The Unity of the Fact

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1. Introduction

Armstronjg, in his book *A World of States of Affairs*, argues in favour of what he calls **Factualism:** 'that the world is a world of states of affairs'.[1] His argument is the **Truthmaker Argument** (op. cit., 115): truth is a substantial and external property, and the only plausible candidate for the truthmakers that such a substantial external property requires are states of affairs, or (for short) facts.

Armstrong goes further: states of affairs are ontically prior. 'States of affairs come first.' (op. cit., 118) They do have constituents. The state of affairs of *a*'s having *R* to *b* has *a*, *R* and *b* as its parts. But the state of affairs is not just the mereological sum of its parts. For the states of affairs of *a*'s having *R* to *b* and *b*'s having *R* to *a* are different and one can exist without the other. Nonetheless, they have the same parts, and so form the one mereological whole. By the first principle of Mereology (**Fusion**):

> Any collection of parts form a whole,

there is such a whole for any *a*, *b* and *R*, and by a second principle (**Extensionality**):

> Any wholes with the same parts are the same,

there is just one such whole. But *a*'s having *R* to *b* and *b*'s having *R* to *a* are different states of affairs. Hence, Armstrong concludes:

> 'States of affairs hold their constituents together in a non-mereological form of composition.' (loc. cit.)

But what is this form of composition? What provides unity to the fact? As Armstrong notes, there can be *a* and *F*, or *a*, *b* and *R*, and consequently their fusions, without there being states of affairs of *a*'s being *F* or of *a*'s having *R* to *b*. What more, then, is needed to provide the unity of the fact?

It cannot be a further constituent, such as instantiation. For again by (Fusion), given *a*, *F* and, say, the fact that Brutus killed Caesar

[1] D. M. Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 8.

doi:10.1017/S003181910500032X ©2005 The Royal Institute of Philosophy

https://doi.org/10.1017/S003181910500032X Published online by Cambridge University Press

(that is, that Brutus and Caesar instantiate killing), we have the mereological sum of *a, F* and instantiation, but we needn't have the state of affairs of *a*'s being *F*. Armstrong calls this Bradley's regress argument (op. cit., 30 *et alibi*).

Hylton, in his study of Russell's break with idealism claims that Bradley's point is more than that relations involve a vicious regress. It is that the power of relations to unite their terms cannot be taken as fundamental, but stands in need of explanation:

> 'Relations and relational unity are intelligible only as abstractions from a more fundamental sort of unity'.[2]

Armstrong's talk of a non-mereological form of composition was the basis of Russell's answer. Russell claimed:

> 'A complex differs from the mere aggregate of its constituents, since … the relation which is one of its constituents enters into it as an actually relating relation, and not merely as one member of an aggregate … [A] complex, which we may call '*x*R*y*', consisting of the two terms so related … is the simplest example of what I call a 'complex' or a 'unity'. What is called analysis consists in the discovery of the constituents of a complex.'[3]

Bradley believed that to admit the relating relation as a constituent of the fact was the root of the problem. He asked rhetorically:

> 'What is the difference between a relation which relates in fact and one which does not relate? … Is there anything … in a unity besides its "constituents", *i.e.* the terms and the relation, and, if there is anything more, in what does this "more" consist?'[4]

Bradley was unconvinced by Russell's explanation. Once we consider the elements of the fact independently from their role as abstracted from it, there is no way back. As he put in a posthumously published paper on 'Relations':

> 'From terms taken as in themselves unrelated, and from a relation not taken as itself their relation, there is no logical way to the union present in, and required for, the relational fact.'[5]

[2] P. Hylton, *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 49.

[3] B. Russell, 'Some Explanations in Reply to Mr Bradley', *Mind* 19 (1910), 373–8: 374.

[4] F. H. Bradley, 'Reply to Mr Russell's Explanations', *Mind* 20 (1911), 74–6: 74.

