BIVALENCE AND THE CHALLENGE OF TRUTH-VALUE GAPS

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A B S T R A C T

This thesis is concerned with the challenge truth-value gaps pose to the principle of bivalence. The central question addressed is: are truth-value gaps counterexamples to bivalence and is the supposition of counterexamples coherent? My aim is to examine putative cases of truth-value gaps against an argument by Timothy Williamson, which shows that the supposition of counterexamples to bivalence is contradictory. The upshot of his argument is that either problematic utterances say nothing, or they cannot be neither true nor false.

I start by identifying truth-bearers: an utterance, for instance, is a truth-bearer if it says that something is the case. Truth-bearers are *evaluable* items, with truth- and falsity-conditions statable in corresponding instances of schemas for truth and falsehood. A *genuine* case of a truth-value gap should be an utterance that is neither true nor false but says something to be the case. But it is inconsistent to accept the schemas for truth and falsehood and the existence of genuine cases of truth-value gaps. Secondly, I expound Williamson's argument, which explores this inconsistency, and I identify two kinds of strategy to disarm his argument: those that preserve the schemas for truth and falsehood, and those that do not. Neither strategy is found to be persuasive. Thirdly, I argue that cases of reference failure causing truth-value gaps illustrate the upshot of Williamson's argument. Fourthly, I examine Scott Soames's account of liar sentences as counterexamples to bivalence. Soames adopts a strategy of the first kind to avoid contradictions. I argue that his solution allows some contradictions to be true, and that he fails to show that liar sentences are truth-bearers. Finally, I examine Charles Travis's case for *isostheneia*: an equal balancing of reasons to evaluate a statement as true or as false, in which case a statement is neither. Travis avoids contradictions by adopting a strategy of the second kind. I argue that the schemas for truth and falsehood are immune to Travis's objections, and that isostheneia fails to identify evaluable items.

The cases examined confirm that utterances that are neither true nor false say nothing. My claim is thus that truth-value gaps are not counterexamples to bivalence.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

> [T]here cannot be an intermediate between contradictories, but of one subject we must either affirm or deny any one predicate. This is clear, in the first place, if we define what the true and the false are. To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true; so that he who says of anything that it is, or that it is not, will say either what is true or what is false. (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 7, 1011^{b})

This dissertation is concerned with the challenge truth-value gaps pose to the principle of bivalence. The principle of bivalence says that every item of a certain kind – every truth-bearer – is either true or false. A counterexample to bivalence must be an item of the relevant kind that is neither. A possible characterization of truth-value gaps is to say that they are items that are neither true nor false, but could have been.

Bivalence and the challenge truth-value gaps create to the principle are important insofar as matters of truth and falsehood are important. We talk and think about the world, and we expect what we say and think to be true, but sometimes discover that what we said or thought was false. We seem to assume that what we say, think and believe is bivalent—that it is, if not true, then false—and this has effects on how we reason. Yet, our assumption that bivalence holds of what we say and think faces considerable difficulties. We encounter many cases that appear to be unevaluable, from sentences containing singular terms like proper names that turn out to be vacuous, to paradoxical cases like liar sentences. Faced with such cases, we are moved to abandon our assumption that what we say and think must be either true or false, and conclude that there are truth-value gaps. Nonetheless, we continue to regard Aristotle's elucidation of truth and falsehood as capturing something essential to what we understand by the notions.

The central question here addressed is: are truth-value gaps counterexamples to bivalence and is the supposition of truth-value gaps coherent? Aristotle's elucidation of truth and falsehood may be generalized schematically: to say that *P* is true if and only if *P*, and to say that *P* is false if and only if not *P*. However, it is inconsistent to hold the truth of each instance of these schemas and to hold that there are genuine truth-value gaps, since the right and left-hand sides of the biconditionals do not have the same truth-value when '*P*' is neither true nor false.

Timothy Williamson (1992 and 1994) explores this inconsistency in a powerful argument to the effect that the supposition of counterexamples to bivalence is contradictory. His argument is presented in the context of arguing that vague utterances in borderline cases cannot be neither true nor false. Williamson's argument is schematic and its application is not restricted to vagueness. The argument's fundamental assumptions are (i) the requirement that truth-bearers meet certain conditions: if utterances, for instance, they must say that something is the case; and (ii) the platitudes about the notions of truth and falsehood captured in the respective disquotational or equivalence schemas. The result of the argument is that *either* problematic utterances are not truth-bearers, because they fail to say that something is the case, *or* they cannot be neither true nor false.

My aim is to examine putative cases of truth-value gaps against Williamson's argument. If cases of truth-value gaps are to provide reasons to reject bivalence, the argument must be disarmed. The hypothesis I propose to evaluate is this: if the supposition of actual counterexamples to bivalence is incoherent (and Williamson's argument cannot be disarmed), then items that are neither true nor false cannot be truth-bearers. The claim that truth-value gaps are not genuine truth-bearers, thus not genuine counterexamples to

bivalence, has been defended by Strawson (1950a) and McDowell (1982), for instance. But this claim is usually dismissed, on the grounds that problematic utterances do say something, since they *could* have been truth-valued.

I identify two broad kinds of strategy to disarm Williamson's argument. On the one hand, there are strategies that hold on to the schemas for truth and falsehood, but try to rescue the schemas from inconsistency or from paradox. On the other hand, there are strategies that contemplate dismissing the schemas as correct. However, none of the strategies to avoid the derivation of contradictions considered is found to be persuasive. Hence, I accept Williamson's argument as valid, and agree with what it assumes. Moreover, the cases examined confirm the upshot of Williamson's argument: utterances that are neither true nor false say nothing.

My claim is that truth-value gaps are not challenges to bivalence. If an item is neither true nor false, then it does not have truth- and falsity-conditions, and there are no circumstances in which it could be evaluated as true or as false. Truth-bearers *have* truth- and falsity-conditions. So, an item that is neither true nor false is not a truth-bearer, it is not a *genuine* case of a truth-value gap.

This dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 1 explores some alternative candidates for the role of truth-bearers. Bivalence does not say that everything is either true or false. Equally, one who claims that there are counterexamples to bivalence should not hold that whatever is neither true nor false is a counterexample to bivalence. Just as some conditions must be met for some items to be evaluable, some conditions should be met for some items to be counterexamples to bivalence. In Chapter 1, I also review some accounts of truth,

identify platitudes associated with our understanding of the notions of truth and falsehood, and settle for one formulation of schemas for truth and for falsehood.

In Chapter 2, after presenting Williamson's argument, I examine some strategies to avoid the derivation of contradictions and argue that none of them is persuasive. I identify two types of strategy available: those that attempt to block the argument while maintaining the truth of every instance of equivalence or disquotational schemas for truth and falsehood, and those that admit that the schemas are inadequate (either for cases of truth-value gaps in particular, or in general). The strategies of the first type typically focus on revising the reading of negation, or of the biconditional, in order to avoid the derivation of contradictions. However, these strategies are either *ad hoc*, fail to deny bivalence, or create further difficulties. The second type of strategy can block the argument by forbidding the derivation of object-level negations, which is what leads to contradictions. This requires providing genuine objections to equivalence or disquotational schemas for truth and falsehood. However, this type of strategy either deprives us of reasons to hold that something is said to be the case, or deprives us of plausible and intuitive principles about truth and falsehood. I leave further discussion of two ways to avoid the derivation of contradictions, which illustrate the two types of strategy, for Chapters 4 and 5 where two proposals of truth-value gaps are considered.

Chapter 3 argues that reference failure provides the clearest illustration of the upshot of Williamson's argument. The case of reference failure illustrates how an utterance can be neither true nor false and no challenge to bivalence, because it fails to have any truth- and falsity-conditions. Cases of reference failure also illustrate how other conditions on truth-bearers are not met: for example, they fail to provide objects for propositional attitudes. This

is the clearest case that confirms Williamson's prediction that the price to pay for treating utterances as neither true nor false is to treat them as saying nothing.

The other two cases seem to be radically different from the case of reference failure. They involve utterances of perfectly meaningful sentences, with referents assigned to any singular terms. Nonetheless, the cases are equally affected by the same general problems that affect cases of reference failure. It may be doubted, however, that the prospect of treating other cases of putative truth-value gaps as characterizable in the same way, i.e., as truth-valueless utterances that fail to say anything (and fail to have truth- and falsity-conditions), is doomed to fail. After all, it may be thought, there must be truth-valueless cases such that we can conceive of circumstances in which they would have been true or circumstances in which they would have been false. If there were such cases, Williamson's argument would have to be disarmed. As argued in Chapter 2, the prospect of disarming the argument is dim.

Chapter 4 examines a recent proposal on liar sentences as counterexamples to bivalence. Assigning either truth-value to a liar sentence leads to contradictions. However, saying it is neither true nor false equally leads to contradictions. Scott Soames (1999) proposes a solution for the liar, according to which cases of the liar fall in truth-value gaps, amounting to counterexamples to bivalence. As Soames sees it, what leads to absurdities is the supposition that bivalence holds of liar sentences. Nevertheless, liar sentences also create problems for the equivalence schema for truth; assuming that liar sentences can instantiate the schema also leads to contradictions. Soames solves the problems by changing the reading of the biconditional in the formulation of the schemas. If Soames is right, we cannot suppose that cases of the liar are bivalent. But Soames is not right: he accepts that the schemas capture adequately our grasp of what it is for something to be true. Even if we change the reading of

the biconditional, an instance of the schema for truth relative to a liar sentence will entail that something is true just in case it is not true. It is hard to see how this can follow from an adequate understanding of the notion of truth. Soames claims that liar sentences are genuine truth-bearers, and are sentences that (in other circumstances) could have been truth-valued. One way to identify a truth-bearer is to say that it identifies a possible way for things to be, thereby identifying the conditions in which it is true or false. But nothing can be the case according to liar sentences, because they cannot identify a possible way for things to be, or a possible way for things not to be.

Chapter 5 discusses a phenomenon that is the most general in scope, since it is claimed to affect anything we might say. It does not involve reference failure, ambiguity, vagueness or paradoxical cases. It was proposed by Charles Travis (1994, 1998 and 2000). The phenomenon Travis purports to identify is the following: statements may be understood in different ways. A statement may be true if understood in one way, but understood another way it may be false. There are situations in which nothing decides how a statement is to be understood, and hence nothing decides its truth-value. Travis called this phenomenon *natural isostheneia* (as opposed to the Pyrrhonian epistemological notion of isostheneia). This is a serious and radical threat to the idea that what we say must be either true or false. On the one hand, isostheneia affects allegedly *evaluable* items – we apparently can identify the circumstances in which such items would be true; on the other hand, such items are actually neither true nor false. But Travis's characterization of isostheneia is unsustainable. Either we can identify the circumstances in which a statement would be true, in which case we cannot say it is neither true nor false, on pain of contradiction; or, if isostheneia is the impossibility

of settling an understanding, then it is the impossibility of settling what is said to be the case, and thus when it would be true, in which case we have failed to identify a truth-bearer.

The three types of cases are cases of truth-value gaps. This dissertation argues that none of these cases provides a counterexample to bivalence. In all of them, the failure to be true or false results from the failure in providing *evaluable* items. In none of them something is said, thought or believed, because in none of them something is said, thought or believed that might have been the case or not the case.

Chapter 1

TRUTH-BEARERS, TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD, AND TRUTH-VALUE GAPS

> A criterion for whether a mode of connection constitutes a thought is that it makes sense to ask whether it is true or untrue. (Frege, 1906a)

1.1 Introduction

Bivalence does not say that everything is either true or false. Equally, one who claims that there are counterexamples to bivalence should not hold that whatever is neither true nor false is a counterexample to bivalence. Just as some conditions must be met for some items to be evaluable, some conditions should be met for some items to be counterexamples to bivalence. If bivalence says that *all* items of kind X are either true or false, the question of whether truth-value gaps constitute a challenge to bivalence can be formulated as the question of whether there are items of kind X that are neither true nor false. Identifying the items of which bivalence is said to hold, and what can be counterexamples to it, requires the identification of truth-bearers. Williamson's argument, which shows that there cannot be counterexamples to bivalence, is schematic. The identification of truth-bearers is also the identification of what can instantiate Williamson's argument, and deductive arguments in general.

The principle of bivalence is often thought of as a logical principle. One way to understand that it is a logical principle is to take it as restricted to a particular formal language or to a particular logic (for instance classical logic). When it is so restricted, it is presupposed by the logic itself. Truth and falsehood are properties of what we say, think, believe, suppose, etc. Williamson takes truth-bearers as utterances that say that something is

the case. The cases I discuss in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 do not concern utterances only; thoughts and beliefs are relevant as truth-bearers in all three chapters. In Chapter 4, I discuss Soames's motivation to reject bivalence, and he takes sentences that express propositions as truth-bearers. In Chapter 5, I discuss Travis's claim that any statement of sublunary affairs may be neither true nor false (but might have been truth-valued), thus Travis takes statements as truth-bearers.

This chapter explores some alternative candidates for the role of truth-bearers. Some features that identify truth-bearers can be recognized without any commitment to what further characteristics truth-bearers should have. Truth-bearers are what *can* be true or false, hence they are *evaluable*. What is evaluable can also be stated, supposed, believed, thought, doubted, etc.; what can be true or false can entail and be entailed: it should at least entail itself and not contradict itself. Truth-bearers are true or false in specific conditions. The failure to meet these minimal conditions should cast doubt upon whether a truth-bearer is identified.

Some elucidation of truth and falsehood must also be given. There are some platitudes that express what we understand by truth and falsehood. One such platitude is that it is true (to say, think, believe) that *P* is true if and only if *P*; and that it is false (to say, think, believe) that *P* if and only if not *P*. One other such platitude is that it is true that *P* just in case it corresponds to the facts.

I start in §1.2 with a consideration of different candidates for truth-bearers. I identify what we do not want from truth-bearers and some minimal conditions we do want truth-bearers to meet. Some of the issues raised in this section may appear trivial, but it is worth drawing attention to them as they are relevant for later chapters. §1.3 focuses on the notions

of truth and falsehood and the possibility of stating truth- and falsity-conditions. I briefly review the main theories of truth, review some of the platitudes associated with truth and falsehood and choose a formulation of schemas for truth and falsehood aiming to capture our understanding of the notions. §1.4 draws from §1.2 and §1.3 what cases of truth-value gaps should be in order to amount to counterexamples to bivalence.

1.2 Truth-bearers

Truth-bearers are what can be true or false. Among the possible candidates are sentences, particular utterances or inscriptions of sentences (sentence tokens); acts such as statements and assertions; psychological states such as beliefs and thoughts. Propositions, conceived of as that which is expressed in particular utterances or inscriptions, what is said, stated or asserted, and the objects of some psychological states are also said to be truth-bearers. With the exception of types of sentences, it is legitimate to describe any of the possible candidates as true or as false.

1.2.1 Sentences

Sentence types are not truth-bearers, since different utterances or inscriptions of a given sentence can be used on different occasions to say different things. Usually, the examples provided to illustrate this are sentences involving demonstratives or indexicals, and ambiguous sentences, for instance:

(1) Today is very hot

(2) This is mine

(3) He saw her duck

The sentences in (1), (2) and (3) indicate that we need to take the sentences as uttered or inscribed in particular contexts. It is normally added that utterances of distinct sentence types could be uttered to say the same as would have been said by utterances of (1), (2) or (3):

(4) Yesterday was very hot

(5) That is hers

(6) He saw the duck that belongs to her

Contextualists claim that it is not only sentences involving indexicals and demonstratives that require taking into account the context of utterance to determine what is said and when it is true or false. The central tenet of contextualism is that the linguistic meaning of sentences as types underdetermines truth-conditions and what is said. Pragmatic considerations related to the context of utterance, the purposes and intentions of speakers in making an utterance, and further background assumptions (not all of which can be made explicit) have a crucial role to play in determining what is said and truth-conditions.[1] Here is an intuitive example to illustrate the contextualist thesis:

(7) I've had breakfast

This example is from Recanati (2001). Someone may be asked if she wants something to eat, replying: 'I've had breakfast'. In this case, the speaker is not to be understood as having said that her life was not entirely breakfastless (although, in a relevant context, that could have been what she wanted to say). Instead, she is to be understood as having said that she had breakfast *that morning*. Recanati's point is that what is understood as having been

[1] Contextualism, or truth-conditional pragmatics, has been expounded for instance by Travis (1994, 1996, 1998 and 2000), Recanati (1993, 2001 and 2002) and Bezuidenhout (2002). Some aspects of contextualism are discussed in Chapter 5, as a background to Travis's views on truth-value gaps. I do not take a stand as to whether contextualism is correct or not.

said depends on a pragmatic process that requires the recognition of the speaker's communicative intentions. The semantic interpretation in itself is "powerless to determine what is said" (Recanati, 2001: 87).

The standard line of argument against regarding sentence types as truth-bearers is that, on the one hand, tokens of the same type (for instance (1)) can be uttered on different occasions to say different things. On the other hand, tokens of different types (for instance (1) and (4)) can be used to say the same to be the case. Tokens of the same type can be true in different conditions, and tokens of different types can be true in the same conditions. So, sentences as types are not what can be true or false.

1.2.2 Sentence tokens – utterances and inscriptions

Why not say that token sentences are truth-bearers, for example, (1) 'today is very hot'? Particular utterances or inscriptions can be described as true or as false. There are, nonetheless, some difficulties with taking particular utterances and inscriptions as truth-bearers, which indicate that some restriction must be imposed on sentence tokens.

When it is said that utterances are evaluable, we do not want every speech-act or every utterance of a meaningful sentence to be a truth-bearer. Consider the example:

(8) He loves his mother

If (8) 'He loves his mother' is uttered as an example in an English class, it is not supposed to say anything true or false.

Some sentence tokens, utterances or inscriptions, can change truth-value, or lose their status as truth-bearers:

(9) These are cheese sandwiches

(10) I'm back in five minutes

Example (9) is from Goldstein (2001): one can prepare cheese sandwiches for tea and attach a label with the inscription 'These are cheese sandwiches' to a toothpick. If the label is stuck into a pile of cheese sandwiches, then something true is said. If the same token (same label) is stuck into a pile of egg sandwiches, then something false is said. If the label is left forgotten on the kitchen table, it is not used to say anything true or false.[2]

The example in (10) is one we encounter often. Suppose someone writes, 'I'm back in five minutes' in a post-it note and sticks it on her office door. She will then re-use the note several times, as long as the glue sticks, indicating each time she uses the note in how long she can be expected back in the office. But what is written on the note is not supposed to indicate anything when the note rests in her desk drawer.

What the examples (9)—(10) indicate is that physical tokens of sentences may not be truth-bearers. They may be (re)used on different occasions, or for different purposes, to say different things, changing accordingly in truth-value. They may also not be used to say anything at all. The restriction imposed on utterances (and inscriptions) is thus that an utterance of a sentence is a truth-bearer if it says something.

Although sentences as types are not truth-bearers, sentence meaning constrains what utterances of sentences can say and the type of truth-conditions utterances can have. The examples above (2) 'This is mine'/(5) 'That is hers' are tokens of different sentence types. But it is the conventional linguistic meaning of 'this', 'that', 'mine' and 'hers' that constrains what particular utterances of sentences containing them can say. Individuals are identified

[2] "A piece of string is neither true nor false even if that string happens to shrivel into the shape of a sentence". (Goldstein, 2001: 116)

only in particular contexts of utterance, so only after the relevant contextual parameters are identified can utterances of (2) and (5) be evaluated with respect to different possible circumstances, because only after the relevant contextual parameters are identified do particular utterances of (2) and (5) say anything evaluable. Given the linguistic meaning of the sentence types and of the contexts in which (2) and (5) are uttered, one can know whether (2) and (5) say the same.

At this point, contextualists remark that context-dependence affects most expressions and words, not only indexicals and demonstratives, and that for most context-dependent expressions there is no rule indicating which contextual parameters need be identified for determining what an utterance of a given sentence says. Nonetheless, we can arguably continue to regard utterances as truth-bearers if we recognize some condition such as: if an utterance *u* (as made in context *C*) says that *P*, it is a truth-bearer.

1.2.3 Acts and states—statements, thoughts, beliefs

Rather than say that an utterance *u* as made in context *C* saying that *P* is a truth-bearer, one can prefer to say that a statement is a truth-bearer.[3] Arguably, 'statement' is ambiguous: it can be identified as an act of uttering a certain sentence, or as what is said by uttering the sentence. If we take statements as actions performed by uttering given sentences, we can

[3] Both Austin (1950) and Strawson (1950b), for instance, agreed in taking statements as truth-bearers. But they disagreed in what they took statements to be. For Austin a statement is "the words or sentence *as used by a certain person on a certain occasion*… with reference to an historic situation, event or what not" (Austin, 1950: 151). Strawson, on the other hand, recognizes the ambiguity in 'statement': "'My statement' may be either what I say or my saying it. My saying something is certainly an episode. What I say is not. It is the latter, not the former, we declare to be true... The word 'statement' and the phrase 'What he said', like the conjunction 'that' followed by a noun clause, are convenient grammatically substantival devices, which we employ, on certain occasions, for certain purposes, notably (but not only) the occasions on which we use the word 'true'" (Strawson, 1950b: 163).

agree that statements are described as true or as false insofar as something is stated. If a statement were to be characterized only as an act of uttering a given sentence, the same problems with taking utterances *per se* as truth-bearers would appear.

The same ambiguity exists in 'belief' or 'thought'. One can distinguish between someone's psychological state of believing or thinking and that which is believed or thought. If we mean the first sense of belief or thought, as a psychological state, then two different people cannot have the same beliefs or thoughts, in the sense that they cannot be in the (numerically) *same* psychological state. If we mean the second sense, as that which is believed in or thought about, then we can say that two different people can share the same belief, i.e., they can both believe, for instance, that today is very hot. One can state what one thinks, doubt what someone else believes, question what another person supposes, etc.

It is reasonable, thus, to take utterances, statements, beliefs, thoughts, suppositions, and so on, as evaluable as true or as false insofar as something is said, believed, thought, supposed, etc. (Taking the fact that many utterances or inscriptions are neither true nor false as a counterexample to bivalence would trivialize the possibility of truth-value gaps). The move that usually follows this consideration is to say that what is primarily true or false is that which is said, thought, or believed; more specifically, that which is said or thought *to be the case*.

1.2.4 What is said, thought, believed – propositions

Propositions are usually taken to be what is said, thought, believed, etc. Utterances are said to be true in virtue of the proposition expressed, beliefs are true in virtue of the proposition believed, and the same goes for other speech-acts or psychological states.

Not all philosophers are comfortable with the notion of propositions. One may complain that propositions are ontologically suspect, and that all the features required of truth-bearers can be accounted for by focusing on particular utterances or inscriptions, i.e., particular marks or sounds located in space and time. One may also complain that propositions are mysterious entities, because they do not have sufficiently precise identity conditions (or that sufficient and necessary conditions for propositions to be expressed cannot be stated).[4] There are some difficulties with taking only particular utterances and inscriptions as truth-bearers, as seen with the examples (8)—(10) above. Moreover, sufficiently precise identity-conditions are hard to come by for many notions. For instance, I am the same person I was yesterday, but it is not clear that we can identify sufficiently precise identity conditions for being the same person over time.

I think we can dismiss concerns with the ontological status of propositions. It is (at least for present purposes) sufficient that we recognize the role the notion of a proposition plays. The *prima facie* evidence for propositions is provided by the need to distinguish what is said by different utterances of the same sentence, and the recognition that different utterances, suppositions, beliefs, and thoughts can be about the same thing. Supposing, believing and thinking are usually described as propositional attitudes, because they are attitudes taken towards propositions, or attitudes that take propositions as objects.

The notion of a proposition derives part of its purpose from examples such as:

(10) It is true that today is very hot

(11) I think that today is very hot

(12) You doubt that today is very hot

[4] Cf. Quine (1986)

The conjunction 'that' is followed by 'today is very hot' and the two form a that-clause 'that today is very hot'. From (11)—(13) it is legitimate to infer that there is something I think which you doubt, and to infer that *what* I think is true. If what I think is true, then today is very hot. Inferences of this kind are sometimes taken as indicating that that-clauses are referential singular terms.[5] If they are referential singular terms, then propositions are the objects or items referred to.

Two comments on this: some may disagree that beliefs and thoughts are related to propositions, and argue that beliefs and thoughts are not related to an intermediary entity, rather that they are directly related to, or are of, what is or may be the case.[6] The complaint depends on a particular conception of propositions, and I have taken no stand on *any* particular theory about the nature of propositions. (I am merely recognizing some necessary conditions to identify propositions, which I take to be the least controversial and the best motivated by pre-theoretical evidence.) The second comment concerns taking propositions as the *objects* of certain attitudes, actions or psychological states. One may be concerned that this commits us to objectifying propositions, such that we can refer to and quantify objectually over them, which may again bring about the concerns with the ontological status of propositions.

Horwich's (1998) minimalist theory of truth takes propositions as truth-bearers, and, on his view, we *can* refer to propositions. Horwich thinks that the truth-predicate exists solely for the sake of a logical need, and maintains that it is from the propriety of inferences such as

[5] See for instance Horwich (1998).

[6] Cf. Travis (2000, *passim*). His position is discussed in Chapter 5. A position that combines the two claims, that i) propositions are the objects of certain acts and states (such as statements, thoughts and beliefs) and ii) that certain acts and states are of what is or may be the case, maintains that propositions are what is or may be the case. The combination is achieved in the claim that facts are true propositions. Cf. for instance Russell (1904), Frege (1918), McDowell (1987; 1994: Lecture II), Hornsby (1996), Williamson (1999; 2000: Chapter 1).

the above that "propositions involving truth derive their utility" (Horwich, 1998: 2-3). What guarantees that truth plays this inferential role is simply that for any declarative sentence '*P*' we are guaranteed an equivalent sentence 'the proposition that *P* is true' (or 'it is true that *P*'). The original sentence '*P*' is converted into a noun-phrase 'that *P*' to which the truth predicate is then attached. Conversely, the truth predicate works as a denominalizor: for any expression 'that *P*' of which truth is predicated, a sentence containing the noun-phrase can be converted into a sentence '*P*'.

As seen on earlier sections, it is not entirely correct to hold that for *any* declarative sentence '*P*', we are guaranteed an equivalent sentence 'it is true that *P*'. We certainly do not want to say that any sentence type '*P*' is equivalent to 'it is true that *P*', because sentence-types are not truth-bearers. We also cannot accept without qualification that any utterance or inscription of a declarative sentence '*P*' is guaranteed to be equivalent to 'it is true that *P*'. Take for example, (9) 'These are cheese sandwiches'. If the label with the inscription remains forgotten in the kitchen table, (9) is neither true nor false, thence there is no true equivalence between that token of 'these are cheese sandwiches' and anything else. Rather, we should say that for any sentence '*P*' expressing a proposition we are guaranteed an equivalent sentence 'it is true that *P*' (where the sentence occurring embedded in 'it is true that __' expresses the same proposition as that expressed by '*P*' on its own).

Soames (1999) also takes propositions as truth-bearers (his motivation to reject bivalence is discussed in Chapter 4). He proposes some identifying features of propositions that summarize part of the role of the notion of proposition:

> "What does matter is the conception of propositions as objects of belief and assertion, as semantic information contents of sentences in contexts, and as fundamental bearers of truth and falsehood… the truth of a sentence or utterance depends on the truth of the proposition it

> expresses. A sentence or utterance cannot be true if it says nothing or expresses no proposition. Rather it is true because it expresses a true proposition." (Soames, 1999: 18)

Whether or not the truth predicate exists solely for the sake of a logical need, propositions do meet a logical need. We can embed sentences in different contexts, for example those created by 'not'/ 'it is not the case that', 'and' 'or', 'if… then…' This is what Wright calls 'conservation of truth-aptitude under embedding' (Wright, 1999: 227). The conservation of truth-aptitude under embedding is associated with entailment and deductive inferential relations holding between truth-bearers, and propositions embody the commitment that the same is said or expressed in different occurrences of the same sentence.

Russell (1903) proposes a definition of proposition that captures the connection between propositions and logic:

> "It may be observed that, although implication is indefinable, proposition can be defined. Every proposition implies itself, and whatever is not a proposition implies nothing." (1903: 15).

We expect that every instance of the schema 'if *P*, then *P*' is true. Equally, we expect that every instance of the schema '*P* and not *P*' is false. We may rephrase Russell's point: whatever says nothing (expresses no proposition) implies nothing. And, we may add, whatever says nothing (expresses no proposition) contradicts nothing.

We can take utterances as true or as false if something is said. We can thus regard propositions as what is said in utterances, what may be believed or thought, and what stands in entailment and inferential relations. Conversely, we can regard utterances as expressing beliefs and thoughts, and entering in entailment and inferential relations, if they say something or express a proposition.

Acknowledging this tells us very little about what it is for utterances to say something, or what it is for utterances to be true or false. I have said practically nothing about truth- and falsity-conditions for example. The next section reviews some accounts of the notion of truth, platitudes associated with truth and falsehood, and chooses a formulation of schemas for the notions.

1.3 Truth and falsehood

1.3.1 Accounts of truth

The simplest and most widely endorsed elucidation of the notions of truth and falsehood is given in Aristotle's *dictum*: "to say of what is not that it is, and of what is that it is not, is false; while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 7, 1011[b]). There may be disagreement over how much this tells us about truth and falsehood and how to reformulate the *dictum* in present terminology. For instance, while some take the *dictum* as the first statement of truth as correspondence,[7] the *dictum* may also be seen as a first statement of deflationism.[8]

Virtually every theory or definition of truth has been criticized. Theories are often accused of neglecting some important feature or constraint on the notion of truth. Sometimes the very possibility of defining truth is doubted, for the notion of truth is so basic and fundamental that any prospect of definition is accused of presupposing it.

True statements should be coherent, but coherence theories are accused of ignoring that coherent statements may nonetheless be false. Pragmatists face similar difficulties, for a

[7] Cf. for instance Blackburn and Simmons (1999: 1). Tarski's semantic definitions equally intend to capture the notions of truth and falsehood elucidated in Aristotle's *dictum*. Cf. Tarski (1944).
[8] Cf. Lindström (1999: 103).

belief may yield successful action while being false. One may hold that at the basis of the notions of truth and falsehood are those of the correctness or incorrectness of a statement or assertion, and that these are ruled by the warrant or justification for making a statement.[9] Again, it seems to be possible that statements be warranted but false, or unwarranted (or unjustified) but true.

True statements or propositions are said to correspond to reality or to the facts, to "tell it like it is".[10] It is also said that if something is true, there must be *something* "out there in the world" that makes it true. These remarks capture intuitions about truth, but spelling them out in full detail is not easily accomplished. In particular, the difficulties rest in elucidating what correspondence consists in or what 'making true' amounts to, and explaining the notions of propositions and facts without presupposing the notion of truth.

In contrast, Frege (1918) was persuaded that no adequate definition of truth could be satisfactory and argued against any attempt to define it. Part of his argument is that if one proposes a definition of truth, one must do so without appealing to or presupposing the notion being defined, and this, he claimed, does not seem possible. In particular, Frege argued against defining truth as the correspondence between a representation and reality, for defining truth as correspondence requires laying down in which way the correspondence obtains. We would then have to ask whether it is true that the correspondence obtained in the laid down respect, and this process could be iterated indefinitely, so the attempt to define

[9] Cf. Dummett (1978).
[10] Different accounts of correspondence can be found in Russell (1910 and 1918, for instance) and Wittgenstein (1922); Austin (1950); Armstrong (1997)

truth as correspondence collapses. Hence, Frege concludes, "it is probable that the content of the word 'true' is unique and indefinable" (Frege, 1918: 87).[11]

A departure from traditional accounts of truth is to hold that truth is not a substantial property, and thence that it is a mistake to search for its underlying nature. This is one of the claims of deflationism, its main claim being that the meaning of 'true' is fully given (or implicitly defined) in instances of the disquotational schema: '*P*' is true if and only if *P*. If one takes propositions as the primary truth-bearers, 'true' is instead said to be implicitly defined in instances of the equivalence schema: it is true that *P* if and only if *P*.[12] The appeal of deflationism results largely from the simplicity and intuitiveness of the equivalence schema. Nevertheless, deflationism has also received criticism. It is objected, for instance, that it fails to accommodate the correspondence intuition, or that it is incompatible with truth-conditional semantics.[13]

At the basis of truth-conditional semantics is the thought that what is said or expressed in an utterance of a sentence can be identified by stating the utterance's truth-conditions. Truth-conditional semantics presupposes that the truth-conditions of an utterance can be derived from the contribution of component words to the sentence uttered (bracketing context-dependent expressions like indexicals and demonstratives).[14] However, if what is said in an utterance of a sentence is specified by stating its truth-conditions, then we cannot

[11] Other perspectives on the indefinability of truth are, for instance, Russell's (1904) and Davidson's (1996). For a criticism to Frege's argument, see for example Walker (1997), Soames (1999).
[12] In defence of deflationism, see Field (1994), Horwich (1998) and Soames (1999).
[13] Dummett (1959, 1991 ch. 3, 1999), Davidson (1967; 1996). For further criticism of deflationism, see Wright (1992 ch.1; 1999: 209 ff).
[14] This is questioned by contextualism, also called 'truth-conditional pragmatics'. Nonetheless, truth-conditional pragmatics (generally) does not question the more fundamental claim that what is said in an utterance (in a given context) is identifiable by the conditions in which that utterance, as made in that context, is true. See for instance Recanati (1993). For recent and comprehensive work on truth-conditional semantics, see Larson and Segal (1995). For criticism of truth-conditional pragmatics, see García-Carpintero (2001).

assume that what is said has been previously and independently determined. Horwich and Soames' positions, in particular, need propositions to be identifiable independently of truth-conditions.

Both Soames and Horwich dedicate some attention to the challenge posed by truth-conditional semantics. Soames's (1999) reply to the challenge is as follows: The argument in favour of truth-conditional semantics assumes i) that truth is an unrestricted notion applying to sentences of arbitrary languages, and ii) that understanding a sentence (or an utterance of a sentence) is *always* based on understanding the conditions in which it is true. So, the grasp of the notion of truth is necessary for understanding any sentence. Soames maintains that the two assumptions i) and ii) are doubtful, because "the notion of a sentence is a fairly sophisticated one that children acquire after they have succeeded in understanding a substantial amount of language; even more so the notion of a true sentence" (Soames, 1999: 29). He then adds that we teach children the meaning of 'true' by providing instances of the equivalence schema, and concludes "it seems as if a child acquires the concepts of truth and of a true sentence after he or she has already mastered lots of language". (*idem*)

Horwich (1998) admits that knowledge of the truth-conditions of a sentence cannot constitute both our knowledge of its meaning and our grasp of the truth of the sentence. He holds that what is mistaken is that our knowledge of the *meaning* of a sentence is constituted by our knowledge of its truth-conditions. Truth-conditional semantics, as he claims, associates a sentence '*P*' (as uttered) with a possible state of affairs where the form of association is given by saying that the (uttered) sentence '*P*' is true if and only if *P*. He claims that some forms of representation must "obtain their content by means other than having been explicitly associated with possible states of affairs." (Horwich, 1998: 69). If

some cases of meaning do not "arise from explicit associations with truth-conditions", why should we expect to ascribe content by association with possible states of affairs? His solution is

> "to recognize that while understanding a sentence does indeed usually *coincide* with an explicit knowledge of its truth condition, understanding does not *consist* in such knowledge. It consists, rather, in appreciating the sentence's syntactic structure and understanding its constituent words, which, in turn, consists in knowing basic regularities in their use (including the assertability conditions) of all the sentences in which those words occur." (*idem*)

We may agree that understanding a sentence does not consist in knowing its truth-conditions, and that to understand a sentence one must appreciate its syntactic structure and understand its constituent words "which, in turn, consists in knowing basic regularities in their use". But understanding a sentence as such is not sufficient to grasp the different possible truth-conditions of utterances of, for example, (7) 'I've had breakfast', (9) 'These are cheese sandwiches', or (10) 'I'm back in five minutes'. One can understand each sentence, appreciating its syntactic structure and constituent words without having any idea of what, if anything, is said in an utterance or inscription of each sentence. What Horwich identifies as the conditions required for understanding a sentence are not the conditions required for understanding what an utterance of the sentence says. What should be provided is an account of what exactly is distinctive of some relevant "cases of meaning" or "forms of representation" that makes them susceptible to association with truth-conditions and possible states of affairs.

This discussion may be set aside, since it is sufficient to accept that instances of the equivalence schemas state truth-conditions, whether one follows deflationists in holding that

each proposition specifies its truth-conditions, or whether one endorses the idea that truth-conditions identify what is said or expressed.

1.3.2 Platitudes

Wright (1999) proposes an interesting alternative to an analysis of truth in terms of sufficient and necessary conditions. Even if it is admitted that the notion of truth is too basic to be defined, that does not mean the notion cannot be illuminated by gathering basic platitudes related to it. Wright proposes a list of such platitudes:

> ": the transparency of truth—that to assert is to present as true and, more generally, that any attitude to a proposition is an attitude to its truth—that to believe, doubt or fear, for example, that *p*, is to believe, doubt or fear that *p* is true. (*transparency*)
>
> : the opacity of truth… that a thinker may be so situated that a particular truth is beyond her ken, that some truths may never be known, that some truths are unknowable in principle. (*opacity*)
>
> : the conservation of truth-aptitude under embedding:… truth-apt propositions have negations, conjunctions, disjunctions, etc. which are likewise truth-apt. (*embedding*)
>
> : the correspondence platitude—for a proposition to be true is for it to correspond to reality, accurately reflect how matters stand, 'tell it like it is', etc. (*correspondence*)
>
> : the contrast of truth with justification—a proposition may be true without being justified, and vice-versa. (*contrast*)
>
> : the timelessness of truth—if a proposition is ever true, then it always is, so that whatever may, at any particular time, be truly asserted may—perhaps by appropriate transformations of mood, or tense—be truly asserted at any time. (*timelessness*)
>
> : that truth is absolute—there is, strictly, no such thing as proposition's being more or less true; propositions are completely true if at all. (*absoluteness*)" (Wright, 1999: 227)

The platitudes captured in Wright's compilation focus only on truth, but the notion of falsehood is equally important for bivalence. Parallel platitudes for falsehood can be adapted from Wright's list, but the task is not straightforward. Perhaps falsehood is *transparent* in this sense: to assert not *P* is to present *P* as false; and to believe, hope or desire that not *P* is

to hope or desire that *P* is false. If one asserts, believes, etc. that *P*, when not *P*, one's assertion, belief, etc. is false, just as if one asserts, believes, etc. that *P*, when *P*, one's assertion, belief, etc. is true.

We can regard falsehoods as opaque in this sense: that a thinker may be so situated that a particular falsehood is beyond her ken, because she may not know that something is false.

Some caution must be taken with a reformulation of the correspondence platitude for falsehood. With relation to truth, it says that for a proposition to be true is for it to correspond to reality, accurately reflect how matters stand, 'tell it like it is', etc. One could say that for a proposition to be false is for it not to correspond to reality, but this seems to eliminate at the start the possibility of truth-value gaps. If one takes correspondence together with the absoluteness of truth—that propositions are completely true, if at all—then whenever a proposition is less than true, it fails to correspond to reality, which would mean it is false.

An alternative, considered by Blackburn and Simmons (1999: 23), is to say that a statement or proposition is true if it corresponds to a state of affairs that obtains, and false if it corresponds to a state of affairs that does not obtain (it is neither true nor false if it fails to correspond to any state of affairs). The question that arises is: how can something correspond to a state of affairs that does not obtain? If a proposition is false, the world must somehow be different from what it would have been had that proposition been true. But it is not clear how the correspondence intuition should be spelled out to account for falsehood.[15] Moreover, the

[15] Williamson (1999), in discussing the truthmaker principle (that every truth is made true by something), addresses the problem: "Consider the truth that there is no golden mountain. By (TM), something is such that, necessarily, if it exists then there is no golden mountain. What is this thing whose existence prevents that of a golden mountain? It is not the sum of all actual mountains (which are not golden) or of all actual golden things (which are not mountains), for those sums could exist even if there were a golden mountain. If we say 'the absence of a golden mountain', what kind of thing is an absence? A state of affairs? Although we can try constructing a theory of such things, it is natural to suspect an illicit nominalization… Why try to make a noun-

correspondence *platitude* for truth is only accepted as such by different parties in a very non-committal and minimal sense (cf. for example Horwich 1998: 8—11, or Blackburn and Simmons 1999: 8).

The remaining platitudes are more straightforward. Aptitude for falsehood is conserved under embedding: falsehood-apt propositions have negations, conjunctions, disjunctions, etc. which are likewise apt for truth or falsehood. The contrast between truth and justification already concedes the parallel contrast between falsehood and lack of justification. Falsehood appears to be as timeless as truth: if a proposition is ever false, then it always is, so that whatever may at any particular time be falsely asserted—may, perhaps by appropriate transformations of mood, or tense—be falsely asserted at any time. Equally, falsehood is as absolute as truth—there is no such thing as a proposition's being more or less false; propositions are completely false, if at all.[16]

I think we can take the above as platitudinous principles about truth and falsehood, as long we bear in mind that for these to be *platitudes* they must be regarded in a minimal, uncommitted sense. For instance, the correspondence platitude, to be accepted by all parties, cannot be developed as other more robust correspondence theories of truth, such as Armstrong's (1997).

The next section chooses a formalization of schemas for truth and falsehood that purports to be consistent with the above platitudes.

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phrase do the job already done by the sentence 'there is no golden mountain'?" (Williamson, 1999: 259) If it is true that there is no golden mountain, it is false that there is a golden mountain. Whatever makes the one truth true makes the one falsehood false. So, what is it in the world that makes it false?

[16] Notice that the absoluteness of *truth* is not incoherent with the admission of more truth-values, beside *true* and *false*. For example, one who endorses a many-valued logic will make *truth* correspond to the value 1, and *falsity* correspond to 0, admitting other values between 0 and 1. So, although there are higher or lower degrees of truth-values, there is no higher or lower degree of *truth*, since truth is, by definition, the highest value possible. Therefore, many-valued logics are coherent with the absoluteness of truth.

