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WITTGENSTEIN AND REALISM

Michael Scott

It is clear from both his writings and lectures on religion that Wittgenstein thought that there are many differences in the standards and forms of justification informing religious and scientific discourses. However, the evidence of such differences can be used to support two quite different and conflicting lines of argument. On one apparently realist argument, the differences are taken to show that religious discourse describes different kinds of fact (or offers different kinds of description) to scientific discourse; on the other seemingly antirealist argument, the differences show that religious discourse does not have a descriptive function at all. This paper evaluates these arguments both as contributions to the debate concerning religious realism and as interpretations of Wittgenstein.

According to non-cognitivist theories of religious language, religious statements are expressions of attitudes, stances or emotions. R. B. Braithwaite, for example, proposed that religious assertions should be regarded "as primarily evincing feelings or emotions" and that "it is the intention to believe which constitutes what is known as a religious conviction."¹ One notable feature of non-cognitivism is that it provides an account of religious statements that is compatible with a verificationist theory of meaning, that is, one which makes the empirical verifiability of a statement a prerequisite of its factual meaning. The difficulty in specifying verification conditions for religious statements will only pose a problem if we take them to assert facts, and this is what the non-cognitivist denies. Indeed, Braithwaite advanced his theory precisely on the grounds that the verificationists had shown that religious statements, like ethical ones, lack truth evaluative content. Even A. J. Ayer allowed that ethical claims, being empirically unverifiable and so factually contentless, have an expressive function.² Since he took theological claims to be in the same predicament as ethical ones, he would presumably have had no objection in principle to extending the same courtesy to them. Of course, the verification principle is no longer thought to constitute the serious challenge to religious claims it once was. Two well known arguments are, first, that many central religious claims may after all be verifiable, and second, that the positivists were wrong from the outset in connecting meaning so closely with empirical verification.³ These arguments may be enough to stave off the threat to the meaning of religious statements, but the need to state a position on the relevance of verification for religious language persists. For the role given to

verification will still have a bearing on the account given of religious truth.

- Philosophers of religion influenced by Wittgenstein have tended to follow the second line of resistance to verificationism, i.e., it was a mistake to give such prominence to the notion of *empirical* verification. Where the verificationist goes wrong, on this view, is not in the attention to verification conditions per se, but in insisting that in any field of discourse a particular type of verification – empirical verification – is the only one suitable. The meaning of a religious statement, for example, is shown primarily by its use in religious discourse rather than in scientific discourse. Consequently, the philosophical task should be to *describe* this use, that is, the standards and conditions under which the statement may be asserted or believed in religious discourse. So the descriptive method is still concerned with verification, where this is understood to cover whatever counts in determining the truth of statements within religious discourse, even when this includes kinds of “evidence” – again very broadly conceived – that would not be countenanced in scientific practice. This approach does not presuppose that scientific standards are not operative within religious discourse, or that religious standards fall short of scientific respectability. However, it does require that we should be open to the possibility of different standards operating in different discourses.

Now, it is clear from both his writings and lectures on religion that Wittgenstein thought that there *are* many differences in the standards and forms of justification informing religious and scientific discourses. His remarks on the subject seem largely to consist in describing these differences. Some interpreters of Wittgenstein have taken him to be arguing for the controversial conclusion – nowhere explicitly endorsed by Wittgenstein – that we may be justified in believing or asserting religious statements independently of what may be established in scientific investigation. However, I will not be concerned in this paper with the degree to which scientific and religious discourses are different or possess different standards of justification or are independent. Rather, I will look at the philosophical implications which can be drawn from the evidence of differences between the discourses. For this evidence admits two different readings, and can be used to support two quite different and even conflicting lines of argument. On one argument, the differences reflect only the different things that are counted as true in different discourses, on the other, the differences are taken as indicating that it is not the function of religious statements to assert truths but rather express attitudes. Wittgenstein himself gives little guidance as to how the differences should be understood – whether they show that religious discourse describes different kinds of facts (or offers different kinds of description) than scientific discourse does, or that religious discourse does not have a descriptive function. I will argue that this poses not only a dilemma for interpreters of Wittgenstein, but also the problem of two opposing Wittgensteinian positions on the nature of religious language.

I. Overview of the Two Arguments

On one approach, religious truths, descriptions, facts, etc., are just statements that qualify as true, descriptive or factual according to the standards of religious discourse. This is not to say, of course, that it is at all easy to

identify any particular religious truth. The point is rather that religious discourse, just by possessing standards (as well as a degree of syntactic complexity) satisfies the conditions required for its statements to assert truths or falsehoods. The simplest way of showing this (though not the only way),⁴ is to suppose that the content of the truth predicate is given by instances of the disquotational schema:

(DS) "S" is true iff S.

Nothing more informative or substantive can in general be said about truth. With this kind of minimal strategy we can win through to a concept of religious truth with some ease. We simply observe that religious discourse supports the use of a truth predicate that satisfies DS. Instead of insisting on demanding metaphysical standards for truth, reference, fact, etc., such as a robust correspondence condition (i.e., one which does not trivially follow from DS), we instead opt for unprovocative minimalism about these concepts. No philosophical mileage is made, for example, from the fact that the standards of religious discourse may differ from those in science, other than to show the variety of different things that we count as true or as determining truth. Religious truths are not taken to be compromised by the evidence of these differences.

This is currently a popular strategy. To take just one example (I will give some others in Section 4), Hilary Putnam comments on reference in religious discourse:

The use of religious language is both like and unlike ordinary cases of reference: but to ask whether it is "really" reference or "not really" reference is to be in a muddle. There is no essence of reference . . . the way to understand religious language isn't to try to apply some metaphysical classification of possible forms of discourse.⁵

Such an approach seems very much of a piece with Wittgenstein's writings on "family resemblance" concepts and his apparent support for a form of minimalism about truth: "For what does a proposition's *"being true"* mean? "*p*" is true = *p*. (That is the answer.)"⁶ In the same way we can have religious facts, descriptions, etc., just so long as the disciplined use of these concepts is supported in the discourse. I will call this position *minimal realism*. It is realist (in at least one important sense) by virtue of allowing that religious claims may refer, describe, be true, etc., and this realism emerges from taking a minimalist position on truth and other realism-relevant features.