[5] F. H. Bradley, 'Relations', in *Collected Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935/69), 628–76: 643.

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The problem of the unity of the fact is that of reconstituting the fact from its constituents once they have been abstracted from it. My aim is to show that this problem is misconceived—indeed, it is the way the problem is described and conceived which is the problem. Just as *a* is common to the facts that *a* is *F* and *a* is *G*, so too *F* is common to the facts that *a* is *F* and that *b* is *F*. But seen that way, *F* becomes an object, a property robbed of its character as a property. A property or relation is by its nature a property of something, a relation between things. Once we treat it as an object, as a constituent of the fact, it loses that character, and we are simply left with a list: *a* and *F,* or *a, R* and *b*. We puzzle how to reconstitute the fact from its constituents, and like Armstrong and Russell, find we resort to a puzzling form of combination, something strangely stronger than mereology or aggregation. Bradley's regress beckons.

The answer is that it is *F* and *R* which provide the unity to the fact. *R* relates *a* and *b,* and thereby constitutes the fact that *aRb*. Relations are, in Bradley's language, 'relating relations'. There are no relations which do not relate. Facts, as Armstrong said but did not fully appreciate, 'come first'. Objects do not come to us bare of their properties and relations. They have properties and lie in various relations, and that they do are the facts about them. We can distinguish the constituents of those facts, the objects lying in relation to one another. We can also distinguish the properties and relations, but must not confuse them with objects, at the risk of falling into Armstrong's puzzle of how to constitute the fact from its parts.

Recognizing that facts are basic, in that they are the facts about their constituents, has important consequences for the notions of truth and of modality: first, that the unity of the proposition must be distinguished from the unity of the fact. Truth cannot, in a view of Frege's and the early Russell's which has recently been revived, consist in the identity of fact and proposition. The question of unity also has an important bearing on Wittgenstein's famous disagreement with Russell over the nature of the proposition and Russell's abandoning of his multiple-relation theory of judgment in the face of Wittgenstein's criticism. Finally, failure to appreciate its force has led to the more extravagant metaphysical interpretations of possible world semantics. It is these consequences and connections which I will explore in this paper.

2. The Identity Theory of Truth

Why is truth a substantial and external property? One famous argument for the insubstantiality of truth is Frege's regress argument.

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Frege claimed that the correspondence theory of truth was untenable because it leads to vicious regress: p because it is true that p because it is true that it is true that p and so on. That there is such a series of ever longer repetitions of the prefix 'it is true that' is incontestable. The crucial question is whether the regress is vicious:

> 'Any … attempt to define truth … breaks down. For in a definition certain characteristics would have to be specified. And in application to any particular case the question would always arise whether it were *true* that the characteristics were present. So we should be going round in a circle … The [meaning (*Inhalt* p. 327, *Bedeutung* p. 328)] of the word 'true' seems to be altogether *sui generis*. May we not be dealing here with something which cannot be called a property in the ordinary sense at all?'[6]

'True', like 'one' and 'exists', is a predicate which seems to connote a very puzzling property, if there is such a property at all. Just as there is no difference between a cat and one cat, between a cat and an existing cat, so there seems no difference between saying that p and saying that it is true that p, e.g., between saying that violets are green and saying that it is true that violets are green. 'Is one', 'is true' and 'exists', though grammatically predicates, do not correspond, it seems, to any real property.

It was Frege himself who demonstrated the error in this view of 'one' and 'exists'.[7] The source of the puzzle is that these are not first-level properties, but second-level ones. An imagined rose and an existing rose do not, or need not, differ in any (first-level) properties, of colour or scent. To say that a New Dawn rose exists is to predicate a (real) property of the first-level property 'being a New Dawn rose', namely, that it has an instance. Similarly, to say there is one New Dawn rose (in my garden, say), is to say that the property has one instance there. Being one and existing are substantial properties, but a different kind of property from being white or being strongly scented. That is the source of the puzzle, of our confusion, but also the solution, showing that these predicates do connote real properties.