1.3.3 The schemas for truth and falsehood

Several platitudes associated with the notions of truth and falsehood have been identified. Aristotle's *dictum* captures one such platitude – transparency, and this also appears to be the intuition behind Horwich's equivalence schema for truth. The so-called correspondence intuition is equally supposed to express a truism. Russell (1904), Frege (1918) and Strawson (1950b), among others, held it to be evident that it is true that *P* just in case it is a fact that *P*. It is sufficient, for present purposes, to put forward an adequate generalization for the truth- and falsity-conditions of truth-bearers, without taking further commitments to particular theories or definitions of truth.

Williamson (1994: 188) proposes to capture the intuition behind Aristotle's *dictum* in the following schemas for truth and falsehood:[17]

(T) If *u* says that *P*, then *u* is true if and only if *P*

(F) If *u* says that *P*, then *u* is false if and only if not *P*

In (T) and (F), '*u*' is to be replaced by a name of an utterance and '*P*' by a declarative sentence whose inscription says that something is the case.

The commitment to (T) and (F) is the commitment to what they capture of our understanding of the notions of truth and falsehood, but it is not a commitment to the idea that they capture *all* there is to be said about the notions.

[17] Mackie (1973) also proposes a generalization for the *dictum*: "The truth-condition for anything introduced as the statement, belief, and so on, that *p* is simply *p*" (Mackie, 1973: 22). Similarly, we may add, the falsity-conditions for anything introduced as the statement, belief, and so on, that *P* is simply not *P*. As Williamson's argument against counterexamples to bivalence is central to this dissertation, I adopt his schemas for truth and falsehood whenever the discussion of particular proposals of truth-value gaps does not force considering other formulations.

The two essential features of (T) and (F) are:

i) Utterances meeting a conditional requirement are truth-bearers – an utterance is a truth-bearer if it says that something is the case. This is coherent with the result of §1.2.

ii) We must instantiate the schemas with the same sentence saying the same to identify *both* what the utterance named says *and* its truth- and falsity-conditions.

Williamson (1994: 188, n. 2) considers the possibility of quantifying universally over '*u*' and '*P*'. Since what instantiates '*u*' in the schemas are named utterances, the quantification over utterances is quantification into name position. What instantiates '*P*' are sentences, so the quantification must be into sentence position. If the quantification is substitutional, the formulas will be restricted to what is expressible in English with sentences inserted in the place of '*P*', whereas the utterances themselves do not have to be in English.

The fact that we quantify into sentence position does not mean that we are talking about sentences, any more than quantifying into name position means that we are talking about names. Names name (when they do), and sentences say something to be the case/express propositions (when they do).[18]

I think that (T) and (F) are preferable to Horwich's equivalence schema:

(E) It is true *that P* iff *P*

Horwich explicitly says that '*that P*' is a singular term referring to a proposition. So, if we are to quantify schema (E), the noun-phrase '*that P*' occupies a position open to object variables. Therefore, when we quantify over the proposition – *that P* – we cannot

[18] For a discussion of quantification into sentence position, in opposition to quantification into name position in the truthmaker principle (that every truth is made true by some*thing*), see Williamson (1999).

simultaneously quantify over the sentence on the right-hand side of the biconditional that expresses the proposition (but does not *refer* to it). We can obtain something like:

($\exists x$) (x is true iff P)

This requires only that some proposition be true if and only if P is the case, but here there is no evident relation between the two sides of the biconditional. What is appealing in equivalence schemas for truth is that we instantiate the schemas with the same sentence in both sides of the biconditional. If schema (E) is interpreted as Horwich proposes, that appeal seems to be lost.[19]

(T) and (F) do not face the same problem, since the bearers of truth and falsity are utterances themselves. What is identified as being said to be the case in an utterance is also identified as the utterance's truth-condition – if an utterance says something to be the case, it is true just in case what it says is the case. If an utterance says nothing, it has no truth- or falsity-conditions. Conversely, if the utterance has no truth- or falsity-conditions, it says nothing.

1.4 Bivalence and truth-value gaps

What about bivalence? Williamson proposes the following formulation of the principle:

(PB) if u says that P, then either u is true or u is false

[19] The axioms of Horwich's minimalist theory cannot simply be all propositions expressed by (non-paradoxical) instances of (E). There are several problems with this: the collection of axioms would be too large to form a set. Cf. Horwich (1998: 20) and Lindström (1999: 108). We cannot quantify over propositions on both sides of the biconditional, because sentences *express* propositions, and only that-clauses (or so Horwich claims) *refer* to propositions. If (E) is quantified substitutionally, it can only be instantiated with sentences of English. For detailed discussion of the logical difficulties arising for the proper formulation of the minimalist theory, see Lindström (1999).

(PB) is schematic; it does not have the form 'every X is either true or false', where 'every X' quantifies over your choice of truth-bearers X. Presumably, (PB) can be strengthened by universally quantifying over '*u*' and '*P*', as Williamson (1994: 188, n. 2) suggests. But when quantifying into sentence position, as we must to cover '*P*', we appear to be constrained to what is expressible in our own language. If we admit, as seems intuitive, that there are unknown truths (the opacity of truth Wright identifies), and moreover that there are inexpressible truths (and falsehoods), then it is not clear that either, (T), (F) or (PB) cover them.

What alternative candidates are there to insert in the place of 'X' in 'Every X is either true or false'? In §1.2, we saw reasons not to insert sentences. Utterances and statements are acceptable if they meet a condition like the conditional requirement in Williamson's formulation. Would propositions fare any better? To formulate bivalence for propositions, we should quantify universally over all propositions, saying: Every proposition is either true or false. The possibility of quantifying over all propositions requires that the supposition of a totality of propositions be coherent. A possible source of problems for this supposition is Russell's (1903) argument to the effect that it yields contradictions,[20] and this may be a reason to remain content with a schematic formulation of bivalence. We should distinguish the schema itself, which does not introduce any paradoxes, from putative paradoxical

[20] "Let us state this new contradiction more fully. If *m* be a class of propositions, the proposition "every *m* is true" may or may not be itself an *m*. But there is a one-one relation of this proposition to *m*: if *n* be different from *m*, "every *n* is true" is not the same proposition as "every *m* is true". Consider now the whole class of propositions of the form "every *m* is true", and having the property of not being the members of their respective *m*'s. Let this class be *w*, and let *p* be the proposition "every *w* is true". If *p* is a *w*, it must possess the defining property of *w*; but this property demands that *p* should not be a *w*. On the other hand, if *p* not be a *w*, then *p* does possess the defining property of *w*, and therefore is a *w*. Thus the contradiction appears unavoidable… The totality of all logical objects, or of all propositions, involves, it would seem, a fundamental logical difficulty." (Russell, 1903: 527-8)

instances of it, as liar sentences threaten to be (the case of liar sentences is to be discussed in Chapter 4). Moreover, the schematic formulation is sufficient for the discussion of truth-value gaps, because the question of the possibility of truth-value gaps is the question of whether there are particular items of the relevant kind that falsify the schema.

How should we understand truth-value gaps? The standard option is to characterize them as truth-bearers that are neither true nor false. As I said in §1.1, truth-bearers are what *can* be true or false, i.e. truth-bearers are *evaluable*. On this understanding, cases of truth-value gaps are evaluable items (they could have been true or false) that fail to be truth-valued. To meet (T) and (F), truth-value gaps must be utterances saying that something is the case, true or false in given conditions, that nonetheless are neither true nor false. These cases of putative truth-value gaps may be called *genuine* truth-value gaps. Nonetheless, the possibility of genuine cases of truth-value gaps seems to be inconsistent with holding the truth of every instance of equivalence schemas for truth and falsehood:

(T) If *u* says that *P*, then *u* is true if and only if *P*

(F) If *u* says that *P*, then *u* is false if and only if not *P*

If we assume that *u* says something, but is neither true nor false, the consequent of the schemas cannot be true. It is false that *u* is true, and it is false that *u* is false, but *P* is neither true nor false.

The next chapter presents Williamson's argument against the supposition of truth-value gaps thus understood. The upshot of Williamson's argument is that it is coherent to treat utterances as neither true nor false only at the cost of treating them as though they said nothing.

An alternative way to understand truth-value gaps is to take them as utterances of sentences that are neither true nor false, but *could* have qualified as truth-bearers: they might have said something to be the case. McDowell (1982) explores this alternative in relation to the effect of non-referring singular terms on utterances containing them. I consider reference failure in Chapter 3. This understanding of truth-value gaps caused by reference failure results from the unavailability of truth-conditions for utterances of sentences with empty singular terms. The distinction to be drawn is between, on the one hand, an utterance (of a perfectly meaningful sentence) that could have said something, and had it said something, it could have been true or false, and, on the other hand, an utterance that could have been true (or could have been false) saying exactly what it does. The first alternative is the one explored by McDowell. However, only the second alternative characterizes genuine cases of truth-value gaps.

It may be doubted, however, that the prospect of treating other cases of putative truth-value gaps as characterizable as truth-valueless utterances that fail to say anything (and fail to have truth- and falsity-conditions) is doomed to fail. After all, it may be thought, there must be truth-valueless cases such that we can conceive of circumstances in which they would have been true or circumstances in which they would have been false. If there were such cases, Williamson's argument would have to be disarmed.

The question is, how can the argument be disarmed and the schemas for truth and falsehood be preserved? In the next chapter, and in Chapter 4, where Soames's motivation to reject bivalence is examined, I discuss attempts to resolve the conflict between the endorsement of schemas for truth and falsehood and the acceptance of the possibility of genuine cases of truth-value gaps, and argue that such attempts are unpersuasive. In Chapter

5, I discuss a different type of strategy, which is to disarm the argument by abandoning the commitment to the schemas for truth and falsehood. However, in order to abandon the commitment to the schemas, one ought to provide arguments to the effect that instances of the schemas fail to state truth- and falsity-conditions. Unsurprisingly, this strategy is uncommon. Chapter 5 discusses this alternative, as proposed by Travis (1996, 1998, 2000) and argues that Travis's objections to the schemas are ineffective, and that his position on truth-value gaps is unsustainable.

I will thus argue that proposals of truth-value gaps fail both to undermine Williamson's argument and to identify items that *could* be evaluated as true or as false.

1.5 Conclusion

Different candidates for the role of truth-bearers have been identified: sentences types, sentence tokens, speech-acts such as statements, psychological states such as beliefs and thoughts. Truth-bearers are items evaluable as true or as false. With the exception of sentence types, any of the candidates can be legitimately described as true or false. Speech-acts or psychological states are truth-bearers if something is said or thought to be the case. Propositions are usually treated as that which is said or thought to be the case.

There are several theories of truth, but no commitment has been made to a particular theory. Instead, it is sufficient for present purposes to recognize platitudes associated with the notions of truth and falsehood. The schemas for truth and falsehood adopted intend to capture one such platitude. The idea captured is that an utterance is true just in case what it says to be the case is the case, and is false just in case what it says to be the case is not the case. The

schemas permit relating the condition for an utterance to be evaluable – that something is said to be the case, to the utterance's truth-conditions.

A commitment to the schemas' correctness conflicts with the supposition of genuine cases of truth-value gaps. The next chapter presents Williamson's argument against counterexamples to bivalence and expounds the two main kinds of strategy to avoid the derivation of contradictions.

Chapter 2

THE ARGUMENT AGAINST COUNTEREXAMPLES TO BIVALENCE

2.1 Introduction

Any claim that there are genuine truth-value gaps, i.e., truth-bearers that are neither true nor false, faces a serious argument presented by Williamson (1992 and 1994).[21] The argument is directed against the possibility of providing actual counterexamples to bivalence. It reduces the supposition of a counterexample to absurdity. If the argument is right, there cannot be genuine truth-value gaps.

The derivation of a contradiction resulting from a supposed counterexample requires few assumptions and uses simple logic. The argument takes as truth-bearers utterances that say that something is the case. It also assumes that truth-bearers can be embedded in different contexts (of negation, conjunction, disjunction, implication, for instance) and that entailment and inferential relations hold for them. The argument's fundamental assumptions are the platitudes expressed in equivalence (or disquotational) schemas for truth and falsehood.

Bivalence does not say that everything is either true or false. Equally, one who claims that there are counterexamples to bivalence should not hold that whatever is neither true nor false is a counterexample to bivalence. Just as some condition must be satisfied for an utterance to be evaluable, some condition must be satisfied for an utterance to amount to a counterexample, arguably the *same* condition. The condition identified is that an utterance

[21] Similar arguments are presented by Dummett (1991: 64), who argues against asserting that there are statements that are neither true nor false, while accepting disquotation for truth; by Travis (1994: 171), who argues that there are no *thoughts* without truth-value; and by Horwich (1998: 76-77) who argues that there cannot be propositions that are neither true nor false.

must say that something is the case. Williamson's argument shows that there cannot be an utterance that meets that condition and is neither true nor false.

Williamson puts forward the argument in the context of discussing whether vague utterances in borderline cases can be claimed to be neither true nor false. His defence of the argument relies on replying to possible objections related to vagueness. The argument is schematic and its application is general. My concern here is with cases that are supposed to be clearly neither true nor false. Thus, the argument must withstand possible charges that do not originate from problems related to vagueness.

No one who claims that there are truth-value gaps can ignore Williamson's argument. One who does claim that must either avoid the derivation of contradictions by blocking the argument at some point, or argue against the argument's assumptions.

The argument does not appeal to any disputable inference rule. This leaves two distinct strategies open to those who want to object to it. One can choose to hold on to the equivalence (or disquotational) schemas for truth and falsehood, because the platitudes they capture are essential to the notions themselves.[22] Since holding on to the schemas means accepting the argument's fundamental assumptions, one needs to devise a way to block the derivation of contradictions. This can be called the 'technical strategy', since it preserves the fundamental assumptions about truth and falsehood and typically revises (in different ways) the sense of negation, or of the biconditional to avoid deriving contradictions. Alternatively, one can adopt a different strategy and argue that the equivalence or disquotational schemas for truth and falsehood are inappropriate (either in the particular cases of truth-value gaps, or in general). This line of argument can appeal to metalinguistic

[22] This is the strategy adopted for instance by Beal (2002), Field (2001; 2002), Richard (2000), Soames (1999).

negation, preventing the equation of the denial that some utterance is true or false with an object-level negation. This can be called the 'philosophical strategy', since it questions the commitment to the schemas as capturing adequately the notions of truth and falsehood.[23]

None of the strategies to avoid the derivation of contradictions is found to be persuasive. Once one can state what an utterance *says*, one can state its truth- and falsity-conditions. Provided one can state truth- and falsity-conditions, the utterance cannot be neither true nor false. The upshot of Williamson's argument is that the price to pay for treating utterances as neither true nor false is to treat them as though they said nothing.

This chapter has the following structure: §2.2 presents Williamson's argument. §2.3 examines and argues against the strategies of avoiding the derivation of a contradiction that preserve the equivalence schemas for truth and falsehood. §2.4 argues against the strategy that admits that the denial that some utterance is either true or false is just metalinguistic, and contemplates dismissing instances of schemas (T) and (F) as adequate to state an utterance's truth- and falsity-conditions.

2.2 Williamson's argument against counterexamples to bivalence

2.2.1 The argument

Williamson's argument requires a formulation of the principle of bivalence. Bivalence does not say that everything is either true or false, so some choice of truth-bearers must be put forward. Williamson takes truth-bearers as utterances that say that something is the case. Williamson hence formulates the principle of bivalence as a schema:

(PB) If *u* says that *P*, then either *u* is true or *u* is false

[23] This is the strategy adopted for instance by Travis (1994, 1998, 2000)

In the schema, '*u*' stands for the name of an utterance and '*P*' stands for a sentence that says that something is the case. The idea captured in the schema for bivalence is that if an utterance says that something is the case, then the utterance is either true or false.

The argument further requires the specification of what it is for an utterance to be true or false. Williamson elucidates the notions by appealing to Aristotle's *dictum*, that "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false; while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true". It is then proposed that Aristotle's *dictum* be captured in the corresponding schemas for truth and for falsehood:

(T) If *u* says that *P*, then *u* is true if and only if *P*

(F) If *u* says that *P*, then *u* is false if and only if not *P*

Whether or not there is more to say about truth and falsehood, it is claimed that the schemas capture something central to their understanding.

As the principle of bivalence is formulated as a conditional, a counterexample to it must satisfy the antecedent of (PB), and falsify the consequent, i.e., it must say that something is the case and be neither true nor false. The argument then is as follows. We start by assuming that an utterance says something, i.e., we assume the antecedent of (PB):

(0) *u* says that *P*

And then deny the consequent of (PB):

(1) not: either *u* is true or *u* is false

Using (0), the consequents of (T) and (F) are detached:

(2a) *u* is true if and only if *P*

(2b) *u* is false if and only if not *P*

Given (2a) and (2b), we can obtain from (1)

(3) not: either *P* or not *P*

Finally, by De Morgan, (3) yields:

(4) not *P* and not not *P*

(4) is self-contradictory. The argument shows that the supposition of a counterexample to bivalence leads to a contradiction. At least, it does so if the rules used in the argument and its assumptions are an acceptable choice.

The argument assumes, firstly, that some utterance says that something is the case and that utterances that say something to be the case are a correct choice of truth-bearers. Secondly, if some utterance says that something is the case, it is assumed one can reason with what it says. Thirdly, it assumes that a counterexample to bivalence is best described as some utterance, saying that something is the case, such that it is not the case that it is either true or false. Finally, schemas (T) and (F) are the fundamental assumptions. The schemas permit the statement of truth- and falsity-conditions for an utterance saying something.

2.2.2 Williamson's defence of the argument

The inference rules used in the argument require little justification, since they appear to be uncontroversial. Provided acceptance of schemas (T) and (F), the intersubstitution of the right and left-hand sides of (2a) and (2b) is permitted, deriving the denial of the principle of excluded middle from the denial of bivalence. The denial of excluded middle leads to a contradiction, since the denial of a disjunction yields the denial of each of the disjuncts.

The argument does not appeal to a specific interpretation of the logical connectives; it does not rely on the use of some disputable inference rule, or on the choice of some logic in

detriment of any other. The argument is valid independently of the logic adopted.[24] In particular, it does not require that classical logic hold, or that the logical connectives be interpreted truth-functionally. What the argument requires is that provided some utterance says that something is the case, we can state its truth- and falsity-conditions. So, given acceptance of (T) and (F), we can equate the denial that some utterance is either true or false with the denial of an instance of the law of excluded middle. The validity of the substitution of '*u* is true' with '*P*', and of '*u* is false' with 'not *P*' requires only the two sides of the biconditionals to have the same semantic value, independently of which semantic theory is adopted, or of what one takes the semantic values to be (cf. Williamson, 1994: 190). The argument further requires that denying a disjunction entails the conjunction of the denied disjuncts. Hence, the argument does not appeal to any questionable inference rule and is not committed to a particular logic. Therefore, there is no reason to object to the inference rules used in the argument.

The argument reduces to absurdity only putative counterexamples to bivalence, as truth-value gaps are supposed to be. The argument starts with the supposition that *u* says that *P* and not: *u* is true or *u* is false. Since this leads to a contradiction, the supposed counterexample to bivalence is denied. Yet, the argument does not question every denial of bivalence. Intuitionists, for instance, can deny that there are statements that are neither true nor false, without being committed to assert that every statement is either true or false.

[24]The rules for the logical constants used in the argument are valid for standard classical, supervaluational, intuitionist, and many-valued treatments, among others. Cf. Williamson (1994: 189, n. 6) An intuitionist, in particular, may refrain from asserting the principle of bivalence, but will not assert that there are utterances that are neither true nor false, nor deny instances of excluded middle – intuitionistically, either entail contradictions.

The formulation of bivalence and the schemas for truth and falsehood assume that truth-bearers are utterances that say that something is the case. Williamson admits that the principle of bivalence could be formulated for other truth-bearers, for instance propositions. He rejects this hypothesis, because one who takes propositions as truth-bearers can claim that each must be either true or false. Such a person can then dismiss vagueness assuming that in such cases one fails to express a unique proposition. As Williamson claims (1994: 187), the point of the controversy about vagueness is lost if this line is pursued, since the problem lies precisely in deciding whether some utterance in a borderline case, saying just what it does, is true or not. So, Williamson restricts the principle of bivalence to utterances that say that something is the case. One does not have to assume, however, that propositions are items *defined* by being either true or false.

The choice of utterances that say that something is the case may require some further explanation of what it is for an utterance to do so. Williamson recognizes that the notion of *saying* is not perfectly precise. When does an utterance say something? Williamson provides some explanation of what is *not* wanted when one says that utterances are the chosen candidates for the role of truth-bearers. One does not want every use of a sentence to perform a speech-act, not even every use of a well-formed declarative sentence. Some utterances of well-formed declarative sentences might fail to say that something is the case, thereby failing to be evaluable. It also appears that Williamson is not committed to accepting that the meaning of a declarative sentence alone establishes what the sentence is used to say, and he is not committed thereby to accepting that the meaning of an uttered sentence alone is sufficient to establish its truth- and falsity-conditions.

I think that there is little difference between expressing the antecedent of (PB), (T) and (F) as '*u* says that *P*' and as '*u* expresses the proposition that *P*'. The same remarks can be made in relation to '*u* expresses the proposition that *P*', so long as propositions are not taken to be truth-valued by definition. Not every use of a sentence to perform a speech-act, not even every use of a well-formed declarative sentence, expresses a proposition.

There are different ways to account for propositions, but a plausible minimal characterization of a proposition expressed by an utterance is of that which is said to be the case by that utterance. The notion of saying something to be the case, like the notion of proposition, is tied to the identification of truth-conditions. Something is said (or some proposition is expressed) just in case there are circumstances in which *that* is the case (or not the case). The conditional requirement that an utterance says something, or expresses a proposition, is committed to there being circumstances in which the utterance, saying what it does, is evaluable as true or as false, and not to the idea that the utterance, saying what it does, *is* either true or false.

In defence of the idea that vague utterances in borderline cases do say something, Williamson says:

> "Even if I am a borderline case, we know what an utterance of 'TW is thin' says because we understand its subject term 'TW', its predicate 'is thin' and the significance of putting them together in that way, and we are aware of any relevant contextual factors (for example, that the set of human beings is an appropriate comparison class). Moreover, we can envisage circumstances in which the utterance would have been clearly true (because TW would have been clearly thin) while saying just what it does, and other circumstances in which it would have been clearly false (because TW would have been clearly not thin) while again saying exactly what it does." (Williamson, 1994: 196)

The sort of considerations drawn here in favour of taking an utterance of 'TW is thin' as saying something rely on the semantic account of the component expressions of sentences

and the contribution of these expressions to the whole sentence, but also on knowledge of relevant contextual factors. Granted an utterance says something, one can think of circumstances in which the utterance would have been true or of circumstances in which it would have been false. If an utterance did not say anything, at best we can conceive of circumstances in which the uttered sentence would have said something, rather than circumstances in which it is true or false in virtue of *what* it says.

In illustration of this point, one can contrast 'TW is thin' with 'This dagger is sharp', where 'this dagger' fails to refer. Where counterfactuals like 'If he had dieted, TW would have been thin' can be true, a counterfactual like 'If the servants had been assiduous, this dagger would have been sharp' is still neither true nor false. So, 'TW is thin' could have said something true without saying something different. This is not the case with 'this dagger is sharp'.

One further reason to take a vague utterance as saying something can also be taken as motivation to accept that one can argue or reason with what is said. Williamson proposes that we suppose the following circumstance: TW has a twin, TW2, who shares TW's dimensions. If so, an utterance of the conditional 'If TW is thin, then TW2 is thin' should be true. The truth of the conditional seems to depend on the fact that the twins share their dimensions, rather than on the actual dimensions of each of them. If it is reasonable to think that some conditionals are true, then the conditionals must say something. If so, the antecedent and consequent of such conditionals also say something. A conditional such as 'if TW is thin, then he is thin' should also count as true. This serves not only to make Williamson's point that vague utterances in borderline cases do not fail to say anything, but speaks also in favour

of the point that provided an utterance says something, it cannot fail to enter in some entailment relations.

Schemas (T) and (F) are the fundamental assumptions of the argument and (2a) and (2b) are their right-hand sides. (2a) and (2b) are required for equating the denial of bivalence with the denial of an instance of excluded middle. As Williamson claims, as predicates of utterances, truth and falsehood are disquotational when saying is.[25] If the sentence uttered has no context dependent expressions, and the uttered sentence is for example 'TW is thin', then the utterance of 'TW is thin' says that TW is thin. The corresponding instance of (2a) says that 'TW is thin' is true if and only if TW is thin, and (2b) says that 'TW is thin' is false if and only if TW is not thin. The quotation marks form a designator of the enclosed inscription. (T) and (F) explain the acceptance of the particular instances of (2a) and (2b): it is because an utterance of 'TW is thin' says that TW is thin that the utterance is true if and only if TW is thin, and false if and only if TW is not thin.

I have said at the outset that it is *inconsistent* to hold the correctness of the schemas while at the same time granting that some utterances that say something are neither true nor false. This could be taken as a reason to object to schemas (T) and (F): if an utterance *u* says that *P* and is neither true nor false, then '*u* is true' is false, but '*P*' is neither. (Similarly, '*u* is false' is false, but 'not *P*' is neither.) If so, the two sides of the biconditionals do not match in semantic value, which was a minimal requirement imposed on the biconditionals. Thus, the schemas cannot provide the truth- and falsity-conditions for utterances lacking truth-values. The problem with this objection, Williamson claims, is that it

[25] Cf. Williamson (1994: 189).

> "gives no hint, when *u* says that TW is thin, of any way in which *u* could fail to be true, other than by TW failing to be thin, or of any way in which *u* could fail to be false, other than by TW failing to be not thin. The whole point of the original argument is that the supposition of a counterexample to (B) is inconsistent… Such inconsistencies would undermine the argument only if they exposed limitations in the argument for those principles, but they do no such thing. The arguments against (T) and (F) from the supposition of a counterexample to (B) completely miss the point of the rationale for (T) and (F). The argument against the supposition is therefore not undermined." (Williamson, 1994: 190)

Williamson's claim here is that, for the objection to work, we would need some elucidation of how some *u* that says that *P* could fail to be true other than by *P* failing to be the case, or of how it could fail to be false other than by *P* failing not to be the case. For the objection to have any strength, we must accept the two first premisses: (0) *u* says that *P*, and (1) not: *u* is true or *u* is false. By rejecting (2a) and (2b), the equation of the denial of bivalence with the denial of the principle of excluded middle is not accepted. So, the contradiction is not derivable.

As is shown in §2.4.2 and discussed in Chapter 3, reference failure illustrates how an instance of premiss (1) can be true, and (2a) and (2b) incorrect. But a contradiction cannot be derived in cases of reference failure, because an instance of (0) in the case of reference failure is vacuous (thus, not true). So, reference failure does not show that (T) and (F) are incorrect. Other examples of utterances that are neither true nor false, if existing, should satisfy the first premiss. Instantiation of schemas (T) and (F) requires that in the place of '*P*' be inserted a sentence expressing what the utterance *u* says, which means that the utterance must say something.

A genuine objection to (T) and (F) can require, as Williamson claims, either: a) that no property could satisfy (T) or satisfy (F); or, b), that no property could both satisfy (T) or (F) and some other constraint equally important to the notions of truth and falsity. The question

now is what can such a constraint be. (In §2.4.3 and in chapter 5, I consider a possible answer, which is Travis's claim that (T) and (F) are incompatible with occasion-sensitivity – a radical version of context-dependence.)

2.3 Objections to the argument that preserve (T) and (F)

2.3.1 Weak negation

Williamson considers (1994: 193) the objection that premiss (1) does not express adequately the rejection that some utterance is bivalent. One could accept the argument, but hold a neutral attitude towards particular problematic instances. One could then express such an attitude by appealing to some form of weak negation. In denying that a particular utterance is bivalent, one would say something like: ne (*u* is true or *u* is false). So the argument would conclude instead that ne *P* and ne not *P*, which is not a contradiction.

The problem with this hypothesis is how to understand the new type of negation. Either it is taken as primitive, or it is defined in terms of strong negation. If weak negation is primitive, two problems arise. As Williamson claims, the metalinguistic analogue of weak negation is weak falsity explained in terms of 'ne': if *u* says that *P*, then *u* is weakly false if and only if ne *P*. But weak negation neglects higher order vagueness. Higher order vagueness can make it sometimes incorrect to assert that an utterance is true or weakly false, i.e., one might say that: ne (either *u* is true or *u* is weakly false). It can then be concluded that ne *P* and ne ne *P*, which is a contradiction, if 'ne' is any kind of negation. The problem is not solved by stipulating other types of negation (weakly weak negation), for the problem of higher order vagueness would reappear.

If weak negation is defined in terms of stronger kinds, the strategy fails. The reason is that if the truth-conditions of 'ne *P*' are explained in terms of 'not', then 'ne *P*' is true if and only if '*P*' is not true. In this case, 'ne *P*' has the same truth-conditions as 'not *P*'. So, the introduction of weak negation achieves nothing.

Does Williamson's reply hold in general? If the cases of truth-value gaps are not vague utterances, then there appears to be no reason to believe that something like higher order vagueness will again lead to contradictions. However, even if we ignore vague utterances, the proponent of weak negation still needs to provide an account of the meaning of 'ne'. The appeal to a different kind of negation should not be *ad hoc*, i.e., it should not be postulated exclusively to avoid asserting contradictions.

Beal (2002) has put forward an account of how to distinguish weak and strong negation. Beal accepts that the disquotational schemas for truth and falsehood are correct. He maintains that by distinguishing between weak and strong negation,[26] one can hold onto to the disquotational schemas and claim that there are truth-value gaps. The weak denial of '*P*' is true if '*P*' is either false or lacks a truth-value. The strong denial of '*P*' is true if '*P*' is false, but will lack a truth-value if '*P*' also has no truth-value. Falsity is defined as truth of strong negation. '*P*' is gappy if ne *P* and ne not *P*. 'Ne *P*' is true if either not *P* or *P* is gappy (i.e., ne *P* and ne not *P*). But this is circular.

Beal recognizes the difficulty of providing a non-circular definition of weak negation. He claims that it must be taken as primitive, to avoid circularity, and that the use of both weak and strong negation is learned by inference rules. The rules provided are divided into

[26] Beal calls 'strong' what Williamson calls 'weak' and vice-versa; I use Williamson's designation for the two negations.

unmixed and mixed (involving just the use of weak negation/strong negation, or mixed uses of both). The two unmixed set of rules are identical: they are double negation elimination and De Morgan. The mixed rules are restricted.[27] But the problem with the set of rules provided is that, on the one hand, the unmixed set of rules does not teach us anything about *two* uses of negation, since the inferences allowed for are identical. On the other hand, accepting that there is anything like mixed rules for negation assumes that there are two types of negation available. It also assumes that one can know which inferences are valid, and which are not, by mixing the two senses of negation. The fact that one can postulate rules of inference for weak negation does not show that there exists an inferential practice involving the two senses of negation. The difference in the unmixed rules requires that one has a reason for restricting double negation elimination and De Morgan as one does. *Why* the rules are restricted as they are is not explained. The only plausible reason for restricting the mixed rules can only rest on the earlier explanation of when 'ne *P*' and 'not *P*' are true or false. But this explanation was found to be circular. So, postulating inference rules for weak and strong negation does not provide us with the meaning of 'ne', or an independent motivation for distinguishing the two readings of negation, other than avoiding the derivation of contradictions.

Beal's proposal would permit holding on to schemas (T) and (F) and claiming that there are truth-value gaps, if a coherent sense for weak negation had been provided. As it is not, the proposal seems simply arbitrary.

[27] Mixed double negation: Not ne *P* entails *P*; *P* entails ne not *P*. Mixed De Morgan: ne (*P* or not *Q*) iff ne *P* and ne not *Q*; not (*P* and ne *Q*) iff not *P* and not ne *Q*. (Beal, 2002: 303)

2.3.2 Definitely true or definitely false

There might be a different way to account for weak negation. The point of finding a notion of weak negation is to make explicit the attitude that the assertion of *P* is incorrect without being false. Weakly denying bivalence would amount to taking the assertion that some utterance is either true or false as incorrect, without asserting that the utterance is not true and not false. The difficulty with this notion is to find an appropriate sense for weak negation.

One possibility is to define 'ne *P*' as 'not definitely *P*', i.e., as the strong negation of 'definitely *P*'. If this is the correct reading of 'ne', then when one objects to 'not: *u* is true or *u* is false' or '*u* is not true and *u* is not false' as not expressing an adequate rejection of bivalence what one is proposing is that a counterexample to bivalence is better characterized thus: 'not definitely: *u* is true or *u* is false' or '*u* is not definitely true and *u* is not definitely false'. From this, and schemas (T) and (F), what can be inferred is: not definitely *P* and not definitely not *P*, which is not a contradiction.

Nonetheless, this strategy suggests that what is objected to is not the use of negation itself, but the formulation of bivalence. In other words, if a counterexample to bivalence is an utterance that is neither definitely true nor definitely false, then bivalence should be strengthened and expressed thus:

(Def-PB) If *u* says that *P*, then *u* is definitely true or *u* is definitely false

The explanation of what 'definitely' (or 'determinately') means requires that it be explained how definite truth differs from truth and how definite falsehood differs from falsehood, and how this prevents definite truth and definite falsehood from satisfying what Williamson calls 'an analogue of (T) and (F)' (Williamson, 1994: 194). It must furthermore

explain why bivalence should be concerned with definite truth or falsehood, rather than simply with truth and falsehood. Presumably, if bivalence were thus strengthened, it would be implausible to hold that every utterance is either definitely true or definitely false.

If something is definitely true, it follows it is true; equally, if it is definitely false, then it is false. What is needed is some explanation of how something failing to be definitely true does not amount to it not being true, and how something failing to be definitely false does not amount to it not being false. This is necessary to prevent the denial of a particular instance of strengthened bivalence from collapsing into a simple denial of an instance of excluded middle. If such a difference cannot be established, then denying that an utterance is definitely true or definitely false simply amounts to denying that an utterance is either true or false. We need an explanation of why bivalence requires that something be definitely true or false, rather than just true or false.

The main problem with the strengthened formulation of bivalence is that it is hard to give 'definitely' a non-epistemic sense. Why is it that an epistemic sense for 'definitely' is not enough? We could say that for some utterance it is not (or cannot be) known whether it is true or false. However, this is no objection to Williamson's position. What he claims is precisely that in the case of problematic vague utterances, conceded they do say something, there is some fact (or facts) of which we are ignorant. Furthermore, there are matters for which there is no determinate answer, because we are actually unable to know whether something is true or not, that are not clearly a problem for bivalence (for instance, at present we may be unable to know whether Caesar did say "Alea jacta est" when he crossed the Rubicon). Moreover, there are putative cases of truth-value gaps that are not cases of utterances describable as '*u* is not definitely true nor definitely false'. The cases I consider

in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are not supposed to be not definitely either true or false, but definitely truth-valueless.

If the strengthened version of bivalence is to be of any help in at least some cases, it ought to be supported by a defence of the idea that for any utterance such that it cannot be said to be definitely true or definitely false, there is no fact (of which we are ignorant) knowledge of which would settle the utterance's truth-value. Cases of truth-value gaps should be such that it is indeterminate whether they are true or not, and indeterminacy cannot be a question of ignorance.

The idea that bivalence is concerned with definite truth or falsehood is not without support. Dummett (1970: 255-8; 1991: 74-82) and Field (2001, ch. 10: 278-306) argue in favour of this interpretation of bivalence. Field (2001), for example, is aware of the difficulty of providing the meaning of 'definitely' and relating it relevantly to truth and falsehood, but considers that it is absurd to suppose that all indeterminacy is a matter of epistemological limitation.

If it is absurd to say that indeterminacy is a matter of ignorance, then he must avoid what he calls 'Williamson's puzzle'. Williamson's puzzle is as follows. Take an instance of the principle of excluded middle, relative to Williamson's example: either TW is thin or TW is not thin. Now, it is reasonable to assume that if something is the case, then it is a determinate fact that it is the case. So, if TW is thin, then it is a determinate fact that he is thin; and if TW is not thin, then it is a determinate fact that he is not thin. Therefore, either TW is determinately thin or determinately not thin. If the conclusion of this argument is denied, then we deny an instance of excluded middle. The denial of an instance of excluded middle leads us down a familiar road: we arrive at a contradiction.

If, as Field holds, there is a difference between definite truth and (simple) truth, and bivalence is concerned with the former, Williamson's puzzle must be blocked. Wherever it is stopped, blocking it requires that the sense of 'determinately' or 'definitely' be explained. This is another way of putting the same point drawn earlier.

There is a difficulty in accounting for 'definitely'. The principle of bivalence claims that every item of a certain sort has one of two values, true or false. If 'definitely', or 'determinately', is to figure in a proper formulation of bivalence, then the two values that the principle assigns to truth-bearers are definite truth and definite falsehood. But definite truth cannot be equivalent to truth, and definite falsehood cannot be equivalent to falsehood. Moreover, 'definitely' cannot be explained by saying that *P* is definitely true if and only if (*P* and it can be known that *P*), because this leads back to the epistemic view.

Field in fact thinks that finding a reductive explanation of definiteness or determinateness is an irresolvable task. He adds, however, that asking for a reductive explanation of the notion is unreasonable. This is not, supposedly, too problematic since we also do not have a reductive explanation of negation, but understand it nonetheless. So, what he proposes is that one give the account of the conceptual role of 'definitely', and of embedded occurrences of the term, such as 'it is not definite that__'. Whether or not it is possible to give an account of the conceptual role of 'definitely', it is still not evident why bivalence should be strengthened with the adverb.

Field's proposal is, very briefly, the following: postulate as part of the conceptual role of 'definitely' that we regard it as misguided to speculate about questions we take to have no

determinate answer.[28] Misguided speculation does not solve the difficulties with explaining the notion of definiteness. Unless more is said about *why* and *how* it is misguided, one fails to explain why something is indeterminate. It cannot be that speculation is misguided because it concerns questions that we do not know how to answer, because this falls back into the epistemic view; nor that it is misguided because it goes beyond determinate facts, since this is circular. Field nonetheless claims that this idea is built into the conceptual role of 'definitely' or 'determinately'.

He proposes a model of an idealized epistemic agent, who can have different attitudes towards propositions that are regarded as potentially indeterminate, which will differ from the attitudes towards propositions that are regarded as certainly determinate. The model proposed builds into the explanation of a proper psychological functioning the idea of it being misguided to speculate about questions with no determinate answers (cf. Field, 2001: 293-301).

The fundamental problem with Field's proposal, however, is that it rests on an account of when an idealized agent *would regard* a sentence or proposition as indeterminate or as determinate, rather than on an account of when a sentence or proposition *is* determinate or indeterminate. Certainly, one can claim that it is part of the conceptual role of determinateness and indeterminateness that agents regard propositions differently, and perhaps even that they think it is pointless to inquire about answers to questions they do not think have a definite answer. But this does not take us away from the epistemic understanding of 'definitely'/'determinately'. Furthermore, explaining the conceptual role of

[28] This claim is curious from a philosopher's point of view: arguably, many philosophical questions are such that we (or most of us) take them as having no definite answer. It is not evident, however, that it is misguided to speculate about possible answers.

'definitely' (or 'determinately') as depending on how an idealized agent regards sentences or propositions falls short of explaining why bivalence should be concerned with definite truth and definite falsehood. This doubt is aggravated by Field's acceptance that the essential feature of truth is that equivalences like 'it is true that *P* if and only if *P*' hold for any *P*. There seems to be no reason for bivalence to concern more than the notion of truth displayed in these equivalences.

Unless a satisfactory answer is given, saying that some utterances are neither definitely true nor definitely false is not identifying counterexamples to bivalence.

2.3.3 Denying versus asserting a negation

Richard (2000) advances one further strategy against Williamson's argument that explores the possibility of reconsidering the use of negation. Richard does not propose a new kind of negation, but rather distinguishes between denying a sentence and asserting its negation. As he claims, asserting something commits one to whatever follows from it, and to whatever follows from it and other sentences to which one is committed. Richard further claims that there seems to be no need to suppose that one must be committed to whatever follows from the negation of a sentence that one denies. This would apply to the case of Williamson's argument thus: one may deny that some utterance *u* is either true or false, then deny that *P* or not *P*, hence denying *P* and denying not *P*. But none of this would amount to being committed to asserting a contradiction.

Richard gives little explanation of what the difference between being committed to asserting the negation of something and simply denying it is. How should one not be committed to what *follows* from what one denies? There is room for all sorts of ways not to

commit oneself to the consequences of a denial, but there should be more to say about how one can be excused from this.[29] If one denies, as in the argument, that *u* is true or *u* is false, does it or does it not *follow* that not *P* and not not *P*? Richard does nothing to persuade us that it does not follow. And if a contradiction follows from denying that *u* is either true or false, insisting that one need not be committed to asserting the contradiction appears *ad hoc*. The notion of 'being committed to assert', on its own, is too vague to be elucidating. Richard's proposal comes down to deciding whether one can deny that *u* is either true or false, but not assert that *u* is neither true nor false.

If one supposes that '*P*' has no truth-value, and that 'not *P*' is equally without truth-value, one can think that there is as much reason to assert '*P*' as to assert 'not *P*'. But if so, what is the point of denying '*P*'? Furthermore, if one indeed believes that there are utterances that are neither true nor false, there seems to be no reason to say that one is not committed to assert that there are such utterances. So, if one is committed to assert that there are utterances that are neither true nor false, then one should be just as committed to whatever consequences follow. Richard's proposal does not provide any satisfactory motivation for the distinction between denying *P* and asserting not *P* that avoids the derivation of contradictions.

[29] A possibility is considered below in the consideration of metalinguistic negation. One can certainly say something like "I would not say so", or "I would not put it in those terms" without wishing to take a stand on what (if anything) is literally said, or if what is said is true or false.

