practices adheres to these in-game constraints.

¹⁶⁶ Price, “Two Expressivist Programmes, Two Bifurcations,” 37.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 38.

Given that scientific representations possess both an i-representational and e-representational level, scientific discourse is then a practice its members are responsible to and responsible for. They are responsible to it since their assertions and representations are externally constrained in these two senses. And are responsible for the practice since these notions of practical constraint are products of the practice – the natural environment does not *impose* these norms of truth and friction on us. Of course science has significant environmental constraint and answerability, which corresponds to its e-representational dimension. However the point neo-pragmatists wish to illuminate is that science is also practically constrained (meaning its members are responsible for it) in virtue of its possession of an i-representational level whose presence enables the latter, environmental constraint (and e-representational level) because it is parasitic upon the in-game notion.

If we are to understand and appreciate these aspects of science's assertoric practice we therefore require these neo-pragmatist investigations. This is why neo-pragmatism offers philosophy of science a useful position. The next step for neo-pragmatists if they wish to give an adequate philosophy of science is to then elaborate these practical constraints of science in greater detail, as well as explaining how they link up with the wider, non-linguistic practice. So, for example, explaining how non-linguistic norms like those concerning scientific method then become relevant. Here, the answer should look like the following: in making assertions and adhering to these assertoric norms – one of which is the norm of truth (a practical constraint and norm of assertoric discourse) which demands that disagreements require further argumentation and justification – science *will then refer* to its non-linguistic norms of method (like a need for double blind tests) which dictates what kind of justification is deemed adequate. Non-linguistic norms of scientific method *become relevant after* speakers uphold these discursive and assertoric norms. Only at this point do norms of science itself, rather than of the assertoric practice it deploys, become relevant in the discursive game. It would be at this point where neo-pragmatists anti-representationalist discussions on our assertoric practices would then link up with the practice of science itself.

Given these details we can conclude that this idea of practical constraint as non-environmental, external (and so objective) constraint prevents any worry that the resulting picture of scientific representations is unattractive or counter intuitive. Their explanatory emphasis on non-descriptive i-representations poses no challenge for anti-representationalists when it comes to external constraint or objectivity in general. Despite this we can also note a second supplementary detail that can complement these points.

Supplementary Detail 2: Autological and Heterological responses

Underlying these concepts of external constraint is the idea of ‘getting things right’. Neo-pragmatists want to explain how our practices work and can be successful without the need to rely on representationalist explanations. My discussions have shed some light on how this can be accomplished. My effort to subsume our intuitions of science as genuinely assertoric and descriptive under anti-representationalism rather than to reject these intuitions reflects this. Yet there is more we can note. Blackburn has argued that Rorty and early neo-pragmatists failed to uphold this idea of ‘getting things right’ under his anti-representationalism. To follow Rorty and collapse ‘objectivity’ into something like solidarity would result in claiming that rather than being able to deal with the issues that confront us, we merely seek approval from our peers and aim towards solidarity. This misunderstands the significance of the concept and of our assertoric practices. Blackburn takes this as being akin to a batsman in cricket who has trained not to be able to deal with the bowling but to get praise and recognition in the change rooms.¹⁶⁸ Science and other fields, he says, do not train themselves to merely adhere to the discursive practice’s rules and to gain solidarity but to actually deal with what they have set out to resolve. It is here where we see the division between coping and copying break down. Neo-pragmatism’s i-representations and e-representations demonstrate why global anti-representationalism provides a more sophisticated account of representations than Rorty’s complete dismissal does. Blackburn states that:

“The map enables us to cope, indeed, but we also know why. It enables us to cope precisely because it represents the landscape correctly... Similarly, if Rorty is to catch a plane, he will doubtless look up the time of departure in a timetable. That enables him to cope better, but it does so just because the times written in the timetable represent the intended times of departure.”¹⁶⁹

He continues this line of thought, stating:

“The problem is that it seems integral to the self-conception of mapmakers and timetable producers, as well as scientists... that there is a kind of success that goes beyond common agreement. We do not make a map by sitting and talking it through until we are all agreed, but by measuring and checking. There is such a thing as getting it right, and agreement with others is a very imperfect signal of having got things right, being neither necessary nor sufficient.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Blackburn, “Pragmatism: all or some?” 72-73.

¹⁶⁹ S. Blackburn, *Truth: a guide for the perplexed*, (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 158.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 159.

Rorty not only ignored the significant environmental constraints relevant for e-representations but additionally tried to undermine assertoric discourse's practical constraints as lacking any robust notion of objectivity due to his effort to expel representationalism. This however misunderstands the objective nature of practical, in-game rules and constraints. Just because they lack an environmental dimension does not equate to a complete lack of objective standards or that they cannot help us 'get things right'. I-representations and related practical constraints are meant to help speakers deal with various issues. Inferential rules surrounding assertibility, for example – of assertions requiring an i-representational form – are intended to help the speakers perform various actions with assertions aside from gaining praise. Beyond these we can also see that given this two-layered conception there is a place for e-representations and descriptive functions within anti-representationalism. There is a sense then that simple norms of solidarity and agreement are not enough in these cases. This prompts neo-pragmatists to elaborate the norms that govern assertions and discursive practice in the way we have seen – to understand what we are doing in practice and how such actions abide by the standards of that practice. Neo-pragmatists do not want these norms to be thought of as *mere* conventions however. Blackburn, for example, remains defensive of his reading of Wittgenstein's greater focus on 'norms of technique of practice' rather than conventional norms. For neo-pragmatists, the key point is that even if the norms that govern us are recognised as our own norms, we shouldn't view them as simply 'conventions' that are 'down to us'. It is not just our whims that dictate whether a particular form of inquiry is working and achieving the results we are after, or whether a vocabulary is successfully fulfilling its intended functions.