Truth is a predicate attaching primarily to thoughts (*Gedanken*), says Frege, using the German term much as I am using the term 'proposition'. He veers between saying that truth is indefinable,[8]

[6] G. Frege, 'Thought', in *A Frege Reader*, M. Beaney (ed. and tr.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 325–45: 327–8.

[7] G. Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, J. L. Austin (tr.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), §46ff.

[8] Frege, 'Thought', 327.

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that 'nothing is added to the thought by my ascribing to it the property of truth' (op. cit., 328), and, as cited above, that it is not a property (in the ordinary sense) at all. But the only argument he gives centres on the regress or circularity in prefixing 'it is true that'. Russell had presented a similar argument to the Jowett Society in Oxford in 1905:

> 'An idea is true when it corresponds with reality, *i.e.* when it is true that it corresponds with reality, *i.e.* when the idea that it corresponds with reality corresponds with reality, and so on … Is there any general property, other than truth, which belongs to all true propositions and to no false ones? If there is … it will not be a definition, on account of the impossibility of defining truth without presupposing it.[9]

Yet not all regresses are vicious. If it is necessary that p, then arguably it is necessary that it is necessary that p (and vice versa), and necessary that it is necessary that it is necessary that p, and so on. Again, from p it follows that it is possible that p, that it is possible that it is possible that p, and so on. In neither case is the regress vicious, for it is not necessary to understand the latter terms of the series in order to understand earlier terms. Moreover, even in the first case, where there is equivalence, it is misleading to say that nothing is added by prefixing 'it is necessary that'. It is a substantive thesis that necessity is idempotent (that $\Box\Box p$ is equivalent to $\Box p$), just as it is a substantive (and false) thesis that knowledge is idempotent (in particular, the KK-thesis, that 'a knows that p' entails 'a knows that a knows that p').

What has recently been identified in Frege's remarks is the identity theory of truth, sometimes but not always interpreted as the deflationary thesis, that truth is insubstantial. For Frege aims most of his argument at the correspondence theory, the claim that 'truth consists in a correspondence of a picture to what it depicts': 'if the first did correspond perfectly with the second, they would coincide'.[10] That is, any correspondence adequate for truth would be

[9] B. Russell, 'The Nature of Truth', in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, vol. 4: *Foundations of Logic* 1903–05, A. Urquhart (ed.) (London: Routledge, 1994), 490–506: 493, 504. It seems unlikely that Frege will have known Russell's unpublished address. Perhaps they have a common source, possibly in Kant's discussion in the Transcendental Logic (I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, J. M. D. Meiklejohn (tr.) (London: Dent, 1934) II 13, pp. 66ff.). I owe this reference to my colleague, Jens Timmermann.

[10] 'Thought', 326–7.

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identity. As Dodd puts it in his book *The Identity Theory of Truth*: 'facts are true thoughts'.[11] Thoughts, or propositions, the object of the propositional attitudes (belief, knowledge, desire, propounding or proposing, and so on) are, when true, facts. True thoughts, or propositions, are the same as, are identical to, facts, and facts are how things are. So truth consists in coincidence, the limit case of correspondence, of thought and fact.

Dodd usefully distinguishes robust from modest identity theories. The distinction relies on Frege's distinction between sense and reference. Modest theories, like Frege's, identify facts with true thoughts, where 'thoughts are senses of sentences'.[12] In Dummett's words:

> 'Facts, as true thoughts … belong, not to the realm of reference, but to that of sense. We therefore cannot say that a thought is true just in case it corresponds to a fact: if it is true, then it just *is* a fact.'[13]

Thoughts are, for Frege and Dodd, compound senses, composed of the senses of expressions. Dodd says that propositions have

> 'constituents which go proxy for the objects they are about … we should regard [propositions] as complexes of senses,'[14]

and Frege says that we must be

> 'able to distinguish parts in the thought corresponding to the parts of the sentence, so that the structure of the sentence serves as an image of the structure of the thought.'[15]

The sense of the expression 'Frege', for example, is what one knows when one understands the expression: namely, says Dodd following McDowell, that 'Frege' refers to Frege.[16] In Frege's metaphor, the sense is a mode of presentation of the referent. The sense of the sentence 'Frege was a great logician', for example, is what one knows when one understands the sentence, the way the truth-value True is presented by that sentence.