2.3.4 Truth as a partially defined predicate and a different interpretation of the biconditional

Soames (1999) advances an argument similar to Williamson's. Surprisingly, Soames thinks that it is the supposition that bivalence holds that leads to contradictions. He avoids the contradictions that result from claiming that there are genuine truth-value gaps by treating truth as a partially defined predicate: for certain sentences, truth is not defined to apply and is not defined not to apply. So, a counterexample to bivalence is not described as an utterance that is neither true nor false, since that entails contradictions, but as an utterance such that it cannot be said to be true nor said to be false, it is ungrounded. Soames further claims that any truth predication of a given sentence *S* has the same status as that of *S* itself.

Soames thinks that every instance of schema (T) is true, and that conveying the meaning of the truth-predicate involves conveying the acceptability of all instances of the schema. If the biconditional in the schemas is the material biconditional, and truth-value gaps are admitted, then not all instances of schema (T) are true. To preserve the schema, Soames proposes to change the reading of the biconditional in the schema: a biconditional 'A iff B' is true just in case 'A' and 'B' have the same status: true, false or ungrounded, and is false otherwise. This permits Soames to take liar sentences, for instance, as instantiating truly schema (T).

In Chapter 4, I discuss Soames's proposal. I argue that introducing a new status for propositions – ungrounded – leads to considerable difficulties. These difficulties result from how this third status is to be dealt with in the contexts of negation, disjunction, conjunction, and implication. Soames's characterization of the truth predicate presents conditions for the

truth predicate to apply or to fail to apply to simple sentences and to sentences containing truth-functional connectives. The conditions for 'ungroundedness' must be given for simple sentences, as well as for sentences containing connectives. However, Soames's characterization of the truth-value or status of complex sentences is problematic. If we suppose, for instance, that 'TW is thin' is ungrounded, then conditionals such as 'if TW is thin, then TW2 is thin' and 'if TW is thin, then TW is thin' are ungrounded, not true[30]. But this is false. Moreover, accepting that paradoxical cases, such as the liar, can instantiate truly schema (T) means that the contradiction 'A is true iff A is not true' is sometimes true (because it follows from the relevant instance of schema (T) relative to paradoxical liar sentences). This, however, provides no understanding of the notion of truth. Therefore, instances of the (T) schema relative to liar sentences cannot convey the meaning of the truth-predicate, which conflicts with the claim that conveying the meaning of the predicate involves conveying the acceptability of *all* instances of the schema.

None of the strategies that preserve schemas (T) and (F) are found to work. They are either *ad hoc*, proposing a localized solution with no independent motivation, or provide examples that are not counterexamples to *bivalence*, or the solutions proposed create further difficulties (which are either implausible or straightforwardly unacceptable). The main alternative left is to reconsider acceptance of schemas (T) and (F).

[30] For if both the antecedent and consequent of a conditional are ungrounded, then the conditional itself is not true. Cf. Chapter 4, §4.2.2.

2.4 Objections to the argument that do not preserve (T) and (F)

2.4.1 Metalinguistic negation

It is plausible to hold that not all negation is a negation of what is literally said in an utterance. So, one possibility left to explore is whether the denial that an utterance *u* is either true or false is (just) metalinguistic. It may be surprising that a challenge to the schemas comes from yet another way to read the negation that some truth-bearer is bivalent.

Metalinguistic negation is normally used to reject the correctness of a previous utterance. As Horn (1989) says, it focuses "not on the truth or falsity of a proposition, but on the assertability of an utterance" (Horn, 1989: 363). It can thus focus on an aspect of an utterance, impinging on the correctness of the whole utterance, for instance a presupposition, an implicature, or that the utterance is (socially) inadequate (because of the choice of words, or even the pronunciation). Metalinguistic negation need not amount to a negation of what was said, or to an objection to the truth or falsehood of the utterance. A few examples from Horn can illustrate different uses of metalinguistic negation:

(1) Chris didn't *manage* to solve the problems. He solved them easily.

(2) Winning isn't everything, it's the *only* thing.

(3) It's not *stewed bunny*, honey, it's civet de lapin

(4) (Esker too ah coo-pay luh vee-and?)

Non, je n'ai pas 'coo-pay luh vee-and' – j'ai coupé la viande.

However, none of the above cases is of much help against Williamson's argument. What is wanted is a use of metalinguistic negation that focuses precisely on an utterance's truth-value, in particular, on the fact that the utterance does not have any. There are cases of such uses:

(5) What she said is neither true nor false. She said 'Move on!'

(6) The teacher in the English for foreign students class did not say anything true or false when she said, 'He loves his mother'.

These examples are not illustrative of what is wanted to block the argument either, because the utterances of the quoted sentences in (5) and (6) are not supposed to have said anything evaluable as true or as false. What is wanted is that metalinguistic negation is a denial of the correctness of predicating an utterance as true or as false, because both an utterance of '*P*' and of 'not *P*' are equally deemed incorrect, but either could have been true or false.

2.4.2 Metalinguistic negation, reference and presuppositions

Metalinguistic negation may focus on a presupposition of an utterance made. If there is some presupposition associated with uses of singular terms, as Frege (1892b) and Strawson (1950a; 1952) claimed, then it is possible to say that an utterance containing a non-referring singular term is neither true nor false, because the presupposition that the singular term refers fails.

If we appeal to metalinguistic negation to block disquotation, we will not be able to put forward truth- or falsity-conditions for a given utterance. If the presupposition that a singular term refers fails, and that is given as a reason for denying that an utterance of a sentence containing the term is true or false *and* for blocking disquotation, then the consequents of (T) and (F) relative to that utterance are unacceptable. We reject that the utterance is true or false because we cannot use the singular term to state the utterance's truth- or falsity-conditions. Thus, we reject the left hand-sides of either biconditional,

because we reject the assertability of either right-hand side. But if we reject the assertability of either right-hand side, we cannot state truth- and falsity-conditions for that utterance. If so, we must also reject that we can disquote to put forward what the utterance, allegedly, says.

This answers the objection to (T) and (F) mentioned in §2.2.2. The objection was that the two sides of the biconditional do not match in truth-value when an utterance is neither true nor false. At least in the case of reference failure, it is evident that the two sides of the biconditional cannot match in truth-values; but in the cases of reference failure, the antecedent of (PB), (T) and (F) is equally not true. If presupposition failure means that an utterance is neither true nor false, then it also means that the utterance fails to say anything. The claim that utterances of sentences containing empty singular terms are neither true nor false is hence tenable, but no counterexample to bivalence.

2.4.3 Variations on presupposition failure

One could argue that the kind of presupposition involved in the case of reference failure is a special case. The condition that a singular term refers is on a different level from an utterance's truth and falsity-conditions, and therefore it is not part of the truth- and falsity-conditions of the utterance. The kind of presupposition involved in cases of reference failure result from what Strawson calls 'referring rules'[31], which constrain how an expression is to be correctly employed in making statements. One could further argue that there may be other kinds of presupposition failure affecting truth-evaluations. Perhaps there

[31] Cf. Strawson (1952: 213).

are cases such that if some presupposition *P* is true, then a statement *S* is true or false, but if *P* is false, then *S* is neither true nor false. [32]

This hypothesis faces a famous argument from Dummett (1978). Dummett argues that the basis of the application of the notions of truth and falsehood to assertoric utterances rests in a speaker being right or wrong in making a certain assertion. The notion of presupposition would interpose a third possibility for statements: a speaker in making a statement could, if some condition were false, be neither right nor wrong in what he said. However, unlike bets, assertions do not seem to leave any place for such a gap.

As seen in the different uses of metalinguistic negation, there are many ways for a speaker to be right or wrong in making an assertion that are unrelated to the assertion's truth-value. Nonetheless, the point made by Dummett can be rephrased: this understanding of presuppositions interposes a gap between an assertion's truth and its falsehood, by imposing an identifiable condition on a statement's truth or falsehood that is not supposed to be part of its truth-conditions. But if understanding a statement requires understanding when it would be true, it is hard to see how such a condition is not part of the truth-conditions of the statement.

Dummett's argument is as follows: suppose there are two statements *S* and *S*'. We can also identify two conditions *C* and *C*'. *S* is true if *C* and *C*' obtain, false if *C* does not obtain but *C*' does, and neither true nor false if *C*' does not obtain. *S*' is true if *C* and *C*' obtain, false if *C* or *C*' do not obtain (cf. Dummett, 1978: xvi-xvii). *C*' *is* part of the truth-

[32] One could claim, for instance, that an utterance of "John's children are also coming for dinner" presupposes both that John has more than one child, and that they are not the only ones expected for dinner. Allegedly, if John has no children, or has only one child, the presupposition that he has more than one child is false, and hence the quoted sentence above is, on this understanding of presuppositions, is neither true nor false.

conditions of both *S* and *S*', as *C* is part of the truth-conditions of both statements. What difference are we supposed to find between *S* and *S*', which have the same *truth*-conditions? It does not seem to make much sense to say that two statements are true in precisely the same conditions, but if one of those conditions fails, one of the statements is false and the other is neither. Rather, given that *C* and *C*' are the truth-conditions of both statements, the falsity-conditions must be not-*C* or not-*C*'. If understanding a statement requires understanding in what conditions what is stated obtains, there seems to be no reason to hold that the two statements are distinct. Dummett's point is that if a statement could have been neither true nor false due to some presupposition failure of this kind, then there should be a way to understand it such that its understanding accommodated the specifiable conditions in which the statement is neither true nor false. But this is not how statements are understood.

2.4.4 Metalinguistic negation and rejection of (T) and (F)

An alternative to holding that there are genuine truth-value gaps, without being led to assert contradictions, is to claim that the denial that some truth-bearer is either true or false is only metalinguistic, and to provide independent reasons against (T) and (F). The essential features of (T) and (F) are (i) that an utterance is a truth-bearer provided it meets a conditional requirement, namely if it says that something is the case; and (ii) that the schemas must be instantiated with the same sentence to identify *both* what an utterance says *and* the conditions in which it is true. The idea the schemas purport to capture is that an utterance is true just in case what it says to be the case is the case, and false just in case what it says to be the case is not the case. Williamson suggests that a genuine objection to

the schemas could maintain that no property satisfy *both* (T) or (F) *and* some other constraint equally important to the notions of truth and falsehood.

A proposal of truth-value gaps discussed in Chapter 5 is Travis's position on natural isostheneia. Travis (1994, 1998, 2000) claims that we can say what is in fact neither true nor false, but might have been. According to Travis, the presumption that there is an identifiable condition utterances can meet that guarantees their truth-conditions is mistaken.

Travis argues for occasion-sensitivity (a radical version of context-dependence): any statement we make bears many different understandings, varying in truth-value depending on which understanding it bears. A statement does not settle which of its possible understandings is correct; hence, a statement cannot settle when it would be true or false. The occasion on which the statement is made must somehow contribute to how it is to be evaluated, and to which understanding is then correct. If Travis is right, occasion-sensitivity is the further constraint on the truth or falsity of words.

Occasion-sensitivity incorporates the rejection of propositions, motivated by a Wittgensteinian rejection of propositions as shadows. The Wittgensteinian rejection of shadow-propositions is the rejection of representational items interposed between language and the world, with determinate truth- and falsity-conditions that settle when the sentences that express them are true or false. As Travis sees it, the Wittgensteinian picture means that even if there were such shadows, they would not have determinate truth-conditions, because they would still admit of different interpretations.[33]

[33] Travis presents his interpretation of the Wittgensteinian objection to shadow-propositions in the opening chapter of his (2000) book. For an expression of Wittgenstein's suspicions of propositions as "pure intermediaries", cf. for instance Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*, §94.

According to Travis, statements may be true, false or neither. When they are neither, Travis claims, *isostheneia* reigns. Isostheneia reigns when it is *impossible* to decide, on that occasion, which is the correct way to understand a statement: we neither say how things are nor how things are not, so we cannot carry on with our normal object-language talk. We can, according to Travis, deny (metalinguistically) that a statement is true or false, without being led to assert a contradiction. The alleged difference from cases of reference failure is that while arguably nothing is said in utterances containing vacuous singular terms (thus nothing is said that could have been true or false in other circumstances), we can nonetheless identify circumstances in which an utterance affected by isostheneia would have been true or false.

As I argue in Chapter 5, schemas (T) and (F) do not succumb to the Wittgensteinian argument against shadow-propositions, because what is identified as being said by an utterance in a given context is also identified as the utterance's truth-conditions. The truth-conditions are not further interpretable representations, they are what may be the case or not. Therefore, Travis cannot disarm Williamson's argument. In chapter 5, I also argue that Travis's position is unsustainable. Either we can identify the conditions in which certain putative truth-bearers would be true or false, in which case we say something, but cannot say it is neither true nor false, or it is impossible to decide how a given utterance is to be understood, in which case we cannot identify the conditions in which that utterance would have been true or false. If so, we have not succeeded in identifying a truth-bearer, i.e., we have failed to identify an *evaluable* item, and thus have not identified a counterexample to bivalence.

2.5 Conclusion

Williamson's argument is valid, and it does not assume any particular logic or semantics. The argument assumes that if something counts as a truth-bearer, then it has truth- and falsity-conditions. In particular, it assumes that truth and falsehood are transparent. Schemas (T) and (F) purport to capture this platitude. It is the assumption that the schemas are correct, together with the supposition that some utterance saying something is neither true nor false, that leads to contradictions.

The two main strategies against Williamson's argument are not persuasive. The strategy that preserves schemas (T) and (F) and revises the sense of negation or of other connectives is unsatisfactory, because the proposals are either *ad hoc*, or provide examples that are not counterexamples to bivalence, or create more problems (being either implausible or simply unacceptable).

A different strategy questions the appropriateness of schemas (T) and (F), and can claim that the negation of the proposition that a given utterance is bivalent is metalinguistic. One can deny that an utterance is either true or false without deriving a contradiction. This suggests that such an utterance does not amount to a counterexample to bivalence, because it also fails to say that anything is the case. Moreover, dismissing schemas (T) and (F) deprives us of a platitude central to our understanding of the notions of truth and falsity. The next chapter argues that reference failure illustrates the upshot of Williamson's argument: an utterance containing a vacuous singular term that is neither true nor false does not say that anything is the case.

Chapter 3
REFERENCE FAILURE

3.1 Introduction

Reference failure is a classical cause of truth-value gaps. Frege (1892b) and Strawson (1950a), among others, held that utterances of sentences containing non-referring singular terms are neither true nor false. This chapter argues that reference failure does not cause *genuine* truth-value gaps. The aim of this chapter is to take reference failure as an illustration of the upshot of Williamson's argument: utterances of sentences containing non-referring singular terms that are neither true nor false fail to say that something is the case.

Singular terms serve to talk about particular objects or individuals. An intuitive category of singular terms includes different types of expressions, for instance proper names like 'Aristotle', demonstratives like 'that' or 'this' (accompanied or not by a common noun, 'that lime tree'), pronouns like 'I', 'you', 'she', adverbs like 'here' or 'now'. What brings those terms together in the same category are similarities of function and use. These similarities include, for example, grammatical similarities (taking subject position in sentences), similarities in inferential practice, or insensitiveness to scope in extensional, temporal and modal contexts. Most importantly, the truth- and falsity-conditions of utterances of sentences containing singular terms are *object-dependent*. Since utterances of sentences containing singular terms have object-dependent truth-conditions, there is good reason not to include definite descriptions, such as 'the present king of France', in the category of singular terms.

There is often no guarantee that one will succeed in referring to a particular object by using a singular term. There are plenty of examples of sentences containing empty singular terms. Here are a few from the literature: (1) 'Paul R. Zwier has a GPA of 3.9'; (2) 'Mumbo-

Jumbo brings thunder'; (3) 'This dagger is sharp'; (4) 'That butterfly is worth having'. With each we can construe a story of how someone can come to utter sincerely any of the sentences, and believe it to be true.[34] 'Paul R. Zwier' is the name of a fictitious student inserted in a university's student records, the result of a hoax from a group of mischievous students; 'Mumbo-Jumbo' is the name for a god of a distant tribe, but there is no Mumbo-Jumbo; 'this dagger' said Macbeth, and it was nothing but a fatal vision, a false creation of the mind; 'that butterfly', says an equally deluded butterfly hunter. If a singular term fails to refer, then an utterance of a sentence containing it does not have truth- or falsity-conditions and is neither true nor false.

One of the reasons reference failure seems to be problematic is that it seems to be inconsistent with the endorsement of the truth of every instance of schemas (T) and (F). The consequents of the schemas '*u* is true iff *P*'/ '*u* is false iff not *P*' relative to any of the examples in (1)—(4) are not true, because '*u* is true' or '*u* is false' will be false, whereas the result of inserting any of the sentences above in the place of '*P*' is neither true nor false. However, for an utterance to instantiate the schemas, it must say that something is the case. Whenever a sentence type constrains its utterances to have object-dependent truth-conditions, whatever an utterance of that type says is equally object-dependent, provided it does say anything. An utterance involving reference failure that is neither true nor false does not have truth- or falsity-conditions. It equally cannot say that something is the case or not the case.

[34] The example in (1) is from Larson and Segal (1995). Someone who works at the university may read the file and apparently come to believe various things about the non-existing student, namely, that Paul R. Zwier has a GPA of 3.9. The example in (2) is from McDowell (1977) and is discussed by Segal (1989). (3) is from Williamson (1992; 1994). (4) is from Carruthers (1987).

Thus, the antecedent of the schemas (T), (F) and (PB) '*u* says that *P*' cannot be instantiated. The utterance says nothing.

The second reason why reference failure seems to be problematic is that two requirements on recognizing that an utterance says something seem to conflict. On the one hand, the truth-conditions of sentences containing singular terms depend, in general, on the identity and existence of the individual object referred. If no individual is referred to, then the utterance does not have truth- and falsity-conditions, and it cannot express any proposition or thought. On the other hand, there is a strong intuition that people nonetheless understand such utterances, take them to be true and use them to express their beliefs, thoughts, desires, etc. Furthermore, there are arguments to the effect that proper psychological and behavioural explanations require the same content to be ascribed as the content of beliefs and thoughts, whether or not reference to an object is successful. The two requirements are irreconcilable, unless one treats the truth-conditions of utterances with singular terms as object-independent, allowing for something determinate to be said irrespective of whichever, if any, object is referred to. To preserve the semantic features of singular terms, the second requirement must be dropped.

This chapter is organized as follows. §3.2 briefly expounds the views on reference failure held by Frege, Russell and Strawson. Their views provide the background for more recent perspectives on reference and reference failure. §3.3 reviews some of these perspectives and characterizes singular terms as types of expressions such that the truth-conditions and what is said by utterances in which they occur involve the object referred to. Singular beliefs and singular thoughts are also object-dependent, as Evans (1982) and McDowell (1982, 1984 and 1986, for instance) have argued. §3.4 briefly shows how

reference failure confirms the result of Williamson's argument. The phenomenon provides no counterexample to bivalence and does not create problems for schemas (T) and (F). Reference failure illustrates how truth-valueless utterances need not amount to genuine cases of truth-value gaps. Finally, §3.5 criticizes the main objection to this account of non-referring singular terms. It originates from the perception that people nonetheless understand and appear to express their attitudes with such utterances, which motivates the recognition that some sort of thought-content must be ascribable. It also criticizes a proposal by Larson and Segal (1995) that purports to account for the intuition that vacuous ordinary proper names, in particular, are understandable and permit making statements whether or not something is referred to. The only way to make this proposal work is to treat names as some sort of abbreviated descriptions. But reasons were provided in §3.3 to reject this proposal.

3.2 Background – reference failure as a cause of truth-value gaps

3.2.1 Frege

Frege (1892b) claimed that an utterance of a sentence containing a non-referring singular is neither true nor false. Frege had a two-level semantic theory, ascribing to expressions and sentences of a language a sense (*Sinn*) and a reference (*Bedeutung*). Frege maintained that the truth-values of sentences are determined by the values of their component expressions. His theory permits accounting primarily for the contribution made by two distinct categories of expressions to the truth-values of atomic sentences. On the one hand, it identifies the reference of singular terms as individual objects, and the reference of predicate

components in sentences as concepts or functions.[35] If a singular term does not have a referent, then a sentence containing it lacks a truth-value, because the singular term has not contributed any semantic value to the value of the sentence:

> "The sentence 'Scylla has six heads' is not true, but the sentence 'Scylla does not have six heads' is not true either; for it to be true the proper name 'Scylla' would have to designate something." (Frege, 1897: 127)

This gives expression to two natural ideas: i) a sentence such as 'Scylla does not have six heads' is the negation of 'Scylla has six heads'; and ii) 'Scylla has six heads' is false if and only if its negation is true (that is, if 'Scylla does not have six heads' is true). When a sentence has no truth-value, the result of embedding the sentence, for instance under the scope of negation, also can have no truth-value.

Hence, Frege connects the conditions for the truth and for the falsehood of an utterance of a sentence containing a singular term to a common requirement: that the singular term designates something is a presupposition for the truth *and* for the falsehood of the sentence.[36]

Frege is sensitive, however, to differences in the cognitive value of expressions, either singular terms or complete sentences. The examples that illustrate the difference in 'On Sense and Meaning' are identity statements. For example, one may not know that Hesperus is Phosphorus, while knowing that Hesperus is Hesperus. If one can understand both statements, and know that the second identity statement is true, without knowing that the first identity statement is also true, then what one understands in both statements cannot simply be that some referred item is self-identical. The difference in cognitive value appears equally in

[35] Cf. Frege (1891).

[36] Cf. Frege's (1892b: 69) remarks on 'Kepler' designating someone as a presupposition of both: "Kepler died in misery"/ "Kepler did not die in misery"; but the presupposition is not part of the thought. So, the denial of "Kepler died in misery" is not equivalent to "either the name 'Kepler' does not designate anyone, or Kepler did not die in misery".

other statements in which the only difference between the uttered sentences is the occurrence of different co-referring singular terms, for instance 'Hesperus appears in the evening sky' and 'Phosphorus appears in the evening sky'.

Frege explains the difference in cognitive value by introducing the notion of sense. Two sentences in which the only difference is the occurrence of different co-referring singular terms may have different senses, i.e. express different thoughts, if it is possible for someone at a given time to coherently take different epistemic attitudes towards them (this is what Evans calls 'the Intuitive Criterion of Difference'). Frege elucidates the notion of sense by characterizing it as a mode of presentation of the reference. The senses of 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' differ because the same object is differently presented by each of the names. The sense of a sentence, the thought, is then in parallel a mode of presentation of the truth-value of the sentence.

Frege (1892b) admitted that sentences involving reference failure nonetheless express thoughts:

> "Is it possible that a sentence as a whole has only a sense, but no meaning? At any rate, one might expect that such sentences occur, just as there are parts of sentences having sense but no meaning. And sentences which contain proper names without meaning will be of this kind. The sentence 'Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep' obviously has a sense. But since it is doubtful whether the name 'Odysseus' occurring therein, means anything, it is also doubtful whether the whole sentence does… If it were a question only of the sense of the sentence, the thought, it would be needless to bother with what is meant by a part of the sentence; only the sense, not the meaning, of the part is relevant to the sense of the whole sentence. The thought remains the same whether 'Odysseus' means something or not." (Frege, 1982b: 62-3)[37]

[37] The idea that 'the thought remains the same' whether a singular term refers or not is restated in Frege (1906b: 191).

The admission amounts to allowing that a mode of presentation of an object may fail to present anything, and, consequently, to allowing the mode of presentation of a truth-value to fail to present any value.

There are several reasons for Frege to have been led to think that a thought is expressed in utterances of sentences with empty singular terms. Frege took most expressions that can take subject position in sentences and purport to identify an individual as singular terms.[38] He thus took as singular terms not only demonstrative expressions like 'that lime tree', ordinary proper names like 'Kepler', but also definite descriptions like 'the discoverer of the elliptic form of the planetary orbits'. Once definite descriptions are admitted as singular terms, it is plausible to hold that they are understandable whether an individual is described or not. But the impression of understanding also accompanies many ordinary vacuous proper names.

Frege's position has been accused of inconsistency. Dummett (1959) says:

> "A popular account of the meaning of 'true', also deriving from Frege, is that 'it is true that *P*' has the same sense as the sentence *P*… If, as Frege thought, there exist sentences which express propositions but are neither true nor false, then this explanation appears incorrect. Suppose that *P* contains a singular term which has a sense but no reference: then, according to Frege, *P* expresses a proposition which has no truth-value. This proposition is therefore not true, and hence the statement 'It is true that *P*' will be *false*. *P* will therefore not have the same sense as 'it is true that *P*', since the latter is false while the former is not. It is not possible to plead that 'It is true that *P*' is itself neither true nor false when the singular term occurring in *P* lacks a reference, since the *oratio obliqua* clause 'that *P*' stands for the proposition expressed by *P*, and it is admitted that *P* does have a sense and express a proposition; the singular term occurring in *P* has in 'It is true that *P*' its indirect reference, namely its sense, and we assumed that it did have a sense. In general, it will always be inconsistent to maintain the truth of every instance of 'It is true that *p* if and only if *p*' while allowing that there is a type of sentence which under certain conditions is neither true nor false." (Dummett, 1959: 4-5).

[38] "It is clear from the context that by sign and name I have here understood any designation figuring as a proper name, which thus has as its meaning a definite object (this word taken in the widest range), but not a concept or a relation… The designation of a single object can also consist of several words or other signs. For brevity, let every such designation be called a proper name." (Frege, 1892b: 57)

Dummett is right in saying that it is inconsistent to maintain the truth of every instance of the equivalence schema for truth and simultaneously to hold that there are propositions (or thoughts, or statements) that are neither true nor false. Hence, he is also right in pointing out the inconsistency in Frege's position, since Frege did admit that there are truth-valueless thoughts, but defended the sameness of sense between 'it is true that *P*' and '*P*'.

Evans (1982: 22 ff) argues persuasively that Frege could not coherently assign senses to empty singular terms, because empty singular terms lack, on Frege's theory, any semantic value. Evans's argument is, briefly, the following. Frege identifies expressions that belong in the category of singular terms as those expressions whose semantic value consists in being associated to an object. Frege's theory permits explaining how the semantic values of sentences systematically depend on the values of their parts. If a singular term has no semantic value, then sentences containing it cannot have any semantic value either. By admitting that sentences without any semantic value may express thoughts, Frege is admitting that there are viable sentences his theory cannot account for. The least that would be expected would be a revision of the theory to accommodate any significant sentence. But Frege does not revise his theory and continues to assign referents as the semantic values of singular terms.

Evans asks, what is the point of assigning objects as semantic values to singular terms? "If someone understands and accepts a sentence, then, according to Frege, he thereby forms a belief; not a belief about language, but a belief about the world." (Evans, 1982: 24) The point of assigning objective entities as the values of singular terms is to permit the connection of language to the world. If one accepts that sentences without truth-values express thoughts,

then one accepts that one may acquire beliefs that are not about the world and are neither correct nor incorrect.

Frege, however, was not comfortable with the admission of truth-valueless thoughts, and considered that the possibility of singular terms failing to refer was a defect of natural languages, treating empty singular terms sometimes as "fictitious" or "mock proper names".[39] Moreover, Frege himself disagrees with his position in 'On Sense and Meaning' in other writings, holding that the presupposition that a singular term refers is a condition on there being a thought to express:

> "A sentence can be true or untrue only if it is an expression for a thought. The sentence 'Leo Sachse is a man' is the expression of a thought only if 'Leo Sachse' designates something. And so too the sentence 'this table is round' is the expression of a thought only if the words 'this table' are not empty sounds but designate something specific for me". (Frege, 1906a: 174).

The options available seem thus to be that either one revises what one assigns as semantic values to singular terms, incorporating vacuous singular terms in one's account, or one rejects that thoughts are expressed when singular terms have no referents.[40]

3.2.2 Russell

Russell (1918, for example) restricted the category of singular terms to a class of expressions that cannot fail to refer – genuine referring expressions, or logically proper names. Their sole contribution to what is said (to the proposition expressed) in utterances of

[39] Cf. Frege (1892b: 70), (1897: 130).

[40] Evans (1982) and McDowell's (1977, 1984) position on this is that the motivation for the recognition of senses provided by the differences in cognitive value of different co-referring singular terms is not sufficient to motivate the assignment of senses to empty singular terms.

sentences containing them is the individual referred to. Understanding what is said by a sentence containing such a term requires knowing what object is referred to.

Russell's characterization of logically proper names involves several claims. One is precisely that the meaning of a name is its bearer. But Russell takes this claim further, holding that a name has to name, otherwise it is not a name:

> "If it [Romulus] were really a name, the question of existence could not arise, because a name has got to name something or it is not a name…"(Russell, 1918: 243).

We can understand this as saying: a name that does not name has no meaning – it cannot contribute to the expression of any proposition. To know what a logically proper name means is to know what it stands for.[41] Names are also insensitive to differences of scope in different contexts, like the extensional contexts created by truth-functional operators such as negation.[42]

Given the identification of the meaning of a name with its bearer, the contribution a name '*a*' gives to the truth-conditions of a sentence '*F*(*a*)' is the object or individual that '*a*' names; i.e. a sentence containing a name '*a*' expresses a proposition of which *a* is a constituent.[43] A sentence containing a logically proper name is true just in case the bearer of the name satisfies the predicate in the sentence, false just in case it fails to satisfy the predicate. Furthermore, anyone that believes in a proposition expressed by sentences in which '*a*' figures has a singular belief about *a*. Two names with the same bearer have the same meaning.

[41] Russell (1918: 244; 1912: 30).
[42] Russell (1918: 251).
[43] Russell (1918: 248).

According to Russell, the thesis that '*a* does not exist' is senseless.[44] The meaning of a name is its bearer. If we wanted to say that an object does not exist, we would have to refer to or name that object to say it does not exist. But we cannot name or refer to a non-existing entity. Therefore, Russell claims, '*a* does not exist' is senseless. So, logically proper names cannot be empty or vacuous. Russell did not concede, clearly, the possibility of an illusion of understanding.

Russell thought that ordinary proper names cannot be logically proper:

> "…and if there is no such person as Romulus, there cannot be a name for that person who is not there, so that this single word 'Romulus' is really a sort of truncated or telescoped description, and if you think of it as a name you will get into logical errors." (Russell, 1918: 243)

If one is persuaded that to know what a name means is to know what it names, then one cannot know what the name means unless the name has a bearer. If one is also persuaded that anyone who has a belief expressible by '*a* is *F*' has a singular belief concerning *a*, then if '*a*' is empty that person has no singular belief. But there are many ordinary proper names that we can apparently understand, whether or not the person supposed to be named does not exist, for example 'Romulus' or 'Homer'. Suppose 'Homer' is empty. Many people seem to believe that Homer wrote the *Odyssey*. Moreover, it seems plausible that it may be discovered that Homer did not exist. As 'Homer wrote the *Odyssey*' and 'Homer did not exist' seem to be perfectly meaningful (the second is, *ex hypothesis*, true), then 'Homer' is not logically proper. If we consider in contrast, 'this is red', we may also suppose that 'this' is empty. Can we report someone's belief saying: 'she believes that *this* is red'? Or, could we

[44] Russell (1918: 250; 1905: 48).

say, '*this* does not exist'? Apparently not. Thus it seems that demonstrative thought is genuinely referential or singular.

But the problem, even concerning demonstratives, is that it is possible for one to be mistaken in taking something to be demonstrated, due to perceptual errors for example. So, almost every member in the category of singular terms identified in §3.1 may fail to refer. We have to admit the possibility of error in what we take to exist; and if this is admitted, then when we supposed we were referring, we in fact did not refer anything.

Russell held that logically proper names have to refer, and rejects the possibility of an illusion of understanding. He was persuaded that only those items of whose existence we cannot doubt could be the bearers of logically proper names. Russell thought that only those items with which we are directly acquainted can be the referents of logically proper names, because we can only be certain of the existence of those items with which we are directly acquainted. Logically proper names will be 'this' and 'that' – or better, 'this sense datum' – and perhaps 'I', 'here', 'now'.

Whenever there is no object, we cannot know what a singular term means, there is no understanding, because no proposition is expressed. Thus reference failure cannot really occur. There can be no empty names.

Russell (1905 and 1918, for instance) rejected the inclusion of definite descriptions in the category of singular terms. Definite descriptions are expressions that may fail to identify any object, but nonetheless be understandable. Moreover, sentences containing definite descriptions have statable truth-conditions, whether or not there is a unique item described. Hence, they cannot be genuine referring expressions or logically proper names.

On Russell's theory, a description 'the *F* is *G*' does not refer, or designate, any object. Rather, it is a quantified expression specifying unique conditions of application of given predicates to an object. The conditions of application are independent of the identity or existence of any particular object. An utterance of 'the *F* is *G*' is true if and only if there is an *F*, no more than one, and it is *G*. Russell thought that because ordinary proper names can also turn out to be vacuous, while sentences containing them are understandable, and because true statements can be made with vacuous proper names (namely negative existential statements), ordinary proper names (and other possibly vacuous singular terms) are in fact abbreviated or disguised descriptions.

Some of the features that characterize Russell's logically proper names are also features of singular terms. §3.3 identifies some of those features. For instance, the truth-conditions of utterances containing singular terms are object-dependent, and to have a singular belief is to have a belief that could not be held if the individual thought about had not existed. The condition that singular terms cannot fail to refer should, however, be dropped, because reference failure does occur. We are often mistaken in what we suppose exists. It may be that an illusion of understanding should be admitted.

3.2.3 Strawson

Strawson (1950a), like Frege, was persuaded that when a singular term fails to refer, an utterance of a sentence containing it is neither true nor false. But Strawson further claimed that uttering a sentence containing a vacuous singular term can make no statement – nothing can be said to be the case. Strawson admitted as singular terms (what he called expressions used in the 'uniquely referring use') demonstratives, proper names, pronouns and definite

descriptions, because all these, according to him, are expressions used "to mention or refer to some individual person or single object or particular event or place or process." (Strawson, 1950a: 320)

Like Frege, Strawson (1950a, 1952, 1954) appeals to the notion of presupposition as a requirement on an utterance being truth-valued. If the presupposition that a singular term refers is false, then we must reject that the uttered sentence states that something is the case.[45] If the singular term in an uttered sentence *S* fails to refer (the presupposition fails), then the utterance of *S* is neither true nor false, although *S* is nonetheless a meaningful sentence. We must distinguish between the sentence (and its being meaningful), utterances of the sentence, and what is said in uttering the sentence on occasions (what Strawson calls 'a use of a sentence').

Strawson's comments on 'referring rules' permit some further elucidation of the notion of presupposition. Strawson's referring rules can be understood as "laying down a contextual requirement for the correct employment of an expression" (Strawson, 1952: 213). The satisfaction of this contextual requirement is not part of the content of the statement, of what is said.

The claim that utterances of sentences containing empty singular terms are neither true nor false is tenable for a Strawsonian, without any risk of contradiction. The claim would

[45] "But it is senseless to ask, of the sentence, whether it is true or false. One must distinguish between what can be said about the sentence, and what can be said about the statements made, on different occasions, by the use of the sentence. It is only about statements that the question of truth and falsity can arise; and about these it can sometimes fail to arise. But to say that the man in our imagined case fails to say anything either true or false, is not to say that the sentence he pronounces is meaningless. Nor is it to deny that he makes a mistake (…) But we must distinguish this kind of logical absurdity from straightforward self-contradiction. It is self-contradictory to conjoin S with the denial of S' if S' is a necessary condition of the truth, simply, of S. It is a different kind of logical absurdity to conjoin S with the denial of S' if S' is a necessary condition of the truth or falsity of S. The relation between S and S' in the first case is that S entails S'. We need a different name for the relation between S and S' in the second case; let us say, as above, that S presupposes S'" (Strawson, 1952: 175).

pose a challenge to bivalence if such utterances were truth-evaluable, i.e., if they said something. However, rejecting that an utterance is either true or false because one rejects it as incorrect (due to a failed presupposition) indicates that no statement is made with the utterance. So, there is no problem for bivalence arising from reference failure, on Strawson's account, because no putative truth-bearer is put forward.[46]

Frege, Russell and Strawson provided accounts of referential expressions that aimed at capturing the object-dependency and singularity of (at least) the truth-conditions of sentences containing them. But Frege could not accommodate empty singular terms in his theory, and took seriously the impression of understanding empty singular terms. Russell proposed a category of logically proper names, but came to exclude most singular terms in the intuitive category in §3.1 from the category of logically proper names. According to Russell, sentences with logically proper names express singular object-dependent propositions. But Russell also did not admit that there could be an impression of understanding an expression. Thus, Russell came to treat most expressions that intuitively are singular terms as abbreviated descriptions. Strawson, in contrast, redeems all the types of expressions in the intuitive category, and brings back definite descriptions. Strawson's innovation was to explicitly distinguish between the meaning of a sentence as such and what is said in utterances of the sentence. According to Strawson, an utterance of a sentence can be understood (because it is an utterance of a meaningful sentence) while the utterance fails to say anything because no item is referred to. So, the possibility of merely being under the

[46] Strawson's position on presuppositions and reference failure is often criticized, but the reason for most of the criticism results from his inclusion of definite descriptions in the category of singular terms. Cf. Sellars (1954), Russell (1957), Grice (1981), Neale (1990).

impression of understanding is admitted. Since, according to Strawson, singular terms carry the presupposition that an individual is actually referred to, a hearer will usually expect the singular term used to refer.

Subsequent work on reference and singular terms has partly focused on identifying the features of expressions in natural languages that qualify them as singular terms. Some of such features are Russellian.

3.3 Object-dependency: truth-conditions and singular thoughts

3.3.1 Semantic properties and truth-conditions

What differentiates singular terms from other noun-phrases, like quantifiers and definite descriptions, is that the truth-conditions of sentences containing singular terms require, in general, the object referred to. Singular terms enable us to talk, express thoughts and beliefs about particular individual objects, people, places, etc. In this sense, different kinds of expressions function as singular terms, such as the kinds of expressions in the intuitive category of singular terms in §3.1: proper names, demonstratives or indexicals. Definite descriptions, such as 'the present king of France' or 'the author of the *Odyssey*', used to be included in the category of singular terms.

There are enough arguments against taking descriptions as singular terms. The distinction between definite descriptions and singular terms results largely from Russell's theory of descriptions. There are, however, also enough arguments against treating ordinary proper names as disguised descriptions, which lead to rejecting Russell's treatment of ordinary proper names as disguised descriptions. The arguments indicate that definite

descriptions and singular terms, as proper names and demonstratives, are semantically distinct.

There are mainly three reasons against the descriptive view of ordinary proper names. One reason against taking names as abbreviated descriptions is that whatever descriptions a speaker associates with a name may fail to identify a unique individual. For instance, if I had to describe Benjamin Britten, I would say, with confidence, that he was a 20th century British composer. But the description I can put forward is not uniquely true of Britten.[47]

A second reason concerns the possibility of misdescription. Descriptions associated with a named person may in fact misdescribe that person. For example, any other description I could give of Benjamin Britten would very possibly misdescribe him. Whatever my limitations in describing Britten, I nonetheless refer to *him* when I use his name.[48]

The most important reason, of primary importance in this chapter, concerns precisely the difference in truth-conditions between sentences containing singular terms, such as proper names and demonstratives, and sentences containing descriptions. The object-dependency of truth-conditions has been accounted for by recognizing some semantic features of singular terms.

Singular terms, including ordinary proper names, are *rigid designators*. The essential feature of rigid designators is that the truth-conditions of sentences containing them, unlike sentences with definite descriptions, depend on the existence and identity of the designated object. The term 'rigid designator' was introduced by Kripke. As Kripke (1980) says,

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[47] Donnellan (1972) concedes the 'backing of descriptions' by users of a name, but argues that such a backing of descriptions need not uniquely identify the referent of a name (see for instance Donnellan, 1972: 367-8).
[48] The famous example with regard to misdescription is the erroneous identification of Peano as the discoverer of the Peano axioms of arithmetic. (see Kripke, 1980: 84-5).

> "Consider:
> (1) Aristotle was fond of dogs.
> A proper understanding of this statement involves an understanding both of the (extensionally correct) conditions under which it is in fact true, *and* of the conditions under which a counterfactual course of history, resembling the actual course in some respects but not in others, would be correctly (partially) described by (1)… The thesis of rigidity is simply – subtle points aside – that the same paradigm applies to the truth-conditions of (1) as it describes counterfactual situations. That is, (1) truly describes a counterfactual situation if and only if the same aforementioned man would have been fond of dogs, had that situation obtained." (Kripke, 1980: 6)

A true description of Aristotle, 'the last great philosopher of antiquity' for example, is contrasted with the name 'Aristotle' because although both the sentence containing the name 'Aristotle' and the sentence containing the description are actually true (if they are) due to Aristotle's fondness of dogs, with respect to a counterfactual situation, someone else other than Aristotle could have been such a last great philosopher. 'Aristotle' is hence a rigid designator, but 'the last great philosopher of antiquity' is not.

Kripke's notion of rigidity permits discerning differences in scope-sensitivity between definite descriptions and proper names in modal contexts. Contrast: 'it is possible that Aristotle was not a philosopher' with 'it is possible that the last great philosopher of antiquity was not a philosopher'. Differences in scope-sensitivity between proper names and definite descriptions occur also in temporal contexts.[49]

Kripke's comment above also indicates also that understanding the statement requires understanding the statement's truth-conditions. If the statement is made by uttering a sentence with a proper name, then understanding the statement requires knowing who is named. This rehabilitates one of the features that identify Russellian logically proper names,

[49] See Neale (1990: 122).

but not in the form Russell proposed it: to understand statements containing a proper name one has to know, but not necessarily be acquainted with, who is named.

Peacocke's notion of rigidity is more perspicuous in that it relies on a criterion for a term to be a rigid designator that makes explicit that truth-conditions of sentences containing a singular term depend on the object referred:

> "*t* is a rigid designator in [a language] L iff
> there is an object *x* such that for any sentence G(*t*) in which *t* occurs, the truth (falsity) condition for G(*t*) is that <*x*> satisfy (respectively, fail to satisfy) G( )." (Peacocke, 1975: 110).