However, Wittgenstein's writings can be developed in a quite different direction, more sympathetic to non-cognitivism. For Wittgenstein's emphasis on the difference between religious and scientific discourse, can be read as attempting to show that religious claims should be seen as having a different *function* than scientific claims. And here a second argument emerges, one which takes the differences between religious and scientific (or in general fact-stating) language, to show that religious discourse has a largely expressive purpose. Here, religious statements *are* taken to be compromised by the evidence of their differences from scientific statements: they

are shown to be non-descriptive. If a statement is "true" it is not by virtue of accurately representing a real state of affairs. I will call this theory *non-factualism*. I take non-factualism to be a form of antirealism, for it is opposed to the idea that religious statements are true, factual or descriptive in the way that realists – even minimal realists – say that they are. As an account of Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion, non-factualism is supported by B. R. Tilghman⁷ and, for several other areas of Wittgenstein's philosophy, by Simon Blackburn.⁸

The contrasting approaches of non-factualism and minimal realism in the interpretation of Wittgenstein are reflected in the two strikingly different "standard" criticisms of Wittgensteinian positions in philosophy of religion. One frequently cited argument is that Wittgensteinianism is just repackaged non-cognitivism,⁹ a sophisticated form of Braithwaite's theory misleadingly dressed up to look like a philosophically neutral description of religious language. This is presumably directed against only the non-factualist interpretation of Wittgenstein's writings, which takes religious claims to have an expressive function, for minimal realism allows that religious claims may be true, factual, descriptive, etc. The second argument is that Wittgensteinianism is a form of fideism that aims to preserve the discourse by placing it in strict quarantine from external and specifically scientific criticism.¹⁰ This objection may apply to a minimal realist interpretation of Wittgenstein but it clearly has little bearing on non-factualism. For the non-factualist, the issue of preserving religious claims from scientific criticism does not arise, because it is not the function of religious discourse to assert facts. These two objections point up the two different ways of interpreting Wittgenstein that I have outlined. It is also the case that the two objections cannot both be right – a fact not usually noted by writers who set out both objections as good grounds for rejecting Wittgenstein's views on religious language. For the charge of fideism proceeds with the assumption that the truth of many central religious beliefs would be at least challenged, if not shown to be mostly in error, were they exposed to scientific evaluation. The argument that Wittgenstein takes religious statements to be expressions of attitudes is at cross-purposes with this assumption. Scientific developments may engender non-religious or anti-religious attitudes, but this is quite different from falsifying religious statements. The critic of Wittgenstein may still uphold both lines of objection, provided it is understood that they apply to different interpretations of Wittgenstein. However, I hope to show in this paper that in neither case are they effective forms of opposition as they are currently presented.

Despite their seeming to be at odds, elements of both minimal realism and non-factualism are often found in interpretations of Wittgenstein's writings and lectures on religion. On the one hand, there is a respect for the grammar of religious discourse along with discourse-relative accounts of truth and reference, that one would expect to lead to a form of minimal realism. On the other hand, there is an emphasis on the deceptiveness of the similarities between the (superficial) form of religious and empirical statements, and the non-descriptive character of the indicative statements of religious discourse, which suggests a non-factualist account. The minimalism of minimal realism is run alongside the differences asserted by

non-factualists, and the direction in which these ideas should be developed is all too often left unclear.

Now, those non-factualist accounts of Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion in which his sympathy for minimalism also figure, are in danger of running into a serious difficulty, spelled out by Paul Boghossian,¹¹ Crispin Wright¹² and Paul Horwich.¹³ It is that once truth is conceded as a metaphysically lightweight notion, there seems no basis to resist the further concession that statements which count as true according to the standards of the discourse, are indeed true. Both religious and ethical discourse exhibit syntactical complexity (negation, conditionalisation, etc.) and also a degree of internal discipline (there are various standards for the proper use of their sentences). So the truth predicate operating in ethical or religious discourse should comfortably satisfy any minimal requirements for truth and consequently any indicative religious statement is at least a candidate for asserting a truth. Minimalism about truth slips easily into minimal realism. It seems to follow that a non-factualist cannot be a minimalist about truth. Notably, A. J. Ayer, who advanced both a deflationary theory of truth and a non-factualist account of ethics, is cited as falling foul of this problem.¹⁴ It is also notable that many religious non-realists who advance a form of non-factualism also criticise robust notions of truth — in particular correspondence theories — without addressing the impending difficulty. If truth is not metaphysically substantial, what grounds are there for accepting the non-factualist's claim that religious statements do not assert truths, despite their seeming to do so?

The problem is not disastrous for the non-factualist attracted to minimalism. A minimalist about truth can consistently maintain non-factualism for a discourse if the statements of that discourse do not *qualify* for truth, even of a minimal sort. A number of recent debates in ethics have hinged on the question of whether a notion of "truth aptness" or "proposition" can be defended which the statements of ethical discourse fail to satisfy.¹⁵ However, having noted the potential tension between truth minimalism and non-factualism, I will not be addressing the prospects for a successful form of minimalist non-factualism. My interest here is in the fact that a form of religious realism – minimal realism, and a form of religious antirealism – non-factualism, both seem able to draw support from Wittgenstein's writings. I will look at these positions in Sections 3 and 4. In Section 5, I will set out the difficulties in determining which view Wittgenstein himself adopted, before attempting to resolve the issue in Section 6. I will begin, however, with an explanation of the terms of the debate.

II. Irrealism

To clarify the term "non-factualism", I will put it in the context of the different kinds of irrealism that may be adopted with regard to a field of discourse. Following Paul Boghossian, irrealism may be defined as "the view that no real properties answer to the central predicates of the region [of discourse] in question." (157) There are two irrealist strategies. First, error theoretic irrealism, which is the view that the declarative sentences of the discourse in question are all false. The discourse's predicates denote properties,

but there are no such properties: the states of affairs we aspire to describe in the discourse do not obtain. Error theorists usually go on to propose either (a) elimination of the defective discourse, perhaps replacing it with a different or substantially revised discourse whose predicates do successfully pick out properties, or (b) instrumentalism, the view that despite the discourse's failure to express truths, it serves some other purpose for which it deserves to be left largely intact. The latter approach will likely be more desirable in those cases where the disputed discourse has proved conspicuously successful. Examples of error theories include Hartry Field's account of mathematics,¹⁶ and J. L. Mackie's views on ethics.¹⁷ Mackie contends that there are no ethical properties of a kind that could answer to the predicates central to ethical discourse. Since there are no such properties, ordinary moral thought is systematically mistaken. Field puts forward a broadly similar argument for mathematical discourse. He argues that there are no abstract mathematical entities of the sort that pure (non-vacuous) mathematical statements seem to require to be true. These statements aim to be descriptive, but there is no mathematical realm for them to describe. An error theorist about religious discourse would maintain that all members of the class of predicates central to religious discourse have uniformly empty extensions; that is, declarative religious statements are false.