Blackburn is alluding to what is a very appropriate distinction: the difference between autological and heterological responses and practices.¹⁷¹ It is because of these that neo-pragmatists feel the need for more to be said (as I've done in this chapter) on assertions, representations and the practice that governs them without inflating them as representationalists do.

Autological Practice: embodies the notion of sincerity. The problem here is that under only an autological norm if a speaker claims that "New Zealand is a state of Australia" or that "it is true..." that this is the case, the speaker is considered to have met the practice's standard. This seems problematic. And is why Blackburn notes the idea of a heterological response.

¹⁷¹ Blackburn, "Pragmatism: all or some," 74. See here for the Heterological/Autological distinction.

Heterological Practice: This notion expresses what we feel to be lacking in the autological practice. Beyond adhering to norms of sincerity we recognise that a part of practice sees disagreement, doubt and persuasion involved, and that this involves recognising that our practices have standards that demand more than merely stating ones opinion. Merely giving one's opinion, even if warranted, lacks this idea of standards above the individuals that comprise the practice. It is this that heterological practices capture and which are expressed in the neo-pragmatists' two kinds of constraint in e-representations and i-representations.

Heterological norms are most obvious in science: there is a responsibility to verify procedures that are fundamental for their practice (norms) of assertion and so require both significant practical constraints for its i-representational dimension (as we've seen) and environmental answerability for its e-representational level.¹⁷² Failing to meet such a standard is to warrant criticism. Blackburn notes that a person who makes a timetable is expected to be not only sincere but also accurate. Autological practices however would be different since it would hold that we want the person to claim that the plane would leave at 1.00pm iff he believes it. Thus autological practices are similar to Price's practice of Merely Opinionated Assertions (MOA). Of course minimalism and neo-pragmatism can incorporate these insights with reasonable ease: "The term 'accurate'... introduces nothing beyond minimalism: we want our informant to say that the plane leaves at 1.00pm if and only if the plane does leave at 1.00 p.m..."¹⁷³

A purely autological practice therefore is insufficient in explaining the practice of assertion and its relevant norms. Thus the elaborations of assertoric practice, of truth as a norm of discourse, the subtlety of i-representations and this reformed understanding of external constraint and its effect upon discursive practices ensures that the heterological elements of discourse are given their due without inflating them into heavy metaphysical notions. Blackburn's distinction therefore complements Price's clarification of the ways external constraint can be understood since we can conclude that heterological practices need not demand environmental constraint and answerability. Instead, via the elaborations made here, we can insist that heterological practices can possess in-game constraints and lack environmental constraints. Thus we can conclude that the concept of objectivity can be captured within anti-representationalism in a robust manner.

¹⁷² Blackburn notes that he himself has largely been preoccupied with defending heterological elements in ethics. Nonetheless his point stands for science.

¹⁷³ Blackburn, "Pragmatism: all or some?" 74.

This focus on the internal working of inquiry being dependent upon ourselves as a product of our practices whilst remaining beyond any of its members is a key insight of this neo-pragmatist anti-representationalism. Positions like Rorty's which seek to reduce our practices to being purely cultural products fail to appreciate these elements. Pragmatists who obsess over the idea of norms as cultural products fall into 'narcissism', while those who ignore the subtlety of these in-game constraints (and i-representations) fall into Representationalism and mistakenly run together i- and e-representations and their related content/correspondence assumptions. This anti-representationalist perspective of discourse can supplement our understanding of scientific practice with these insights, while at the same time can itself become a more robust position thanks to these elaborations. Under neo-pragmatism, we can do justice by way of science's use of assertoric practices while upholding our concepts of objectivity, truth and the world. Through this neo-pragmatist anti-representationalism, science can receive the proper explanation and appreciation of these elements which results in a reforming of our understanding of these concepts while ensuring that this global anti-representationalism does not follow Rorty and his reductivist account.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter I want to survey where we began and where we have arrived. Under this neo-pragmatist global anti-representationalism, we can affirm that scientific vocabulary is:

- Genuinely assertoric because the neo-pragmatist account of assertion recognises all assertions regardless of D-type or E-type forms as genuine. By characterising assertions in the fashion of being a certain linguistic action, there is no need for representationalism or the bifurcation thesis to be adopted to affirm that science is genuinely assertoric.
- Genuinely descriptive thanks to the potential for scientific vocabulary to have additional e-representational elements.
- Yet not purely descriptive due to there being a necessary i-representational dimension which is explanatory basic. All vocabularies, science included, must possess i-representational levels and, as a result, adhere to practical and in-game constraints and norms that govern the practice. This supports the idea that even scientific discursive and assertoric practices are ones which we are responsible for.