Peacocke intends his criterion for a rigid designator to provide a more explicit formulation of the idea that a characteristic of singular terms is that they enable us to talk, express thoughts and beliefs about particular individual objects, people, places, etc, thus tying the object-dependency of truth- and falsity-conditions of sentences containing rigid terms to the role and function of those terms.

Not only proper names, but also demonstratives and indexicals, are rigid in both Peacocke's and Kripke's sense. Peacocke's criterion is also meant to show that descriptions do not meet it. The truth-conditions of a sentence 'The *F* is *G*' are statable without indicating any object (thus, certainly not the item that in fact is the *F*), but require rather that whatever individual is the unique *F* be *G*.

Kaplan's (1989) notion of a *directly referential* expression is equally meant to capture the object-dependency of truth-conditions:

> "I intend to use '*directly referential*' for an expression whose referent, once determined, is taken as fixed for all possible circumstances, i.e., as *being* the propositional component.
> For me, the intuitive idea is not that of an expression which *turns out* to designate the same object in all possible circumstances, but an expression whose semantical *rules* provide *directly* that the referent in all possible circumstances is fixed to be the actual referent." (Kaplan, 1989: 493)

Kaplan's notion of a directly referential expression is Russellian insofar as he takes *the referent* as being the propositional component of a proposition expressed by an utterance of a sentence containing the directly referential term. Kaplan calls the content expressed a 'singular proposition'.

At the same time, Kaplan also recovers a Strawsonian idea. Kaplan's distinction between *character* and *content* accounts for the distinction between, on the one hand, the fixed semantic features of singular terms like demonstratives and indexicals, and, on the other hand, the content that is assigned in a context. This captures the distinction introduced by Strawson between the linguistic meaning of an expression and what the expression refers to in a context of use. In the case of demonstratives and indexicals, it is part of their linguistic meaning, the term's character (a function from contexts of utterances to contents), that the referent will be determined only in a context of utterance. Once the referent is fixed, the utterance can be evaluated with respect to different circumstances. For instance, in an utterance of 'You are very kind', the meaning of 'you' indicates that the term will refer to whoever is addressed by the speaker in the context in which the sentence is uttered. If the addressee is, say, João, the utterance will be true in a circumstance in which João is very kind, and false in a circumstance in which João is not very kind. As uttered in such a context, what the utterance says is that João is very kind.[50]

Recanati (1993) draws from Kripke and Peacocke's characterization of rigid designators, and from Kaplan's characterization of directly referential expressions, what he

[50] Once again, descriptions are not directly referential in Kaplan's sense. The truth-conditions of sentences with descriptions do not involve nor depend on the individual that actually satisfies the description. Rather, descriptions specify conditions that are to be met by an object if it is to satisfy the description, and these conditions are part of truth-conditions.

takes to be the identifying semantic features of singular terms as *types* of expressions, the properties singular terms possess that distinguish them from other types of expressions such as definite descriptions. Singular terms indicate, as types of expressions, that the truth-conditions of utterances of sentences containing them will be object-dependent. Recanati adapts Kaplan's notion of a term's character. The character of a singular term is its 'linguistic mode of presentation' (Recanati, 1993: 29-30). The linguistic mode of presentation of singular terms constrains what kind of truth-conditions an utterance is to have, but it is not part of what is said, or of the proposition expressed.

In the case of demonstratives and indexicals, the term's character can be understood whether or not an item is demonstrated. But proper names do not have a character like that of demonstratives. The only apparent linguistic rule associated with proper names is that a proper name is to stand for its bearer.[51] Since we can distinguish between the type of sentence a token of which is uttered, and what is said in an utterance, we can distinguish between two levels of understanding: i) understanding the uttered sentence as a token of a certain sentence type, and ii) understanding what is said by that utterance, including understanding the conditions in which it is true.[52]

Clearly, in the absence of a referent, an utterance containing a singular term has *no* truth- and falsity-conditions. If, as Kripke said, a proper understanding of a statement

[51] A name is assigned a reference by means of a convention, but the convention by which a name receives a bearer is not linguistic, but social (Recanati, 1993: 136 ff). Furthermore, it is arguable that a causal link between a speaker's use of a name and an object is necessary for reference to be successful (Devitt, 1974; Kripke, 1980; Evans, 1982). However, neither the convention that assigns a bearer to a name, nor the causal link between a speaker's use of a name and its bearer is part either of the truth-conditions of utterances of sentences containing that name, or part of what is understood by the speaker. It may be that more is understood when a name is uttered, even if nothing *is said* when the name is uttered. There may be a "backing of descriptions" associated to certain uses of empty names.

[52] Recanati considers a similar distinction (Recanati, 1993: 27-8).

requires understanding the extensionally correct conditions in which the statement is true, when there are no such conditions, as happens when a singular term does not refer, there can be no *proper understanding*. It is not evident, however, that understanding the type of sentence uttered (as mentioned above) is sufficient to explain the impression of understanding empty proper names.

Not everyone takes the referent of a singular term as a component of the proposition expressed, as Russell and Kaplan do.[53] The difference in the cognitive value of co-referring singular terms is an obstacle to treating the truth-conditions of *all* utterances of sentences with singular terms as requiring *exclusively* the identification of the object referred. The examples 'Hesperus appears in the evening sky' and 'Phosphorus appears in the evening sky' are illustrative of this. Someone could believe the first proposition but not the second. So, whereas 'Ptolemy believed that Hesperus appears in the evening sky' is arguably true, 'Ptolemy believed that Phosphorus appears in the evening sky' is arguably false. Nonetheless, the recognition of differences in cognitive value, which become evident in propositional attitude ascriptions, does not entail that truth-conditions and what is said is any less object-dependent.

Grasping what is said in an utterance requires grasping the truth-conditions of the sentence as uttered then. The difference in cognitive value between co-referring singular terms *ought* to respect the object-dependency and singularity of truth-conditions. The recognition of the difference in cognitive values and the possibility of holding different epistemic attitudes towards '*a* is F' and '*b* is F', where $a = b$, should not conflict with the type of truth-conditions the sentences can have. So, the recognition of the role the notion of

[53] Against the Russellian-Kaplanian view, see McDowell (1977), Evans (1982), Chisholm (1989), for instance.

sense or mode of presentation plays in accounting for differences in cognitive value is not sufficient to motivate the idea that empty proper names have senses or modes of presentation.

Evans (1982) and McDowell (1977) equally defend the singularity and object-dependency of what is said and of truth-conditions,[54] accept the truth of instances of the equivalence schemas for truth, but intend to account for the differences in cognitive value by adapting the Fregean notion of sense. Since holding these three views is inconsistent with admitting that empty singular terms have sense (see §3.2.1 above), the thesis that empty singular terms can have senses must be rejected.

If the sense of an expression is a mode of presentation of its semantic value, the sense of a singular term must present its referent. Evans and McDowell propose that in stating the reference of a singular term, for instance 'Hesperus', we should do so in a way that displays or shows its sense. The proposal is thus that

(1) 'Hesperus' stands for Hesperus

achieves this, whereas

(2) 'Hesperus' stands for Phosphorus.

does not.[55] Even if we adopt the notion of sense as a mode of presentation or way of thinking of an object, it is patently obvious that if that object had not existed there would not have been any mode of presentation or way of thinking about *it*.

The claim that singular terms are expressions such that they constrain *all* utterances of sentences containing them to have object-dependent truth-conditions also faces the problem

[54] Evans, for example, claims that singular terms are precisely those terms whose contribution to the truth-conditions of sentences containing them can be stated as for 'G (*t*)' in Peacocke's criterion (see Evans, 1982: 49). McDowell (1982) claims that it is the syntax of sentences of the relevant sort (containing singular terms) that constrains them to express singular object-dependent thoughts.

[55] See Evans (1982: 26, 34-5) and McDowell (1977: 161-5). For discussion of the proposal, see §3.5.2 below.

of negative existential statements. If a singular term is thus identified, and since a vacuous singular term can be *used* in true negative existential statements, it is clear that the true negative existential statement it occurs in does not have object-dependent truth-conditions. Could Russell be right in claiming that a name has to name, otherwise it is not a name?

It is true that true negative existential statements create difficulties for an account of singular terms. Clearly, a uniform treatment of all sentences containing what we take to be singular terms is not possible. The difficulty is acknowledged for instance by Peacocke (1975).[56] Obviously, his criterion for a rigid designator cannot apply to uses of empty singular terms in true negative existential statements. Evans (1982) also recognizes that a uniform treatment of singular terms in normal and existential contexts is not possible:

> "I argued for the thesis that nothing is said by someone who makes a normal, information-invoking use of a singular term that has no referent. Anyone who presents such a thesis must come to terms with the fact that there are apparently intelligible uses of such terms, made in the full knowledge that they have no referent. Such utterances are intelligible only because they can be interpreted in such a way that there is the possibility that they are true when the term has no referent…most notorious are negative existential statements, in which empty singular terms are apparently used to register the fact that they are empty." (Evans, 1982: 343)

I do not know what the solution for handling existential statements is. What is clear is that we cannot handle abnormal uses of singular terms, such as in negative existential statements, in the same way as we handle normal uses of singular terms (we cannot treat the truth-conditions of *any* possible statement with a singular term as object-dependent). It is also clear that the Russellian strategy of treating *any* singular term that *may* fail to refer as abbreviated descriptions (that is, even singular terms that *do* refer) cannot be adopted without losing the positive proposals that account adequately for the truth-conditions of statements

[56] See Peacocke (1975: 129)

containing normal uses of singular terms (which include extensional, modal and temporal contexts). From the fact that negative existential statements containing what we take to be a singular term can be true, it does not follow that we should treat *all* other statements containing singular terms as being truth-evaluable, whether or not an item is referred to.

3.3.2 Singular thoughts

The previous section identified features of singular terms that indicate that an utterance with an empty singular term having no truth- and falsity-conditions is not understandable as saying that something is the case (with the exception of negative existential statements). Evans (1982) and McDowell (1977, 1982, 1984) extend this claim to singular thoughts and attributions of propositional attitudes.[57] Evans and McDowell's position can be summarized thus: there is no truth-evaluable content when reference failure occurs, since "the syntax of sentences of the relevant sort" constrains the truth-conditions of such sentences to be singular and object-dependent. If there are no truth-conditions, then there is no thought-content.

Evans and McDowell object to treating what is said by utterances of sentences with singular terms as a Russellian proposition because of concerns with cognitive significance. The objection is founded on the Intuitive Criterion of Difference: that two thoughts are distinct if it is possible for the same person at the same time to coherently take different epistemic attitudes towards them. To report what someone else thinks, we should not only identify *who* or *what* is thought about, but also report it in such a way that captures *how* the

[57] The connection made is stated in McDowell's (1982) justification for the thesis that an utterance of an atomic sentence containing an empty singular term is neither true nor false: "The syntax of sentences of the relevant sort fits them to express singular thoughts if any; where a singular thought is a thought that is not available to be thought or expressed if the relevant object, or objects, did not exist. It follows that if one utters a sentence of the relevant sort, containing a singular term that, in that utterance, lacks a denotation, then one expresses no thought at all; consequently, neither a truth nor a falsehood." (McDowell, 1982: 303-4)

person is thinking of such individual. Hence, the content of the thought is not simply truth-conditional content of which the referent is a component, but must include a way of thinking of that individual. Unfortunately, to report *how* someone thinks about something is not always possible. It is not possible to demonstrate an object that one is not presented with, even if someone else thinks of that object demonstratively. In this case, what is available is a transparent relational ascription: she thinks, concerning *a*, that it is *F*.

To individuate a singular thought and ascribe it we must refer to an appropriate object. If we know there is no object, we know we cannot ascribe the thought:

> "There is, one knows, no thought that one could ascribe in that form. This is the Russellian thesis – formulated here in terms of reflections about "that"-clauses …" (McDowell, 1982: 307)

The arguments against admitting that thoughts can be expressed with empty singular terms, either demonstratives or proper names, assume that it is necessary to ascribe a singular thought that a transparent relational thought or belief ascription is available, i.e., that if *S* thinks that *a* is *F*, then *S* thinks, of *a*, that it is *F*. If '*a*' is an empty singular term, then no thought ascription is possible.[58]

The impossibility of attributing an attitude by means of a that-clause is a symptom of the fact that when reference failure occurs there is no thought to grasp or entertain. If it is not possible to state the content of singular thoughts when reference failure occurs, and on the assumption that a thought whose content cannot be stated is no thought at all, then there are

[58] "A sincere assertive utterance of a sentence containing a name with a bearer can be understood as expressing a belief correctly describable as a belief, concerning the bearer, that it satisfies some specified condition [in footnote: that is, describable by way of a transparent, or relational, attribution of belief]. If the name has no bearer (in the interpreter's view), he cannot describe any suitably related belief in the transparent style. He can indeed gather, from the utterance, that the subject believes himself to have a belief that could be thus described, and believes himself to be expressing such a belief by his words. That might make the subject's behaviour, as speaking as he does, perfectly intelligible; but in a way quite different from the way in which, in the first kind of case, the belief expressed makes the behaviour intelligible." (McDowell, 1977: 172-3)

no empty singular thoughts. The point must be applicable to empty demonstratives and to empty proper names. For instance, to an utterance of 'that butterfly is worth having' as well as to 'Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder'.

Evans (1982: 82, and 139) argues that in the event of failed reference with demonstratives, we are unable to report what someone says or thinks by means of a that-clause where we equally demonstrate the object in the same way as the subject, for instance, '*S* thinks that that butterfly is worth having'. We are also unable to report what someone thinks by referring to the butterfly by any other means, for instance, '*S* thinks, of butterfly$_1$, that it is worth having' (where we would name the butterfly 'butterfly$_1$').

No descriptive thought could adequately replace a demonstrative thought. Had there been a demonstrated butterfly, the truth-conditions of the thought would have been different from the truth-conditions of any descriptive thought. In the second place, the subject could take different attitudes towards the putative demonstrative thought and the descriptive thought. Finally, the subject need not have entertained any descriptive thought in thinking demonstratively of butterfly$_1$. Hence, there is no way to state the content of the singular demonstrative thought when there is no object.

The point that no that-clause is available to state the content when there is no object must equally extend to singular thoughts expressible with proper names. We cannot say, '*S* thinks, concerning Mumbo-Jumbo, that he brings thunder'. Had there been a Mumbo-Jumbo god, a descriptive thought would not have had the same truth-conditions as a singular thought expressed in 'Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder'. Also, the subject need not have entertained a descriptive thought at all. The question is, why can we not say for instance that natives of a distant tribe think that Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder, even if there is no Mumbo-Jumbo?

The arguments against admitting that thoughts can be expressed with empty singular terms, either demonstratives or proper names, assume that it is necessary to ascribe a singular thought that a transparent relational thought or belief ascription is available. Someone who is persuaded that singular thoughts are object-independent (that they are available to be entertained whichever, if any, object, is thought about), would dispute the truth of this conditional, claiming precisely that someone can think that *a* is *F*, even if someone does not think, of *a*, that it is *F* (this is further discussed in §3.5.2).

McDowell suggests that when it is not possible to ascribe to someone a singular belief or thought, the subject must be described as having some second order beliefs. Arguably, the subject may also have other first order descriptive beliefs associated with the use of that name. A subject meant to express a thought describable in the transparent style, and this is what is required by "a proper respect for a person's authority on his own thoughts" (1977: 175). But how to deal with the apparent *prima facie* plausibility of saying that the natives think that Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder? McDowell's answer is that when we describe subjects in this way "the interpreter is simply playing along with his deluded subject – putting things his way".

Now, the Russellian-Kaplanian[59] can acknowledge that different attitudes are taken towards the same truth-conditional content, but grasped under distinct 'modes of presentation' or characters. But Evans and McDowell think that the *thought-contents* must be different, even if they are true in the same conditions – the thought determines truth-conditions. Insisting we have different thoughts, even if the objective truth-conditions are the same, is partly due to the acceptance of the Fregean claim that senses (thoughts) can only be

[59] Cf. Kaplan (1989: 532).

composed of senses. Thus, singular thoughts do have singular object-dependent truth-conditions, but the referent is not a component of the thought. Rather, singular thoughts include object-dependent or *de re* senses. Whichever of the positions concerning the constitution of singular thoughts is correct, both are essentially Russellian in this respect: singular thoughts are object-dependent because i) thoughts about different objects are distinct thoughts, and ii) in the event of there being no object referred there can be no thought to grasp or entertain. This means rejecting that the same singular thought can be grasped whichever, if any, object is thought about.

Nonetheless, the idea that from the subject's point of view things may appear the same is plausible; the possibility of an illusion of understanding seems to require this. Arguably, we may need to recognize that there are types of modes of presentation, and that one can think of different objects in the same sort of way. For example, different times can be thought of as *now*, places as *here* and (almost?) everybody has first person thoughts. The idea that there are types of modes of presentation may serve to provide *some* psychological and behavioural explanations.[60] McDowell acknowledges that there may be sorts (or types) of modes or presentation. He says,

> "… different *de re* senses (modes of presentation) can present their different *res* in the same sort of way… And the univocity of a context-sensitive expression can be registered by associating it with a single sort of *de re* sense… Given a context, a suitable sub-sentential character will determine an object, or else – if no object is suitably involved in the context – nothing. Even in the latter sort of case, the character is still, according to this way of thinking, available to be expressed: a constituent of a sub-propositional conceptual content. Contrast *de re* senses. Given a context, a sort of *de re* sense may determine a *de re* sense… or else it too may determine nothing. And in the latter sort of case, according to this way of thinking, there can only be a gap – an absence – at, so to speak, the relevant place in the mind – the place where, given that the sort of *de re* sense in question appears to be instantiated, there appears to be a specific *de re* sense. [in footnote:] Perhaps there is a thought symbol (a means of

[60] The distinction between the truth-conditional content expressed and the mode of presentation under which it is apprehended is also argued for by Perry (1977) and Recanati (1993) for instance.

> representation) at a place corresponding to the gap. But to accept this would not be to accept that there is, at that place, an *aspect* or *ingredient* of content. What there is at that place, if we accept this suggestion is a putative *bearer* or *vehicle* of content." (McDowell, 1984: 103).

Could one endorse the singularity of thoughts, but recognize two distinct aspects of thoughts: the objective truth-evaluable content, and the subjective mode of presentation under which truth-evaluable content is apprehended? Evans and McDowell reject this way of regarding the matter. The problem is that if it is admitted that we can distinguish between two aspects of *thoughts*, the objective truth-conditional content of the thought, and the subjective narrow mode of presentation under which the objective component is apprehended, we open the way for admitting that the subjective mode of presentation is available whether or not there is an objective content. The admission of such a possibility would permit ascribing to mistaken subjects only the subjective narrow mode of presentation.

Evans argues against the admission of narrow contents, indistinguishable from the subject's perspective. Such narrow contents are meant to be representational states, but representational states must be assessable as true or false, since a representational state "represents something other than itself as being thus and so, with the consequence that the state is true if and only if the thing concerned is thus and so" (Evans, 1982: 202). But a schema, or a thought-symbol, what is left in the absence of an object, is not evaluable, hence it is not representational, and cannot be a component of thoughts.

3.4 Why reference failure does not provide reasons to reject (T), (F) and (PB)

Dummett (1959) is right in saying that it is inconsistent to maintain the truth of every instance of the equivalence schema for truth and simultaneously to hold that there are propositions (thoughts, or statements) that are neither true nor false. What he is not right about is the claim that the equivalence schema is inconsistent with "there being a type of sentence which under certain conditions is neither true nor false."

Williamson's argument explores the inconsistency in holding both views, but admits the alternative Dummett does not think plausible: that certain sentences (or utterances of sentences) may in certain conditions be neither true nor false, *because* nothing is said, no proposition or thought is expressed. The previous section identified features of singular terms that legitimate the alternative justification for why some sentences in certain conditions are neither true nor false.

Reference failure does generate truth-value gaps, but it does not constitute a challenge to bivalence nor is it inconsistent with schemas (T) and (F). Suppose, for example, that in a certain context 'this dagger' fails to refer. An utterance of 'this dagger is sharp' in that context is neither true nor false. The consequents of schemas (T) and (F) are, respectively, '*u* is true iff *P*' and '*u* is false iff not *P*'. Instances of the consequents relative to the utterance of 'this dagger is sharp' would be: ''this dagger is sharp' is true if and only if this dagger is sharp', and ''this dagger is sharp' is false if and only if this dagger is not sharp'.

Obviously, since the utterance is neither true nor false, the left-hand side of either biconditional is *false*, but the right-hand side of either biconditional is *neither* true nor false. So, this seems to create a problem for the schemas, and it justifies the metalinguistic negation of ''this dagger is sharp' is true' and of ''this dagger is sharp' is false', while disallowing the

derivation of a corresponding object-language negation. Raising a problem for the schemas would permit blocking Williamson's argument. The problem with this line of argument, with respect to reference failure, is that it ignores the *antecedent* of the schemas, and the effects on it of the appeal to metalinguistic negation.

The unavailability of truth- and falsity-conditions, which legitimises metalinguistic negation, means the unavailability of *content*. In the supposed context of use, 'this dagger is sharp' says nothing. It is because we can say that an utterance of the sentence 'this dagger is sharp' says nothing in that context (mentioning the sentence in question) that we cannot use the sentence in the right-hand side of the biconditional. So, the antecedent of the schemas relative to the utterance of 'this dagger is sharp' must also be denied: ''this dagger is sharp' says that this dagger is sharp' is not true. Therefore, we cannot accept uses of the sentence in that context.[61]

The same must apply to an utterance of 'Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder'. The consequents of (T) and (F) relative to 'Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder' are unacceptable: ''Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder' is true iff Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder' and ''Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder' is false iff Mumbo-Jumbo does not bring thunder'. If we only deny metalinguistically the left-hand side of either biconditional, we cannot state the truth- and falsity-conditions of the utterance of 'Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder'. Again, we reject that the utterance is true or false *because* we cannot use 'Mumbo-Jumbo' to state truth- or falsity-conditions, i.e., we reject the left hand-sides of either biconditional, because we reject the assertability of either right-hand side. But if we reject the assertability of either right-hand side, i.e., if we cannot *use* the sentences where 'Mumbo-Jumbo' occurs, then we should also

[61] We cannot accept embedded or unembedded uses of the sentence. Cf. Williamson (1992: 149).

reject that we can disquote to put forward what the utterance would have, allegedly, said. That is to say, we ought equally to reject ‘‘Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder’ says that Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder’.

Reference failure does not show that schemas (T) and (F) are inappropriate. The unacceptability of the consequents of the schemas: ‘*u* is true iff *P*’ and ‘*u* is false iff not *P*’, where *u* is an utterance of a sentence with an empty singular term, results from the fact that the left-hand sides are false and the right-hand sides are neither true nor false. If this is a reason to prevent the derivation of an object-level negation, then we must also reject the antecedent of the schemas. We cannot insert a sentence saying that something is the case in the place of ‘*P*’.

The phenomenon of reference failure illustrates how cases of truth-value gaps need not create difficulties for schemas (T) and (F), and also how no contradiction need be derivable from denying that an utterance is neither true nor false. One can reasonably hold that an utterance *u* involving reference failure is neither true nor false, but it illustrates that cases of reference failure do not amount to genuine cases of truth-value gaps.

Now, one convinced that something is said by an utterance of ‘Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder’ will not accept this conclusion, in the same way that one who is not convinced that singular thoughts are object-dependent will not accept that the unavailability of a transparent relational thought or belief ascription entails that there is no thought to ascribe. The next section examines and criticizes the reasons that may lead one to reject the position reached so far.

3.5 "People who are mistaken about the existence of something are not crazy, they are just wrong!"

This is what Segal (1989) claims in criticizing the claim that singular thoughts are object-dependent. We can agree that people are wrong, but what are they wrong about? It is often the case that someone mistakenly takes herself to refer or take attitudes to an object, where there is no object to refer or take attitudes to. She may attempt to express her beliefs by uttering a sentence with an empty singular term. Usually, whenever there are reasons to consider that someone has a propositional attitude, it seems that there are equally reasons to take an utterance expressing someone's belief or thoughts as saying that something is the case.

Reference failure is problematic because there appear to be conflicting requirements on the recognition that an utterance says something. The account of the truth-conditions of sentences containing singular terms indicates that, with the exception of existential statements, the truth- and falsity-conditions of utterances of such sentences are object-dependent. So, when there is no object, the utterances do not have truth- or falsity-conditions, which suggests that nothing is said or thought. In this sense, the non-existence of the object entails the non-existence of expressible content. On the other hand, people understand such utterances, take them to be true or false, and typically act on what they take to be true. Providing an explanation for conscious and rational behaviour seems to require that some content be ascribable, whether or not an object is referred to.

The main objection against the object-dependency of singular thoughts, a position held by Evans and McDowell, for instance – that singular thoughts about different individuals are different singular thoughts, and that if there is no individual thought about, there is no

singular thought – is that this position deprives us of a means to provide intelligibility and coherence to subjects' attitudes and actions. Moreover, it may be argued, even if it turns out that an ordinary proper name is vacuous, people who suppose the name to refer will nonetheless understand and believe utterances containing it.

3.5.1 Psychological and behavioural explanations

Carruthers (1987) and Segal (1989), among others,[62] argue against the object-dependency of singular thoughts, which can be called the 'Russellian thesis'. The opposition is founded on the role of thoughts in the causation and explanation of human action. If a subject does not think any thought when there is no referred object, how can a non-thought cause and provide rationale for intentional action? Rather, it is claimed, the role of singular thoughts in the causation and explanation of attitudes and actions suggests that singular thoughts of the same type should be attributable whichever, if any, object is actually thought about. A proper taxonomy of singular thoughts should account for thoughts in virtue of their functional role in psychological and behavioural explanations.

The Russellian thesis has, as Carruthers sees it, two ways to account for the situation of, for instance, a butterfly hunter attempting to catch a hallucinated butterfly. The first way is to explain the subject's action as resulting from other non-conscious dispositions to act, other beliefs and desires. For instance, the Russellian could claim that since we cannot attribute to the subject a conscious decision such as 'I will catch that butterfly for my collection', we can attribute to the mistaken subject some second order beliefs.

[62] For example, Blackburn (1984: chapter 4).

We need, however, a candidate for the content of the conscious decision taken by the butterfly hunter and need to relate her subsequent actions, thoughts and beliefs in a coherent way back to the original decision. Ascribing content to the original decision (or thought) will provide intelligibility to the butterfly hunter's actions. Not doing so will force us to classify her actions together with actions such as turning the wheel of the car while driving to avoid an obstacle, while one's mind is focused on something else.[63] This argument applies to McDowell's (1977) view that the subject will have a second-order (possibly unconscious) belief that she has a singular belief, which would explain her actions.

Another argument against the second-order belief explanation is put forward by Segal (1989). Segal's argument applies to cases of proper names, as well as to any other possibly vacuous singular terms. The strategy of Segal's argument is to show that the claim that singular thoughts are object-dependent cannot make sense of mistaken subjects without undermining itself. If it is sufficient to ascribe second order beliefs to explain mistaken subject's attitudes and actions, then object-dependent singular thoughts become explanatorily redundant. If they are not necessary to explain the attitudes and actions of mistaken subjects, then they are equally unnecessary to explain the attitudes and actions of non-mistaken subjects.

Segal's argument appeals to the usual Twin-Earth thought-experiment. Take the example 'Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder'. Natives of a distant tribe utter the sentence because they believe there is a god, called 'Mumbo-Jumbo', who brings thunder. But there is no Mumbo-Jumbo on Earth. If there is no thought-content to attribute to the natives, then we must find another explanation for their actions. Suppose then that there is such an

[63] Carruthers (1987: 19)

explanation, in the form of a set *X* of beliefs and desires (including the native's second order beliefs). Suppose furthermore there is a Twin-Earth twin to the Earth's native, exactly alike the Earth's native, except on Twin-Earth there is a Mumbo-Jumbo god. On Twin-Earth, it is true that Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder. The twin-native must have all of the beliefs and desires in *X*. If *X* explains the native's actions on Earth, it will be sufficient to explain the twin-native's actions on Twin-Earth, and hence the belief that Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder (which would be, on assumption, attributable to the twin-native, but not to the native) is explanatorily redundant. Hence, object-dependent thoughts are not necessary to provide psychological and behavioural explanations.

Nonetheless, what Segal wants to argue is *not* that some set *X* of beliefs and desires is sufficient to explain both the native and the twin-native's actions. What he wants is that the twin-native's belief that Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder explains why he utters 'Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder'. And if that is what must be attributed to the twin-native, it must be the same belief that we attribute to the native.

The second possibility available to the Russellian to explain the attitudes and actions of mistaken subjects is to draw a distinction between a thought and a thought-sign (a kind of mental sentence). Carruthers argues equally against this possibility.[64] He compares the butterfly hunter, trying to catch a hallucinated butterfly, to the protagonists in Lewis Carroll's poem that decide to go hunting for the snark. Arguably, Lewis Carroll's characters failed to think any contentful thought, but their actions are caused by a conscious event involving a complete thought-sign. However, there is a clear difference between the snark hunter and the butterfly hunter. In the snark hunter's case, we have no idea of what would make the

[64] Carruthers (1987: 20).

enterprise of catching the snark end in success. The subsequent thoughts and actions of the snark hunter can be given no coherence and intelligibility deriving from the original decision. In contrast, both the butterfly hunter and we can describe the circumstances in which the enterprise of catching *a* valuable butterfly would have ended in success:

> "that there had indeed been a valuable butterfly observed on the wall, and that that very same butterfly was captured undamaged for the butterfly-hunter's collection." (Carruthers, 1987: 20)

Considering that the same is going on in the snark hunter's case and in the butterfly hunter's case, according to Carruthers, has the consequence that assigning a thought-sign rather than a complete thought will deprive us of a way to give coherence to the subsequent attitudes and actions of the butterfly hunter. Again, we would be forced to give two different explanations for the actions of someone who is trying to capture a real butterfly and for the person who hallucinates a butterfly. But the explanations are the same (arguably, the descriptions of the conditions in which the projects of catching a real or a hallucinated butterfly are equally the same).

But Carruthers's arguments are unconvincing. Arguably, unlike the actions of the snark hunter, the actions of the butterfly hunter may be given "a coherence and unity deriving from the original decision". Both we as observers and the person herself would have no difficulty in specifying the *conditions* in which the action would have ended in success. For which action are we identifying success conditions? The action of catching *a* valuable butterfly. However, we do not want the success of catching *any* one valuable butterfly to explain the success of the actions of the butterfly hunter that does not hallucinate a butterfly, that project is successful if *that* specific butterfly is caught. But in the hallucinatory case, *any* individual valuable butterfly would have served. Carruthers's explanation of the condition for the

success of the action: "had there been *a* valuable butterfly, and that *that* very same butterfly was captured undamaged" does not specify the conditions for the success of catching a *specific* butterfly, but the conditions for the success of catching *any* individual butterfly. In the second conjunct of the condition, 'and that *that* very same butterfly…', the demonstrative 'that' does not, obviously, refer to any particular butterfly, but is bound by the existential operator in the first conjunct 'had *there been a*…'

How exactly does this go against the thought-sign hypothesis? Perhaps a comparison with utterances is helpful. Consider an utterance of 'that butterfly is worth having' made by the person who hallucinates a butterfly. The utterance is neither true nor false in this case, there is no demonstrated butterfly that would make the utterance either true or false; it makes no statement (even if the subject thinks it does). Nonetheless, we can specify general conditions in which this utterance would have been true, as a token of a sentence-type, independently of there being any item demonstrated. As a token of a certain type, it constrains, by meaning what it does, the 'conditions in which it would have ended up in success': had there been a butterfly demonstrated and referred to as 'that butterfly', and had that very same butterfly been worth having. But this is not stating the utterance's truth-conditions. It is identifying which type of truth-conditions it can have.

Any valuable butterfly would have made the enterprise of catching *a* valuable butterfly end up in success. However, this is saying nothing about *one* particular butterfly (which is what the subject intended), nor is it a specification of the truth-conditions of the utterance of 'that butterfly is worth having', since it does not have any. Suppose now someone uttered 'that blea lends blurpy'. We do not know what this means. The utterance was of something

resembling a sentence, but we have no idea of what such an utterance *could* say, unlike 'that butterfly is worth having'.

If the notion of a thought-sign makes sense, it is as illegitimate to compare a thought-sign of the form *I'll catch that butterfly for my collection* to a thought-sign of the form *Let us go on a hunt to catch the snark*, as to compare an utterance of 'that butterfly is worth having' to an utterance of 'that blea lends blurpy'. It does not follow from the fact that both utterances fail to say that something is the case that both must be utterances of meaningless sentences. Equally, it does not follow from the fact that both the butterfly hunter and the snark hunter entertain contentless thought-symbols, that we do not know in general what circumstances would result in the success of the butterfly hunt, nor that we cannot provide any intelligibility to the butterfly hunter's actions and attitudes. Thus, the fact that the thought-sign in the snark hunter's case *could not* have had any content does not show that the butterfly hunter does not entertain a contentless thought-sign, some sort of mental sentence she is persuaded is not contentless.

We can specify the conditions that would have to obtain for that thought-sign to have some content (and to be truth-evaluable), as we can specify general conditions in which the butterfly hunter's actions would have ended up in success. So, Carruthers argument does not establish that acknowledging that a subject being conscious of a certain thought-sign is not sufficient to provide intelligibility to the subject's actions. Carruthers says:

> "Our argument against the Russellian has survived the response unscathed. The thoughts of a person setting out to capture an hallucinatory butterfly may enter into the causation of their action – guiding and regulating and providing intelligibility – in precisely the way that any ordinary contentful thought would. To insist, as the Russellian does, that these are in fact mere thought-signs, lacking in content, is to commit us to giving two quite distinct explanations in the two cases, and this seems entirely wrong. (1987: 20-1)

Clearly, the argument against the Russellian has not "survived the response unscathed". We may accept that "The thoughts of a person setting out to capture an hallucinatory butterfly may enter into the causation of their action – guiding and regulating and providing intelligibility" because we are assuming that the person is rational. But we cannot accept that she has singular thoughts regulating and providing intelligibility for her actions "in precisely the way that any ordinary contentful thought would", because the hunter hallucinating a butterfly has no singular thoughts about an hallucinatory butterfly, whereas the hunter who sees a butterfly has singular thoughts about *it*.

It also does not follow that "To insist, as the Russellian does, that these are in fact mere thought-signs, lacking in content, is to commit us to giving two quite distinct explanations in the two cases." The explanations are not distinct for those aspects of their actions that are not distinct – the project of catching *a* valuable butterfly is successful if *a* valuable butterfly is caught. If we suppose two subjects S1 and S2 perceiving two identical butterflies, $butterfly_1$ and $butterfly_2$, and both sincerely utter 'that butterfly is worth having', we can say that S1 thinks that $butterfly_1$ is worth having, and that S2 thinks that $butterfly_2$ is worth having. Each utterance will have different truth- and falsity-conditions that depend on which butterfly is perceived and demonstrated. If we now suppose a subject S3 who hallucinates a butterfly, we cannot attribute to S3 any singular thought about a demonstrated butterfly, since no butterfly is perceived. What is thought by S1, S2 and S3 irrespective of which, if any, object is referred cannot be the same *singular thought*. Even if S1 and S2 entertain singular thoughts of the same type, S3 cannot entertain an empty singular thought of the same type, since S3 does not entertain any singular thought at all.

What Segal intends to infer also does not follow from what he shows. Segal's strategy is to show that we cannot make sense of mistaken subjects without undermining our position that singular thoughts are object-dependent (that singular thoughts about different individuals are different thoughts and there is no such thing as an empty singular thought). He claimed that if we can make sense of Earth's natives, who utter sincerely 'Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder' without attributing to them a singular thought, then we can also make sense of Twin-Earth's natives behaviour without attributing to them a singular object-dependent thought about Mumbo-Jumbo.

What is common in their behaviour and beliefs that can require a common explanation? That there is a god called 'Mumbo-Jumbo', that such a god brings thunder, and possibly several other beliefs. All this can be explained without attributing an object-dependent belief to either group of natives. But what Segal wants to show is that *if* the singular belief (supposed to be object-independent) held by Twin-Earth's natives explains their actions and attitudes, then it also explains Earth's natives attitudes.

However, this does not follow from the earlier remark. Twin-Earth's natives believe *truly* that twin-Earth Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder, and worship Mumbo-Jumbo (who, presumably, rewards them by bringing thunder upon their enemies' heads). Suppose that there is third group of natives on Twintwin-Earth, where there also exists a Mumbo-Jumbo god, but this one does not bring thunder. Twintwin natives worship their own Mumbo-Jumbo (but he rewards them by bringing rain on everyone's heads). We can describe twintwin natives as believing *falsely* that (twintwin-Earth) Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder, but we cannot describe them as believing *truly* that (twin-Earth) Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder. At best, we can describe Twintwin-Earth's natives and Twin-Earth's natives as sharing a

number of common, descriptive beliefs about two different gods, who happen to have the same name. Thus, at best, we can describe Earth's natives as sharing a number of common, descriptive beliefs with their Twin-Earth and Twintwin-Earth's counterparts.

Do all three groups of natives believe the same and express the same belief by uttering 'Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder'? *If* the same belief is ascribable whether there is a Mumbo-Jumbo god or not, the same belief must be ascribable whatever the name 'Mumbo-Jumbo' refers to. This is what a denial of the claim that 'singular thoughts about different objects have different contents, and there is no such thing as an empty singular thought' amounts to. However, twin-natives' beliefs are true and twintwin-natives' beliefs are false, so arguably they cannot have the same beliefs. The truth-conditions of twin-natives beliefs differ from the truth-conditions of twintwin-natives' beliefs, because their beliefs are about different gods, even if the gods are all named 'Mumbo-Jumbo' and are believed to have the same thunder-bringing powers. Since there is no Mumbo-Jumbo on Earth, it is hard to see how Earth's natives could have a singular belief or thought without truth- or falsity-conditions.

Perhaps Segal's rejection of the object-dependency of singular thoughts is meant to allow the same singular thought to be entertained about different individuals, being true of one god, and false of another. Rejecting the object-dependency of singular thoughts would also permit the same singular thought to be available to be grasped when there is no individual god thought about. If Segal were right, then the conditional: 'If *S* believes that *a* is *F*, then *S* believes, of *a*, that it is *F*' would be falsified. I will next discuss this proposal.

3.5.2 Senses to the rescue?

Even if names are not abbreviated descriptions, in Russell's sense, it is not unreasonable to hold that understanding an utterance with a proper name requires having some conception of who or what the name refers to. Thus, Larson and Segal (1995) make use of a notion of a dossier or file of information associated with the use of a proper name.[65] The information in the dossier will be, typically, derived from the individual the name stands for, but it may include misinformation (for example, that Peano discovered the Peano axioms of arithmetic). The information in the dossier does not fix the reference of the proper name, nor does it enter in the specification of the truth-conditions of utterances of sentences with that name. If it did, it would not be coherent to say that Peano did not discover the Peano axioms of arithmetic, even though 'the discoverer of the Peano axioms of arithmetic' is a description often associated with Peano. Descriptions can be added or removed from the dossier, as they are assumed (or discovered) correct or incorrect.

Larson and Segal argue that this dossier of information specifies a singular concept of an object. The notion of a singular concept is meant to be the notion of a mode of presentation of the referent of a proper name, supposedly similar to the Fregean notion of sense. Someone can associate different dossiers of information, or singular concepts, with co-referring proper names. Such a person may reasonably hold different attitudes towards the same individual. So, we may attribute to the person, for instance, the belief that Hesperus

[65] The notion of a dossier was originally developed by Grice (1969). Evans (1973, 1982 ch. 9) and Recanati (1993) explore the notion of a dossier of information associated with a proper name as a condition of the correct understanding of uses of the name. Thus, Evans says: "We must allow then that the denotation of a name in the community will depend in a complicated way upon what those who use the term intend to refer to, but we will so understand 'intended referent' that typically a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for x's being the intended referent of S's use of a name is that x should be the source or causal origin of the body of information that S has associated with the name." (Evans, 1973: 13)

appears in the evening sky, while not attributing to the same person the belief that Phosphorus appears in the evening sky. Larson and Segal further claim that one takes attitudes (belief, desire, etc.) to the "mental representation or mode of presentation of the proposition".[66] Thus, the mode of presentation of the individual determined by the dossier of information associated with the individual's name is relevant *at least* for the truth-conditions of utterances of sentences attributing propositional attitudes.

Larson and Segal, in accordance to Segal's (1989) position, claim that there is nonetheless a strong intuition concerning empty proper names that

> "[E]ven though they fail to refer, they nonetheless make a meaningful contribution to the sentences in which they occur… the failure to refer to a particular person seems largely irrelevant to understanding the term."(Larson and Segal, 1995: 164)

If empty names make a meaningful contribution to utterances of sentences containing them, and if someone can express thoughts or beliefs by employing empty names, then a way to explain this may be by recognizing that there is a dossier of information that determines a way of thinking of something, a conception of an object, that nonetheless does not determine a referent. Speakers may intend to refer to an individual by using a name with which such a dossier of information is associated, unaware of the fact that nothing answers by that name. Segal's (1989) claim that Earth's natives and twin-Earth's natives may have the same belief that Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder could then be elucidated by appealing to the notion of a singular concept of an individual, determined somehow by the same information associated in the communities with uses of the name.

[66] Larson and Segal (1995: 181).

Admitting that there is a dossier of information associated with the use of a proper name is not assuming that it *fixes* the referent of the name, that it is part of what is said in (most) utterances of sentences where the name occurs, nor part of the truth-conditions of such utterances. If not, it must be somehow truth-conditionally inert, or irrelevant. At least, this appears to be the most natural and expected consequence of Segal's (1989) position taken together with the idea of dossiers of information endorsed in Larson and Segal (1995). However, it is not the position held by Larson and Segal.

Larson and Segal (1995) endorse the Davidsonian thesis that the significance or meaning of a sentence can be accounted for by stating the necessary and sufficient conditions for its truth. Larson and Segal propose a cognitivized version of truth-conditional semantics, meant to account for speakers' knowledge. Thus, in putting forward the derivation of the truth-conditions for sentences, the theory is also putting forward what speakers understand by the uttered sentences.