A second irrealist strategy is non-factualism. A non-factualist about some region of discourse F maintains that

although F's declarative sentences appear to express genuine predicative judgements, that appearance is wholly illusory. In actual fact . . . F's predicates do not denote properties; nor, as a result, do its declarative sentences express genuine predicative judgements, equipped with truth conditions: seeing as such sentences would be making no claim about the world, so nothing about the world could render them true or false.¹⁸

Unlike the error theorist, the non-factualist denies that the declarative statements of the discourse in question are *truth apt*. That is, the statements are not even in the business of stating truths. A central problem for non-factualist accounts is the logical and syntactic features that the statements of the discourse are able to support. A notoriously difficult range of examples, much discussed in ethical discourse, gives rise to the Frege-Geach argument. Consider those cases in which an ethical judgement is simply asserted, for instance, "It is wrong to break promises." In such cases the non-factualist has a fairly simple story to tell about the function of the assertion: it simply expresses an attitude towards the object of the judgement, the breaking of promises. But what should the non-factualist say about ethical statements occurring in contexts in which they are not asserted, such as "If it is wrong to break promises, it is wrong make promises that you do not intend to keep." In this sentence, no attitude towards breaking promises is expressed. It would not do to argue that the statement "It is wrong to break promises" means something different when it is asserted than when it is the antecedent of the conditional. Because, "it is wrong to break promises" in its asserted and conditional contexts can be

put together to form a valid argument with the conclusion "It is wrong to make promises you do not intend to keep."¹⁹ Conditionals are not, of course, the only feature of ethical discourse that will be a problem for the non-factualist. Any ethical claim that takes a form other than the simple expression of ethical conviction will require additional explanation. This line of argument also applies to the non-factualist position in other discourses, such as religious non-factualism.²⁰

The Frege-Geach argument is damaging to some traditional forms of non-factualism, such as Braithwaite's, where the discourse in question exhibits the relevant syntactical features. But it would be a mistake to suppose that it constitutes a conclusive argument against more sophisticated forms of non-factualism, which I will call *expressivism*. For explanations of these features in ethical discourse have been put forward by Allan Gibbard²¹ and Simon Blackburn²². Blackburn, in particular, pursues a *quasi-realist* project, which aims to show how all the characteristics of a discourse that are supposedly distinctive of realism can be made from non-representational ingredients. Our use of concepts such as truth, knowledge, fact, etc., can consequently be engaged in by the expressivist without embarrassment: "starting from a recognisably anti-realist position, [the quasi-realist] finds himself increasingly able to mimic the intellectual practices supposedly distinctive of realism."²³ The way in which this might be done is indicated by Blackburn's account of ethical judgement:

If practical life were simpler its pressures could be voiced by a simpler linguistic method: the 'Boo! — Hooray!' language of emotivism, or the simple issuing of overt prescriptions, as in the Decalogue. But once reflection starts up and we have to think about competing practical pressures, we need a richer language, and this is what we have. We have given the discourse what I call its proposition surface. We are pretty casual about doing that in any event: Consider the usual expression of gustatory delight 'That's yummy' instead of just 'yummy!'²⁴

The propositional surface does not emerge merely from expressions of attitude, but from attitudes and sensibilities that are subject to criticism and argument, and the demands of consistency and clarity that are the result of various "practical pressures."²⁵ The resulting expressivist account of the disputed discourse, informed by quasi-realist techniques, will end up looking on the surface more in sympathy with realism than non-factualism. For instance, talk about truth and falsity, which forms a crucial part of the realist's account, will have its analogue in the quasi-realist's rival proposals about the discourse's function. The expressivist has no intention to prohibit our saying that the statements of the disputed discourse are true or false. On the quasi-realist side, calling a statement true has the function of asserting the statement, without the implication that the statement is articulating a proposition rather than expressing an attitude.

Given the quasi-realist's aim of appropriating the realism-relevant features of a discourse without taking on any commitment to realism, the project may seem to be self-defeating. If it is allowed that statements that the non-factualist takes to express attitudes may also be (quasi) descriptive,

true, factual etc., doesn't this undermine the distinction with which the quasi-realist project began, between claims that express attitudes and genuine claims with truth evaluative content? Blackburn avoids this problem by relocating this contrast in the different explanations given for the propositional surface, rather than in the propositional surface itself. The quasi-realist's contribution lies in

Eschewing false metaphysical, or natural, explanations for our propensities, and substituting ones which enable us to see ourselves better. The theory lies not in the words we end up using, but in the hard-earned title to use them; it is this process, not the bare end point, which matters.²⁶

Unlike the realist, the quasi-realist's explanation of how we come to talk of the truth or falsity of statements of a discourse will not involve the discourse addressing a real subject matter. It will show that we can talk in these terms without giving the discourse's statements the status of having genuine and truth evaluable contents. Since Blackburn presents one of the most promising forms of expressivism, and the most persuasive interpretation of Wittgenstein as an expressivist, it is his variety of non-factualism that I will address in this paper.²⁷

Two final points. First, a distinction can be made between non-factualists about properties who go on to deny the existence of the bearers of those properties, and those who do not. Neil Tennant gives the example of a realist about actions who is a non-factualist about the moral properties of actions.²⁸ One might tentatively characterise John Hick as an example of a non-factualist of this type. Hick appears to wish to adopt a non-factualist account of divine properties, while maintaining realism about the bearer of those properties.²⁹ Second, expressivist non-factualism stands in contrast with those forms of instrumentalism which result from scepticism about the subject matter of the discourse. The instrumentalist proposes that despite doubt about the discourse's success in stating truths, it has some *other* function for which it should be preserved. The expressivist, in contrast, is not suggesting that the discourse is in any way defective: it is not the discourse's function to state truths but only to express attitudes. Notably, both J. M. Soskice and William Alston gloss over this distinction. They group instrumentalism together with expressivism as a form of anti-realism. Alston speaks of "expressivism-instrumentalism"³⁰ while Soskice contrasts theological realists with "theological instrumentalists . . . those who believe that religious language provides a useful, even uniquely useful, system of symbols which is action-guiding for the believer but not to be taken as making reference to a cosmos-transcending being in the traditional sense."³¹ The confusion results from the fact that the secondary function that the instrumentalist claims the discourse has may be that it expresses attitudes. However, while error theorists and non-factualists about religion may regard religious discourse as useful and worthy of preserving, their accounts of the cognitive status and primary function of the discourse will be importantly different.