[11] J. Dodd, *The Identity Theory of Truth* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 80.

[12] 'Thought', 328.

[13] M. Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (London: Duckworth, 1973), 442; cited in Dodd, *The Identity Theory of Truth*, 114.

[14] *The Identity Theory of Truth*, 68–9.

[15] G. Frege, 'Compound Thoughts', in *Logical Investigations*, P. Geach (ed. and tr.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 55–77: 55; cf. G. Frege, 'Logic in Mathematics', in *Posthumous Writings*, H. Hermes *et al*. (eds.), P. Long and R. White (trs.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 203–50: 243.

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According to the modest theory, to identify facts with thoughts is to deny that there is anything propositional in the world. There is Frege, and there is how he is (a great logician). But there is no state of affairs, Dodd believes, e.g., of Frege's being a great logician. Strawson urged this claim, against Austin:

> 'That … to which the referring part of the statement refers, and which the describing part of the statement fits or fails to fit, is that which the statement is *about*. It is evident that there is nothing else in the world for the statement itself to be related to … The only plausible candidate for the position of what (in the world) makes the statement true is the fact it states; but the fact it states is not something in the world.'[17]

Thoughts, or propositions, on this conception, are put together from the senses of which they are composed, and form compound, propositional objects—the objects of the propositional attitudes. But the world contains only the referents of which those constituents are the senses, which they present (to thought). There is no propositional complexity in things to which true thoughts can correspond. Facts, such as they are, are for the modest theory simply true thoughts.

In contrast, the robust theory reverses the identity, and identifies true thoughts with facts, conceived as states of affairs. Just as when I think of Frege, it is Frege himself, not some idea or concept that I think of (though that may be the vehicle for my thought), so too when I think or recall or propose that Frege was a great logician, it is the fact which I think, recall or propose, not some intermediary impression or abstraction. Where the modest theory denies that the content of a true judgment or belief corresponds to any compound of things the judgment is about, the robust theory denies there is any intermediary object of belief to which the state of affairs, the fact whose constituents are those things, can correspond. In thought we directly apprehend the fact containing the objects referred to. The proposition, as object of belief, is the fact as a state of affairs. The proposition contains the things referred to—'That's right, John himself, right there, trapped in a proposition.'[18] As Russell puts it in *The Principles of Mathematics*:

[16] *The Identity Theory of Truth*, 52.

[17] P. F. Strawson, 'Truth', *Aristotelian Society* Supplementary Volume 24 (1950), 29–56: 33–34.

[18] D. Kaplan, 'Dthat', in *Demonstratives*, P. Yourgrau (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 11–33: 13.

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> '… a proposition, unless it happens to be linguistic (i.e. to be about words) does not contain words: it contains the entities indicated by words.'[19]

Instead of identifying the fact with the thought (the sense) as the modest theory does, the robust theory identifies the thought with the fact (as state of affairs, compounded of the referents). Either way, fact and thought are the same.

But what then is Truth? facts are true propositions (the identity theory claims) or thoughts. The modest theory makes a metaphysical claim: there are no states of affairs, in that there is no worldly object of a propositional nature. The robust theory, while affirming the metaphysical thesis that the world does contain facts, adds an epistemological claim: the object of thought and knowledge is the fact itself, without intermediary. It is a direct realism about epistemology and mind. But what of truth? In what does truth consist? Indeed, what is falsehood? If true thoughts are facts, what are false thoughts?