As in any truth-conditional semantic theory, the truth-conditions of sentences are determined by assigning semantic values to sentence constituents, and determining how sentence constituents can be combined into sentences. The semantic values of sentences, truth-values, are then assignable, based on the values of constituent expressions and the rules for their composition into sentences. Predicates will be assigned semantic values by being associated to conditions of application that are general – indifferent to *how many* individuals meet the condition, and object-independent – indifferent to *which* individuals meet the condition. The application conditions for definite descriptions are singular – exactly one individual is described, but object-independent – indifferent to which individual is described. In contrast, proper names will be assigned semantic values by being associated with

conditions of application that are singular – exactly *one* individual meets the condition, and *object-dependent* – the named individual is 'crucially involved'.[67]

What results from bringing modes of presentation or singular concepts to the truth-conditional content of uttered sentences containing proper names? There are two possibilities. The first, which Larson and Segal reject, is expressed by McDowell (1977) and Evans (1982). McDowell also endorses the Davidsonian thesis that a truth theory can function as "a theory knowledge of which will suffice for understanding a language." (McDowell, 1977: 159) Proper names contribute with their *referents* to the truth-conditions of sentences. By drawing a parallel between the Davidsonian thesis and the Fregean idea that senses of sentences can be determined by giving truth-conditions, McDowell claims that in stating the semantic value, i.e. the reference, of a proper name we display the sense of the name. So, for instance

(1) 'Hesperus' stands for Hesperus

states the reference of 'Hesperus' and displays its sense, whereas

(2) 'Hesperus' stands for Phosphorus

correctly states the reference, but cannot display the sense, of 'Hesperus'.

The notion of sense is supposed to account for different ways an object can be thought about, but it is not entirely clear that clauses such as (1) and (2) are sufficient to reveal the different ways someone thinks about Venus. For suppose that someone learns the names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' by being told that they are other names for the planet Venus. It is not evident that such a person will think in different ways about Hesperus (i.e. Phosphorus,

[67] See Larson and Segal (1995: 127, for instance).

i.e. Venus). She would accept (1) as well as (2).[68] Larson and Segal have similar doubts. In the first place, if two names are co-extensive, they fail to see how by simply stating who or what the co-extensive names designate amounts to a display of senses or modes of presentation. In the second place, if we cannot state who or what a name refers to, it would follow that the name would be senseless, and this would conflict with the intuition that empty names, and utterances containing them, make a 'meaningful contribution' to sentences in which they occur.

So, the alternative Larson and Segal propose is that the sense or mode of presentation of a proper name is the singular concept determined by the dossier of information associated with the use of the name. But the mode of presentation or singular concept has to be included somehow in the truth-conditional content of utterances of sentences with proper names and at the same time be available to be expressed whichever object, if any, is referred to by the name. In stating the semantic values of proper names, Larson and Segal put forward clauses such as

(3) The semantic value of 'Hesperus' is x iff x = Hesperus

and

(4) The semantic value of 'Phosphorus' is x iff x = Phosphorus

[68] Evans (1982:18-9) says that the only constraint Frege imposed on the notion of thought is that two sentences *S* and *S*' must express different thoughts if it is *possible for someone* to coherently take different attitudes towards them (this is what Evans calls the 'Intuitive Criterion of Difference'). Evans concedes that we should not say '*anyone*', because someone who knows that Hesperus is Phosphorus will not take different attitudes to two sentences containing either of the names (see Evans, 1982: 19, n. 19). However, Evans still holds that the thoughts expressed by two sentences 'Hesperus is *F*' and 'Phosphorus is *F*' *are* different. That must mean that someone who *knows* that Hesperus is Phosphorus entertains different thoughts in understanding the two sentences. But since the notion of sense is introduced to account for differences in cognitive value, and is glossed as a way of thinking of an object, it is not clear that we should take the person who knows that the names have the same referent (and therefore does not have different epistemic attitudes towards sentences containing them) as thinking of Venus in two different ways, even though she has at her disposal several names to refer to Venus.

This is not different from McDowell's position, unless the semantic value of the name is the singular concept of Hesperus, or Phosphorus, rather than the designated planet. So, Larson and Segal claim that what figures on the right hand side of this kind of clause for proper names is the singular concept associated with a name (Larson and Segal, 1995: 191).

One obvious difficulty with this is that it would mean, if taken literally, that 'Hesperus is a planet' is true just in case the singular concept of Hesperus is a planet. What is intended must be rather that the term that figures on the right-hand side is "supported by an individual concept" and that grasping a singular concept of an individual is associated with possessing information about the individual (Larson and Segal, 1995: 187-8). So, what a name stands for must be determined by the singular concept associated with the name.

If truth-conditions are derivable by identifying the semantic value of a proper name, then the truth-conditions of an utterance of, for instance, 'Hesperus appears in the sky in the evening' must include the semantic value of 'Hesperus'. Supposedly, the sentence is true if and only if whatever meets the singular concept of Hesperus appears in the sky in the evening.

But Larson and Segal want not only the mode of presentation to be part of truth-conditional content, they want it to be available whether there is an object referred to or not. Furthermore, Segal claims that the *same* singular thought may happen to be about different individuals, as in the case of Mumbo-Jumbo. So, a sentence like 'Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder' is true just in case whatever, if anything, falls under the singular concept of Mumbo-Jumbo brings thunder. As there is no Mumbo-Jumbo, Larson and Segal claim the sentence is false.

If we want the mode of presentation to be part of truth-conditional content, to determine truth-conditions, and to be available whether or not there is an object referred to, the cost of doing that is that the truth-conditions (and the truth-evaluable content) may be singular by their standard (exactly one individual meets the conditions) but not object-dependent. However, being *just* singular, by this standard, reveals no difference between the truth-conditions of sentences containing proper names and the truth-conditions of sentences containing definite descriptions. If the consequences of this position are followed, what we obtain is an object-independent statement made, with object-independent truth-conditions. The 'singular concept' determined by a dossier of information associated with a proper name is strikingly similar to a cluster of definite descriptions.

These consequences are incompatible with some of the other features of singular terms, proper names included, that Larson and Segal are willing to endorse. In the first place, that the truth-conditions of utterances of sentences containing proper names are singular *and* object-dependent, and what is said in utterances containing a name depends, in general, on how things stand with relation to *that* object, not on how things stand with how we think of it. Secondly, that the dossiers of information associated with uses of proper names are introduced to support speakers' use of the terms, *but not* to provide truth-conditions, since it is assumed that the information in the dossier may misdescribe an individual. The dossier does not determine the referent of a name; it determines only how the speaker thinks of the object (again, 1995: 191). In the third place, Larson and Segal accept the Kripkean suggestion that the semantic values of proper names are fixed by causal chains of usage linking a speaker's use of a name to its bearer, rather than by descriptive information associated with the name. But accepting the singularity and object-dependency of truth-

conditions, and the suggestion of the causal link between the use of a proper name and its bearer, means that the semantic values of proper names are the bearers of the names, not the singular concepts determined by the dossier of information associated with the name.

To preserve these features, the information associated with a use of a name that determines a way of thinking of an individual cannot be involved in the truth-conditions of an utterance with the proper name, or in what is said. Even if there are such modes of presentation determined by dossiers of information, whether or not the name has a bearer, that shows nothing about there being truth-conditional content expressed in utterances of sentences with empty proper names. Hence, there cannot be clauses providing the semantic value of a name like 'Mumbo-Jumbo', no matter what comes into people's minds in hearing the name. There can be nothing more associated with the name other than some descriptive information that does not attach to, or derive from, any particular object. All we have is some ill-grounded information (because there is no object designated by the name).

3.6 Conclusion

When an utterance of a sentence containing an empty singular term is made, that utterance is neither true nor false. This would amount to a counterexample to bivalence if such an utterance said that something was the case, but were neither true nor false. I have claimed that nothing true or false is said when reference failure occurs, because nothing is said. No truth- or falsity-conditions can be put forward; hence nothing can constitute understanding what would have to be the case according to it. Denying that such an utterance is either true or false implies no contradiction, because it means that the negation is

metalinguistic – it amounts to a rejection of the acceptability of using the singular term in it to make statements.

The intuition that something is nonetheless understood, and that attitudes can be taken even in the event of a singular term failing to refer, as far as utterances are concerned, has to be accounted for by relying on the fact that the utterances nonetheless are of meaningful sentences. With cases of empty proper names, admittedly speakers do associate descriptive information with uses of the names. If one treats the truth-conditions of utterances with singular terms as object-independent, allowing for something determinate to be said irrespective of whichever, if any, object is referred, then the semantic features of singular terms cannot be preserved.

The phenomenon of reference failure illustrates how cases of truth-value gaps need not create difficulties for schemas (T) and (F), and also how no contradiction need be derivable from denying that an utterance is either true nor false. Reference failure serves as an example of how utterances that are neither true nor false need not amount to genuine cases of truth-value gaps.

Chapter 4

SOAMES ON BIVALENCE, THE LIAR AND PARTIALLY DEFINED PREDICATES

4.1 Introduction

The principle of bivalence says that anything of the truth-bearer type is either true or false. Truth-value gaps are a challenge to the principle of bivalence if the sort of things that are neither true nor false, or are truth-valueless, are the same the principle declares to be true or false. *If* bivalence says, for example, that all (and only) propositions are true or false, it must be rejected only if there are propositions that are neither true nor false. If what is found to be neither true nor false are not propositions, but for example English sentences, the claim that all propositions are true or false need not be revised. Whatever is a counterexample to bivalence, because it falls into truth-value gaps, must be the same type of thing that is identified as a truth-bearer.

Scott Soames (1999) proposes a motivation to reject bivalence. He claims that if bivalence is assumed to apply to liar sentences, contradictions will follow. Soames recognizes that contradictions equally follow if bivalence is denied of liar sentences. As seen in Chapter 2, contradictions follow if bivalence is denied of any truth-bearer. Soames not only accepts that Williamson's argument against the supposition that an utterance can be neither true nor false is valid, he also advances a similar argument himself. Surprisingly, Soames thinks that it is the supposition that bivalence holds that leads to contradictions.

Soames avoids contradictions by treating truth as a partially defined predicate: for certain sentences, truth is not defined to apply or not to apply. Liar sentences are some of such cases. However, there are several problems with Soames's proposal. Liar sentences also

pose a problem for schema (T). Soames only avoids the problem by changing the meaning of the biconditional in schema (T), and this is shown to be an unsatisfactory move. Furthermore, we should only regard liar sentences as possible counterexamples to bivalence provided they are regarded as proper truth-bearers. Soames takes truth-bearers to be sentences that express propositions. However, it is questionable that liar sentences, such as the example considered, can count as proper truth-bearers. Soames imposes on truth a condition I call *the priority requirement*: that the status of the claim that some sentence *S* is true (or not true) depends on the prior status of *S* itself, hence on the status of sentences not containing the truth-predicate. Soames regards the cases where the truth-predicate cannot be eliminated as cases of truth-value gaps. I argue that the priority requirement means that liar sentences fail to express propositions: for liar sentences, there is no prior sentence *S* on whose truth or falsity the liar case would turn. Nothing is said constraining a possible way for things to be, so nothing is said that can be called true or false. Sentences that do not say anything are neither true nor false without contradiction.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. In §4.2, I present Soames' case. First, I review Soames's motivation for rejecting bivalence, which springs from the thought that applying or denying bivalence of liar sentences leads to contradictions. Secondly, I present Soames's characterization of the rules to apply the truth predicate. In the third place, I consider the priority requirement. Liar sentences are ungrounded, truth-valueless, because there is no other truth-valued sentence on which the truth-value of liar sentences depends. In the fourth place, I consider Soames's arguments for taking liar sentences as proper truth-bearers, i.e., as sentences that express propositions.

In §4.3, I discuss Soames's proposal. First, I show how introducing a new status for propositions – ungrounded – leads to considerable difficulties. These difficulties result from how this new status is to be dealt with in the context of sentences containing truth-functional connectives. However, Soames's characterization of the truth-value or status of complex sentences is problematic, because it entails that some true formulas and valid patterns of inference are invalid, others are ungrounded. For instance, it entails that 'if A, then A' can be ungrounded. Then, I discuss Soames's reasons for taking liar sentences as expressing propositions. The paradoxical nature of liar sentences could be seen as a reason to reject several principles, other than bivalence, all of which appear to be correct except when applied to the liar, for example the disquotational schema (T). I argue that liar sentences do not express propositions. Hence, I question Soames's motivation for rejecting bivalence. The crucial aspect of the discussion relies on questioning whether liar sentences should be viewed as proper truth-bearers, in Soames's words, whether they are sentences that express propositions. If they are not, then it should not be expected that the principle of bivalence, schema (T), or any logical principle will apply to them.

4.2 Soames's model

4.2.1 The motivation for rejecting bivalence – avoidance of contradictions

In the first chapter of the book, Soames identifies truth-bearers as those items that express propositions. He says:

> "What does matter is the conception of propositions as objects of belief and assertion, as semantic information contents of sentences in contexts, and as fundamental bearers of truth and falsity.
> In addition to propositions, utterances, eternal sentences, and occasion sentences taken in contexts (sentence/contexts pairs) can all be construed as truth-bearers. However, the truth of a sentence depends on the truth of the proposition it expresses. A sentence or utterance

> cannot be true if it says nothing or expresses no proposition. Rather, it is true because it expresses a true proposition". (Soames, 1999: 18)[69]

Soames's claim that assuming the principle of bivalence to apply to the liar leads to a contradiction requires a formulation of the principle and a typical liar sentence. Soames's version of the principle of bivalence is this:

(PB-s) Every sentence of English is either true or not true.

Given the previous identification of truth-bearers, (PB-s) must be understood as saying that every sentence of English *that expresses a proposition* is either true or false. Liar sentences are counterexamples to (PB-s) if they express propositions. Supposedly, a liar sentence would do some of the things truth-bearers do: be objects of belief or assertion, provide semantic information content in contexts, be bearers of truth and falsity, etc.

The first example Soames gives of a Liar sentence is:

(1) Sentence (1) is not true.

Soames claims that the expression 'sentence (1)' is synonymous with 'the first numbered example in the section 'Truth and Paradox' in chapter two of the book by Scott Soames on truth'. So, it is the same to assert that sentence (1) is not true or that the first numbered example in section 'Truth and Paradox' in chapter two of the book by Scott Soames on truth is not true. The first reasons adduced to admit that (1) is a proper truth-bearer are that it is a grammatical sentence of English, it is perfectly meaningful, and that someone not familiar with what is being discussed would comprehend what the sentence

[69] In §4.2.4, I consider more conditions for a sentence to express a proposition.

says.[70] Finally the sentence would have been true if the first numbered example in the section had been another false sentence, for example, '2+2=5'. What this shows regarding sentence (1), as it is, is a problem to be discussed later. I will accept for the moment that these are good reasons to believe that sentence (1) expresses a proposition.

Soames presents different versions of how the assumption that (PB-s) holds for a liar sentence such as (1) leads to a contradiction. One version takes (PB-s) to be the first assumption. The second version has an instance of schema (T) as a premiss. It is important for Soames to provide two different arguments. Assuming schema (T) to apply to a liar sentence leads to a contradiction. But the contradiction it leads to depends, according to Soames, on two things: that (PB-s) is assumed and that the biconditional in the schema is the material biconditional. Dismissing (PB-s) as a valid assumption allows Soames to reject the conclusions of the arguments. Soames's arguments are:

Argument 1-

1) Every English sentence is true or not true.[71] Therefore, sentence (1) is true or not true.

2) Suppose sentence (1) is true

3) Sentence (1) = 'Sentence (1) is not true'

4) If 'Sentence (1) is not true' is true, then sentence (1) is not true (schema T→)

[70] Cf. Soames (1999: 50). This is disputable. Later in §4.3 and in Chapter 5 (§5.2), it is argued that understanding a meaningful grammatical sentence is insufficient to grasp what an utterance of the sentence says. Anyone unfamiliar with several aspects of context ('what is being discussed') does not know if someone's utterance of, for instance, "I've had breakfast" says: (a) my life has not been entirely breakfastless, or (b) I had breakfast this morning, or (c) is merely explaining to a Portuguese speaker how to say 'Já tomei o pequeno-almoço' in English.

[71] The reasons why Soames talks of a sentence not being true, rather than being false, seem to be these: (i) as the discussion is about the predicate 'true' applying or not applying, we can talk about something being true or not true. Nevertheless, Soames 'not true' is, in every respect identical to the predicate false, (ii) there is no need to add a further premiss in which 'not true' is identified with 'false'.

5) Then, sentence (1) is not true

6) Therefore, sentence (1) is true and it is not true

7) Suppose now sentence (1) is not true

8) If sentence (1) is not true, then 'sentence (1) is not true' is true (schema T←)

9) Then, sentence (1) is true

10) So, sentence (1) is true and it is not true.

As the same consequence follows from each of the assumptions, sentence (1) is true and sentence (1) is not true. Without the assumption that every sentence is true or not true, the contradiction cannot be inferred.

The second argument takes an instance of schema (T) as a premiss (although it was also assumed above).

Argument 2 -

I) 'Sentence (1) is not true' is true iff sentence (1) is not true

II) Sentence (1) = 'sentence (1) is not true'

III) Sentence (1) is true iff sentence (1) is not true

IV) Sentence (1) is true and not true

One or more of the premisses or the rules used to arrive at the conclusion must be rejected. Given the first argument, what Soames wants to reject in the second argument is the use of (PB-s), from (III) to (IV). If we do not suppose that sentence (1) is true or not true, the consequence of the argument is that sentence (1) is true if and only if it is not true.

(I) is an instance of the disquotational schema (T) and, on Soames's view, it cannot be rejected. Soames gives two reasons for this. First, no instance of schema (T) is false; in fact,

it is impossible that it is false (Soames, 1999: 50). Secondly, the correctness of (T) is central to the notion of truth as

> "it incorporates a linguistic rule essential to understand the truth predicate. Conveying the meaning of the truth-predicate in English involves conveying the acceptability of all instances of (T). Anyone competently employing the predicate cannot reject any such instance". (Soames, 1999: 51)

The logical rules and connectives involved seem to be incontrovertible.

Finally, (II): Soames takes this to be a true sentence, as it is just the definition of the Liar sentence. It could be rejected if either English did not (or could not) contain devices of self-reference or if the truth-predicate did not belong to English. But, English does contain its own truth-predicate, and it does contain devices of self-reference. However, if 'iff' stands for the material biconditional, the instance of schema (T) provided is equivalent to:

(I)* ('sentence (1) is not true' is true and sentence (1) is not true) or ('sentence (1) is not true' is not true and sentence (1) is true)

But, as there are reasons to reject that sentence (1) is true or not true, there are also reasons to reject each component conjunct and disjunct in (I)*. Therefore, (I) should be rejected. Nevertheless, Soames adduces two independent reasons to accept premiss (I): any instance of (T) is true, and accepting each and every instance of (T) is essential for understanding the notion of truth. However, if we reject that Liar sentences can satisfy bivalence, then we should equally reject that liar sentences can truly instantiate schema (T).

In order to keep schema (T) as central to the notion of truth, Soames suggests that the biconditional in its formulation be viewed not as the material biconditional, but that

> "The connective is given an interpretation in which '(A iff B)' is assertable and true whenever both A and B 'have the same status' – including the case in which both are claims that must be rejected. In this interpretation, (P1), (P2), and (C1) [my (I), (II) and (III)] are unobjectionable, but the contradiction cannot be derived without the assumption that sentence (5) [my sentence (1)] is either true or not true." (Soames, 1999: 160)

Finally, Soames must still overcome the argument that shows that denying bivalence leads equally to a contradiction. The denial of (PB-s) would be

(NPB-s) Not every sentence of English is either true or not true

From (NPB-s) it follows that there is a sentence of English that is neither true nor not true, i.e., there is some sentence of English that is both not true and true. If the counterexample to (PB-s) were a liar sentence, (NPB-s) would say that it is true and not true. Assuming bivalence to hold of a liar sentence or that the denial of bivalence holds of it leads to the same result that the liar sentence is true and not true.

A difference must be noted in the two ways one arrives at a contradiction. The first way, assuming bivalence to hold, requires schema (T) and the liar sentence; but the contradiction resulting from the denial of bivalence goes through for any sentence/proposition, requiring only (T) and no further assumptions are required (as was shown in Chapter 2).

Soames wants to reject the thesis that liar sentences can be said to be either true or not true. Soames must find a way to characterize the truth predicate that allows him to reject (PB-s) and the consequence of its denial without being driven to contradictions. By rejecting that liar sentences are true and rejecting that they are not true, Soames can reject that cases of the liar are instances of (PB-s) or of (NPB-s).

Soames's solution consists in providing a partial characterization of the truth predicate such that in some cases the truth predicate cannot be said to apply or not to apply.

4.2.2 Soames's model of partially defined predicates

Soames proposes a model of partially defined predicates and argues that truth can be understood as conforming to the model proposed. The purpose of the model is to provide a characterization of the truth predicate such that in some circumstances a proposition cannot be said to be true and it cannot be said to be not true.

On Soames's model, a partially defined predicate is one such that, for certain things, it can neither be said to apply nor to fail to apply. Such a predicate may be introduced in a language by rules providing sufficient conditions for it to apply and sufficient conditions for it not to apply, but not sufficient and necessary conditions for it to apply or to fail to apply. As the conditions are mutually exclusive but not jointly exhaustive, there will be objects of which the predicate cannot be asserted or denied (Soames, 1999: 164-5). The truth-predicate is introduced by the following clauses:

(2) A predicate '*P*' applies (does not apply) to an object $o \equiv o$ is (is not) *P*

(3a) For any n-place predicate *P* and terms $t_1,\ldots, t_n$, '$Pt_1,\ldots, t_n$' is true (not true) ≡ *P* applies (does not apply) to the n-tuple $<o_1,\ldots,o_n>$ of referents of the terms

(3b) For any sentence *S*, 'not *S*' is true (not true) ≡ *S* is not true (true).[72]

If there is some predicate '*P*' such that, for some referred objects, the predicate cannot be said to apply and cannot be said not to apply, then a sentence where '*P*' is predicated of such objects cannot be said to be true or not true. So, Soames claims, 'true' is equally partially defined. The claim is that some things that can be true or untrue can fail to be one or the other. Hence, there would be truth-value gaps. A sentence in which a predicate is

[72] Clause (2) tells us what it is for a predicate that is already understood in the language to apply or not to apply, clause (3a) tells us what it is for an atomic sentence to be true, and clause (3b) introduces negation.

attributed to items for which it is not defined to apply will be called *ungrounded*, but being ungrounded is not to be understood as a third truth-value on a par with truth and untruth (or falsehood).

In the clauses above, Soames characterizes the truth of atomic and simple negated sentences. Soames also characterizes the truth of propositions containing truth-functions and quantification. The clauses and the truth-tables presented include the possibility of component expressions being ungrounded, which must have an effect on the truth-values or *status* of complex expressions. Nevertheless, Soames intends his clauses to present the classical understandings of the logical connectives, and he will identify 'not true' with 'false'. I will not consider all of the clauses, namely quantified expressions. The account begins with disjunction. A truth table is provided (where '*' means 'ungrounded'):

Disjunction		
A V B	**A**	**B**
T	T	T
T	T	F
T	T	*
T	F	T
F	F	F
*	F	*
T	*	T
*	*	F
*	*	*

The clause for disjunction is:

(3d) 'A V B' is true ≡ A is true or B is true

'A V B' is not true (i.e., false) ≡ A and B are not true. (cf. Soames, 1999: 173)

If both disjuncts are ungrounded, then the sentence is also ungrounded. If we substitute 'B' for '¬A', and 'A' is ungrounded, '¬A' will also be ungrounded, and then 'A V ¬A' is

ungrounded. In rejecting that all sentences/propositions are either true or false, it is legitimate to reject that either a sentence or its negation must be true. Where there are no grounds to assert that sentence (1) is true, or to assert that it is not true, there are also no grounds for asserting that either sentence (1) is true or not.

The remaining truth-functional connectives are conjunction and material implication.

(3e) 'A & B' is true ≡ A is true and B is true

'A & B' is not true ≡ A is not true or B is not true

(3f) 'A ⊃ B' is true ≡ A is not true or B is true.

'A ⊃ B' is not true ≡ A is true and B is not true.

Although Soames does not give the corresponding truth-tables for the specified connectives, given clauses (3e) and (3f), these truth tables can be written down:

Conjunction		
A &B	**A**	**B**
T	T	T
F	T	F
*****	T	*
F	F	T
F	F	F
F	F	*
*****	*	T
F	*	F
*****	*	*

Conditional		
A ⊃B	**A**	**B**
T	T	T
F	T	F
*****	T	*
T	F	T
T	F	F
T	F	*
T	*	T
*****	*	F
*****	*	*

In the truth-tables, the conditions in which complex expressions are true, false or ungrounded are clearly displayed. These tables will also permit the discussion of the correctness of Soames's characterization of the truth of complex sentences. As I argue in §4.3, several problems spring from admitting that propositions can have a third status.

Establishing how the predicate 'true' and the predicate 'applies' apply completes Soames's account of truth as a partially defined predicate:

> (3a+) The predicate 'true' applies (does not apply) to an object ≡ it is (is not) a true sentence
>
> The predicate 'apply' applies to a pair <*o*, *o*'> ≡ *o* is a predicate that applies to *o*'; otherwise it does not apply. (Cf. Soames, 1999: 174)

Soames claims that, given the previous characterizations, we have a grasp of the right hand-side of the biconditional in (3a+) that is sufficient to fix the interpretation of the left-hand side. The result is a set of instructions governing the use of the truth predicate both in sentences that contain the predicate and in sentences that do not. It can be deduced from the given clauses when a sentence or proposition is ungrounded. A sentence is ungrounded when the predicate in the sentence is attributed to a certain object or objects for which it is not defined to apply. Given the last clause (3a+), the truth-value of sentences containing the truth-predicate can also be established. If Soames's introduced biconditional is transitive, the truth of a sentence ''*o* is *P*' is true' can be inferred from clauses in (3). A given sentence such as ''*o* is *P*' is true' is (is not) true just in case *o* is (is not) *P*. This means that what is needed to know whether a given sentence '*S* is true' is true or not is just whether what the sentence '*S*' itself says obtains or does not obtain. It must be, in principle, possible to eliminate any reference to truth-values in order to arrive at truth-conditions.

4.2.3 The priority requirement, the liar and bivalence

For a sentence to be true or not, it must satisfy what we may call the *priority requirement*:

> "… the procedure to introduce the truth-predicate makes the status of the claim that *S* is true (or not true) dependent on the prior status of *S* and ultimately on the status of sentences that do not contain the truth predicate at all… when the dependence cannot be traced back in this way, the rules for characterizing sentences as true or as not true will simply be inapplicable… there is a class of sentences that the instructions are silent about." (Soames, 1999: 175-6)

In Soames's model, a sentence (proposition) is ungrounded if a predicate neither applies nor fails to apply to the object it is attributed to. The model permits Soames to explain how 'Sentence (1) is not true' is ungrounded. Sentence (1) is ungrounded because neither *true* nor *not true* apply to it. Suppose we were to consider whether 'sentence (1) is not true' is true or not true:

(A) 'Sentence (1) is not true' is true ≡ sentence (1) is not true

Then we should eliminate the truth-predicate:

(B) Sentence (1) is not true ≡???

On the other hand, if we wanted to say when 'sentence (1) is not true' is not true we could start by writing

(C) 'Sentence (1) is not true' is not true ≡ it is not the case that sentence (1) is not true, i.e., sentence (1) is true

But again,

(D) Sentence (1) is true ≡???

In both (B) and (D) we cannot eliminate the truth-predicate. So, the priority requirement is violated. As there is no other sentence not containing the truth predicate, one

on whose prior status the truth value of the sentence would turn, it follows that sentence (1) is ungrounded.

On Soames's view, 'sentence (1) is not true' is a sentence that expresses a proposition, but that, nevertheless, cannot be regarded as true and not regarded as untrue because the conventions governing the use of the truth-predicate do not allow us to decide whether the sentence is true or not.

Soames's account of truth enables him to reject (PB-s), which can now be called 'weak bivalence', and can be contrasted with strong bivalence:

(WPB) Every sentence (proposition) is either true or not true

(SPB) Every sentence (proposition) is either true or false

As well as the respective negations:

(WNPB) Some sentence (proposition) is neither true nor false

(SNPB) Some sentence (proposition) is neither true nor not true

Soames identifies untruth with falsehood. Nevertheless, two things can be said concerning the strong and weak versions. According to Soames, if weak bivalence and strong bivalence are not distinguishable, then they must be rejected, as there will be cases of sentences that cannot be taken as either true or not true (or as false). On the other hand, there are accounts of truth-value gaps according to which there are sentences (or propositions) that can be neither true nor false. On these accounts, there might be reasons to reject strong bivalence, hence accepting weak negation of bivalence. But such accounts could still be committed to a weak bivalence principle, and reject the strong denial of bivalence. Soames presents arguments that ought to persuade us that his cases of truth-value gaps are different from other accounts. The other approaches are Frege's and Strawson's.

Before we move on to the next section, it can be seen how on Soames's model there is room to distinguish truth and untruth from determinate-truth and determinate-untruth. This distinction is easily made. One can claim that each predicate has a determinate-extension and a determinate-antiextension. The *determinate-extension* of a predicate is the set of things such that the linguistic conventions stipulate that the predicate applies to the members of that set. Its *determinate-antiextension* is the set of things such that the linguistic conventions stipulate that the predicate does not apply to those things. The extension of a predicate, on the other hand, is simply the collection of things to which the predicate applies. Its antiextension is the collection of things to which it does not apply.

It follows from Soames's characterization of truth that if a proposition is true or not true, it falls in the determinate-extension or determinate-antiextension of truth. Furthermore, whatever is in the determinate-extension of a predicate or in the determinate-antiextension of the predicate also falls in its extension or in its antiextension. But the converse is not correct. This is not licensed by the linguistic rules governing the use of the predicate. A sentence that cannot be determined to be true or not true falls neither in the determinate-extension nor in the determinate-antiextension of the truth predicate, but it cannot be said that it is neither in the extension nor in the antiextension.

It follows that although determinate-truth can be seen as a well-defined predicate, a denial of bivalence for determinate truth would be correct under Soames's conception: it would be correct to say that there are items that are not determinately true nor determinately untrue. Soames illustrates this distinction:

> "However, if we say this, we must not conclude that an individual for which a predicate is undefined is one the predicate does not apply to or that an ungrounded sentence (or proposition) is one that is not true. To assert something ungrounded is to make some kind of

> mistake. But the mistake is not correctly described as that of saying something untrue. Rather, it is in saying something that cannot, in the end, be sanctioned by the linguistic conventions that give one's words their meaning."(Soames, 1999: 172)

I argue in §4.3 that liar sentences fail to express propositions. Soames's own priority requirement can be used to show it. So, they provide no reason to reject bivalence, and provide no motivation to distinguish between *determinate-truth* and truth. Truth must be a well-defined predicate. In Soames's terms, the assertion of an ungrounded sentence, like the liar, is a kind of a mistake. But rather than claiming it is a mistake that consists in an utterance expressing a proposition that cannot be rightly taken to be true or not, I argue it is a mistake that consists in an utterance expressing no proposition. It is an error that does not amount to saying anything with any truth-conditional content.

4.2.4 Truth-value gaps and propositions: Soames's case in contrast with Frege and Strawson's

It is Soames's contention that truth-value gaps due to partially defined predicates being 'inappropriately' applied are distinct from Frege and Strawson's cases of truth-value gaps.

A Fregean would claim, according to Soames, that a proposition *P* presupposes the truth of some other proposition *Q*, if without *Q*'s truth *P* will be neither true nor false. The presupposed proposition is determined from the components of *P*. The Fregean compositional account of the truth-conditions of, for example, the proposition that the King of France is bald, would describe the expression 'the King of France' as expressing a singular concept. This concept can pick out different individuals. If the individual is bald, then the proposition is true; if the picked individual is not bald, then the proposition is false.

It is also possible that the singular concept fails to pick out any individual, in which case the proposition is neither true nor false. So, the presupposed proposition is the proposition that the king of France exists. If it is true, then the proposition that the king of France is bald is truth-valued; if it is false, then the proposition that the king of France is bald is neither true nor false.

Soames's argument to the effect that Liar sentences are not cases of Fregean presupposition failure consists in drawing a distinction between the acceptability of sentences such as:

(4a) The king of France is bald

(4b) The king of France is not bald,

both of which are neither true nor false; and sentences such as:

(1a) Sentence (1a) is true[73]

(1b) Sentence (1b) is not true,

which cannot be accepted as true or as untrue sentences. For the Fregean, (4a) and (4b) are neither true nor false, hence are not true. But for Soames, (1a) and (1b) cannot be accepted as untrue. Therefore, if Soames is right, his cases are not Fregean gaps and do not arise from logical presupposition failure.

Then, Soames moves on to argue that his cases are not of the same type as Strawsonian truth-value gaps. Strawson considers that truth-value gaps can result from a different type of logical presupposition failure; it differs from Frege's in that the consequence of some presupposition *Q* being false is that some sentence *S* will fail to express any proposition. A sentence *S* presupposes a proposition *Q*, relative to context *C*, if and only if *Q* must be true in

[73] (1a) is a truth-teller; by the priority requirement, (1a) is as ungrounded as (1b).

order for *S* to have any semantic content. The semantic content of a sentence (the statement it is used to make or the proposition it expresses) can be regarded as a function from contexts to propositional contents. The semantic content of the component expressions in a sentence is their contribution, in contexts of utterance, to the proposition expressed by the sentence that contains them. If a component expression, in a particular context, fails to express some semantically relevant content, then the sentence containing it will equally fail to express a proposition.

An instance of such failure is given in Strawson's (1950a) example 'this is a fine red one' when 'this' is uttered in a circumstance where it fails to pick any item. As there is nothing referred to by 'this', the word fails to contribute with any content to the propositional content of the sentence. The sentence hence fails to express a proposition.

Soames considers that this is supported by the difference between (attempted) propositional attitude ascriptions, where the relative clauses are the sentences in the examples of Fregean and Strawsonian presupposition failure.

(5) Mary says/believes that the King of France is bald.

(6) Mary says/believes that this is a fine red one.

Arguably, (5) may be true even if 'the king of France' fails to refer to anyone, whereas (6) cannot be evaluated as true or not. If propositional attitude ascriptions express a relation between a subject and a proposition, a sentence like (6) fails to ascribe a belief to Mary.

Soames argues that liar sentences are not bearers of false Strawsonian presuppositions. He must show that these sentences, unlike Strawson's, *do* express propositions. Soames gives us three arguments for this.

First, if they were like Strawsonian cases, then they would be neither true nor false sentences, i.e., they would not be true sentences. But Soames has argued that a sentence like 'sentence (1) is not true' cannot be accepted to be not true.

Secondly, Soames intends to show that ungrounded sentences express propositions by drawing an analogy. He claims that it may be that some proposition *P* is actually true, and that this proposition is expressed by some sentence '*o* is *F*'. In some possible circumstance different from the actual, the object *o* may be such that the predicate *F* is not defined to apply to it. It will not be correct to say that *o* is *F* nor that *o* is not *F*, so the proposition *P*, although actually true, could be ungrounded. If it is possible that actually true propositions can be ungrounded, it should also be possible that actually ungrounded propositions can be true or false. So, Soames further claims that liar sentences cannot be dismissed as not expressing propositions due to their status as ungrounded sentences. If it is possible for propositions to be ungrounded, the fact that liar sentences are ungrounded cannot show that liar sentences do not express propositions. According to Soames, liar sentences express propositions. Soames dismisses the claim that liar sentences cannot express propositions because they cannot be coherently assigned any truth-value:

> "All of this might seem contentions if it had not already been shown that there are propositions that cannot correctly be evaluated for truth-value in certain possible circumstances... But then since *propositions* can resist evaluation for truth-value, there is no compelling reason to think that such resistance on the part of the Liar sentences like (15) shows that they do not express propositions." (Soames, 1999: 194)

In §4.2.1, I mentioned some of the requisites for sentences to express propositions. A sentence *S* expresses a proposition *P* only if: it is a grammatical and meaningful sentence; someone not familiar with the context in which *S* is uttered can comprehend what it says; it

can be used in propositional attitude ascriptions; it conveys semantic information contents of sentences in context; and it is possibly a bearer of truth and falsity. If a Liar sentence such as sentence (1) is to express a proposition, it must do some of the things propositions do. One of such things is to be possibly true or false. In Soames's line of argument, a liar sentence is one that in fact expresses an ungrounded proposition that could have been true, if the sentence referred to as being not true were another false sentence. Soames says,

> "Still, it accomplishes the two main tasks for which propositions are needed. First, it determines a function (albeit partial) from possible circumstances to truth-values that constraints how the world is represented to be." [The second task a proposition fulfils is to be the content of propositional attitudes]. (Soames, 1999: 193)

Even if it were correct to say that there are propositions that cannot be evaluated for truth-value, that does not by itself show that liar sentences, because they cannot be evaluated for truth-value, do express propositions. They must, in Soames's words, "determine a function from possible worlds to truth-values that constrains how the world is represented to be", and thereby convey semantic information and be possible bearers of truth and falsity. Liar sentences should (if expressing propositions) represent the world as being some way or other.

The third argument given by Soames for sentences (1a) and (1b) to express propositions has already been alluded to. A proposition can be said to be the content of propositional attitudes. So (7) could describe the content of the belief of an agent, Mary, who is misinformed about sentence (1).

(7) Mary believes that sentence (1) is not true.

If I am going to argue that sentence (1) cannot express a proposition, I must also argue that Mary can have no belief as reported in (7). If beliefs are relations to propositional

contents, once it is shown that there can be no propositional content expressible by sentence (1), then it immediately follows that Mary could not have a belief as that allegedly reported in (7).

4.3 What is wrong with Soames's proposal

In §4.1, I started by saying that truth-value gaps are a threat to the principle of bivalence only if the same sort of things that are truth-valueless are those the principle claims to be either true or false (not true). The direction of my discussion of Soames's new type of truth-value gaps is towards showing that liar sentences do not constitute a threat to bivalence.

The first thing to do is to show how introducing a third *status* for propositions – being ungrounded – leads to considerable difficulties. These difficulties result from how this new status is to be dealt with in the context of sentences containing sentential connectives, either Soames's new interpretation for 'iff', or the classical truth-functional connectives. Without ungrounded propositions, however, these problems do not arise. So, the next thing to do is to see whether there are ungrounded propositions or not. I argue that liar sentences fail Soames's conditions for sentences to express propositions. It may be that liar sentences either are, after all, cases of Fregean presupposition failure, or cases of Strawsonian presupposition failure.

If liar sentences do not express propositions, then Soames's motivation for rejecting bivalence is *ungrounded*. There is no reason to suppose that sentences that do not express propositions should not be rightly called neither true nor false.

4.3.1 If logic applies to ungrounded propositions, then logic is a potato

Soames introduced a new connective, '≡' that should replace '↔' in the clauses that introduce the truth-predicate, and also in schema (T). It first appeared in the course of showing how assuming the principle of bivalence to apply to liar sentences leads to a contradiction.

We need recall only the second of Soames's arguments leading to contradictions.

(I) 'Sentence (1) is not true' is true iff sentence (1) is not true

(II) Sentence (1) = 'sentence (1) is not true'

(III) Sentence (1) is true iff sentence (1) is not true

(IV) Sentence (1) is true and not true.

(III) is no more acceptable than (IV). Just as an expression of the form 'A & ¬A' is contradictory, because under any assignment of values to 'A', the expression is false, also any expression of the form 'A iff ¬A' is false under any assignment of values to 'A'. Furthermore, the argument form is invalid. Take any expression A such that we assume that

(a) 'A is not true' is true iff A is not true, and

(b) A is true iff A is not true,

where (a) is the premiss and (b) the conclusion of some argument. Assume furthermore that A expresses a proposition that can be true, false, or ungrounded. Now we can assign values to (a) and (b), under all possible assignments of values to A.

(a)			
A	'A is not true' is true	**iff**	A is not true
False	T	T	T
True	F	T	F
*	*	*	*

So, it seems that schema T is correct, except when A is ungrounded.

(b)			
A	A is not true	**iff**	A is true
False	T	F	F
True	F	F	T
*	*	*	*

If we did not have the third status, ungrounded, the argument would force us to reject the premiss, i.e., the instance of schema (T). It seems quite evident that applying schema (T) to liar sentences leads inevitably to a contradiction. But as is seen in the first table above, premiss (a) is always true (if there is no third status). So, some assumption should be rejected, since that must be responsible for the derivation of the contradiction. It seems evident that the problem lies in the second premiss of Soames's argument:

Sentence (1) = 'sentence (1) is not true'

The paradoxical nature of the liar does not require an appeal to the principle of bivalence to derive contradictions. These will follow if one assumes only that schema (T) applies to the liar.

Soames's solution consists in introducing the new biconditional: an expression 'A iff B' is true whenever 'A' and 'B' have the same status. With this biconditional, the instance of schema (T) is correct, as is (III) (now the conclusion of the argument, without the assumption of bivalence), that sentence (1) is true iff it is not true.

Soames's solution is awkward. First, it is strange that a connective should be defined with the purpose of making some contradiction possibly true. It should be noticed that an expression of the form 'A iff ¬A', given Soames's new biconditional, is true only when 'A' is ungrounded, but always false otherwise.

Secondly, the argument from (I) to (III) above does go through, given the connectives and rules involved. Nevertheless, there is a difference in the truth-conditions of premiss (I) and the conclusion (III). Given that 'iff' is understood as Soames has defined it, a premiss of the form ''A' is true iff A' is true under any assignment of truth-value (or status) to A. However, an expression of the form 'A iff ¬A' is always false, except when 'A' is ungrounded. Hence, we have an argument form that is legitimate only with the new biconditional, where we start with true premisses and end with a possibly false conclusion. So, there could be a problem with introducing a connective that legitimates inferences from true premisses to possibly false conclusions.