III. Religious Expressivism

Was Wittgenstein an expressivist about religious discourse? A strong case can be made for it (just as it has been made by Blackburn for Wittgenstein on mathematical, ethical and aesthetic discourse).³² Such an interpretation reasonably draws on Wittgenstein's repeated insistence that there are decisive dissimilarities between religious and empirical statements and beliefs, the one theme most obviously shared by his lectures and occasional writings on religion. Of course, Wittgenstein does not suggest an assimilation of religious convictions and attitudes, or some complex of attitudes and factual beliefs as Braithwaite thought. Indeed, Wittgenstein explicitly ruled out such a proposal when Casimir Lewy suggested it in the course of one of his lectures.

Suppose someone, before going to China, when he might never see me again, said to me: "We might see one another after death" – would I necessarily say that I don't understand him? I might say [want to say] simply, "Yes. I *understand* him entirely."

Lewy "In this case, you might only mean that he expressed a certain attitude."

I would say "No, it isn't the same as saying 'I'm very fond of you'" – and it may not be the same as saying anything else. It says what it says. Why should you be able to substitute anything else?

Suppose I say: "The man used a picture." (LC³³ pp. 70-71)

It is surprising that these comments have been widely taken if not as a conclusive proof that Wittgenstein rejected religious expressivism, then at least as a basis for supposing that Wittgenstein took expressivism as an unhelpful way of looking at the matter. Peter Winch,³⁴ D. Z. Phillips,³⁵ and Hilary Putnam³⁶ each quote Wittgenstein's dismissal of Lewy's suggestion as proof of Wittgenstein's resistance to religious convictions being reduced to or replaced with attitudes, and on that basis turn their attention away from expressivist interpretations of Wittgenstein. Of course, in the first part of this they are quite right: Wittgenstein was not in the business of giving reductionist accounts of religious claims. But why shouldn't the irreducibility and irreplaceability of religious utterances naturally emerge from attitudes and other states that the expressivist has to work with, along with all the features of their propositional surface? Wittgenstein's remarks do not imply otherwise; he is not saying, for instance, that religious convictions are just like ordinary beliefs. That is something on which he specifically casts doubt: "one doesn't use 'believe' as one does ordinarily." (LC p. 59) Rather, Wittgenstein proposes that a religious conviction is akin to being in the grip of a *picture*, which leaves the question about the status of religious discourse wide open. It is not hard to find other evidence that Wittgenstein's view stands in sympathy with those of the expressivist; indeed, as Putnam concedes, just about everything else in the lectures can be read in support of expressivism.³⁷

Wittgenstein discusses religious beliefs at some length, and specifically the case of someone believing in the Last Judgement. There are, he suggests,

crucial differences between such beliefs and scientifically based beliefs, or ordinary beliefs about states of affairs (he gives the example "There is a German aeroplane overhead.") While religious believers may speak of "evidence" and "historical events," the evidence and events cited in connection with a religious belief do not constitute a reason to hold that belief in the way that evidence given in support of a hypothesis gives a reason to believe that the hypothesis is true. In religious discourse "reasons look entirely different from normal reasons," (LC p. 56) religious belief is not "a matter of reasonability," (LC p. 58) religious beliefs are not hypotheses or opinions, they are not properly spoken of as objects of knowledge or as having a high probability (LC p. 57), and when historical facts are introduced "they are not treated as historical, empirical, propositions." (LC p. 57) However, Wittgenstein is not inviting an error theory of religious discourse:

It can happen, and often does today, that a person will give up a practice after he has recognized an error on which it was based. But this happens only when calling someone's attention to his error is enough to turn him from his way of behaving. But this is not the case with the religious practices of a people and *therefore* there is *no* question of an error. (PO³⁸ p. 121)

The claims of other religious believers in other religions are not in error either:

Was Augustine in error, then, when he called upon God on every page of the *Confessions*?

But – one might say – if he was not in error, surely the Buddhist holy man was – or anyone else – whose religions give expression to completely different views. But *none* of them was in error, except when he set forth a theory. (PO p. 119)

Here Wittgenstein seems at pains to emphasise the contrast between religious discourse and other fact stating discourses, indeed, he implies that when taken (or where offered) as reporting facts religious claims are in error. Elsewhere, Wittgenstein suggests that those "errors" would be just too big for this factual interpretation of them to be credible; that such claims *are* made by intelligent and reasonable people stands as a reason for doubting that religious statements report facts (LC pp. 61-3, 59).

As the expressivist will observe, Wittgenstein is careful to point out that when the propositional surface of religious and scientific discourse is similar, for example, when one speaks in religious discourse of truth and evidence and historical facts, this does not show that religious claims possess truth apt content. For instance, it is possible to reject what somebody says they believe – in the Last Judgement, say – and believe the opposite. Wittgenstein's explanation of this aspect of the propositional surface of religious discourse should be quite amenable to the expressivist. In the religious case, he suggests, one might not share the same outlook as the believer in the Last Judgement, one might find it disagreeable, even morally disagreeable and "you can call it believing the opposite," (LC p. 55), but

one cannot in the ordinary sense "contradict it." The point is driven home by Wittgenstein's proposals for the function of religious beliefs. Religious belief is "like a passionate commitment to a system of reference. Hence, although it's *belief*, it's really a way of living, or a way of assessing life." (CV³⁹ p. 64) This is brought out in his comments on the doctrine of predestination. The doctrine, he suggests, is "less a theory than a sigh, or a cry," (CV p. 30) and while the doctrine may be called "true," "it is not permissible for someone to assert it as a truth, unless he himself says it in torment." (CV p. 30) Taking the statement "It is God's will," Wittgenstein claims: "The work done by this sentence, or at any rate something like it, could also be done by a command!" (CV p. 61)

IV. Minimal Realism

There is, however, another way of looking at the matter. According to the minimal realist interpretation, Wittgenstein's description of the differences between religious and empirical claims was not aimed to establish the different status or function of religious and empirical discourse. Rather, he was elucidating the different grammar appropriate to these fields of discourse.⁴⁰ Wittgenstein does not use scientific discourse as a model for standards of truth and description against which religious discourse palpably falls short, but as an object of comparison against which the distinctive features of religious discourse can be articulated. Wittgenstein's point, argues the minimal realist, is not that religious statements are in no respect descriptive: they *are* descriptive (or at least some of them are), but are they are not *scientific* descriptions, and they may be true, but not in the way that scientific hypotheses may be true. Far from reinforcing the kind of metaphysical differences between different discourses in which the non-realist trades, Wittgenstein undermines these differences. We can speak of religious truth, reference, reality, etc., as well as, though not in the same way as, scientific truth, reference, facts, etc. Notions of truth and reference do not make weighty philosophical demands on the discourses in which they successfully operate. So there is no question that religious discourse, as well as ethical and other discourses, have statements that successfully refer, describe, are true, etc. We must look instead to the way in which truth and reference function in religious discourse, to find out what these terms amount to. This interpretation is supported by Wittgenstein's own minimal account of truth:

'p' is true = p
'p' is false = not-p.