Consider the robust theory, first. According to this theory, a propositional attitude, if veridical, is an attitude towards a fact, where a fact is a state of affairs, that is, an actual state of affairs. Thus a mistaken attitude must be a relation to a non-actual state of affairs—that or nothing, and it seems clear that it is not a relation to nothing. For its object is what defines its content, and mistaken attitudes can have a different content. So their objects are different. But their objects are not how things are, for then they would not be mistaken. So there must be both actual and non-actual (or existing and non-existing) state of affairs, and truth must be what distinguishes actual states of affairs (or facts) from non-actual ones.

Russell came to reject this account of truth and its Meinongian ontology. One reason, though, as we will see, not the main one, was that it commits us to there being things which don't exist. That offended Russell's increasingly strong sense of reality. Believing, for example, that Frege was a woman should no more commit us to there being a non-actual state of affairs—Frege's being a woman—a state of affairs which does not exist, than believing that the king of France was bald should commit us to there being a king of France, one that does not exist. We might, indeed, we ought in consistency to believe there is one, if we believe he is bald. But our account of belief should explain how we can have the false belief even when there is no king of France.

[19] B. Russell, *The Principles of Mathematics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1903), 47.

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But we must be cautious here. Clearly there are many things which do not exist, the objects of fiction and the imagination among many others. We can represent to ourselves innumerable states of affairs which do not exist. Moreover, those states of affairs have an objectivity which cannot be denied—the very same non-existing state of affairs can be common to the thoughts of many people. What is dangerous is to suppose that non-existent states of affairs are another type of states of affairs.

Russell's major objection to this view was that 'truth and falsehood, in this view, are ultimate, and no account can be given of what makes a proposition true or false.'[20] This way of putting the objection invites the response that the difference lies in whether the state of affairs exists: facts are states of affairs which exist, falsehoods those which do not. But this is to miss the point. Take the proposition that Frege was a woman, for example. According to the robust theory, this is an objective falsehood, a non-existing state of affairs at all? We have particular and universal, Frege and womanhood, the constituents of the putative state. But since Frege was not a woman, the constituents do not constitute a state of affairs—there is no unity. There is no such state.

So the real problem for the robust theory is not the claimed reality of non-existent states of affairs, but their unity. What constitutes the unity of a false proposition? The constituents are thought together, but if the thought is false, they are not in fact together, and there is nothing to think. Direct realism in epistemology cannot account for error in representation. This the reason why Dodd embraces the modest theory. He writes:

> 'Such an account of propositions is unable to leave room for a proposition's being *false* … The entities *a*, *b* and *R* can only be unified into a proposition by virtue of being united in *fact* … the constituents of a proposition can only be unified, and hence form a proposition proper, if the proposition is true.'[21]

The proposition cannot be an object of reference, containing *a*, *b* and *R*, or Frege and womanhood, but must, he concludes, be an object of sense, composed of the senses, or modes of presentation, of them.

We still need an answer, nevertheless, to the question: how are true thoughts different from false ones? The modest theory

[20] 'On The Nature of Truth', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 7 (1906–7), 29–49: 48.

[21] *The Identity Theory of Truth*, 113–4.

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attempts to answer this by a deflationary move. Following Frege's lead, Dodd reduces the truth of 'p' to p itself:

> 'What is the nature of the equivalence holding between "$\langle p \rangle$ is true" and "p"? … the equivalence is that of sameness of sense.' (op. cit., 137)

As we have seen, this equivalence is based on a mistake, the Kant/Russell/Frege regress argument: the fear that unless we identify the sense of 'it is true that p' with that of 'p' itself, we will embark on a vicious regress. But no argument has been given that the regress is vicious, and identifying the sense of '$\langle p \rangle$ is true' with that of 'p' leaves truth indefinable; for unless truth is insubstantial, we need an explanation why the sense of '$\langle p \rangle$ is true' and 'p' are equivalent, and the argument for insubstantiality failed.