Finally, and most importantly, it may be asked which understanding of the notion of truth is possible in an instance of (T) such as ''sentence (1) is not true' is true iff sentence (1) is not true', where sentence (1) is the sentence indicated previously. What understanding of truth can be achieved if one then accepts that some item is true if and only if it is not true?

The application of schema (T) to the liar raises some difficulties. If the biconditional in the formulation of (T) is the material biconditional, contradictions are derived just as easily as with the application of the principle of bivalence to cases of the liar. If the biconditional is as Soames defines it, we are allowed to regard a contradiction as possibly true (A iff ¬A). We are also allowed to make an inference from true premisses to possibly false conclusions. Finally, we gain a very strange understanding of the notion of truth – namely, an understanding on which we are obliged to accept that some sentence is true if and only if it is not true.

What this seems to indicate is that the problem does not lie in the acceptance of the principle of bivalence, or in the acceptance of schema (T). There may be independent

problems with either, but it is not clear that liar sentences are what should lead us to reject any of them. Arguments require that one deals with truth-bearers. Soames's claim is that truth-bearers are sentences that express propositions. The assumption that liar sentences do express propositions, and hence are items we can use in arguments, leads to the difficulties just indicated. So perhaps what needs to be revised is the claim that they do express propositions.

According to Soames, once bivalence is not supposed to apply to liar sentences, no contradiction can be derived. As seen above, that is questionable. It is doubtful that no contradiction is derived if schema (T) is assumed to apply to cases of the liar. Furthermore, only by assuming that a liar sentence such as 'sentence (1) is not true' cannot be accepted to be truth-valued, and adding a third status for propositions and a new connective, would the argument be valid. But if this argument is supposed to be used in *showing* that 'sentence (1) is not true' cannot be accepted as true or not true, then what is meant to be shown cannot be assumed in order to accept that the argument is valid without assuming bivalence.

Admitting that propositions have a third status, and that a biconditional is true when both conditions are ungrounded, carries further problems. Soames claims that his characterization of truth-functional connectives is a classical one. If so, we would expect that classically valid formulas and classical rules of inference remain valid under his characterization.

We know that negation, disjunction, conjunction and the material conditional have the standard assignments of truth-values, and, given the truth-characterizations, we can infer the remaining assignments of truth-values (as seen in §4.2.2).

Suppose now that in the place of ‘B’ in the conjunction ‘A & B’ and disjunction ‘A V B’, we insert ‘¬A’. We can also consider the law of non-contradiction:

a) A & ¬A

b) A V¬A (excluded middle)

c) ¬(A & ¬ A) (law of non-contradiction)

And in the conditional we insert A again:

d) A ⊃ A

We have classically true expressions in b), c) and d), whereas a) is a contradiction. c) is the negation of a). Furthermore, by ⊃-elimination, d) is equivalent to b), and by De Morgan laws, b) is equivalent to c). One would expect a) would never have the same status, or truth-value as b), c) or d). However, when A is ungrounded, the following will hold:

e) A ≡ ¬A

f) A & ¬A ≡ ¬ (A & ¬A)

Admitting that *ungrounded* expressions can be thus embedded has some clearly unwanted consequences. For example, take d) A ⊃ A. It is a classically valid formula. If ‘A’ expresses a proposition, it ought to imply itself. If snow is white then snow is white, if dogs bark then dogs bark, and if the sentence ‘sentence (1) is not true’ expresses a proposition, then if sentence (1) is not true, it is not true. However, in Soames’s account, if (1) is an instance of a liar sentence, then the sentence is ungrounded, and so it cannot be asserted that if sentence (1) is not true, then it is not true. The conditional ‘if sentence (1) is not true, then sentence (1) is not true’ is as ungrounded as the sentence ‘sentence (1) is not true’. But then it may be asked whether ‘sentence (1) is not true’ does indeed express a proposition.

Russell, in the course of explaining what the relation of implication between propositions consists in, said,

> "It may be observed that, although implication is indefinable, *proposition* may be defined. Every proposition implies itself, and whatever is not a proposition implies nothing. Hence to say "*p* is a proposition" is equivalent to saying "*p* implies *p*"; and this equivalence may be used to define propositions." (Russell, 1903: 15)

Soames could claim that although 'A ⊃ A' can be ungrounded, 'A ≡ A' is always true. But this is not a good reply. The reason why it is expected that an expression of the form 'A ⊃ A' is always true is that we do not need to know the truth-value of A to accept the conditional. If A describes a possible way for things to be, we do not need to know that A is the case to accept that if A is the case, then it is the case. (With sentence (1), if it is possible that sentence (1) is not true, and if it can be believed that sentence (1) is not true, it should also be correct to say that if it is not true, then it is not true, independently of the value or status of the proposition.)

Suppose now we try to use *modus ponens* with two ungrounded sentences 'A' and 'B'. 'A ⊃ B, A ∴B' should be valid, no matter what the values or status of 'A' and 'B' are. As all premisses and conclusions are ungrounded, the argument must be also (for lack of a better term) ungrounded, instead of valid. But how can *modus ponens* be sometimes ungrounded? If the premisses and conclusion were false, the argument would still be valid. It is only when the premisses or conclusion are ungrounded that there are questions of the validity of the argument. But one cannot hope to find out *a priori* if what one wants to infer from some premisses is grounded or ungrounded before making inferences. If a proposition can fail to

imply itself, and if it can fail to enter in some basic valid inferences, what purpose does it fulfil in truth-evaluations and in reasoning?[74]

Not all sentences can be used to make inferences. Sentences that fail to make statements, or to express propositions, should not be expected to enter in valid reasoning, or to entail other propositions. Soames recognized this when settling the issue of what he took truth-bearers to be:

> "However, the truth of a sentence depends on the truth of the proposition it expresses. A sentence or utterance cannot be true if it says nothing or expresses no proposition. Rather, it is true because it expresses a proposition." (Soames, 1999: 18)

A sentence or utterance cannot be true if it says nothing or expresses no proposition. Such a sentence or utterance cannot contribute anything to the truth-value of expressions in which it is embedded. It cannot be used in inferences and it cannot entail or contradict anything.

It must be correct to say that any proposition must enter in deductive reasoning and be *evaluable* as true or as false. Saying that a proposition may fail to be either true or false has the consequence that propositions may not be used in inferences and may fail to entail or contradict anything. It could be that Soames's account of truth-functions is defective and ought to be corrected in order to include classically valid inferences and formulas. But if a proposition must enter in valid entailment relations, it should also entail itself, and it should be true to say 'A $\supset$ A'. If this is true of any proposition, given the classical meaning of the

[74] One could say in Soames's defence that perhaps an argument is valid if the status of the conclusion is not lower than the status of the premisses, where false is lower than ungrounded, and ungrounded lower than true. This still faces a problem. As indicated earlier, 'if A, then A' is ungrounded whenever 'A' is ungrounded. However, if one can derive some B from A, then one can derive that A implies B. But since 'if A, then A' can be ungrounded, one cannot always derive A from A.

material conditional, it is equivalent to asserting that A or its negation must be the case. It would follow that bivalence cannot be rejected after all.

On the other hand, if something fails to instantiate entailment relations—in particular, if it fails to entail itself—then it seems that *that* cannot be a proposition. Either bivalence follows from the account of the truth of simple and complex propositions, or ungrounded sentences are not counterexamples to bivalence, because they do not express propositions. Soames quotes Kripke's comment (but not to endorse it) on this problem:

> "'Undefined' is not an extra truth-value... If certain sentences express propositions, any tautological truth-functions of them express a true proposition. Of course, formulas, even with the forms of tautologies, which have components that do not express propositions, may have truth-functions that do not express propositions either… Mere conventions for handling terms that do not designate numbers should not be called changes in arithmetic; conventions for handling sentences that do not express propositions are not in any philosophically significant sense 'changes in logic'."[75]

Given that some sentences are ungrounded (or undefined), there is no point in trying to account for their contributions to the values of other sentences. There is a Portuguese expression that is sometimes used to indicate that some things do not make sense. One can either call someone's reasoning 'potato logic' or say if that is true, or if that is possible, or if that makes sense, then logic is a potato. Trying to apply truth-functionality to things that are not truth-valued is potato logic.

4.3.2 What cannot express propositions is neither true nor false (without contradiction!)

Soames presents three arguments for the claim that ungrounded sentences express propositions. Those arguments are intended to show that unlike Strawsonian gaps, 'Sentence

[75] Soames, (1999: 192), quote from Kripke's 'Outline of a Theory of Truth': 700-701.

(1) is not true' cannot be regarded as failing to express a proposition and is not a case that is neither true nor false.

As Soames sees it, for the Fregean a proposition *P* is truth-valued if some other proposition *Q* is true. In the case of 'the king of France is bald', it would have to be true that the king of France exists for it to be true or false that the king of France is bald. As there is no king of France, the proposition that the king of France is bald is neither true nor false.[76]

Soames claims that liar sentences cannot be neither true nor false, for if they were so, it would follow that they are not true, and Soames argues that they cannot be sentences that are not true. So, he concludes that the truth-value gaps they illustrate do not arise from presupposition failure and are not Fregean gaps. (Soames, 1999: 168)

But is a Fregean committed to accepting that sentences such as 'the king of France is bald', (5a), or 'the king of France is not bald, (5b), are *not true* as Soames defines it? Given (3b), we can say that 'the king of France is bald' is not true just in case 'is bald' does not apply to the King of France. Is a Fregean committed to the claim that 'is bald' does not apply to the King of France? Given (3a), it can be said that 'is bald' does not apply to the king of France just in case the king of France is not bald. But a Fregean is not committed to the claim that the king of France is not bald, therefore he is not committed to the claim that 'is bald' does not apply to the king of France, nor to the claim that 'the king of France is bald' is not true. Hence, what a Fregean means by 'not true' is not what Soames means. In fact, what Soames means by 'not true' is what a Fregean means by 'false':

[76] This is not strictly correct, since what Frege identifies as a presupposition is rather that a name or singular term designates something (cf. Frege, 1892: 69)

> "the proposition that the king of France is bald is true in w iff the concept picks out an individual in w and that individual is bald in w; *it is false in w iff the concept picks out an individual in w who is not bald in w*". (Soames, 1999: 167) (italics not in the original)

So, liar sentences can be neither true nor false, without contradiction. Given how truth and falsehood are understood, and given what Soames claims about liar sentences, it could be said that the concept expressed by 'true' does not pick out an item that is true in *w*, and the concept expressed by 'false' does not pick out an item that is false in *w*. In these circumstances, both concepts fail to pick out an individual, so the sentence is neither true nor false.

If liar sentences were cases of presupposition-failure, one could hold that the false presupposition that would entail that it is neither true nor false that sentence (1) is not true would be the presupposition that the concept true applies to sentence (1) and the presupposition that the concept false (Soames's not-true) applies to sentence (1). After all, sentence (1) cannot "be sanctioned by the linguistic conventions that give one's words their meaning"(Soames, 1999: 172).

What Soames fails to do is to distinguish between the sense of *not being true* in which it is the same as being false, and the sense of *not being true* understood in 'is neither true nor false', that is, failing to be truth-valued. So, Soames has not shown that liar sentences are not Fregean gaps and do not arise from logical presupposition failure.[77]

[77] The coherence of holding that a proposition is nonetheless expressed in cases of Fregean presuppositions failure is debatable: what exactly is a proposition that has no truth- and falsity-conditions? In Chapter 2, the coherence of this claim is questioned by considering both Dummett's (1978) argument against a third status for statements dependent on the satisfaction of a presupposition, and Williamson's argument against counterexamples to bivalence. In Chapter 3, the consistency of Frege's claim that a truth-valueless thought is expressed in the event of reference failure is also questioned. Moreover, the example Soames chooses to illustrate Fregean presupposition failure, 'the king of France is bald', is not a good example. Arguably, if the king of France does not exist, the sentence is false, rather than a case of truth-value gaps.

Soames then moves on to show that his cases are not Strawsonian truth-value gaps. From a Strawsonian point of view, a sentence says something true or false if it is used to make a statement (or express a proposition). A sentence *S* presupposes a proposition *Q*, relative to context *C* iff *Q* must be true in order for *S* to express a proposition. If the presupposition is false then the sentence makes no statement, it says nothing. Soames claims that 'sentence (1) is not true' cannot bear Strawsonian presupposition failure, because it does express a proposition. He gives us three arguments for this.

First, if it were like Strawsonian cases, then it would be a neither true nor false sentence, i.e., it would be a sentence that is not true. Soames argues that it cannot be accepted to be not true. But Soames is again confusing two ways for something to be not true. His own account of what it is for a sentence to be not true, i.e., what it is for it to be false, and what it is for something to be not true because it fails to be truth-valued, and, in this case, to express a proposition.

It can again be asked: would a Strawsonian say, for example, 'this is a fine red one' *is not true* (in Soames's sense)? A Strawsonian would be committed to accepting that 'this is a fine red one' is *not true*, in Soames's sense, only if 'is a fine red one' does not apply to the referent of 'this'. But 'is a fine red one' would not apply to the referent of 'this' if such a referent were not a fine red one. As 'this' does not refer in the case mentioned, the Strawsonian would not accept that there is something such that 'is a fine red one' does not apply to it. Hence the Strawsonian is not committed to the claim that the sentence is not true in Soames's understanding of what 'not true' means. Again, Soames can only mean by it what a Strawsonian, or a Fregean, mean by 'false'.

Many things fail to be truth-valued, i.e., are neither true nor false, without contradiction. One can only appeal to the argument that liar sentences cannot be said to be neither true nor false, on pain of contradiction, if one previously establishes that they do count as proper truth-bearers, i.e., in Soames's words, if they express propositions. One cannot say: they must express propositions because if they do not they are *not true*, i.e., they are *false*. But we know that it is not the case that a sentence like (1) is false, because we know that there is no prior sentence on whose truth-value sentence (1) would turn. If sentence (1) does not express a proposition, it has to be correct to say that it is neither true nor false; so, it has to be correct to say that sentence (1) is not true. However, here we are saying it is *not true* because it fails to be truth-valued to start with. We are not committed to saying that it must be false.

In Soames's second argument, we are asked to think of a proposition that is actually true, but could have been such that it could not be evaluated as true or as not true. Soames proposed one condition for something to be a proposition, namely, that it "*determines a function (albeit partial) from possible circumstances to truth-values* that constrains how the world is represented to be".

Does sentence (1) constrain a possible way for things to be? Could it have been a true or false sentence? If the expression 'sentence (1)' referred to a false sentence, for example '2+2=5', it would have been a true sentence, for it would say that this sentence is not true. Soames thinks that this may guarantee that 'sentence (1) is not true' fulfils one condition for sentences to express propositions, namely that there are possible circumstances in which it is true. However, if the expression 'sentence (1)' referred to a false sentence, for example, '2+2=5', in saying that sentence (1) is not true we would be saying that it is not true that

2+2=5. There would be a proposition expressed by ‘sentence (1) is not true’, and from it we would be allowed to infer that it is not the case that 2+2=5.

The same sentence type can be used to express different propositions, or fail to express any proposition at all, but Soames seems to be ignoring this point. It is doubtful that it is (always, at least) a sentence-type in itself that ‘determines a function from possible circumstances to truth-values’. Therefore, Soames’s argument that sentence (1) could have been used to say something true does not show that this use of sentence (1) does say anything at all.

Soames also claims that sentence (1) is the sentence that is *the first numbered example in the section ‘Truth and Paradox’ in chapter 2 of the book by Scott Soames on truth*. Saying this, however, is not showing that sentence (1) expresses a proposition.

Either ‘sentence (1)’ is synonymous with ‘the first numbered example in the section…’, in which case it is the same to write down ‘sentence (1) is not true’ or ‘the first numbered example of the section ‘Truth and Paradox’ in chapter 2 of Soames’s book is not true’; or to say that sentence (1) is the first numbered example in that section of Soames’s book is a way to denote that sentence, but not what it says, if it says anything.

If it were the first option, writing down ‘the first sentence in (…) is not true’ does not make the sentence say something or express a proposition. The same comments made earlier can be made again: it fails the priority requirement, as there is no prior sentence on whose truth or falsehood it could turn. Furthermore, it would also follow that if it were to express a proposition, it would be true just in case it was not true.

One may have reasons to doubt that the two sentences are synonymous, because the second sentence is a description. If we say that the first numbered example in that section of

Soames's book is sentence (1) and that it is not true, we might be saying something true. Saying this is not accepting that 'sentence (1) is not true' says something true or false, or that it says anything at all.

The third argument given by Soames for sentences to express propositions has already been alluded to. A proposition can be said to be the content of propositional attitudes. If belief is accounted for as a relation between an agent and a propositional content, where there is no content there is no relation to be held. What can be asked is whether the following could be a belief ascription:

(7) Mary believes that sentence (1) is not true.

Given that sentence (1) fails the conditions given by Soames for propositions to be expressed, and given that sentences that do not express propositions are neither true nor false, there is no reason to think that (7) ascribes a belief to Mary. It would only do so if there were a propositional content with which to relate Mary's belief state. If propositional attitudes are accounted for as a relation between a subject and a propositional content, and sentence (1) fails to express a proposition, then Mary cannot have the belief allegedly ascribed. Hence, the appeal to propositional attitude ascriptions does not suffice to show that sentence (1) indeed expresses a proposition. Our intuitions regarding propositional attitude ascriptions are shaky and do not guarantee that there are propositions whenever such ascriptions seem to take place. There ought to be independent grounds on which to argue that there really are propositions expressed in such cases.

Soames gave several conditions for propositions to be expressed. If these are summarized in a checklist and liar sentences are scrutinized according to it, we can see that a liar sentence like 'sentence (1) is not true' only fulfils those requisites that are inessential for

expressing propositions. The sentence ‘sentence (1) is not true’ expresses a proposition only if:

i) It is a grammatical sentence. Yes.

ii) It is perfectly meaningful. Yes.

iii) Someone not familiar with was being discussed can understand *what it says*.

Well, that depends on what we understand this to be. Either someone understands what it says because it is a perfectly meaningful sentence, in which case, there is no difference between being understandable and being grammatical and meaningful; or it means that someone understands *what it says* in the sense that someone grasps the proposition it expresses, or knows what would have to be the case for it to be true or false. If it is the last case, then no, no one can understand what sentence (1) says.

iv) It is used in propositional attitude ascriptions. No (as was illustrated by example (7) discussed in previous page).

v) It conveys semantic information content of sentences in contexts.

Conveying semantic information seems to identical with (iii), if (iii) is understood as expressing a proposition such that someone can understand what it says. Hence, no.

vi) It determines a function from possible worlds to truth-values that constrains how the world is represented to be. As was seen, it also does not do that.

Maybe a word could be said about this. A function from possible circumstances to truth-values, that constrains how the world is represented to be, seems to be what the semantic information content conveyed by sentences in contexts is. In essence, what appears to be required is that some way things might be is identified, providing truth-conditions for a certain sentence as used.

All the points above can be summarized in three points. A sentence expresses a proposition if it is a grammatical sentence, conveys semantic information/is a function from possible circumstances to truth-values, and can be used in propositional attitude ascriptions. The only thing that 'sentence (1) is not true' can be, out of the available list, is to a grammatical and meaningful sentence of English. But this is not sufficient for propositions to be expressed. Sentences that do not express propositions are neither true nor false, without contradiction.

Soames had introduced some distinctions that could be meaningful: determinate truth *versus* truth, strong bivalence *versus* weak bivalence, and strong denial of bivalence *versus* weak denial of bivalence. Since Soames's reasons to take liar sentences as motivating the rejection bivalence are unpersuasive, his reasons for treating truth as a partially defined predicate are undermined. Hence, there is no apparent need to distinguish between determinate truth and (simple) truth. If something is not determinately true, then it is not true. If something is not determinately false, then it is not false. It is not possible that some proposition is not determinately true, but is nevertheless true, or is not determinately false but is still false. Even if it were possible to draw some relevant distinction between determinate-truth and (simple) truth, we would still not be allowed to assert that some propositions are neither true nor false. What must still be shown is that there is no relevant distinction between strong bivalence and weak bivalence, or strong denial of bivalence and weak denial of bivalence.

I claimed that Soames confuses two ways for things not to be true. He identified two principles of bivalence:

(SPB) Every sentence (proposition) is either true or false.

(WPB) Every sentence (proposition) is either true or not true.

As propositions have been identified as truth-bearers, rather than sentences, we should take both versions of bivalence as saying that every proposition is either true or false, or true or not true. The difference between (SPB) and (WPB) depends on how we regard 'not true'. If not being true means being false, then there is no distinction between weak bivalence and strong bivalence. If not being true means it is not true because it is neither true nor false, then there is a difference.

Soames claimed that for the Fregean, every proposition would be true or not true, whereas for the Strawsonian every proposition would be true or false. The acceptance by the Fregean that every proposition is true or not true is not strictly speaking acceptance of a principle of bivalence. A principle of *bi*valence will say that there are two values propositions may have. If the Fregean accepts that propositions may be true, false, or neither, then saying that a proposition is not true is ambiguous. It may be not true because it is false, or it may be not true because it has no truth-value. Hence, either weak and strong bivalence are the same, or what is called weak bivalence is not a principle of bivalence at all.

Soames also claimed that the Strawsonian would accept that some sentences are neither true nor false. As he says,

> "If there are genuine instances of Strawsonian presupposition, then the sentential version of (11) [weak denial of bivalence] is correct since there are meaningful sentences that fail to express propositions on certain occasions of use and therefore are neither true nor false on those occasions." (Soames, 1999: 170)

This is incorrect. The Strawsonian would indeed accept that there are sentences that are neither true nor false, but that is *not* a denial of bivalence. Given that the Strawsonian takes

statements to be truth-bearers, whatever is not a statement cannot be evaluable as true or as false, nor a counterexample to bivalence.

One can say that sentences are neither true nor false, hence not true, without being committed to there being propositions or statements that are not true and not false. Liar sentences can be such examples of sentences that are neither true nor false. Once there is some justification to deny that liar sentences can express propositions, one is no longer driven to contradictions by applying bivalence or any other principle to these sentences.

4.4 Conclusion

Soames's arguments in favour of the claim that liar sentences express propositions are not persuasive. It is not clear that his requirements for sentences to express propositions are satisfied. It would have to be accepted that liar sentences do express propositions, or count as normal truth-bearers, for any argument to the effect that liar sentences are counterexamples to bivalence to proceed. If liar sentences expressed propositions, then there would also be difficulties with other principles, namely with the disquotational schema (T), which Soames wants to accept. Changing the reading of the biconditional is equally an unsatisfactory move. Any sentence that is not used to make a statement is neither true nor false, without contradiction. One is not entitled to make inferences with things that are not truth-bearers. If one does, certainly one will infer contradictions. If one could, then logic would be a potato.

Soames chooses to talk of propositions not being true rather than of propositions being false. So he concludes that if liar sentences were neither true nor false, they would be not true, that is, they would be false. But the claim that some things are neither true nor false is just the opposite of accepting that those same things are false. In confusing the two senses in

which some things can be not true, Soames fails to recognize that many things are precisely neither true nor false.

The most important conclusion to be drawn is that if liar sentences do not express propositions, they are not things that *should* obey bivalence, and hence do not provide any reason to reject it. They are failed attempts.[78] Like Escher's drawings of impossible objects, they seem to obey rules for representing, but are, if one wants, impossible representations – nothing can be the case (or not the case) according to them. When nothing is said constraining a way for things to be, nothing is said which could be true or false. Sentences that do not say anything are neither true nor false without contradiction. If there are good reasons to doubt that liar sentences express ungrounded propositions, there are reasons to doubt Soames's motivation to reject bivalence.

[78] Cf., on liar sentences as failed attempts, Goldstein (2001).

Chapter 5

TRUE, FALSE OR NEITHER? TRAVIS ON NATURAL ISOSTHENEIA

> [A] child might be taught to distinguish between propositions and other expressions by being told "Ask yourself if you can say 'is true' after it. If these words fit, it's a proposition." (And in the same way one might have said: Ask yourself if you can put the words "*This* is how things are:" in front of it.)
> (Wittgenstein, 1958, §137)

5.1 Introduction

Anyone holding that there are truth-bearers that are neither true nor false must disarm Williamson's argument to the effect that such a supposition leads to contradictions. In Chapter 2, I identified two kinds of strategy that can be adopted to block the derivation of contradictions following from the denial that a particular truth-bearer is bivalent. The first kind of strategy attempts to resolve the inconsistency of holding the correctness of every instance of disquotational or equivalence schemas for truth and falsehood, and at same time admitting the existence of truth-value gaps. A different strategy consists in abandoning the commitment to the schemas for truth and falsehood. As remarked in Chapter 2, questioning the correctness of the schemas for truth and falsehood requires an explanation of how an utterance, which on assumption says that something is the case, can fail to be true or fail to be false other than by what it says failing to be the case or failing to be not the case. A genuine objection to the schemas may claim that no property can satisfy either of the schemas and some other constraint equally important on the notions of truth and falsehood.

Charles Travis holds an original and radical view about the possibility of truth-value gaps. He asks, "Can we say what is neither true nor false, but might have been, had the world spoken of been suitably different?" (1994: 171). His answer is affirmative. The principle of bivalence can be understood as saying that anything of the truth-bearer kind is (or must be)

either true or false. *If* Travis is right, there are truth-bearers that are neither true nor false. However, Travis must disarm Williamson's argument.[79] His views on truth place him among those that adopt a strategy of the second kind to block the argument: Travis objects to the schemas for truth and falsehood insofar as they concern utterances or statements. This chapter examines Travis's position, shows that he fails to undermine the schemas, and argues that his position is unsustainable.

Travis rejects two ideas: (i) that sentence meaning determines truth-conditions and what is said; and (ii) that we need propositions, what Travis calls 'shadows', conceived of as representational items interposed between language and the world, with determinate truth- and falsity-conditions that settle when given words expressing them are true or false. Rejection of the first idea is the standard contextualist or truth-conditional pragmatics tenet: meaning and reference alone underdetermine truth-conditions and what is said. Travis's rejection of the second idea relies on a Wittgensteinian argument to the effect that even if there were shadow-propositions, they would not have determinate truth-conditions.

To replace those ideas, Travis argues for *occasion-sensitivity* (a radical version of contextualism). Any statement we make bears (indefinitely many) different understandings. On some understandings it is true, on some others it is false. The statement does not settle which one understanding is correct. Understandings themselves bear different understandings. Hence, a statement does not have truth-conditions that settle when it is true or false. The occasion on which the statement is made must contribute to how it is to be

[79] "Williamson's argument is serious. My position needs urgently to disarm it. But editorial considerations dictate that I do not respond here. I hope to do so in another place." Travis (1998: 171, n.1) To the best of my knowledge, Travis has not addressed Williamson's argument directly. I will, nonetheless, extract from his views on truth, falsehood and truth-value gaps how he would disarm the argument.

evaluated, and to which understanding is then correct. A proper account of the relation of language to world must take into account how our use of words requires sensitivity to occasions.

The affirmative answer to the question above comes in the form of what Travis calls *natural isostheneia* (Travis, 1994, 1998, 2000). Any statement bears different understandings. A statement may be made in a situation such that *nothing* in the meaning of the uttered sentence, the objects talked about or other factors of the situation itself, decides which understanding of the statement is then correct. On some possible understanding the statement would be true, and on some other understanding it would be false, but since it cannot be both, it is neither.

My position is that whatever may be true or false demonstrably cannot be neither, as indicated by Williamson's argument against genuine truth-value gaps. What may be true or false is what is evaluable, and what is evaluable has truth- and falsity-conditions. The schemas for truth and falsehood, as well as the formulation of bivalence adopted, are committed to what may be called *the conditional requirement*: utterances are truth-bearers if they say something to be the case. If an utterance says something to be the case, it has determinate truth- and falsity-conditions.

I am willing to concede the rejection of (i) the claim that meaning alone is sufficient to determine truth-conditions and what is said, but I do not concede rejection of (ii) that we need some notion of truth-conditional content. Conceding contextualism does not entail that the conditional requirement and schemas (T) and (F) are wrong. Thus, I do not concede that what is said is interpretable, because what is said (or expressed) is not a representation entirely independent of the facts that would verify it. Hence, the Wittgensteinian argument against

shadow-propositions is not applicable against schemas (T) and (F). The thesis of occasion-sensitivity requires the rejection of *both* (i) and (ii). My concession of the rejection of (i) is a concession to contextualism, but *not* to its radical version – occasion-sensitivity.

This chapter is organized as follows: §5.2 presents Travis's position. First, I expound the contextualist claim that meaning and reference underdetermine what is said, and give some intuitive examples in its support. In the second place, I present Travis's use of the Wittgensteinian argument against shadow-propositions, to the effect that shadow-propositions are as interpretable as the sentences that express them. I finally present Travis's radical version of contextualism – occasion-sensitivity.

§5.3 first presents Travis's argument for natural isostheneia. A statement is neither true nor false if nothing settles which of its possible understandings is correct on the occasion it is made; but such a statement could have been truth-valued. Secondly, Williamson's argument is revisited. If, as Travis claims, we can say what is neither true nor false, but might have been, what prevents us from deriving a contradiction?

§5.4 presents the reasons why, according to Travis, truth-value gaps caused by isostheneia cannot entail any contradiction. Travis rejects the argument's assumptions: the conditional requirement and schemas (T) and (F), because they neglect occasion-sensitivity. Travis also distinguishes thoughts from statements; thoughts are identified as *what* is thought, and what is thought is what may be the case or not; statements are identified as particular acts of uttering sentences. Entailment and inferential relations hold for thoughts, not statements. However, particular schemas can only be instantiated by statements. When isostheneia occurs, no thought is expressed in a statement. Thus, a truth-valueless statement cannot instantiate any schematic argument, including Williamson's argument.

In §5.5, I argue that Travis's position on isostheneia is unsustainable. First, I argue that the conditional requirement and schemas (T) and (F) are not vulnerable to the Wittgensteinian argument against shadow-propositions. To reject (T) and (F) is to reject the transparency of truth and falsehood. Travis's alternative of accounting for the truth of statements as (unspecified) correspondence to the facts (but not: to the fact that thus-and-so) is implausible: it means that statements are never completely true. But this means rejecting the absoluteness of truth. Finally, I argue that the two main features of isostheneia are incompatible. *Either* there are conditions in which a statement would be true (or false), in which case a thought *is* expressed, and we cannot say it is neither true nor false, on pain of contradiction; *or* isostheneia means that it is impossible to choose between different understandings an utterance could bear, in which case *that* utterance could not have been true or false because it says nothing. In either case, we cannot say what is neither true nor false but might have been.

5.2 Background claims

Travis claims that meaning and reference do not determine truth-conditions and what is said. He also claims that there need not be propositions, conceived of as representational items with fixed truth-conditions, interposed between the sentences that express them and the facts that verify them. The two claims are meant to show that statements do not have fixed truth-conditions that settle when they are true or false. The two claims are related, but are not equivalent. It is possible to maintain that meaning and reference are insufficient to fully determine truth-conditions, while accepting the notion of truth-conditional content. Travis's radical version of contextualism – occasion-sensitivity – relies on both claims.

5.2.1 Contextualism

Travis's claim concerning statements being neither true nor false results from his position on several issues. One of the positions he holds is that the meaning of a sentence is not sufficient to determine what is said in an utterance of the sentence nor when it would be true or false: "Most English sentences behave the same. Supplied with referents, there is still no one fact, or falsehood, they would state. That is not what meaning makes them do." (1996a: 455).

This position fits into what has been called *contextualism* or *truth-conditional pragmatics* (see, for example, Bezuidenhout, 2002). Truth-conditional pragmatics questions the semantics/pragmatics division in relation to the determination of the truth-conditional content of utterances. Contextualists recognize that meaning imposes constraints on what can be said in an utterance and what type of truth-conditions it is to have, but does not fully determine truth-conditional content (what is said). Therefore, it goes against a generally endorsed view according to which the semantic properties of sentences (bracketing disambiguation and referent assignments) are sufficient to determine both what is said and truth-conditions. Pragmatic considerations related to the context of utterance, the purposes and intentions of speakers in making an utterance, and further background assumptions (not all of which can be made explicit) have a crucial role to play in determining what is said and when it would be true.[80]

[80] 'Context' must be understood, clearly, as including more than parameters such as place and time of utterance, identity of interlocutors, etc. Spelling out in full what features of a context of utterance are relevant for the determination of truth-conditional content may not be possible. This results, for instance, from the idea that there are relevant background assumptions not all of which can be fully articulated or made explicit.

Contextualism has been maintained and developed in different ways by Travis (1994, 1996a, 1998, 2000), Recanati (1993, 2001, 2002) and Bezuidenhout (2002), among others. There are abundant intuitive examples in support of the context-dependence of what is said. The examples reveal the context-dependence of virtually any type of expression. Here are some such examples:

1) I've been playing football
2) The ink is blue
3) That ball is round
4) I've had breakfast

1) is adapted from Bezuidenhout (2002): a boy goes into the kitchen telling his mother he has been playing football. He was playing with his father and dog, and the goal posts were two trees in the garden. The dog sometimes ran away with the ball. In that context, the boy's activity counts as playing football, and what he says is true. But it is not true that the boy was playing football on a football pitch with proper goal posts, eleven players aside, referees, and for ninety minutes. Nothing about what we understand by 'playing football' in itself determines whether the situation described is to count as playing football or not.

The second example is from Travis (1998, 2000). Pia goes to the stationer's and asks for blue ink. If she is given ink that looks blue in the bottle but writes black, she may complain that that is not what she asked for. But it could have been what she asked for, she could have wanted ink that looks blue in a bottle. Nothing in the meaning of 'blue ink' itself decides whether ink that looks blue but writes black is to count as blue or not. The meaning of the sentence 'the ink is blue' and the bottle of ink described remain nonetheless unchanged. Usually, when people buy blue ink from stationers, the standard understanding of 'blue ink'

is ink that writes blue. But the normal reasonable expectations on how to understand a request for blue ink from stationers do not rule out other possible understandings, when some different purposes are relevant. As Travis sees it, we cannot say simply that 'is blue' is a correct description of some ink just in case it is blue. Rather, "the only rule for that predicate is: it is correctly used on an occasion only to describe what then *counts* as blue" (Travis, 2000: 213).

The third is also given by Travis (1996a). Pia and Jones are playing squash. What shape do squash balls assume on rebound? Pia hits the ball and Jones says 'the ball is round'. But the ball after being hit was deformed into an ovoid, so what Jones said then was false. Fiona had never seen squash played before, and from where she stands, the ball seems a blur. She asks what is the form of the squash ball, and is truly informed by Max that the squash ball is round. So, in talking of the same ball at the same time, there are different things to be said in uttering the same sentence. The meaning of the sentence leaves it open for different utterances of the sentence to say various things: "there is no *one* set of conditions under which those English words, spoken of a given ball and time, would be, or say, what is true." (Travis, 1996a: 455)

The fourth is used by Recanati (2001). Someone may be asked if she wants something to eat, replying 'I've had breakfast'. In this case, the speaker is not to be understood as having said that her life was not entirely breakfastless (although, in a relevant context, that could have been what she wanted to say). Instead, she is to be understood as having said that she had breakfast *that morning*. Recanati's point is that what is understood as having been said depends on a pragmatic process that requires the recognition of the speaker's communicative intentions, relying partly on the semantic potential of a sentence (the

sentence's meaning that constrains what it can be used to say). The semantic interpretation in itself is "powerless to determine what is said" (Recanati, 2001: 87).

These examples are meant to illustrate that meaning and reference underdetermine what is said and truth-conditions, and that pragmatic considerations are required to understand what is said. The alternative explanation of what is going on in these cases is the standard Gricean explanation.[81] For instance, with case (4), on the Gricean explanation, the utterance of 'I've had breakfast' literally says that the speaker has had breakfast before the time of utterance, and is true if the speaker has had breakfast at least once in her life. In the context in which the answer is given, in reply to a question 'Would you like something to eat?', what is literally said in the utterance would not be relevant unless it is taken as implicating that the speaker had breakfast that morning, and thus does not want something to eat. On the Gricean explanation, we can distinguish between the proposition literally expressed (which is constrained by the meaning of the sentence type uttered) and the propositions implicated (further information conveyed in a context of utterance, but not encoded in the sentence uttered). It is this kind of explanation that contextualists reject. They reject, in particular, the thesis that what is said in a given context of utterance is so tightly constrained by linguistic meaning, and claim instead that grasping what is said in context already requires the knowledge of relevant background assumptions. Thus, to return to example (4), we would not understand the speaker's answer as implicating that she does not want something to eat unless we already understand that what she said was that she had breakfast *that morning*.

I do not intend to discuss the examples given in support of contextualism, but I recognize that the examples are intuitive. Bezuidenhout (2002) argues against different

[81] See for instance García-Carpintero (2001), Grice (1975, 1981) and Recanati (2001, 2002).

attempts to dismiss context-dependence as accountable by treating it as cases of ambiguity, incompleteness, non-literality, ellipsis, etc.[82] Whether context-dependence is accountable in these terms or not, in each of the cases considered something true (or false) *is* said, and this fact should be respected. Accepting that the examples are intuitive is not being committed to any particular explanation of how the sentences then uttered amount to being evaluable. I do not take a stand, in particular, on whether truth-conditional pragmatics is preferable to the standard Gricean explanation. I am, nonetheless, willing to concede to the contextualists that what is said is context-dependent.

5.2.2 Needless shadows

The opening paragraph of Travis's book, *Unshadowed Thought*, is as follows:

> "G. E. Moore, reporting on Wittgenstein's lectures in Cambridge in 1930-1933, tells us: 'One chief view about propositions to which he was opposed was… that a proposition is a sort of "shadow" intermediate between the expressions which we use in order to assert it and the fact (if any) which "verifies it"… He said that it regarded the supposed "shadow" as something "similar" to the fact which verifies it, and in that way different from the expression which expresses it, which is not "similar" to the fact in question. Wittgenstein opposed this conception, Moore tells us, as follows: 'He said that even if there were such a "shadow" it would not bring us any nearer to the fact", since "it would be susceptible of different interpretations just as the expression is". He said, "You can't have a picture which can't be misinterpreted" and "No interpolation between a sign and its fulfilment does away with the sign.""(Travis, 2000: 1)

Shadow-propositions are supposed to be distinct *both* from the sentences that express them (but equally representational) *and* from the facts that verify them (but structured similarly). Travis claims that what might be true or false is what *represents*, so if propositions are true or false, they are representations. A sentence would be derivatively true or false by expressing the shadow-proposition it does. Since shadow-propositions are representations of

[82] Cf. Bezuidenhout (2002: 107-115).

facts (and distinct from them), their truth or falsehood must be explained as the obtaining or not of some relation of correspondence to the facts. But we have no conception of an uninterpretable representation. So, shadow-propositions must be interpretable in different ways. Therefore, shadow-propositions cannot be associated with determinate truth- and falsity-conditions, and do not take us any nearer to the facts, as they were supposed to. This argument requires that there be a gap between what is said (or expressed) and what may be the case or not.

Travis identifies two problems with the idea that shadow-propositions are both distinct from the sentences that express them and the facts that would verify them. Firstly, we do not know how sentences relate to the shadow-propositions they express. The claim that meaning determines truth-conditions, along with the conception of what is literally expressed by an uttered sentence, is threatened by contextualism. If contextualism is right, it cannot be assumed that the relation between sentences uttered and propositions expressed unproblematically results from meaning and reference.[83]

The other problem concerns how propositions relate to reality. The second feature associated with propositions is the supposed similarity between the shadow-proposition expressed and the fact that verifies it.[84] This point may be rephrased as the idea that a proposition has, or determines, fixed truth-conditions, that settle when it is true or false of "any configuration of the world". But if shadow-propositions are representations, how they represent anything requires interpretation, hence how they are true or false of anything must depend on further factors other than being the propositions they are. The Wittgensteinian

[83] Bezuidenhout makes this point saying "contextualists claim that there is a gap between sentence meaning and what is asserted, and that this gap can never be closed." (2002: 107)
[84] Cf. Travis (2000: 2).

point is precisely that even if there were such things as shadow-propositions, they would still be susceptible to different interpretations.

These objections require that, in the first place, propositions be conceived of as *representations* and, in the second place, that meaning and reference be thought to be sufficient to determine which proposition words express. Conceding the contextualist claim means abandoning the second requirement, i.e., meaning and reference are not sufficient to determine which proposition words express. But conceding contextualism does not mean conceding that propositions are representations distinct from the facts that would verify them. This problem will be addressed again in §5.5.

5.2.3 Occasion-sensitivity

Travis's radical version of contextualism is designated as 'occasion-sensitivity'. Occasion-sensitivity incorporates *both* contextualism *and* the rejection of shadows, which means it purports to cut the connection not only between sentence meaning and what is said or expressed on occasions, but also the connection between what is said or expressed and what may be the case or not the case: "But occasion-sensitivity poses a significant challenge to the idea that for a sentence of a language there are the conditions (*Umstande*) of which it would be true…" (Travis, 2000: 251-252).

Now, the context-dependence view can be summarised thus:

> (CD) If *u* is a particular utterance of a sentence type *S*, the linguistic meaning of *S* and parameters of the context of utterance *C*, such as the identity of the interlocutors, the place and time of utterance and the objects referred, are insufficient to determine what *u* says and hence its truth-conditions.

(CD) is compatible with the idea that something relevant in the context of utterance determines what *u* says, and hence that something relevant in the context of utterance determines the conditions in which *u* is true or false.[85] However, the point against the notion of propositions suggests that even if we suppose that *u*, as uttered on a particular occasion, says something, the conditions in which *u* is true or false are still undetermined.