And to say that a proposition is whatever can be true or false amounts to saying: we call something a proposition when *in our language* we apply the calculus of truth functions to it.⁴¹

One way of developing the approach suggested here has been set out with impressive clarity by Sabina Lovibond for ethical discourse. According to Lovibond,

What Wittgenstein offers us, in the *Philosophical Investigations* and elsewhere in his later work, is a homogenous or 'seamless' conception of language. It is a conception free from invidious comparisons between different regions of discourse . . . On this view, the only legitimate role for the idea of 'reality' is that in which it is coordinated with (or, as Wittgenstein might have said – cf. *Philosophical Investigations* 136 – 'belongs with') the metaphysically neutral idea of 'talking about something'

Wittgenstein's view of language implicitly denies any metaphysical role to the idea of 'reality'; it denies that we can draw any intelligible distinction between those parts of assertoric discourse which do, and those which do not, genuinely describe reality.⁴²

The argument is substantiated with a minimal account of those features – description, reference, truth – that the expressivist may claim that the discourse lacks:

If something has the form of a proposition, then it *is* a proposition: philosophical considerations cannot discredit the way in which we classify linguistic entities for other, non-philosophical purposes . . . The only way, then, in which an indicative statement can fail to describe reality is by *not being true* – i.e. in virtue of reality not being as the statement declares it to be . . .⁴³

So provided that the sentences of a discourse satisfy certain grammatical features, they have truth apt content. There is no deeper level at which to draw a distinction between those discourses with sentences with truth apt content and those without. What are the required features? In general, sentences with an assertoric form can be constructed in it, and those sentences are subject to standards of correctness. This approach is, of course, by no means restricted to only ethical discourse; it readily extends to religious discourse, or any discourse that exhibits the required features.

Lovibond's argument unsettles the distinctions on which the traditional antirealist/ realist dispute is based, and in particular distinctions between the different cognitive status of discourses on which the non-factualist argument depends. If Lovibond is right, no metaphysical argument need be won for the indicative claims of the disputed discourse to qualify for truth aptness, descriptiveness, etc., albeit of a metaphysically lightweight variety; they qualify on grammatical grounds alone. Furthermore, none of the discourses that are the subject of philosophical controversy is likely, on this account, to fail to produce many true sentences. The error theorist could maintain, consistently with minimalism about truth, that sentences of the discourse are both truth apt and all false. But it is unclear what reason could be offered in favour of this position, short of a discourse suffering from some deep internal incoherence in its standards of warrant.⁴⁴

Despite its attractiveness as a philosophical position, Lovibond's interpretation is difficult to square with Wittgenstein's own views. Wittgenstein, as is well known, was concerned to emphasise the diversity of and differ-

ences between discourses, or language games. As Simon Blackburn has pointed out, he considered taking the quotation "I'll teach you differences" from *King Lear* as the motto for *Philosophical Investigations*. Lovibond, in contrast, seems to achieve realism across the board by showing their uniformity. If Lovibond is right about Wittgenstein, Blackburn argues:

One would expect evidence of Wittgenstein saying, in effect, that he has had us fooled all along. We *thought* he was teaching differences, but really he was *subverting* the very differences he seemed to bring up. All along he was warning us against thinking that it might be significant to try to understand mathematics in terms of rules, . . . or to suggest that framework propositions might not be true (did we *need* this warning?), or to wonder if religious commitment or ethics expressed emotional and other cognitive states, and so on. There are no such differences! His motto is: I'll teach you *samenesses*!⁴⁵

However, the central point about Wittgenstein can be well taken without going along with Blackburn's account of the differences that Wittgenstein was trying to teach us. That is, Wittgenstein can be understood as explicating differences between scientific discourse, and ethical or religious discourse, without thereby seeking to cast doubt on the appropriateness of classifying ethical or religious claims as true or false, referential, or descriptive. Rather than introducing a metaphysical standard for truth, that some region of discourse might fail to meet, Wittgenstein was setting out the different ways in which the concept of truth is used in different regions of discourse: religious, scientific, ethical, etc. Wittgenstein is indeed teaching us differences: in the variety of uses of this and other philosophically important concepts. He offers us a plethora of differences that undermine rather than uphold any clear division that the expressivist hopes to make between descriptive and non-descriptive functions of discourse.

This interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy is currently widely supported. It is briefly endorsed by Crispin Wright, and broadly informs his own approach to realism issues in *Truth and Objectivity* (to which I will return later).⁴⁶ It is defended by Cora Diamond as an approach to ethics and mathematics,⁴⁷ and by Putnam – who calls it "common-sense realism"⁴⁸ – for mathematics, ethics and, as quoted earlier, philosophy of religion:

The Wittgensteinian strategy, I believe, is to argue that while there is such a thing as correctness in ethics, in interpretation, in mathematics, the way to understand that is not by trying to model it on the ways in which we get things right in physics, but by trying to understand the life we lead with our concepts in each of these distinct areas.

According to D. Z. Phillips,

by all means say that 'God' functions as a referring expression, that 'God' refers to a sort of object, that God's reality is a matter of fact, and so on. *But please remember that, as yet, no conceptual or grammatical clarification has taken place.* We have all the work still to do since we

shall now have to show, in this religious context, what speaking of 'reference', 'object', 'existence', and so on amounts to, how it differs, in obvious ways, from other uses of these terms.⁴⁹

Rush Rhees⁵⁰ and Peter Winch⁵¹ also seem sympathetic to this kind of interpretation.