- Still objective thanks to neo-pragmatist elaborations and clarifications of practical and environmental constraint. We can, as anti-representationalists, affirm that science is an objective affair yet without worrying that this demands a Representationalist approach or heavy metaphysics to accomplish.

As a consequence of these facts anti-representationalism has a more than capable means of explaining and subsuming science into its program, and it is one which gives due credit to the internally driven norms of discourse. We can therefore deploy a use-theoretic approach alongside this philosophical and anthropological perspective to make sense of scientific vocabulary. The overturn of the explanatory direction between content and use can be upheld without compromising science. Neo-pragmatists therefore need not worry that when it comes to their anti-representationalism they must adhere to the bifurcation thesis and local application of their position so as to avoid conflict with science. We can remain committed to a global anti-representationalism without this compromising the objective and descriptive nature of scientific language. At the same time, it reveals interesting facts about assertoric discourse and its relation to science that otherwise would have been unavailable under representationalism. It demonstrates that descriptive functions of scientific declaratives are dependent upon the presence of this non-descriptive form and associated functions.

Conclusion

Throughout my thesis neo-pragmatism has demonstrated the capacity to offer numerous insights towards various questions within the philosophy of science. Neo-pragmatism can offer a robust philosophy of science, it only needs to relate its various ideas and arguments to the field more directly. Throughout this thesis, I've strived to do just this. I've sought to use neo-pragmatism to develop a minimalist approach to science which is resolutely deflationist yet rich in its understanding of the practice. My minimalist thesis therefore constitutes a strong starting point for future neo-pragmatist investigations. It has set the foundations for a more nuanced and sophisticated neo-pragmatist philosophy of science as well as a better formulation of neo-pragmatism as a philosophical doctrine. In particular, it has strengthened its various arguments towards its anti-representationalism and minimalism. I have therefore begun the process of redesigning neo-pragmatism, though this program is far from finished. The neo-pragmatist must take the revisions I have provided and add to them to create a richer position. Having set this foundation I am confident this is possible. The possibilities for neo-pragmatism should now look all the more possible and attractive.

What then has been accomplished in this thesis? In chapter one, I surveyed how neo-pragmatism can be formulated and expressed. I offered my own version which sought to be more modest and accessible for pragmatists in general as well as for non-pragmatists. I established a clear set of principles for the doctrine alongside a revised understanding of its methodology. I therefore brought together the various neo-pragmatist commitments to bind them into a more cohesive, single thesis. Following this, I demonstrated an interpretative flaw in realism that undermined realist efforts to render itself a modest and minimal thesis. In doing this I showed that neo-pragmatism, not realism, is the true standard-bearer of minimalism.

In chapter two I fused NOA with neo-pragmatism in an attempt to modernise NOA and offer a neo-pragmatist inspired minimalist thesis for science. In doing so I assisted NOA in becoming a more relevant, useful and contemporary thesis. I then proceeded to explicate the relevance neo-pragmatist truth has for science, defending the position from criticisms that argued NOA collapsed into a type of realism. I also related and applied their ideas directly to the issue of aims in science. I showed that science possesses a quasi-general idealised aim in the form of truth. As a result of these chapters, I therefore strengthened neo-pragmatism's minimalist thesis into a more sophisticated position capable of constituting a minimalist

approach to science that can uncover multiple insights into the practice that otherwise would have been obstructed.

In chapter three I investigated how neo-pragmatism's brand of anti-representationalism impacts science. I resolved an outstanding issue that presented a challenge to global incarnations of the thesis: I addressed the issue of how scientific assertions could be considered genuinely assertoric and descriptive according to anti-representationalism without compromising their non-descriptivist view of language. I showed how we can uphold these common intuitions about science by affirming a two-layered functional approach to representations that enables all assertions, irrespective of vocabulary, to be considered non-descriptive while permitting scientific assertions to possess an additional descriptive dimension. This demonstrated that anti-representationalism does possess the capacity to investigate and apply its principles to scientific vocabulary. And, can uncover interesting details to how scientific assertions are more complex than representationalists thought.

To conclude, my thesis has left neo-pragmatism in a stronger position than it was previously. The aims of the thesis have been satisfied as I've opened the way for more readily accessible neo-pragmatist investigations into science. I've provided neo-pragmatists a set of foundations for them to take and develop into a more sophisticated position which possesses greater capacities of relating itself to science. Not only have I developed a minimalist thesis of science upon the back of neo-pragmatism but have shown the limits of neo-pragmatism and how it can evolve into a more robust position. We can therefore have a staunchly deflationist approach to science which does not require any core thesis of realism or antirealism. We can use and exploit the principles of neo-pragmatism to offer an approach towards science that not only explains certain aspects of it without comprising our intuitions surrounding it, but also offers new, insightful facts about the practice which can constitute a robust philosophy of science.

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