Consider the squash-game case (3), where the interlocutors change, but utter tokens of the same sentence type 'that ball is round', and reference is made to the same ball at the same moment. The two utterances of 'that ball is round' with reference to the same ball in the same moment differ in truth-value and, as Travis would say, bear different understandings.[86] Or consider again case (2) 'the ink is blue'. Whether the stationer tells Pia something true or not depends on how the stationer's utterance of the sentence on that occasion is to be understood. Given the rejection of the notion of proposition, the way the stationer's utterance is understood still does not determine fully its truth and falsity-conditions. According to Travis, understandings themselves bear understandings, that is, occasion-sensitivity iterates. Even if Pia were to make her request clearer by completing the sentence with more information, saying, for instance, 'I want ink that *writes* blue', this sentence would again be occasion-sensitive:

> "There are various things one might say in describing ink as blue on an understanding on which writing blue counts as being blue. The understanding given English words, on a speaking of them, bear may well choose between some understandings of being as those English words describe things, without choosing between all… What given words mean does

[85] Recanati, for instance, says. "What is said… corresponds to the intuitive truth-conditions of the utterance, that is, to the content of the statement as the participants in the conversation would gloss it." (Recanati, 2001: 79-80).
[86] "The words 'is round', in meaning what they do, speak of being round. In fact, I suggest, for them to speak of that is just for them to mean what they do… If that is what meaning does, we can see why there should be contrasts… – both true and false things to be said, e.g., of a given item in using 'is round' to mean what it does, in calling the item round. The reason is that the concept of being round does not by itself settle how an object must be to be correctly describable as round." (Travis, 1996a: 455)

> not determine fully what it would be for things to be as one described them in using those words on some occasion. For their meaning makes them speak of what admits of understandings. A use of them, on an occasion, may bear an understanding that settles some of what their meaning on its own does not as to what would count as being as *thus* described. But there need be nothing in a particular use to settle all such questions." (Travis, 1998: 176-7)

The occasion-sensitivity view can be thus summarised:

> (OS) If *u* is a particular utterance of a sentence type *S*, the meaning of *S* and parameters of the context of utterance *C*, such as the identity of interlocutors, the time and place of utterance and the reference of expressions used in *u*, are insufficient to determine what *u* says and thus its truth-conditions; moreover, what is reasonable to understand as having been said in *u* still does not determine the conditions in which *u* is true or false.

Travis generalizes the point: for any utterance of a sentence on a particular occasion there is more than one thing that could be understood. As Travis sees it, there are more than two things, and "if more than *n* things, then more than *n*+1" (Travis, 1994: 172). Since different ways to understand an utterance affect the evaluation of the utterance, we cannot, allegedly, suppose that there is such a thing as *the* truth-conditions of the utterance. It is not just that occasion-sensitivity poses a challenge to the idea that there are conditions under which a *sentence of a language* would be true or false. If right, occasion-sensitivity also challenges the idea that there are the conditions under which any given utterance made on an occasion would be true or false.

According to Travis, language can be creatively used in novel situations. The constraints meaning lays down do not foresee every possible application of words to any new situation. Whether given words are applicable in a situation or not depends on the purposes of using those words *then*,[87] on what would be the most reasonable or sensible way to understand a

[87] "…how things are according to given words is not independent of what one ought to have been able to do with them—of the uses to be expected of the information they should provide." Travis (2000: 242-3).

given statement, given the concerns or purposes that are relevant in such a situation. So, a third factor is required for understanding what is said, namely the particular circumstances in which utterances are made. Understanding words on occasion relies on our worldliness and reasonableness to choose the adequate, or more valuable, understanding from a variety of different possible ones. But understandings themselves bear different understandings.

5.3 The arguments

5.3.1 The argument for natural isostheneia

Travis claims that we can say what is neither true nor false but might have been. What may be true or false? Travis, following Austin, maintains that what may be true or false are not sentences, but statements. Meaning leaves it open for a sentence to be used in saying many different true and false things. A sentence *as such* has no truth- or falsity-conditions, i.e. it is not *evaluable*, and hence it is not a truth-bearer. Understanding a sentence as such is not understanding what is the case according to it, because nothing is the case according to it. So, there is no such thing as what a sentence "says to be so".[88]

Since Travis follows Austin closely in what he takes statements to be, consider what Austin has to say. A statement is

> "[T]he words or sentence *as used by a certain person on a certain occasion*… A statement is made, and its making is a historic event, the utterance by a certain speaker or writer of certain words (a sentence) to an audience with reference to a historic situation, event, or what not." (Austin, 1950: 151)

The phenomenon of natural isostheneia is then the following: Suppose an utterance of a perfectly meaningful sentence made on a particular occasion, with reference to 'a historic

[88] Cf. Travis (1994: 176).

situation'. By Austin's criterion for identifying statements, a statement was made. Given occasion-sensitivity, the statement might be interpreted or understood in different ways. But suppose moreover that *nothing* in the situation the statement is made, in 'the historic situation' referred or in the meaning of the words uttered, decides how the statement is to be understood. If, and when, isostheneia does occur nothing decides how the statement is to be evaluated. If nothing in the nature of such a situation chooses between different possible understandings, then there is equal reason to call the statement true as to call it false. Since it cannot be both, it is neither. Isostheneia is a third condition statements may be in, alongside truth and falsehood. As Travis says, *tertium datur* (Travis, 1998: 183).

Consider the case Travis provides to illustrate isostheneia:

> "We are sitting in Jones' living room with Jones when suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, he dies. A moment later there is a knock at the door. We open and are asked: 'Is Jones at home?'" (1994: 169).

What would be the adequate answer in this situation? Travis's intuitions concerning the situation described are as follows:

(i) it is not correct to answer 'Yes, Jones is at home' nor 'No, Jones is not at home';

(ii) either answer would misinform;

(iii) neither answer would have been true;

(iv) neither answer would have been false. ("For if 'He is' would have stated falsehood, 'It's false that he is' should have stated truth. But if it is false that Jones is at home, then he is *not* at home, and it should have been true to say so, contrary to the third point. Similarly for 'He isn't.'" (Travis, 1994: 169))

If we were to answer anyway 'Jones is at home', how should the answer be evaluated? As Travis sees it, we would have said some*thing*, in particular, we (who know of Jones's

death) would have described Jones as being in a certain condition, we would have made a statement describing Jones as being at home. If the intuitions are right, our statement is neither true nor false. What informs the intuitions, as Travis claims, is that "in *those* circumstances for describing him, he neither counts as in that condition, nor as not" (*idem*).

The reason for the answer is the basis for the argument for natural isostheneia. There are reasons for counting Jones as at home and there are reasons for counting Jones as not at home. Depending on how our statement is understood, there are features of the situation that make Jones count as at home. Equally, depending on how our statement is understood, there are features of the situation that make Jones count as not at home.

What are such reasons? Jones's body is still in his chair, although Jones is dead. On this understanding, Jones is at home. But Jones is dead, and the dead are not anywhere. So he is nowhere, therefore not at home. On this understanding, Jones is not at home. The same sentence 'Jones is at home' is used to talk about the same individual in the same condition. On one understanding, the sentence as used is true; on another understanding, the sentence is false. Neither the meaning of the sentence uttered nor Jones's condition decides whether Jones counts as being at home or not.

The argument continues: the reasons for and the reasons against counting Jones as at home cancel each other out, because "neither outweigh their conflicting counterparts" (1994: 170). The reasons cancel each other out, apparently, because the statement cannot be simultaneously true and false, on pain of contradiction. We cannot say that Jones is and is not at home. Hence, he does not count one way or the other. 'Jones is at home' is neither true nor false.

Since, it is assumed, we would have said some*thing* if we had replied 'Jones is at home', we can say what is neither true nor false, but "might have been, had the world spoken of been suitably different" (1994: 167). The world could have been suitably different in this respect: Jones could have lived. Had he lived, we would have said what was either true or false by uttering, in that situation, 'Jones is at home'.

Travis adapts the term 'isostheneia' from the Pyrrhonians, for whom it was an epistemological notion – an equal balancing of everything known that does not permit deciding whether something is true or not. Travis does not want his notion of isostheneia to be epistemological. There is no further factor or condition to be discovered, either in what we mean by 'is at home' or in the situation itself, that could settle whether Jones counts as at home or not. Nothing in the nature of the case decides how to evaluate the statement.[89] Thus, Travis thinks, isostheneia reigns: we can say what is neither true nor false, but might have been had the world been different. If Travis is right, we seem to identify counterexamples to bivalence: some evaluable items can fail to be truth-valued.

There are serious problems for Travis's position, on the one hand, with the claim that isostheneia consists in the *impossibility* of choosing between different understandings, and, on the other hand, that there are *specifiable* conditions in which what is said would have been true or false (i.e., that what is said *could* have been truth-valued). I argue in §5.5 that these problems reveal that either something truth-valued is said, or that the impossibility to choose

[89] "As long as the way a statement speaks of things being is one that admits of understandings as to what being that way would be, and as long as the understanding *it* bears does not choose between every competing pairs of these, that statement is susceptible to a condition of natural *isostheneia*, a third condition beside describing things as they are and describing them as they are not. Natural *isostheneia* is a way for the world to be, determinately, knowably, arranged. It is not an epistemic condition." (Travis, 1998: 181).

one understanding means that nothing is said to be the case. In either case, we cannot say what is neither true nor false but might have been.

5.3.2 Williamson's argument revisited

Williamson's argument shows that we cannot say that what may be true or false (what is evaluable) may be neither, because that implies a contradiction.

Williamson's argument relies on few assumptions. In the first place, it assumes what Travis calls 'the conditional requirement': truth-bearers (what is evaluable) are taken as utterances that say that something is the case. Secondly, truth-bearers are true or false in particular conditions: an utterance is true just in case what it says to be the case is the case, and it is false just in case what it says to be the case is not the case. This can be formalized in the corresponding schemas (T) and (F). Finally, it assumes the seemingly uncontroversial claim that entailment and inferential relations hold for utterances meeting the conditional requirement.

Recall that schemas (T) and (F) are:

(T) if *u* says that *P*, then *u* is true if and only if *P*

(F) if *u* says that *P*, then *u* is false if and only if not *P*.

Assuming that (T) and (F) are correct is not assuming that there is nothing else to say about truth and falsehood. Whatever else may be said about the notions should not conflict with the schemas. (T) and (F) aim at capturing the elucidation of the notions of truth and falsity given in Aristotle's *dictum*:

> "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true" (*Metaphysics*, IV, 7, 1011^{b})

Travis agrees that the *dictum* is a correct elucidation of the notions of truth and falsehood,[90] but that our statements may fail to satisfy the condition it imposes on words being evaluable in terms of "saying of what is…"/ "saying of what is not…" Williamson recognizes that utterances may fail to say anything. But whereas schemas (T) and (F) purport just to generalize the basic idea behind Aristotle's formulation, Travis reads more into the *dictum*: "'false' like 'true', is a verdict on a way of representing things; on whether the ways things are is rightly represented that way. Such questions arise only where there *is* a way things were represented as being" (Travis, 1994: 177).

Obviously, the schemas already carry the commitment to the idea that there is a determinate condition utterances can meet that guarantees their truth- and falsity-conditions. It is also true that the schemas appear to leave context-dependence unaccounted for. On the other hand, the schemas *equally* require no commitment to the idea that the meaning of an uttered sentence is sufficient to determine what is said. The degree of generality of the schemas is compatible with different accounts of what is required for determining what is said. For instance, whereas there is disagreement between deflationists and truth-conditional semanticists about the role of schemas such as (T) and (F), there is agreement as to their correctness.[91]

The apparent neglect of context-dependence could be easily amended by changing the antecedent of the schemas to something like: an utterance *u* of a sentence *S* in context *C* says that *P*.[92] This correction does not identify which aspects of the context of utterance are

[90] Cf. Travis (1994: 167, 177)
[91] See Chapter 1, § 1.3.1.
[92] A formulation of a principle for truth that purports to take context into account is proposed by Andjelković and Williamson (2000):

relevant for identifying what is said. However, since it was conceded at the start that it may be that not all relevant aspects of contexts of utterance can be fully expressed or articulated, the limitation should not worry us.

In illustration, consider example (1), from §5.2.1, 'I've been playing football'. In that situation, where the boy goes into the kitchen and utters 'I've been playing football', he tells his mother that he was playing football, and what he says is true, because he was indeed playing football. Given the description of the situation, we have no trouble understanding what he said (the mother probably would know better), and that what he said was true. We see that we can say that he was playing football because we understand the situation adequately. Thus, given that we have an adequate grasp of what was said, we can instantiate the schemas. Given that the boy said that he was playing football, what else could be required for the truth of his statement other than the fact that he was playing football? Or, if he had lied to his mother (suppose he had been climbing trees, rather than playing football with his father and dog), what else could be required for the falsehood of his statement other than the fact that he was not playing football? The fact that the schemas for truth and falsehood make no explicit mention of context-dependence seems not to be a problem.

A genuine case of truth-value gaps would be a counterexample to bivalence. A counterexample to bivalence should be an utterance that says that something is the case. Williamson formulates the principle of bivalence thus:

(PB) if *u* says that *P*, then either *u* is true or *u* is false.

(T) $\forall$**s**$\forall$**c**$\forall$**P [Say (s,c,P)** $\supset$ **[True (s,c)** $\equiv$ **P]]**,
where the expression **Say (s,c,P)** is used to mean: the sentence s as uttered in the context c says (or is used to say) that P (where 'P' may be replaced by a declarative sentence). What this formulation of principle (T) also intends to capture is that if a sentence (as uttered in a context) "says that something is so, then it is true if and only if that thing is so." (Andjelković and Williamson, 2000: 215)

A counterexample to (PB) would be an utterance *u* saying that *P* that is neither true nor false. In other words, what the utterance says to be the case would be neither the case nor not the case. Now, such a supposition is contradictory,[93] provided acceptance of (T) and (F). Thus, it is coherent to suppose that utterances are neither true nor false only if they are treated as saying nothing. If we adopt Travis's terminology, and admit that we say some*thing*, we represent Jones as being at home (or we represent Jones as not being at home). So there is a way Jones is represented as being. If, in the situation imagined, we state that Jones is at home, what else could be required for the truth of the statement other than Jones being at home? Or, what else could be required for the falsehood of the statement other than Jones not being at home? If, as Travis claims, in that situation our statement is *not true* and *not false*, what prevents us from deriving a contradiction?

Travis acknowledges that we usually expect truth and falsehood to be transparent:

> "There is an understanding of being true (and likewise of being false) on which we expect truth to have a sort of transparency… The core idea is: if someone said that the way things are is thus and so, and did so truly, then I can say so too… So from the truth of what he said I can draw a valid inference, the conclusion of which I can express in saying things to be precisely the way he did… A parallel idea might hold for being false. If someone said things to be thus and so, then I might state the truth in saying things not to be that way. So, similarly, for the inference I may draw, and the way I may state its conclusion." (Travis, 1998: 182)

In Chapter 1, §1.3.2, transparency was identified as one of the platitudes associated with our understanding of the notions of truth and falsehood. Schemas (T) and (F) express more formally the intuition that truth and falsehood are transparent. It is the assumption that truth and falsehood are transparent, together with a given denial of truth and falsehood, that leads to contradictions. As mentioned in Chapter 2, §2.2.2, a genuine objection to the schemas should explain how an utterance (saying what it does) can be not true and not false, other

[93] Cf. Chapter 2.

than by what it says failing to be the case and failing to be not the case. Williamson also suggests that a genuine objection to (T) and (F) can claim that no property can satisfy both (T) or (F) and some other constraint equally important to the notions of truth and falsehood.

Travis has identified occasion-sensitivity as playing an essential role as regards the truth and falsehood of what we say. Occasion-sensitivity is incompatible with the idea that there is a condition utterances can meet, such as 'an utterance *u* of a sentence *S* in context *C* says that *P*', which guarantees when that utterance would have been true or false. This seems to suggest that we are mistaken in expecting truth and falsehood to be transparent. The next section looks more carefully at what Travis is dismissing together with Williamson's argument.

5.4 Travis against Williamson's argument

5.4.1 Against the conditional requirement

Travis thinks that what may be true or false must at least represent things in a particular way. This suggests a commitment to the claim that *everything* that may be truth-valued must represent things as being some way or other. Travis thinks that the commitment to the conditional requirement is a commitment to the idea that utterances meeting it cannot fail to have a truth-value; [94] however, neither the conditional requirement, nor Williamson's argument, assume that utterances must be truth-valued. In any case, occasion-sensitivity is supposed to create problems for the idea that the conditional requirement is sufficient for the specification of truth- and falsity-conditions:

[94] Cf. Travis (1998: pp. 177-8)

> "A given description for a thing, as provided by some English phrase – a description of a thing as blue, say – admits of understandings. It describes things as a given way, where there are various (competing) understandings of being that way… For all that, there may be pairs of understandings of ink's being blue between which the understanding your words bear does not choose." (Travis, 1998: 178).

The idea here is: even if an utterance says that some ink writes blue, what is said still does not settle what would have to be the case for the utterance to be true. If we insist that what an utterance says cannot be interpretable and that it is true or false in determinate conditions, Travis can reply that this is simply a commitment to shadows. The suggestion of the connection between the imposition of the conditional requirement on utterances and the idea of shadows is stated as follows:

> "Some things have truth values. Some do not. What distinguishes the one sort of thing from the other? To have a truth value, an item must represent things as some particular way. […] That idea is compatible with this one. A way of representing things may be such that, world willing, what so represented would have a truth value, but, world unwilling, what so represented would not… One might think to stave off that idea with this one: there are ways for words, or other items, to represent things such that whatever *so* represented things could not lack a truth value, no matter how the world was… Ways for words to represent anything admit of understandings… The core idea here – that understandings admit of understandings – amounts to rejection of a larger picture. It is the picture Wittgenstein rejects in rejecting a conception of propositions as, as he puts it, shadows. The idea of a shadow is that of a specifiable form, or way, for words, or other things, to represent, which determines all that is determined as to when what so represented would be true (or false)." (Travis, 1998: 191-2)

What Travis is suggesting is that a commitment to the conditional requirement (as sufficient for identifying an utterance's truth and falsity-conditions) is a commitment to shadows. Enter the Wittgensteinian argument against shadows: since shadows are representations, they are interpretable. In other words, shadows cannot determine truth- and falsity-conditions. Hence, the conditional requirement is not sufficient to establish truth- and falsity-conditions. As Travis sees it, even when we *use* a sentence in the place of '*P*' to express what was said in an utterance, and when it would be true, the sentence *as used* (and

not just as mentioned) is itself occasion-sensitive. Therefore, identifying what was said on occasion cannot determine when the utterance would be true or false.

5.4.2 Against schemas (T) and (F)

According to Travis, we cannot simply say that an utterance *u* of a sentence *S*, made by person *p*, at time *t*, place *l*, etc., is true if and only if___. We cannot do so because the identification of such parameters on the left hand side permits variation in truth-conditions.[95] The possibility of variation in admissible understandings, which allegedly entails variations in truth-values, would mean that a disquotational schema might have false instances. There is no *one* sentence we may use on the right hand side of such a biconditional that would state the truth-conditions of an utterance identified by those parameters. Moreover, whatever sentence we might use on the right hand side would itself be occasion-sensitive.

I mentioned in §§1.3.1 and 5.3.2 that schemas similar to (T) and (F) are normally taken as correct, for instance both by deflationists and truth-conditional semanticists. But Travis objects to deflationism as much as to truth-conditional semantics.[96] He cannot accept that all there is to truth is displayed in these schemas, nor that instances of the schemas are sufficient to state truth-conditions. As he says:

> "These platitudes, and so deflationism, miss that aspect of truth that determines meaning's role. Truth requires words to have the uses which, given what they mean, they should have in the circumstances of their speaking. Through this link with use, when words would be true is a factor fixing what it is they said… What words mean plays a role in fixing when they would be true; but not an exhaustive one. Meaning leaves room for variation in truth-conditions from one speaking to another". (Travis, 1996a: 451)[97]

[95] It may be noted that a *statement*, both for Austin and for Travis, is precisely an utterance of a sentence on a particular occasion with parameters fixed as above.
[96] See for instance Travis (1996a) and (2000, chapter 10)
[97] It may seem that "when words would be true is a factor fixing what it is they said" sounds like endorsement of a Davidsonian claim: that we can identify what is said by stating truth-conditions. However, against what Travis

Travis (1996) thus argues against equivalence schemas similar to (T), including that proposed by Horwich (1998):

(E) It is true *that p* if and only if *p*

(where '*that p*' is to be replaced by a name of a proposition, and '*p*' by a declarative sentence stating the condition for the truth of the proposition *that p*).

Travis identifies several difficulties with (E). In the first place, particular cases of this schema are meant to state the truth-conditions of something, and identify what that something is. In the second place, the instances of the schema are meant to reveal all there is to say about truth. Thirdly, we would still not know how to relate the truth of propositions with the sentences that express them. Given the contextualist claim, we cannot appeal only to meaning and reference for elucidation. Finally, schemas of this kind make truth (and falsehood) depend exclusively on two factors: how things are, and how things are represented as being. But a third factor is required, namely the occasions on which words are uttered.

The difficulties Travis identifies require some comments. The objections to (E) are meant to reveal problems in any similar schemas, including schema (T). In Chapter 1, §1.3.3, I noted some differences between (E) and (T). In (E), the expression '*that p*' refers to a proposition, and it is the proposition referred to that is taken as a truth-bearer. The occurrence of '*p*' on the right hand side of (E) expresses that same proposition, but does not refer to it. Horwich seems to be committed to the idea that the proposition expressed and its truth-

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takes as being the Davidsonian position, he says: "The Davidsonian picture suggests that the conditional requirement is all there could be. For on it, words are not in a condition to mesh with truth at all—not in a condition for truth to demand anything of them—until they take on a certain sort of representational form, and then only by virtue of having such a form. But the sort of form in question is one precisely designed to engage with the world in such a way that truth is decided *solely* by the way that form and the world fit each other… But then *all* truth can impose is the conditional requirement." (Travis, 2000: 229).

conditions are distinct. Schema (T), on the other hand, requires only that the expression '*P*' occurring both in the antecedent and the consequent of the schema be understood in the same way and that it indicates or expresses what is said to be the case, as well as truth-conditions. Furthermore, utterances themselves are taken as truth-bearers. Now, a schema such as (E) is supposed to state the truth-conditions of propositions. Propositions, as Horwich seems to conceive them, appear to be vulnerable to the Wittgensteinian argument against shadows. Does the Wittgensteinian argument apply against (T)? I return to this in §§5.5.1 and 5.5.2.

It is not necessary to debate the second difficulty, because, unlike Horwich, we do not need to assume that instances of schema (T) say *all* there is to be said about truth. Williamson, in particular, clearly states he does not make that assumption. What Travis would need to dispute is that schemas of this kind capture something essential to what we understand by the notion of truth. Travis does recognize that "There is an understanding of being true (and likewise of being false) on which we expect truth to have a sort of transparency". It is hard to see how we can reasonably have such expectations if the idea meant to be captured in a schema such as (T) were not essential to our understanding of what truth is.[98]

[98] Admittedly, what Travis acknowledges is that we "expect that truth" has a "sort of transparency", not that we expect truth to be transparent, so that transparency is essential to truth. Now, "sort of transparency" deserves some comments. Suppose someone was to describe a woman saying: "she is sort of heavy". One could ask: "what do you mean "sort of heavy"? You mean she is overweight?". It seems to me that one can understand Travis's comment in two ways. (1) The qualification "sort of" is irrelevant to the description ("heavy" or "transparent"), being added merely to avoid making a straightforward statement. (2) Travis is not actually conceding the transparency platitude, he is using a rhetoric strategy, appearing to grant something to his adversaries, to reject it later on. If (1) is the case, then my point above stands. If (2) is the strategy Travis is using, then he does not concede transparency. But if Travis does not concede transparency, which is, arguably, a platitude about truth, then he faces some problems. The first is that he looses a common ground on which to argue about truth, and secondly, he deepens the gap between what it is for statements to be true, and what it is for thoughts to be true (cf. §5.4.3); I suspect that this strategy, if adopted by Travis, allows us to question whether *statements* ever achieve truth.

Concerning the third difficulty, *if* contextualism is correct, then it does raise some problems for Horwich's position. Horwich endorses the popular view according to which words (sentences or utterances of sentences) are true or false according to the proposition they express. The proposition expressed is true in determinate conditions. The question Travis raised was: what makes those words express that proposition? Horwich's answer makes him vulnerable to Travis's criticism. For Horwich, the meaning of the sentence uttered (bracketing disambiguation and reference assignments) determines which proposition is expressed. In arguing that grasping the proposition expressed does not consist in knowing truth-conditions, Horwich said:

> "It consists, rather in appreciating the sentence's syntactic structure and understanding its constituent words, which, in turn, consists in knowing basic regularities in their use (including the assertability conditions) of all the sentences in which those words occur." (Horwich, 1998: 69)

One knows what proposition is expressed by knowing the meaning of the sentence uttered, and the proposition then specifies its own truth-conditions. So, meaning determines truth-conditions. This is just what is not so for any contextualist, including Travis. Sentence meaning permits variations in truth-conditions.

Suppose now we concede to the contextualist that knowledge of meaning is not sufficient for grasping what is said, or truth-conditions. Concession of contextualism means that we cannot rely exclusively on linguistic meaning to identify which propositions are expressed. But that does not mean that schemas (T) and (F) (or some other similar schemas) are wrong. One can coherently endorse some form of contextualism and preserve the notion of truth-conditional content, as for instance Recanati does:

> "The distinguishing characteristic of sentence meaning (the linguistic meaning of the sentence-type) is that it is conventional and context-independent. Moreover, in general at least, it falls short of constituting a complete proposition, i.e., something truth-evaluable…

> What is said results from fleshing out the meaning of the sentence (which is like a semantic 'skeleton') so as to make it propositional." (Recanati, 2001: 76)

From the inability to identify which proposition is expressed in an utterance, when taking into account only the meaning of the sentence uttered and *some* contextual parameters, it does not follow that no proposition or truth-conditional content is ever expressed. But to defend this, the point against shadows must be disarmed.

Conceding contextualism can also accommodate the last difficulty Travis identifies; it can be accommodated by recognizing that the context in which a sentence is uttered partly contributes to determining what is said in that context. The concession of context-dependence does not imply that, because of it, nothing determinate is ever said, but rather that we must take further contextual and pragmatic considerations into account for identifying what is said. What is said, if anything, may depend on the context or occasion in which given words are uttered. Thus, how an utterance is evaluated depends in this way on the context of utterance. This does not mean that *if* something is said, it still does not have determinate truth- and falsity-conditions, nor that what truth-value an utterance has, saying what it does, is an occasion-sensitive matter. Nonetheless, once again, accommodating this objection requires disarming the Wittgensteinian argument against shadows. Thus, the only objection Travis raises against (E) that can be raised, if at all, against (T) is the Wittgensteinian point against shadow-propositions.

5.4.3 Thoughts and facts versus statements

It is clear that we can say what is true or false, but also that we can *think* what is true or false. Travis, however, introduces a distinction between statements (Fregean *Aussage*) and

thoughts (*Gedanke*). I will not draw out here all the implications Travis sees in the distinction. Travis (2000) says:

> "I have insisted that a fact is not tied to some particular statement of it, as if the structure of that statement (Fregean *Aussage*) were uniquely the way that fact is structured. Rather, the same fact might be stated in any of many ways, in statements with radically diverse syntactic and semantic structures… McDowell speaks disapprovingly of separating the notion of a fact from that of 'the content of a thought or assertion that would express it'. There is an important distinction here. On the present account, there is an intimate relation between the notion of a fact and that of a thought. Two expressions of a thought may be expressions of the same thought just in that each states the same fact. Thoughts, of course, like facts, on the present account lack any one essential structure. An assertion, on the other hand – a specific act performed by producing words with a given structure – does have an intrinsic structure. It is a Fregean *Aussage*, not a Fregean *Urtheil* or *Gedanke*." (Travis, 2000: 238)

For Travis, there is an "intimate relation" between facts and thoughts, but not between statements and facts. Thoughts (beliefs, etc.) are identified by what is thought (believed, etc.). What is thought is what may be the case – how things are, and not a representation of how things are. It follows, as Travis sees it, that neither facts nor thoughts are structured like any statement. Thus, they are not tied to any particular that-clause. Statements or assertions, on the other hand, have an "intrinsic structure", supposedly, the structure of the uttered sentence. Statements and assertions are tied to particular that-clauses.

Thoughts are also true or false, though. But the premiss of the Wittgensteinian argument against shadows is that *everything* that is truth-valued is an interpretable representation. So either Travis is mistaken in claiming that thoughts are not structured representations, or the premiss that everything that is truth-valued is an interpretable representation is wrong. Let us grant the claim that thoughts are uninterpretable. If this is granted, it cannot be accepted that *everything* that is truth-valued is an interpretable representation. (Hence, there is a conception of something that can be true or false and is uninterpretable). Travis must then give distinct

explanations for what is required for the truth of statements and what is required for the truth of thoughts:

> "Thoughts are identified by what is so according to them. Identify a thought in that way, and in one stroke you identify what would make it true: that thought's being so. A thought is designed so that that is all that its truth requires". (Travis, 2000: 228).

Schemas (T) and (F) require that the same idea be applied to utterances: if we identify what was said in an utterance we simultaneously identify the utterance's truth-condition, what would make the utterance true. If we insist in identifying statements as specific *acts* of uttering given words, the same point applies: to identify what is stated in a statement is to thereby identify what is required for that statement's truth. But Travis rejects this explanation. It is unsatisfactory, on his view, because it is allegedly committed to shadows and ignores occasion-sensitivity.

Travis's distinction between thoughts and statements is reflected in the phenomenon of natural isostheneia: although some*thing* is said when, in the imagined situation, we utter 'Jones is at home', no thought is expressed:

> "How could we say what it is that is so according to a truth-valueless thought to the effect that Jones is at home, made neither true nor false by Jones dead in his chair? The direct way would be 'what is so on that thought is that ____'. The natural way to fill the blank would be: 'What is so on that thought is that Jones is at home.' But what condition of things does this specify?… What we cannot do is to use them [those words] so as to have the content they would have in expressing the supposed truth-valueless thoughts. We cannot use them with the content they might have had, spoken in a position of ignorance. For words with that content would not speak of anything which, from the position we enjoy, might be called, or might count as, Jones' being at home... the price for that is admitting that, until all the relevant facts are in, nothing merely about the way words were to be understood by itself decides whether they expressed a thought or not." (Travis, 1994: 181-4)

When a statement is neither true nor false, no thought is expressed. Thoughts are identified by *what* is thought. When 'Jones is at home' is uttered in the imagined situation, it does not identify any conditions *of* things of which to speak. Equally, on Travis's view, had

'Jones is not at home' been uttered in that situation, it would also not identify any condition of things of which to speak (this is part of the reason why 'Jones is at home' would also not have been false. Cf. §5.3.1). Whatever counts as the something that is said, it fails to identify a thought. Hence, Travis's account of natural isostheneia does not imply that there are truth-valueless thoughts. On the contrary, Travis seems to be committed to the idea that thoughts are bivalent.

If words are only contingently truth-valued, as Travis claims, then words only contingently express thoughts. Thus, the claim that "we can say what is neither true nor false, but might have been, had the world spoken of been suitably different" amounts to this: we can utter sentences that could have expressed a thought, had the world been suitably different, but which, in fact express no thought. 'Jones is at home', as uttered then, "fails to identify any definite condition on which its truth might turn; it fails to distinguish *one* condition of things, from among a variety of possibilities, as the condition it speaks of." (Travis, 1994: 183)

5.4.4 Entailment and inferential relations

Travis claims that statements *per se* do not enter in entailment relations. Statements *per se* can be interpreted in different ways, bearing distinct understandings. Different understandings affect truth-evaluation, therefore they equally affect the validity of inferences. What follows from a statement depends on how it is understood. Entailment holds between conditions *of* the world:

> "We infer one thing from another. If we infer B from A, our hope is that A entails (or implies) B. But what entail and are entailed are facts…What we think (or realize, or imagine, and so

> on) is that such-and-such is so. That such-and-such is so may well entail things. But it does not represent anything as so."(Travis, 2000: 74-5)

But particular *schemas* can only be instantiated with statements. This follows from the distinction Travis sees between statements and thoughts. The instantiation of schematic inferences requires that the items that can instantiate such schemas be structured. Statements (and sentences) are structured, but thoughts and facts "lack any one essential structure".

This is arguably a problematic view to hold, since it is difficult to conceive how something can entail something else when the items standing in such a relation lack any structure.[99] Moreover, Travis's claim that what "entail and are entailed" are facts is implausible. Entailment and inference require that what entails and is entailed may be *false*. It is more plausible to claim that entailment holds between thoughts, since it is admitted that thoughts may be true or false.

Travis (1994) considers an argument similar to Williamson's, taking *thoughts* as truth-bearers. This is what Travis then claimed: "But valid patterns of inference represent entailment relations, and we may plausibly hold, with Frege, that such relations hold between thoughts. If there are no thoughts without truth-value, then the 'instances' of the pattern which might generate contradiction are no genuine instances at all." (Travis, 1994: 182).

Whatever difficulties Travis's position on entailment and inference may face, we may suppose that on his view we can only consider entailment relations between statements insofar as statements state facts, or express thoughts. According to Travis, no fact is stated and no thought is expressed when a statement is affected by isostheneia. Thus such a

[99] For discussion, see for example Sullivan (2003).

statement, for instance 'Jones is at home' cannot instantiate any schematic argument, including Williamson's.

As mentioned in §5.3.2, Travis recognizes that we expect truth and falsehood to be transparent. But, as Travis sees it, when isostheneia occurs, transparency is lost:

> "If *isostheneia* reigns for a given statement, it will reign for what I say if I say so too. If I say things to be just the way that statement did, it will not be a fact that things are as I just said; nor a fact that they are not. So such a statement does not satisfy the condition transparency imposes. On this understanding of truth and falsity, a statement for which *isostheneia* holds is not true, and not false. *Isostheneia* is thus a determinate *tertium* alongside those conditions… This understanding of truth and falsity does lose something. If we are told that it is not true that thus and so, or that someone said that thus and so, but that is not true, we often expect to be able to infer what we could express in denying precisely that things were *that* way. With *isostheneia*, and this understanding of truth, that inference does not always hold. In particular circumstances we may be able to see that *isostheneia* is outwith the range of what is countenanced by a given denial of truth. We may then be right to draw the inference. But there is, as it were, a cagier sort of denial, and a more subtle way for it to be correct. It might be true to deny the truth of something because for it *isostheneia* holds. Unsurprisingly, *isostheneia* means, where it arises, that we cannot carry on our ordinary mode of object-language talk, from our usual perspective, with complete nonchalance." (Travis, 1998: 183)

So, when we deny that an utterance affected by isostheneia is either true or false, we cannot infer a corresponding object-level negation. So, the negation is merely metalinguistic.

As I have mentioned earlier (for instance, Chapter 2), one of the strategies to disarm Williamson's argument is precisely to block disquotation, maintaining that the negation that some utterance is true or false is merely metalinguistic. The main difficulty with this strategy is to deal with the *antecedent* of (PB), (T) and (F): *u* says that *P*. If we cannot disquote to state truth- and falsity-conditions, we also cannot disquote to put forward what an utterance says. This was illustrated in Chapter 3 with reference failure.

Now, Travis claims that when isostheneia occurs, we cannot carry on with "our ordinary mode of object-language talk". It seems that an utterance that is neither true nor false qualifies precisely as not saying something to be the case. Not only does it not have truth-

and falsity-conditions, it also fails to express any thought. Equally, it does not entail anything and nothing is entailed by it. It seems to follow that Williamson's position is confirmed: the price to pay for supposing utterances to be neither true nor false is to treat them as though they said nothing.

Nonetheless, there are problems with this: Travis has dismissed the idea that stating that an utterance says that thus-and-so is sufficient to settle *any* truth- or falsity-conditions. If he is right, we should not be surprised that it may happen that often there are no actual conditions of which given words are true or false. Furthermore, the main reason why isostheneia seems not to confirm Williamson's position is that, according to Travis, a statement afflicted by it could have been truth-valued, in some possible circumstance that statement would have been true, or in some possible circumstance that statement would have been false, and we can identify those circumstances.

Travis could disarm Williamson's argument against genuine truth-value gaps only if the conditional requirement for an utterance to be evaluable as true or as false (that it says something to be the case) and schemas (T) and (F) are vulnerable to the point against shadows. Travis could hold that isostheneia, as he describes it, is a real possibility only if an utterance affected by isostheneia does not say how things are or how things are not, if it does not express any thought, nor instantiates any schematic argument, and it could have been truth-valued.

I think Travis is wrong; if there are utterances affected by isostheneia, such utterances *could not* have been truth-valued. I will argue why I think so in the next section.

5.5. How to survive Travis's attack

5.5.1 Are schemas (T) and (F) vulnerable to the argument against shadows?

Travis is suspicious of the correctness of the conditional requirement, and of schemas (T) and (F). As argued in §5.4.2, the only point that could be used against the conditional requirement and schemas (T) and (F) is the Wittgensteinian argument against shadows. The schemas are vulnerable to this argument only if i) what is said is what is expressed by an utterance of a sentence, but is distinct from the utterance itself; ii) what is said by an utterance of a sentence must have determinate truth-conditions; but it is distinct from the conditions in which the utterance would be true; iii) what is said by an utterance of a sentence on an occasion must be a representation of reality (and distinct from it), so that its truth consists in some relation of correspondence to reality. With exception of the first condition, none of the others are necessary for (T) and (F) to be correct. This means that the schemas, and the conditional requirement, are immune to the Wittgensteinian argument against them.

What is said or expressed is different from the utterance itself (both from the sentence type uttered and from the act of uttering that sentence in that context). The first condition above is correct. The second condition does not hold: whatever an utterance says to be the case – *P* – is identical to the condition in which the utterance is true – *P*. We must *use* the same sentence to identify both what is said in an utterance and to identify the conditions in which the utterance would be true. Both occurrences of '*P*' must be understood in the same way. But it follows that what is said in an utterance is *not different* from the objective conditions in which the utterance is true, it is *identical*.

Why is this important? Travis argued against the conditional requirement by accusing it of being committed to shadows, where a shadow is "a way for words, or other things, to represent, which determines all that is determined as to when what so represented would be true (or false)." (Travis, 1998: 192). Travis also rejected disquotational schemas for truth, and equivalence schemas such as Horwich's schema (E), by maintaining that the meaning of the words uttered allow for variations in truth- and falsity-conditions. Travis's objections to schemas for truth and falsehood can be summarized thus: what occurs on the left hand side of such schemas is a representation, and as such it can be differently interpreted. So, the context of mention of a sentence on the left hand side and the context of use of a sentence on the right hand side of such schemas may result in different truth-values. Hence, such schemas may have false instances. However, this objection cannot be raised against schema (T)

(T) if *u* says that *P*, then *u* is true iff *P*,

because '*P*' is used both in the antecedent and consequent of the schema. If '*P*' can be legitimately *used* to state what *u* says, then the biconditional in the consequent cannot have different truth-values in the right and left hand sides.

Concerning iii): the supposition that what is said or expressed must be a representation, because only what represents can be truth-valued, is unjustified. In the first place, for Travis to hold that thoughts are unshadowed, although truth-valued, Travis must reject that thoughts are interpretable representations. Therefore, not *everything* that is truth-valued is interpretable. In the second place, nothing in the formulation of schemas (T) and (F) suggests that what is said must be a representation. What is said by an utterance is identical to the condition in which the utterance, as uttered in a context, is true. The condition in which an

utterance is true is not an interpretable representation, since if the condition obtains, it is how things are, and not how we represent them as being.

Certainly, we have to *use* a sentence to express what is said and to state truth-conditions. Travis argues that the meaning of a sentence does not determine the conditions *of* the world upon which an utterance of that sentence is true. For instance, if we *use* 'the ball is round', we make a statement in which we describe the ball as being round. But Travis claims that our use of the sentence to describe the ball is susceptible of being interpreted in different ways. Even if we said:

> if an utterance (in some context) of "the ball is round" says that the ball is round, then that utterance of "the ball is round" is true if and only if the ball is round

the sentence as used (and not only as mentioned) could be understood in different ways. But when we *use* a sentence we are not talking about *it*, any more than when we use a name we talk about a name. To claim that *what is said* is interpretable rests in confusion between use and mention. Williamson (1998) suggests this:

> "Charles Travis's… account of what underdetermines what is said seems to conflate use and mention. He assumes that someone who says 'that is round' of a ball, using the words with their usual meaning, describes the ball as round, and argues that, given the way the ball is, whether it is true to describe it as round depends on the context of utterance. This commits Travis to rejecting the plausible principle that it is true to describe the ball as round if and only if it is round. But once we accept that 'round' is context-dependent, we should reject Travis's assumption, just as we should reject the assumption that if you say 'that is mine' of something, you describe it as mine. Quotation marks are needed." (Williamson, 1998: 10, n. 12)

The argument here is this: Travis claims that 'round' is context-dependent. But Travis assumes that if someone utters 'that ball is round' of a given ball on any given occasion, then that person describes the ball as being round. The truth of that description now depends upon the occasion on which the utterance is made. 'Mine' is also a context-dependent expression.

Therefore, by analogy, someone who says 'that is mine' of a given object describes it as being mine. The truth of the description of the object as mine would now depend on the context in which the utterance is made. But the conclusion is false. Independently of any context, 'mine' is undetermined. What it means is not that whoever uses it describes something as being mine. What depends on the context is what *relation* holds between *whom* and *which* object. It is senseless to even consider any truth-evaluation before context has contributed in all relevant ways to determine what is said.

We have to deny what Travis assumes. Either whoever utters 'the ball is round' to talk about a particular ball does not describe the ball as round, or 'round' is not context-dependent. If we concede contextualism, we must deny that anyone who utters 'the ball is round' to talk of a given ball describes the ball as round. Rather, *given* contextualism, the meaning of the sentence 'the ball is round', and the particular ball referred to, underdetermine what may be said in an utterance of the sentence, because 'round' is underdetermined independently of particular contexts of utterance. The context in which a sentence is uttered must contribute to determining what is said when the sentence is used. It follows, naturally, that the truth-value of the utterance depends on what is said in context, and thus the truth-value of the utterance depends on context, but not in the way Travis assumes.