This is not to say, of course, that there are not also significant points on which there is disagreement. Phillips, for example, appears to take "true" to mean something different in different discourses, presumably with the upshot that the term is ambiguous: we have multiple truth concepts, with different extensions.⁵² Wright argues, in contrast, that the truth predicate has certain minimal and sufficient conditions for its use, in particular, DS; on this, as we have seen, Wittgenstein seems to concur. It is not clear what case there is in favour of Phillips's relativism about truth. No doubt there may be many different kinds of truths, but the concept of truth need not vary as we consider different ranges of cases. Wright suggests that we could nevertheless accept the minimal conditions for a truth predicate while allowing that truth should *constitute* something different in different regions of discourse. That is, truth may exhibit certain additional features distinctive of its use in particular discourses. By way of comparison, Wright gives the notion of identity. Identity may be grounded in the two principles that everything is self-identical and identical things share their properties, but what constitutes identity will depend on whether we are dealing with material objects, numbers, people, etc.⁵³ For instance, we may suppose that the identity of physical objects invariably consists in temporal and spatial continuity, and that numerical identity is established by the one to one correspondence relation, and that personal identity consists in something else again. But the different local features of identity that depend on the range of objects we are considering do not give us a reason to suppose that we are dealing with different concepts of identity in each case.

This disagreement gives rise to a second point of contention. For Wright proposes that the different ways in which truth is constituted in different discourses have a bearing on the realism/antirealism debate. From the minimal starting point of satisfying DS, truth may possess certain additional realism-relevant features. Truth in ethics, for example, may exhibit certain features different to truth in science that justify a realist position for scientific discourse but not for ethical discourse. So far from minimal realism putting the argument about realism/non-realism to rest, as Phillips and others suppose, it forms the starting point from which arguments with the realist can be engaged. The issue, according to Wright, is whether the truth predicate supported by the disputed discourse is just minimal truth or something more robust. The debate can be pursued with such questions as: can there be truths in the discourse that cannot be discovered? Is there anything more to a claim being true than our being justified in asserting it? Are true claims mostly caused or explained by the facts they assert? Are differences of opinion in the discourse usually the result of one or more parties misrepresenting the facts? To take just the first question, on the minimal realist's account of truth, truth may be consistently be identified with warranted assertibility (or some other epistemic notion). This is some-

thing that a realist may wish to rule out on the grounds that, for example, there are religious truths that are in principle beyond our ability to determine as true. So in Wright's framework for the realist debate, minimal realism is an *anti-realist* position, inviting the realist to defend positive answers to one or more of these questions. I will return to this in Section 6.

V. Wittgenstein and Realism

We are faced with two substantially different interpretations of Wittgenstein's writings, and little explicit guidance from Wittgenstein as to which is correct. Wittgenstein writes, "I would like to say: the attitude comes *before* the opinion. (Isn't belief in God an attitude?),"⁵⁴ but here it is unclear whether the question should be taken as rhetorical or whether it is intended to provoke disagreement. Elsewhere, Wittgenstein asserts "Not empiricism and yet realism in philosophy, that is the hardest thing. (Against Ramsey),"⁵⁵ but this has also been given different interpretations.⁵⁶ It is perhaps to be expected that Wittgenstein would not offer a direct statement of support for minimal realism or expressivism, but the problem of determining which strategy Wittgenstein employs becomes acute when it is seen that much of his work in philosophy of religion can form part of either approach.

Consider, for instance, what Wittgenstein says about religious belief. On the expressivist reading, the differences that Wittgenstein shows us between religious and scientific belief (outlined in Section 3) are taken to indicate that expressions of religious conviction and expressions of scientific belief do not have the same cognitive function. This may in turn be seen to invite the quasi-realist to explain, from an expressivist starting point, how we come to talk of "belief" in religious discourse at all. On the minimal realist reading, the differences that Wittgenstein shows us in the way that religious and scientific belief relate to evidence, are treated in argument, and are subject to disagreement, etc., is seen as the basis for a descriptive account of religious conviction which shows it to be both genuine (factual, truth apt, etc.) and distinct from scientific belief: neither merely pseudo-scientific and superstitious, nor quasi-belief. Notably, much of the evidence that is put forward in the prosecution of the expressivist's interpretation of Wittgenstein can be read in these terms.

Certainly, a great deal of exegetical work is needed to get Wittgenstein to look like either an expressivist or minimal realist. The expressivist can take heart from Wittgenstein's remarks in his other writings on avowals and ethics, where some expressivist intention on Wittgenstein's part is difficult to deny. But there is no indication that Wittgenstein faced up to the kind of quasi-realist project that would be required if he were to keep to his stated aim of not interfering in the actual use of language. If the differences between religious and scientific discourse are supposed to be indicative of the expressive function of religious discourse, we are entitled to know how it is – to name just one difficulty mentioned earlier – that religious statements can be embedded in conditionals and regimented into valid arguments. Minimal realists, in contrast, can draw support for their interpretation from Wittgenstein's aim to describe rather than change the grammar of our language. But in his investigation into the local features of different

discourses, Wittgenstein shows little of the kind of attention to truth, reality or descriptiveness that one would expect if he did indeed wish to restore our faith in plain speaking realism.

Wittgenstein's minimal account of truth, and his apparent sympathy for philosophical minimalism in general, might seem to tell in favour of the minimal realist's interpretation. But this conclusion is premature, for the reason mentioned in Section One. Minimalism about truth is consistent with an expressivist account of the function of religious discourse provided we are not also minimalists about truth aptness. A commitment to minimal truth, therefore, does not lead into minimal realism, if the sentences of religious discourse are not used to express propositions but have some other expressive function. As Blackburn puts it: "a thin theory of truth can consort with a thick theory of judgement, ascribing a variety of functional roles to the commitments that on the surface all get expressed by equally well-behaved indicative sentences."⁵⁷ Furthermore, Blackburn argues, Wittgenstein, like Frank Ramsey, is working with a robust notion of truth aptness (or proposition). Whether or not Blackburn is right on this latter point, the evidence of Wittgenstein's minimalism is not enough to show that he was also a minimal realist.

VI. *Religious Realism*

It is tempting to conclude that Wittgenstein did not satisfactorily address the expressivism/minimal realism issue in philosophy of religion (and in other fields where a similar doubt about his objectives arises); either that, or he was sympathetic to one or other position, but left much of the argument unstated. In either case, Wittgenstein's investigations in the philosophy of religion look like philosophically incomplete work. However, the distinction between minimal realism and religious expressivism is not as clear-cut as it first seems. For there is an important similarity between the objectives of these two strategies. They both aim to be in some degree subversive of the traditional realist/non-realist debate. They propose that those claims about a discourse that are usually taken to be distinctive of a realist position can be made either (in the case of the expressivist) without compromising non-factualist principles, or (in the case of the minimal realist) without committing oneself to metaphysical realism. In this respect, the strategies seem to be successful. At the very least, the onus is on the realist who *does* take realism to be philosophically substantive and inconsistent with expressivism to state a position that *is* philosophically substantive and to which expressivists would not anyway subscribe.

It can also be seen that expressivism and minimal realism, as I have been calling it, are both positions that can comfortably be occupied by anti-realists. The main difference between them lies in where the debate with the realist is situated. The expressivist resists the view that the claims of religious discourse are truth apt, and attempts to explain those features of the discourse (i.e. its propositional surface) which suggest otherwise. The minimal realist finds no problem with the discourse possessing a propositional surface and sees no need to explain it, but resists the assumption that the truth predicate operative within the discourse is more robust than min-

imal truth, i.e. more robust than a predicate given by DS and any related platitudes.⁵⁸ So on both interpretations, Wittgenstein's work in philosophy of religion stands as a force for anti-realism, though one which can be developed in two different ways.

While identifying Wittgenstein's remarks on religion – or at least the two ways of developing these remarks – as anti-realist, may confirm the suspicions of realist detractors of Wittgenstein, the varieties of anti-realism in question are of a sufficiently sophisticated sort to provide a serious challenge to the realist position. For the realist's traditional claims that "God exists" is *true* or that it *refers* or it is a *fact* or that God *really* exists will clearly not do the work required of them. Both minimal realist and expressivist will slip through the net. The minimal realist will take these claims as insubstantial platitudes – "philosophy by italics" as D. Z. Phillips puts it – and proceed to give them a philosophically harmless reading. The expressivist could also make use of the minimalist account of these claims, but in any case should in principle be able to take them on board as part of the propositional surface of religious discourse, without any implications for its real function that are inconsistent with expressivism.

What of the two "standard criticisms" mentioned in Section One? While they may stand as an effective response to some accounts of Wittgenstein's work, without further development they offer little resistance to the interpretations considered in this paper. If Wittgenstein is after all offering a repackaged form of non-cognitivism, it is of a sophisticated form that the arguments typically raised against Braithwaite fall short of addressing. These arguments typically assume that any non-factualist theory would be unable to accommodate many of the central and supposedly metaphysical claims that religious believers wish to make, with the consequence that these claims must be given an eccentric interpretation or simply rejected. Certainly, some religious non-factualists have proposed such measures (Don Cupitt is a case in point).⁵⁹ But this does not seem to be what Wittgenstein is saying, and is clearly nor something that the expressivist would concede. The expressivist takes on board the whole body of seemingly realist conviction and argument in a discourse with the aim of showing how it has emerged from the expression of attitudes subject to various practical pressures. To refute the expressivist, the realist will need to identify something which clearly indicates that religious statements are truth apt. For example, a central component of religious discourse that the quasi-realist story cannot explain.

As to the suggestion that Wittgenstein was a fideist arbitrarily sealing off religious language games from scientific criticism, this looks somewhat oversimplified. Wittgenstein's position, on the minimal realist's interpretation, is not that we lack grounds for distinguishing true from false or descriptive from non-descriptive religious statements, but that these are not scientific grounds, and they are not scientific techniques that are used for making the distinctions. So Wittgenstein's observation of the non-scientific character of at least some of the standards at work in religious discourse is not in itself a philosophically substantive (antirealist) conclusion. Rather, it is up to the realist critic of Wittgenstein to show where his observations go astray, or miss the point of religious claims. Certainly, there is evidence that some religious claims can sustain a scientific interpretation.

But it is *prima facie* doubtful that very much could be made of this evidence, as is indicated by the large amount of philosophical labour involved in trying to set up a scientifically respectable representation of religious beliefs. Of course, the critic's objection is often not about the kinds of standards that are currently applicable in religion, but rather that scientific standards *should* be applicable to religious statements, as the proper basis on which to test their truth. But in this case, we are at least entitled to know what is wrong with the standards that already inform religious discourse. Assuming that these standards are at least coherent and workable, why should we replace or supplement them with standards that would result in many religious statements being highly suspect if not false? Similar responses might be made in defence of mathematics, ethics, folk psychology and other discourses. Why, for instance, should truths established in mathematics (i.e. proved mathematical statements) be compromised because of their failure to satisfy certain other scientific questions concerning the existence of mathematical entities?

These brief remarks are, of course, intended only as an indication of some of the problems that will need to be addressed if the traditional criticisms of Wittgenstein's writings on religion are to be developed into convincing responses to Wittgensteinian expressivism or minimal realism. However, it is possible that the religious realist will wish to pursue a different course, one which rejects expressivism and minimal realism *and* accepts the differences between religion and science. This would be to argue that religious truth is *not* minimal, as has been supposed. The argument would be that religious truth in addition to satisfying the minimal constraints, exhibits certain realism relevant features, such as those described by Wright and outlined at the end of section 4. For example, can there be unknowable religious truths? If so, then religious truth cannot be just a matter of what is justified in religious discourse. A convincing case on these lines has yet to be made;⁶⁰ in philosophy of religion it remains largely unexplored territory.⁶¹

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NOTES

1. "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief" in ed. Basil Mitchell *The Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 79.

2. *Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Gollancz, 1946 2nd ed.) ch. 6.

3. This is not to mention the spectacular failure of Ayer's attempts to state a criterion that would not allow every non-analytic statement to count as meaningful. Cf. I. Berlin "Verification" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 39, 1938-39, pp. 225-48; A. Church "Review of Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* 2nd ed." *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 14, 1949, pp. 52-3.

4. Several kinds of minimalism are set out by J. O'Leary-Hawthorne and G. Oppy in "Minimalism and Truth" *Nous* 31, 1997, pp. 170-96. In their terms, I take the "criteria of minimality" to consist in minimal "revision of folk practices" and minimal "ontological commitment" – strategies which could, in principle, be applied to other relevant concepts.

5. *Renewing Philosophy* (Harvard University Press, 1992) pp. 167-8. Cf. "On

Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Mathematics" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* supp. Vol. LXX 1996, pp. 243-64. In quoting Putnam I do not mean to imply that in all other respects he would endorse the interpretation of Wittgenstein I am here outlining; one point at which he dissents is mentioned below. However, the points of similarity seem enough to consider Putnam as sympathetic to this argument.

6. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* ed. G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees, G. E. M. Anscombe, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978) p. 117. Cf. *Philosophical Investigations* ed. G. E. M. Anscombe, R. Rhees, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953) 136, *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics* ed. Cora Diamond (Cornell University Press, 1976) pp. 68-9, 188.

7. "Isn't belief in God an attitude?" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 43, 1998 pp. 17-28.