We can defend schemas (T) and (F) from the threat of occasion-sensitivity, because what is said by an utterance is not interpretable (unlike the sentence itself). With the exception of the first condition, none of the others is met by (T) and (F). Hence, the schemas are immune to the Wittgensteinian argument against shadows. [100]

[100] It may be recalled that Travis uses an instance of schema (F) to justify the intuition that "Jones is at home" and "Jones is not at home" are not false: "For if 'He is' would have stated falsehood, 'It's false that he is' should

So far, I have argued that schemas (T) and (F) do not succumb to Travis's objections. It is worth stressing this point, since dismissing the schemas as correct was the second strategy for blocking Williamson's argument identified in Chapter 2. Travis cannot disarm the argument since to reject schemas (T) and (F), he conflates use and mention. Moreover, as argued in §5.4.3, Travis must abandon one of the following claims, in order to preserve thoughts as truth-evaluable items: i) that we have no conception of an uninterpretable truth-bearer, or ii) that thoughts are not structured representational items. It is, however, worthwhile noting a further tension in Travis's claims concerning thoughts and statements, and drawing attention to an account of truth and truth-conditional content that is naturally immune to the Wittgensteinian arguments against shadows.

In §5.4.3, I commented that Travis agrees with McDowell about what he calls the 'intimate relation' between the notions of a fact and that of a *thought*. The intimate relation amounts to this: if a thought is true, then what is though is a fact. Travis disagrees, however, that *statements* bear such an intimate relation with facts. McDowell's claim is broader: it is the notion of the content of statements, assertions, thoughts and beliefs that stands in a close relationship to that of facts. Travis disagrees with this, because he thinks that a statement or assertion is "a specific act performed by producing words with a given structure".

Let us now imagine someone who argues against Travis's claim that a true thought is the same as a fact, because a thought is a psychological event. Travis would reply, like McDowell, that such a person would be confusing the psychological event of thinking something, with *what* is thought. Now, the same answer can be given to Travis's claim that a

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have stated truth. But if it is false that Jones is at home, then he is *not* at home, and it should have been true to say so, contrary to the third point. Similarly for 'He isn't'" (Travis, 1994: 169).

statement or assertion is an act performed by producing words with a given structure. Travis is confusing the act of uttering given words with what is said.

We have to admit that two individuals can say the same in performing different acts of uttering given words (even in uttering different sentences). We also have to admit that a person can believe what another person said; and that sometimes we even state the facts. The notion of a proposition (or of truth-conditional content) derives part of its purpose from the need to identify a common object for beliefs, thoughts, statements, assertions, etc.[101]

If one conceives of true propositions as indistinct from reality, then propositions are not shadows. In other words, propositions are not shadows if there is no gap between what is said, thought, etc., and what may be the case or not the case.[102] Propositions do not need to be conceived of as *images* of facts. McDowell, for instance, tells us that:

> "[T]here is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case. When one thinks truly, what one thinks *is* what is the case… But to say that there is no gap between the thought, as such, and the world is just to dress up a truism in high-flown language. All the point comes to is that one can think, for instance, *that spring has begun*, and that very same thing, *that spring has begun*, can be the case." (McDowell, 1994: 27).

This, and other various statements of the identity theory of truth, purport to capture the same the same truism that schemas (T) and (F) aim at capturing. It provides us with a

[101] My choice of truth-bearer has been utterances, but utterances that say something to be the case. Utterances that say nothing are not truth-bearers, because they do not express thoughts or beliefs, they are not evaluable (because they do not have truth- or falsity-conditions), and they fail to enter in inferential relations. Nonetheless, the notion of a proposition is meant to fulfil the same role as the notion of what is said in an utterance.

[102] This has been held by Russell – "a fact appears to be merely a true proposition" (Russell, 1904: 75); Strawson – "there is no nuance, except of style, between 'That's true' and 'That's a fact', nor between 'Is it true that…?' and 'Is it a fact that…?" (Strawson, 1950b: 167); Frege—"For what I have called a thought stands in the closest relation to truth… What is a fact? A fact is a thought that is true." (Frege, 1918: 101) More recently, McDowell (1987, 1994), Hornsby (1996), Williamson (1999, 2000), for instance, have held the identity thesis, in spite of some variation in terminology: facts are the same as true propositions, the content of true thoughts, beliefs, and assertions, or true thinkables. The designation "identity thesis" is borrowed from Hornsby (1996).

conception of content that is immune to the Wittgensteinian argument against shadow-propositions.

Let us just recall the beginning of the first paragraph of Travis's book, *Unshadowed Thought*:

> "G. E. Moore, reporting on Wittgenstein's lectures in Cambridge in 1930-1933, tells us: 'One chief view about propositions to which he was opposed was… that a proposition is a sort of "shadow" intermediate between the expressions which we use in order to assert it and the fact (if any) which "verifies it"…" (Travis, 2000: 1)

Unlike Travis, I am no expert on Wittgenstein. However, what Moore says is that Wittgenstein opposed *a* view about propositions, not that he opposed *any* view about propositions. McDowell's denial of a gap between what is said and what may be the case is meant to reformulate another of Wittgenstein's remarks:

> "When we say, and *mean*, that such-and-such is the case, we—and our meaning—do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: *this—is—so*. But this paradox (which has the form of a truism) can also be expressed in this way: *Thought* can be of what is *not* the case." (Wittgenstein, 1958, §94)

Arguably, a further purpose of the notion of proposition is to accommodate thought of "what is not the case", or thought of what is not the case but might have been. The Wittgensteinian argument against shadow-propositions seems to be an argument against *one* conception of propositions, it does not seem to be an argument against *any* notion of a proposition. It cannot be an argument against every understanding of propositions, namely one where true propositions are what is the case.[103]

[103] The identity theory of truth faces some problems, nonetheless. If one follows McDowell, one has the problem of explaining how a true thought is identical to a (worldly) fact, because a thought, for McDowell, is composed only of senses, i.e., modes of presentations. One may choose to follow the early Moorean and Russellian view, on which true propositions are identical with facts, in the sense that they are chunks of reality. A common charge to this view is that it is does not account adequately for falsehood. I am not certain that this is

Travis reads the Wittgensteinian argument in such a way as to motivate the rejection of *any* conception of truth-conditional content. So, Travis holds that a thought or a fact is not tied to any particular that-clause, for instance, *that spring has begun*, as if the syntactic and semantic structure of the sentence embedded in the that-clause were the only way the thought is structured. This follows, allegedly, from the recognition that another that-clause (i.e., an utterance of a different sentence type) could have expressed the same thought, and from the recognition that a that-clause with the same syntactic and semantic structure (i.e., another utterance of the same sentence-type) could have expressed different thoughts. But this is irrelevant. It is not claimed that a that-clause of that type could not have expressed different thoughts, or that different that-clauses could not have expressed the same thought. All that needs to be admitted is that if we get as far as saying *that* (or expressing *that* thought), there is no distance between what we say and what could be the case or not the case.

Even without identity theories, Travis's position already faces sufficient obstacles, not the least that it conflates use and mention, and conflates a speech-act with *what is said* in making an utterance.

5.5.3 Unspecified correspondence?

I argued in the previous section that the conditional requirement, and schemas (T) and (F), are not vulnerable to the Wittgensteinian point against shadows. The schemas, moreover,

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a shortcoming only of the identity theory of truth (for more discussion, cf. Cartwright (1987)). Arguably, accounting for falsehood is just as large a problem for correspondence theories of truth, not the least truthmaker theories. (cf. Chapter 1, §1.3). Since deflationism is also accused of being an unstable position, I think the identity theory of truth is not in a worse position than other theories. Moreover, I think it can be viewed as a variety of minimalism about truth, supported by logical and linguistic analysis of platitudes about truth, namely the transparency platitude.

are consistent with further platitudes associated with truth and falsehood.[104] For instance, that truth and falsehood are transparent (this is arguably the platitude captured in the schemas), that truth and falsehood are absolute, and even with the correspondence intuition (a true utterance 'tells it like it is'). The schemas are equally consistent with a less radical version of contextualism than Travis's.

Is it possible to explain the truth of statements without the conditional requirement and, in so doing, to keep a place for occasion-sensitivity in the account? Let us suppose that statements are not to be identified by what is stated, but just by specific acts of uttering given sentences on occasion.

Like Austin, Travis thinks that the truth of statements consists in a certain kind of correspondence between a statement (a representation of how things are) and the facts (how things are), but not *the* fact that thus-and-so. A statement is understood as an act of uttering given words, as an historic event, made with reference to some other historic situation. The sentence uttered in making a statement describes a certain type of situation. In making a statement, one says that a certain historic situation is of a certain type. The statement is true if the situation described is "sufficiently like standard exemplars of that type those English words describe" (Travis, 2000: 235). Perhaps this explanation could be given for falsehood: a statement is false if the situation described is sufficiently not like the standard exemplars of the type those English words describe. 'Sufficiently like' because one same statement, describing a situation as being of a certain type, may be understood in different ways. Depending on how the statement is understood, the historic situation it aims at describing

[104] Cf. Chapter 1, §1.3.2.

may be seen as being of the type the statement describes or not. This means that statements do not fit the facts perfectly. Travis follows Austin again:

> "There are various *degrees and dimensions* of success in making statements: the statements fit the facts always more or less loosely, in different ways on different occasions for different intents and purposes." (Austin, 1950: 159)

Note that there is some tension between the identification of a statement as an historic event, as an act performed on a given occasion, and the claim that statements fit the facts in different ways on different occasions for different intents and purposes. If a statement is identified as an act performed on *one* given occasion, then on different occasions different statements are made. What is used on different occasions are *sentences*. One and same sentence type can be used on different occasions to say different things. If intents and purposes are relevant on occasions, then variation in intents and purposes entail, again, different occasions, and thereby, different statements.

Travis argues that *sentences* are not truth-bearers, because there is not such thing as what a *sentence* "says to be so" (Travis, 1994: 176). Recall that contextualism claims that the meaning of a sentence *S* is insufficient to determine what an utterance of *S* says and its truth-conditions. But occasion-sensitivity is more radical than this: one and the same *statement* about the same items in the same situation may be true or false, depending on the intents and purposes of the interlocutors in the situation the statement is made. There is no such thing as *the* conditions of which a statement is true or false, no *one* thing a statement says to be so. If statements fit the facts always more or less loosely, they never fit the facts perfectly, i.e., statements are never completely true.

In arguing against attempts to define truth as the correspondence between a representation and reality, Frege said:[105]

> "It might be supposed from this that truth consists in the correspondence of a picture with what it depicts. Correspondence is a relation… A correspondence, moreover, can only be perfect if the corresponding things are not distinct at all… It would only be possible to compare an idea to a thing if the thing were an idea too. And then, if the first did correspond perfectly with the second, they would coincide. But this is not at all what is wanted when truth is defined as the correspondence of an idea with something real. For it is absolutely essential that the reality be distinct from the idea. But then there can be no complete correspondence, no complete truth. So nothing at all would be true; for what is only half true is untrue. Truth cannot tolerate a more or less." (Frege, 1918: 86)

For Travis, statements are representations, they describe ways things may be – describe types of situations. A statement is true if the way it represents (describes) things corresponds to the way things are. The way things are is not a representation. Frege's argument is that if the terms of the relation are of different kinds (representations on the one side, facts on the other) then the correspondence can never be perfect or complete. Travis agrees; statements never fit the facts perfectly. There can be correspondence in some respect but not in others. If we always conceive the understanding a statement bears on occasion as *one more* representation, then the process can be iterated indefinitely. But, continues the Fregean argument, truth does not tolerate a more or less, "what is only half true is untrue". Thus, if

[105] Arguably, Travis is not proposing to *define* truth. Nonetheless, Frege's argument has been criticized in several ways. Frege suggested that the attempt to define truth as correspondence requires one to lay down in which way correspondence obtains. But then one would have to ask whether it is true that the correspondence obtained in the laid down respect, and this process could be iterated indefinitely, so that the attempt to define truth as correspondence collapses. This, Frege thought, leads to a vicious circle; so, he claimed, it is probable that the notion of truth is indefinable, because the notion is so primitive that any attempt at a definition will somehow presuppose it. One criticism of Frege's argument is that there is nothing circular about the regress. There is nothing circular about the regress, just as there is nothing circular about the claim that if it is true that *P*, then it is true that it is true that *P*, and so on (see for instance Walker (1997)). I have some doubts about this objection. The point of saying that truth consists in the correspondence of a representation with something else is, in Wittgensteinian terminology, to be taken nearer to the facts. Stretching the metaphor: if a regress takes us anywhere, it is in the opposite direction we intended to go. A better objection to Frege's argument would be to defend the idea that there is *no* regress whatsoever. For present purposes, however, it is sufficient that the first part of Frege's argument is accepted: that truth does not admit of degrees.

statements never fit the facts perfectly, statements are never completely true. If Frege is right, they are not true at all.[106] This, however, conflicts with the fact that we do state truths. Since it is undeniable that we do make true (and false) statements, the type of correspondence Travis claims to hold between statements and the facts is implausible.

Now, an Austinian could reply that there are many predicates that do admit of degrees. For example, 'dark' or 'light' admit of degrees, and we do say 'darker than'/ 'lighter than'. The same could be said of 'true' and 'false'. Why should the absoluteness of truth be a platitude if truth admitted of degrees? Platitudes are not the sort of thing one can easily argue for. Nonetheless, if it were true (or even, reasonable) that truth and falsehood admit of degrees, then it would be reasonable to expect the comparative forms 'truer than'/ 'falser than' to be as common as 'darker than'/ 'lighter than'. For instance, it should be as common to say that 'the ink writes blue' is truer than 'the ink is blue', as it is common to say that this shade of blue is darker than that shade of blue. To the best of my knowledge, it is not.[107]

The problem with Travis's account of the truth of statements is that, having rejected propositions and the conditional requirement (believing that this immediately makes one vulnerable to the argument against shadows), he is led to see statements *just* as representations distinct and distant from reality, and no more than that. If we only have at our

[106] The same point is made by Hornsby: "The problem with taking truth to be unspecified correspondence is that there can be correspondence in this respect, or that respect, or that other respect, so that there can be less or more correspondence according as there is correspondence in fewer or more respects; but there can't *in any analogous way* be more or less truth." (Hornsby, 1996: 5)

[107] Perhaps something like "He spoke truer than he had ever done in his entire career" could be a comment on a politician's statement, but this would be a comment on how honest, or revealing, the politician was in comparison to his attitudes in the past.

disposal representations interpretable in indefinitely many ways, *nothing* takes us nearer to the facts.

5.5.4 Can we really say what is neither true nor false but might have been?

No, we cannot. Either what is said could be true in statable conditions, and something truth-valued is said, or isostheneia means that what is neither true nor false could not have been truth-valued.

Let us review Travis's intuitions in relation to Jones's case. First, if we were asked at the door whether Jones is at home, we would not answer correctly by saying 'yes, Jones is at home' nor by saying 'no, Jones is not at home'. The second intuition is that either answer would misinform. I think both these intuitions are correct. The third and fourth intuitions Travis puts forward are that either 'Jones is at home' or 'Jones is not at home' would misinform *because* neither would have stated truth, and neither would have stated falsehood.

Travis holds that, in the first place, what characterizes this case as affected by isostheneia is that the reason why neither answer would have stated truth or falsehood is that in the situation imagined we *cannot* choose one among different possible understandings on which the answer given to the visitors would have been true or false. The answer could not be simultaneously true and false, on pain of contradiction. In the absence of reasons to choose *one* way to understand the utterance of 'Jones is at home', the utterance is neither true nor false.

Travis holds, in the second place, that the answer given in that situation *could* have been true or false, and we can say in which conditions or circumstances it would have been so: had Jones lived. This seems to be a problem for bivalence. Travis seems to have identified

something that is (possibly) evaluable, but which (actually) has no truth-value. But these two claims are incompatible, and only one can be correct:

1) We can specify the conditions that would have to obtain for 'Jones is at home', as uttered then, to be true (or false). Had Jones lived, then it would have been true that Jones was at home, or it would have been true that Jones was not at home. Therefore, it might have been the case that Jones was at home (had he lived).

Thoughts are identified by what is thought. But what is thought cannot simply be what actually is the case, because thoughts may be false. What is thought must also be (at least) what is not the case but might have been. If so, someone can think that Jones is alive at home, because that could have been the case. Arguably, the visitors at the door assume that Jones is alive, and expect to find him at home. If we answer 'Jones is at home' we confirm their assumption that Jones is alive and their expectation to find him at home. If someone can think that Jones is alive at home, and Jones is dead (at home) then that thought is false.

We think that neither 'Jones is at home' nor 'Jones is not at home' would have been *informative* or *correct* because, when we understand the situation described, we suppose that the visitors think that Jones is alive. If we are reasonable, we understand that either answer 'Jones is at home' or 'Jones is not at home' would misinform the visitors, because what they assume is false. If we are reasonable, we see that the correct answer in that situation is 'I am sorry, Jones has just died'.

In §5.2.1, I mentioned that contextualism, or truth-conditional pragmatics, questions the semantics/pragmatics division in relation to the determination of the truth-conditional content of utterances; thus, contextualism questions the Gricean explanation of the semantics/pragmatics distinction. The Gricean explanation makes meaning and reference

determine truth-conditional content, what is literally said. On the Gricean explanation, pragmatic considerations concern assumptions, conventional and conversational implicatures, etc., but are not a part, or a determinant, of what is literally said. The contextualist explanation, however, makes the pragmatic considerations related to the context of utterance, the purposes and intentions of speakers in making an utterance, and further background assumptions, crucial for what is said and truth-conditions. Thus, whether Jones is alive *is* relevant in that context.

As we admit that it is possibly true that Jones is at home, and that this means (by Travis's own criterion for the identification of thoughts) that a thought is expressed, we cannot deny that that thought is either true or false. Why not? As Travis admits, a thought is true just in case what is thought is the case, and false just in case what is thought is not the case. Moreover, entailment relations hold for thoughts. Therefore, a thought cannot be neither true nor false, on pain of contradiction. Better false than absurd. If someone can think that Jones is alive at home, and Jones is dead, that thought is false.

2) No, the alternative in 1) is not what Travis understands by isostheneia. Isostheneia does not mean that there is *one* correct understanding for that utterance in that situation, it means that it is *impossible* to choose between different possible understandings. Arguably, it is true that there are different possible ways to understand 'Jones is at home', in talking about Jones dead at home. Jones's corpse is at home, in this sense Jones is at home. But Jones is dead, and the dead are not anywhere, therefore he is not at home. In this sense, Jones is not at home. Part of Travis's argument is that the understandings cancel each other out. The statement is true on one understanding, false on another. It cannot be both true and false on pain of contradiction, therefore it is neither. This may be what Travis is aiming at. But if it is,

then *that* utterance (when nothing in the situation, in the meaning of the uttered words and what is referred to settles an understanding) *could not* have been true or false.

It is false that there is any contradiction between different understandings. If the utterance of the stationer 'the ink is blue' is understood as saying that the ink looks blue in the bottle, then the utterance is true. If it is understood as saying that the ink writes blue, then the utterance is false. There is no contradiction in saying that the ink looks blue in the bottle but writes black. Equally, it is true that there are different ways to understand 'Jones is at home'. But it is wrong that the different ways to understand the utterance of this sentence are incompatible, because *different* understandings have different truth-values, without contradiction. There is no contradiction in saying that Jones's corpse is at home, but since the dead are not anywhere, Jones is nowhere, therefore not at home. For there to be any contradiction, it is necessary that what figures on both sides of an instance of the schema 'A and not A' be the same, or understood in the same way. Different understandings are not, obviously, the same. If so, it is not for a balance between incompatible reasons that it is incorrect to answer 'Jones is at home'/ 'Jones is not at home', but because of an absence of reasons (unless we are perverse) to give a misleading answer.

Travis could still argue that even if it is granted that there is no inconsistency between different understandings of 'Jones is at home', still nothing decides which is the correct way to understand the utterance in that situation. Travis could say, for instance, that none of these understandings would have been adequate in that situation given the reasonable expectations of the interlocutors at the moment. Suppose, then, as Travis holds, that it is *impossible*, to choose between different possible understandings, or things to say, in that situation. If it is impossible to choose between different possible understandings, then the utterance bears

none of such different possible understandings. If it is impossible to choose between different things to say, then nothing is in fact said in that situation; and if nothing is said in that situation, then there are no circumstances in which *that* utterance could have been true or false. *That* utterance (for which nothing settles what is said) could not have been true or false, because it says nothing.

Either we can identify what would have to be the case for an utterance to be true (or false), in which case something truth-valued is said, or isostheneia means that some utterances say nothing, in which case we cannot specify the conditions in which such utterances would have been true or false. The second alternative is probably closer to what Travis intends. However, from the sort of examples Travis gives to illustrate isostheneia, I am inclined to say that what seems to persuade us that the cases are unevaluable is insufficient attention to the reasonable expectations and assumptions of the interlocutors in the situations described, and that if these are taken into consideration, we can see that the cases are after all, evaluable. In either case, we cannot say what is neither true nor false, but might have been. Natural isostheneia cannot provide any counterexamples to bivalence.

5.6 Conclusion

Travis claims that statements are only contingently truth-valued; if he were right, statements could be true, false or neither. When they are neither true nor false, isostheneia reigns. Isostheneia, taken as Travis intends it to be understood, requires occasion-sensitivity to be correct. For occasion-sensitivity to be correct, some principles and platitudes about truth and falsehood should be abandoned, for instance schemas (T) and (F), which purport to formalize the transparency platitude. Equally, for isostheneia, as Travis describes it, to be

coherent, schemas (T) and (F) *must* be wrong, so that Williamson's argument can be disarmed. If they are not wrong, then we cannot say what is neither true nor false but might have been. The fundamental point that supports occasion-sensitivity and isostheneia is the Wittgensteinian argument against shadows. Contextualism, understood only as the claim that meaning underdetermines what is said and truth-conditions, is insufficient to reject schemas (T) and (F).

But Travis cannot disarm Williamson's argument. The condition that utterances are truth-bearers if they say something to be the case, as well as schemas (T) and (F), are immune to the Wittgensteinian argument against shadows. It is evident that we have to *use* sentences to instantiate the schemas. But the concession of contextualism does not entail that sentences, when used to say that something is the case, are occasion-sensitive, since that would mean that what may be the case is interpretable in different ways, and this does not make sense. To insist otherwise is to conflate use and mention.

If some phenomenon like natural isostheneia occurs, it must be understood rather as the possibility that, in a particular situation, the context of utterance fails to determine how an utterance is to be understood; i.e., we can regard isostheneia as the possibility that in certain contexts nothing is said to be the case in an utterance. But such an utterance *could not* have been true or false, because it says nothing. Thus, no counterexample to bivalence can result from isostheneia. We cannot say what is neither true nor false but might have been.

C O N C L U S I O N

This thesis was concerned with the challenge truth-value gaps pose to the principle of bivalence. The main question addressed was: are truth-value gaps counterexamples to bivalence and is the supposition of counterexamples coherent? An affirmative answer to the first part of the question would require an affirmative answer to the second part. Williamson's argument, to the effect that the supposition of counterexamples to bivalence is inconsistent, was thus central. My aim was to examine putative cases of truth-value gaps against Williamson's argument. For cases of truth-value gaps to be counterexamples to bivalence, Williamson's argument should be disarmed. Moreover, since bivalence does not say that everything is either true or false, truth-value gaps can only be genuine counterexamples to bivalence if the things that are neither true nor false, or are truth-valueless, are the same things the principle declares to be true or false. The hypothesis I proposed to evaluate was this: if the supposition of actual counterexamples to bivalence is incoherent (and Williamson's argument cannot be disarmed), then items that are neither true nor false cannot be truth-bearers.

I started, in Chapter 1, with preliminary considerations on truth-bearers, truth and falsehood, and what truth-value gaps should be in order to amount to counterexamples to bivalence. A truistic characterization of truth-bearers advanced was that truth-bearers are precisely the possible bearers of truth and falsehood, i.e., items that can be true or can be false. Several candidates for the role of truth-bearers were considered: sentence types, sentence tokens (utterances or inscriptions of sentences), speech-acts or psychological states,

and propositions. With the exception of sentence types, any of the candidates can be legitimately described as true or as false. We can state, think, suppose, believe, etc., truly or falsely. A minimal characterization of propositions is of that which is said, thought, etc., to be the case or not the case. Utterances, thoughts or beliefs, for instance, are evaluable if something is said, thought or believed to be the case.

I did not consider the idea that items that *cannot* possibly be true or false could be counterexamples to bivalence, i.e., I did not consider the idea that utterances, for instance, that fail to say something that could have been the case, and fail to say something that could have been not the case, could count as putative counterexamples to bivalence. This would be admitting that some utterances say something even if it is impossible for them to be true or false. Many utterances are not truth-valued, even if utterances of meaningful sentence types, but unless there is some plausible reason to expect them to be truth-evaluable, there appears to be no reason to regard them as counterexamples to bivalence. That we should only take as truth-bearers items that *can* be possibly true or false is confirmed, moreover, by the attempts made by Soames (cf. Chapter 4) and Travis (cf. Chapter 5) to argue that the cases of truth-value gaps they propose could have been truth-valued in other circumstances. The parallel with vague utterances in borderline cases can plausibly be drawn: even if we do not know how to evaluate (or even if we can evaluate) such cases, we have no doubts that they could be clearly true or clearly false.

I have not made any specific commitment to how utterances achieve the condition of saying something. The advantage of doing this is that it permitted accommodating different accounts of what is required for the expression of truth-conditional content. I am, however,

strongly inclined to associate the grasp of what is said in an utterance to the grasp of the utterance's truth-conditions.

For the purposes of the dissertation, it was sufficient to acknowledge platitudes about the notions of truth and falsehood: for instance, that truth and falsehood are transparent, absolute, timeless, conserved under embedding, that truths somehow correspond to reality, but that some truths may never be known, etc. These platitudes were sufficient for the purposes of the dissertation, since we can show the incoherence of the supposition of genuine truth-value gaps assuming only such platitudes. (I am, however, inclined towards the identity theory of truth, but it must be stressed that my commitment to the identity theory of truth is not necessary to show that the supposition of genuine cases of truth-value gaps is incoherent.)

Aristotle's *dictum* is often accepted by all parties as a correct elucidation of truth and falsehood. The transparency platitude, in particular, is captured in the *dictum*. The *dictum* can be generalized schematically. Since Williamson's argument was central for the dissertation, I settled for Williamson's (1994) schemas (T) and (F) for truth and falsehood. The idea captured in the schemas is precisely that if an utterance says that something is the case, it is true just in case what it says is the case, and false just in case what it says is not the case. The schemas are as intuitive as Aristotle's *dictum*. Although I have not made any commitment to any theory of truth, the intuitiveness of (T) and (F), and of other simple equivalence schemas, suggests that what is said to be the case in an utterance *is* the utterance's truth-condition.

The formulation of bivalence adopted is equally schematic. The idea captured in the schema for bivalence is that if an utterance says that something is the case, it is either true or false. An utterance would thus amount to a counterexample to bivalence if it were neither

true nor false and said something to be the case. An important distinction drawn was between (i) an utterance that could have been true (or false) saying exactly what it does, and (ii) an utterance that could have been true (or false) had it said something. The standard understanding of genuine cases of truth-value gaps is (i). It is this understanding of truth-value gaps that is incoherent. The alternative in (ii) is that of utterances that could have been truth-bearers, but are not since they say nothing to be the case and have no statable truth- or falsity-conditions.

Next, in Chapter 2, I expounded Williamson's argument against the possibility of counterexamples to bivalence. Williamson's argument relies fundamentally on schemas (T) and (F). Given acceptance of the schemas, the denial that a given utterance is bivalent entails a contradiction. Obviously, I did not consider the possibility that contradictions are acceptable.[108]

Now, the argument only shows that there cannot be actual counterexamples to bivalence. It does not show that we can assert that every truth-bearer is bivalent, or that every truth-bearer is clearly either true or false. This involves two related issues, the first is a challenge to bivalence not addressed in this dissertation; the second was briefly discussed in Chapter 2, but was not regarded as providing counterexamples to bivalence, as it is formulated.

My concern was the possibility of actual counterexamples to bivalence, as formulated, thus the question of whether we are entitled to assert bivalence or not was beyond the scope of this dissertation. Some brief comments may nonetheless be made here. I mentioned in Chapter 2, §2.2.2, that intuitionists can reject bivalence, even if they cannot provide actual

[108] For discussion on whether contradictions are acceptable, see for instance Sainsbury (1995) and Priest (2001).

counterexamples to it. For the intuitionist, we can only assert that a statement is true if we have a proof of it, or if we are justified in asserting it. (We could only assert (*P* or not *P*) if we could either prove that *P* or that not *P*.) The reason for intuitionists' abandonment of bivalence rests partly on the rejection of the idea that there are mathematical truths that may lie beyond our capacity to prove them.

Dummett (for instance, 1978) argued that the same type of anti-realist stance could be held in other areas of discourse. According to Dummett, the realist is committed both to bivalence, that every statement is either determinately true or determinately false, and to possibly verification transcendent truth-conditions. The anti-realist, in contrast, may hold that for certain types of statements, we are not entitled to assert that either they, or their negations, are true independently of our capacities to verify or justify them. Thus, an anti-realist can reject bivalence, but he cannot reject what Dummett calls *tertium non datur*: the principle that that no statement is neither true nor false.

Nonetheless, a counterexample to *tertium non datur* would also be a counterexample to bivalence, and a counterexample to either principle entails a contradiction. For an anti-realist, we allegedly know we cannot provide a counterexample to *tertium non datur*; therefore, we ought equally to know that we cannot provide a counterexample to bivalence. What, hence, can motivate (outside mathematical intuitionism) the acceptance of *tertium non datur*, but motivate the rejection of bivalence?

We cannot accept simultaneously the correctness of schemas for truth such as (T), and admit that some utterance may be neither true nor false. Dummett rightly insists on this

point.[109] But Dummett also draws our attention to a further incompatibility: that we may simultaneously hold that the truth-evaluable content of an utterance can be stated by giving the conditions for the truth of the utterance, and hold that instances of equivalence, or disquotational, schemas can fully define the notion of truth.

As mentioned earlier, I am strongly inclined to associate the grasp of what is said in an utterance with the grasp of the utterance's truth-conditions. I have also not proposed to endorse a definition or theory of truth. Thus, although I clearly accepted that instances of equivalence schemas for truth are correct, I did not endorse the idea that instances of the schemas can give a complete account of the notion of truth. Dummett suggests that if one takes this line, then "it must be possible also to say more about the concept of truth than under which specific conditions it applied to given sentences" (Dummett, 1978: xxi). Any other things I contemplated as plausible to say about truth and falsehood were platitudes that may help to illuminate what we understand by the notions. Now, what Dummett had in mind about what more should be said about the notion of truth is a restriction partly motivated by intuitionism in mathematics: "…to justify a realistic interpretation of statements of any kind, it was necessary to demonstrate that we had conferred on those statements meanings such as to yield a notion of truth, as applied to them, with respect to which each statement could be taken to be determinately either true or false, that is, under which the principle of bivalence held good" (*idem*: xxiv).

We can thus return to the question addressed above: what could motivate the acceptance of *tertium non datur*, but motivate the rejection of bivalence? The answer must be that while one may accept that no counterexamples to *tertium non datur* may be given, one can reject

[109] Cf. Dummett (1959: 4-5; 1978: xx; 1991: 64).

that every statement is determinately either true or false. The notion of proof is too strong for areas of discourse other than mathematics, but the anti-realist suggestion seems to be that a statement is determinately true if its assertion is correct, warranted or justified: and we may have no warrant for asserting *P* or for asserting not *P*. Whoever accepts a conception of truth on which it is admissible that understanding what is said in an utterance is a matter of understanding when it would be true, even if we may be unable to verify it as true, is a realist, in Dummett's sense. In contrast, on an anti-realist conception of truth, understanding what is said in an utterance is a matter of being able to verify or justify it, or of knowing what would warrant it. My inclination to associate the understanding of what is said in an utterance with the understanding of the utterance's truth-condition could be accused of presupposing a realist understanding of truth, and hence presupposing bivalence.

I cannot here start a full discussion of these problems. Nonetheless, I suppose one might reformulate Dummett's point and say: to justify an anti-realist interpretation of statements of any kind, it is necessary to demonstrate that we had conferred on those statements meanings such as to yield a notion of truth, with respect to which each statement could be taken as being (determinately) true just in case it is warranted, or correct. The notion of a correct or warranted assertion should then somehow be prior to the notion of truth.

As indicated in Chapter 2, §§2.3.3 and 2.4.1, the question of the correctness of an utterance is broader than the question of its truth. Utterances may be socially inappropriate, irrelevant, misleading, etc., even if *true*. So, the notion of correctness of an assertion must somehow already involve the notion of truth, if it is to be relevant for bivalence. Equally, the question of the warrant or grounds for making an utterance can only be relevantly related to bivalence if it is the question of the warrant or grounds *for the truth* of an utterance. This

suggests that the notion of truth is already implicit in the notion of a warranted assertion; but it is perfectly conceivable that there be warranted assertions that are nonetheless false. This can be avoided if what is involved in 'it is determinately true that *P*' is something like 'it can be known that *P* is true'. However, that every statement is either determinately true or determinately false, in this sense, is implausible. After all, the notion of a true statement seems to be simpler and more basic than the notions of knowable or justifiable statements. Naturally, none of this answers the question of how the meaning of expressions in a particular area of discourse allows us a grasp of truth-conditions that may, in principle, transcend our ability to know whether they obtain or not.

Now, bivalence is formulated with the notions of truth and falsehood, not with the notions of determinate truth and determinate falsehood. Williamson's argument shows that there cannot be counterexamples to bivalence, thus formulated, given acceptance of schemas (T) and (F). I distinguished between two types of strategy to disarm the argument. The first type attempts to resolve the inconsistency of holding that schemas for truth and falsehood are correct and admitting counterexamples to bivalence. The standard move here is to change the reading of negation. But, as argued, unless some motivation is provided to distinguish between two (or more) senses of negation, the proposal is simply arbitrary.

The point of finding a different sense for negation is to make explicit that the assertion of some *P* is incorrect, without implying that *P* is false. The best motivated attempt to draw the distinction between rejecting the correctness of some statement or assertion, without asserting that it is false, is to understand the rejection of *P* as the rejection that it is determinately the case that *P*. The problem is, precisely, to understand how the adverb 'determinately' is to be related to bivalence. Does it merely have an epistemic sense? The

discussion in Chapter 2 indicated that either 'determinately' is redundant, functioning as a means of emphasizing 'true', or it is epistemic. If the former, no useful distinction between different readings of negation can be based on it, if the later, no denial of bivalence is put forward when we say of a given statement that it is neither determinately true nor determinately false.

In Chapter 4, I also discussed Soames's attempt to draw the distinction between 'determinately true' and 'true', based on the introduction of partially defined predicates in a language. But, as argued in Chapter 4, even if the distinction between 'determinately true' and 'true' is drawn, we still cannot say that certain truth-bearers are neither true nor untrue (i.e., neither true nor false). Moreover, even if a model of partially defined predicates for a language is provided, that fails to show that the basic phenomenon one is trying to explain is not that of items of which we do not *know* whether to apply or not a given predicate. Finally, Soames's attempt to avoid the derivation of contradictions by changing the reading of the biconditional is shown to be unsatisfactory. It allows some sentences to be true if and only if they are not true. Unless one is willing to accept contradictions, Soames's solution cannot be correct. If one were willing to accept contradictions, Soames's solution would be unnecessary.

The alternative strategy to avoid the derivation of contradictions I identified is to reject the correctness of schemas for truth and falsehood. If the schemas were rejected, one could plausibly deny metalinguistically that some utterance is either true or false, without being allowed to infer a corresponding object-level negation. The overall problem with this type of strategy is that it deprives us of reasons to say that an utterance has truth- or falsity-

conditions, and therefore also deprives us of reasons to think that such utterances say anything to be the case.

Chapter 3 illustrates how it is possible to deny metalinguistically that some utterance containing a vacuous singular term is either true or false, without being forced to assert a contradiction. The reason is that utterances of sentences containing non-referring singular terms that are neither true nor false have no truth- and falsity-conditions and fail to say anything to be the case. Reference failure seems to be problematic because two requirements on recognizing that an utterance says something seem to conflict. On the one hand, the truth-conditions of sentences containing singular terms depend, in general, on the identity and existence of the individual object referred to. If no individual is referred to, then the utterance does not have truth- and falsity-conditions, and it cannot express any proposition or thought. On the other hand, there is a strong intuition that people nonetheless understand such utterances, take them to be true and use them to express their beliefs, thoughts, desires, etc. The two requirements are irreconcilable, unless one treats the truth-conditions of utterances with singular terms as object-independent, allowing something determinate to be said irrespective of whichever, if any, object is referred to. To preserve the semantic features of singular terms, the second requirement must be dropped. It was not necessary, in this chapter, to decide between a Russellian/Kaplanian account of singular propositions, and a more Fregean account where *de re* senses or modes of presentation are part of singular thoughts. It was sufficient to recognize that the truth-conditions of utterances with singular terms are singular and object-dependent. The exception, clearly, are true negative existential statements; but I did not purport to solve the problem of negative existential statements.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I proposed to extend the same diagnosis to other cases of truth-value gaps, and thus to confirm the upshot of Williamson's argument: that utterances that *are* neither true nor false say nothing.

In Chapter 4, as mentioned above, I examined Soames's motivation to reject bivalence and argued that his solution to avoid the derivation of contradictions is unsatisfactory. Soames's motivation to reject bivalence is based on the fact that if we suppose liar sentences to be either true or false, or even if we deny that they are either true or false, then contradictions will follow. But liar sentences can only provide any motivation to reject bivalence if it is legitimate to take them as genuine truth-bearers. Soames imposed on truth a plausible condition, which I called the priority requirement: that the status of the claim that some sentence *S* is true (or not true) depends on the prior status of *S* itself, hence on the status of sentences not containing the truth-predicate. The priority requirement was used to show that liar sentences cannot be truth-bearers, since there is no prior sentence on whose status (or truth-value) the liar could turn. Thus, nothing is said constraining a possible way for things to be (or not to be), so nothing is said that can be described as true or false. Soames's arguments to show that liar sentences could have been true in other circumstances were shown to rest on a basic mistake: a liar sentence could have been true if the sentence referred to had been another false sentence.

In Chapter 5, I discussed a difficult challenge proposed by Travis. Travis's strategy to disarm Williamson's argument requires the rejection of the schemas for truth and falsehood. His rejection of the schemas is based on the rejection of two ideas. The first is that sentence meaning is sufficient to establish what is literally said in an utterance, and hence to establish the utterance's truth-conditions. The second is the idea that we can appeal to a notion of

proposition or of truth-conditional content (what is said) that settles when an utterance expressing such content would be true or false. Rejection of the first idea is a common move characteristic of contextualism or truth-conditional pragmatics. Rejection of the second idea is based on a Wittgensteinian objection to propositions as shadows. To replace the allegedly objectionable ideas, Travis proposed occasion-sensitivity: that statements are context-dependent in such a way that we are never allowed to presume to have identified truth- and falsity-conditions for such statements. Occasion-sensitivity is hence a constraint on the truth and falsity of words that seems to preclude the possibility of schemas like (T) and (F) being be correct. Since Travis dismisses the schemas, he can claim that some utterances are neither true nor false, but might have been. The negation involved here is meant to be *only* metalinguistic, so that we are not allowed to infer any contradiction from it.

As argued in Chapter 5, the schemas for truth and falsehood are immune to Travis's objections. Even if we concede that sentence meaning underdetermines what is said and truth-conditions, we are not moved to reject that what is said in an utterance in a given context identifies the utterance's truth-conditions. The rejection of the schemas relies crucially on whether they are vulnerable to the Wittgensteinian objection to shadows. But the schemas are not vulnerable to this objection, because what is said in an utterance is not a further interpretable representation; it is identical to the utterance's truth-condition. Thus, Travis cannot disarm Williamson's argument. Hence, the cases Travis claims to be neither true nor false, cases of isostheneia, as he calls it, cannot provide counterexamples to bivalence.

What characterizes isostheneia, according to Travis, and makes it a cause of putative counterexamples to bivalence is this: since statements may be differently understood, and

vary accordingly in truth-value, depending on the occasion they are made, it may happen that nothing in the meaning of a sentence uttered, the items referred to, or further aspects of the context of utterance, settle which is the correct way to understand the (alleged) statement made. When this occurs, a statement is neither true nor false. What makes this constitute a possible problem for bivalence is that, as Travis claims, such statements *could* have been truth-valued. Now, since we know that there cannot be counterexamples to bivalence, the phenomenon Travis proposes cannot be characterized in this way. The examination of a case of isostheneia confirmed this. Either there are conditions in which an utterance would have been true (or false), in which case something *is* said to be the case, but we cannot say it is neither true nor false, on pain of contradiction; or isostheneia means that it is impossible to choose between different possible things to say, in which case an utterance in such a condition could not have been true or false because it says nothing. In either case, we cannot say what is neither true nor false but might have been.

Although I conceded contextualism (or truth-conditional pragmatics), I am not in a position to decide whether it is correct or not. The semantics/pragmatics division is, at the moment, a very much disputed question. In spite of the intuitiveness of the examples given in support of contextualism, some people like García-Carpintero (2001) have argued that the traditional semantics/pragmatics divide can be preserved under a broadly Gricean perspective. Independently of which is the right view, solving this problem was beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The main question addressed here was: are truth-value gaps counterexamples to bivalence and is the supposition of counterexamples coherent? The answer is negative: the supposition of counterexamples is incoherent; therefore truth-value gaps cannot be

counterexamples to bivalence. The idea that one can coherently suppose that items that are clearly neither true nor false are genuine truth-bearers should be dispelled. None of the strategies to make the supposition of counterexamples to bivalence coherent were found to be persuasive, and none of the cases of truth-value gaps examined were found to identify evaluable items.

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