8. "Wittgenstein's Irrealism" in J. Brandt and R. Haller *Wittgenstein: Towards a Re-Evaluation* (Vienna: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1990), pp. 13-26.

9. Cf., for example, Richard Swinburne *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) ch. 6, Michael C. Banner *The Justification of Science and the Rationality of Religious Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) ch. 4, John W. Cook "Religious Belief" in ed. J. V. Canfield and S. G. Shanker *Wittgenstein's Intentions* (New York: Garland, 1993) pp. 147-161.

10. Cf. Kai Nielsen "Wittgensteinian Fideism" *Philosophy* 42, 1967 pp. 191-209, and Swinburne *ibid*.

11. "The Status of Content" *Philosophical Review* 99, 1990 pp. 157-84. Boghossian restricts his argument to deflationary accounts of truth which assert "that there is no such thing as a property of truth," (p. 161) which is not essential to the minimalist theory of truth (cf., for example, Paul Horwich *Truth* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) p. 38). The restriction, however, is unnecessary: the argument should apply to non-deflationary minimalism about truth.

12. *Truth and Objectivity* (Harvard University Press, 1992).

13. "Gibbard's Theory of Norms" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22, 1993 pp. 67-78.

14. Cf. Boghossian *op. cit.* note 11.

15. On one account, the non-factualist's case consists in disengaging the issue of truth from truth aptness, and showing that minimalism about the former does not commit one to minimalism about the latter. Cf. F. Jackson, G. Oppy, M. Smith "Minimalism and Truth Aptness" *Mind* 103, 1994 pp. 287-302. Cf. also John O'Leary-Hawthorne and Huw Price "How to Stand Up for Non-Cognitivists" *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74, 1996 pp. 275-92.

16. *Realism, Mathematics and Modality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

17. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Penguin, 1972) ch. 1.

18. *Op. Cit.* note 11, pp. 160-1.

19. Cf. Simon Blackburn *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) pp. 189-90.

20. Which makes it surprising that these criticisms have *not* been applied. It is usually supposed that the religious believer will be committed to some metaphysical claim that the non-factualist will be unable to accommodate.

21. *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (Harvard University Press, 1990) pp. 92-102. Cf. Simon Blackburn "Gibbard on Normative Logic" and Gibbard's "Reply to Blackburn" in *Philosophical Issues 4: Naturalism and Normativity* (California: Ridgeview Publishing, 1993).

22. "Attitudes and Contents" in *Essays in Quasi-Realism* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

23. *Ibid.* p. 15.

24. "The Land of Lost Content" in ed. R. G. Frey *Value, Welfare, and Morality* (Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 14-15.

25. Blackburn has given substantially more detail to the latter part of the project in his *Ruling Passions* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

26. "How can we tell whether a commitment has a truth condition?" in ed. Charles Travis *Meaning and Interpretation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) p. 208.

27. I will be assuming that Blackburn's quasi-realist program is in principle workable; for an excellent overview of the difficulties and implications cf. Gideon Rosen "Blackburn's *Essays on Quasi-Realism*" *Nous* 32, 1998 pp. 386-405.

28. *The Taming of the True* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 67.

29. For a recent statement cf. *The Rainbow of Faiths* (London: SCM Press, 1995) pp. 27f, ch. 3.

30. "Realism and the Christian Faith" *International Journal of Philosophy of Religion* 38, 1995. Though Alston does make this distinction when he considers anti-realism in more general terms, cf. points (a) and (c) in *A Realist Conception of Truth* (Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 67-8.

31. J. M. Soskice "Theological Realism" in *The Rationality of Religious Belief* ed. W. J. Abraham and S. W. Holtzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) pp. 108.

32. Op. cit. note 8.

33. *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* ed. Cyril Barrett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966).

34. *Trying to Make Sense* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) pp. 64f.

35. *Wittgenstein and Religion* (Macmillan, 1993) p. 48.

36. Op. cit. note 5, pp. 152-3.

37. Ibid. p. 152.

38. *Philosophical Occasions 1912-51* ed. J. Klagge and A. Nordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993).

39. *Culture and Value* ed. G. H. von Wright, tr. Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980).

40. Specifically religious discourse, since the grammar of empirical discourse is largely assumed.

41. *Philosophical Investigations* op. cit. note 6 136.

42. *Realism and Imagination in Ethics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 36.

43. Ibid. p. 26

44. Op. cit. note 12 p. 87.

45. "Realism and Truth: Wittgenstein, Wright, Rorty and Minimalism" *Mind* 107, 1998 pp. 157-181, p. 165.

46. Op. cit. note 12 pp. 202-4.

47. Cora Diamond "Wittgenstein, mathematics and ethics: Resisting the attractions of realism" in eds. Hans Sluga, David G. Stern *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

48. "The Dewey Lectures 1994: Sense, Nonsense, and the Senses: An Inquiry into the Powers of the Human Mind" *Journal of Philosophy* 91, 1994, pp. 445-517, p. 514; cf. Putnam (1996) op. cit. note 5 p. 243.

49. "Philosopher's Clothes" ed. Charles M. Lewis *Relativism and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1995) p. 138.

50. "Religion and Language" in *Without Answers* (London: Routledge, 1969) p. 132.

51. *The Idea of a Social Science* [1958] (London: Routledge, 1990 2nd ed.) pp. 150ff; "True or False?" *Inquiry* 1988 pp. 265-76.

52. *Religion Without Explanation* (Basil Blackwell, 1976), p. 142; op. cit. note 44, pp. 149f.

53. "Realism, Pure and Simple? A Reply to Timothy Williamson" *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 2, 1994 p. 337.

54. *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology vol. 1* ed. G. H. von Wright and H. Nyman trans. C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982) p. 38.

55. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* op. cit. note 6 p. 325.

56. Cf. the appendix to Cora Diamond's article op. cit. note 47.

57. Op. cit. note 22, p. 7.

58. This is not to say, of course, that the minimal realist cannot be persuaded that the notion of truth *is* more robust. Various considerations set out in Section 3 may press the minimal realist into adopting a realist semantics. Putnam, for example, claims that the common-sense realist would say that undecidable mathematical propositions are true or false; though he concedes that this is not Wittgenstein's view. (op. cit. note 5 (1996) pp. 260-2)

59. Cf. *Taking Leave of God* (London: SCM Press, 1981).

60. On just the issue of truth and justification an argument for religious realism has been sketched by W. Alston (op. cit. note 30 (1995)); he has recently presented a more detailed argument for realist truth in general (op. cit. note 30 (1996)).

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