Thus both the modest and robust versions of the identity theory fail. The modest theory fails in making truth indefinable, while the robust theory cannot explain the unity of the fact and the disunity of falsehood. The modest theory can accommodate false thoughts—combinations of senses—but cannot explain how they can be false, and cannot distinguish the unity of a true thought from the unity of a false one. The robust theory, in order to admit this distinction, cannot explain the unity of false propositions. If a true proposition is a fact, that the objects are thus and so, a false proposition is nothing, for then they are not as they are represented to be.

3. Bipolarity

What the identity theory misses, therefore, is the distinction between the level of representation and the level of what is represented. Propositions represent the world. That representation is true when what is represented is a fact. So true propositions represent facts. But what do false propositions represent?

Wittgenstein offered us a theory of representation in his Picture Theory. He distinguished facts (*Tatsachen*) and situations (*Sachlagen*) from states of affairs (*Sachverhalte*), in the translation of Pears and McGuinness.[22] One interpretation of this terminology is shown in Fig. 1. It is called the 'P-theory' by Black who rejects it, and was defended by Stenius.[23] The world is the totality of facts, but

[22] L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, D. Pears and B. McGuinness (tr.) (London: Routledge, 1961).

[23] M. Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1964), 41; E. Stenius, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), ch. III.

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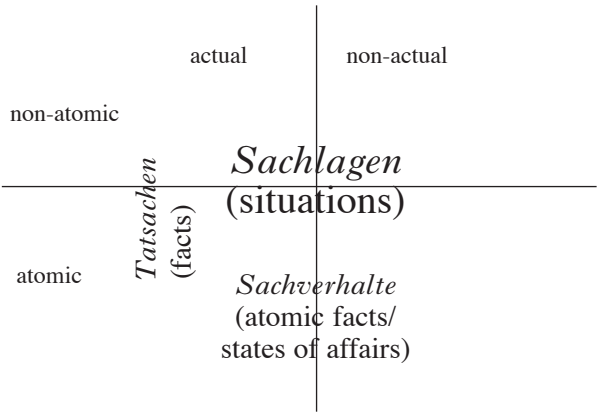


Figure 1: Stenius' P-theory

beyond facts there are situations and possible facts.[24] Propositions picture possible situations (¶ 2.11), and elementary propositions picture existing and non-existing states of affairs (atomic facts). Elementary propositions assert that a certain state of affairs exists, that is, that it is a fact (¶ 4.31). A clear presentation of this account of Wittgenstein's ontology is given in the following clauses, adumbrated by Raymond Bradley:[25]

- simple objects combine to produce 'possible states of affairs'
- any possible combination of possible states of affairs comprises a 'possible' world
- of the states of affairs, only some actually exist
- 'propositions with sense' picture possible states of affairs.

But this interpretation is mistaken. To see why, we need to look more closely at Wittgenstein's account of sense. Wittgenstein's account of truth is clear. His account of sense is not. A proposition is true if it pictures a fact—if the situation it pictures exists, or obtains. But what do false pictures picture? What is the sense of false propositions?

According to the P-theory, they picture possible situations which do not obtain or exist. But how can there be situations which do not obtain? It might seem, once again, that a Meinongian reponse is invited. There are situations, or at the atomic level, states of affairs, which exist (*bestehen*: obtain, hold, subsist), and in addition, it seems, there are states of affairs which do not obtain or subsist. The

[24] *Tractatus* ¶ 2.014.

[25] R. Bradley, *The Nature of All Being. A study of Wittgenstein's Modal Atomism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1992), xv.

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Meinongian will distinguish the character of such states of affairs (their *Sosein*) from whether or not they obtain or exist (their *Sein*). And that certainly seems to be how Wittgenstein speaks. He writes, for example:

> 'The totality of existing states of affairs (*bestehende Sachverhalte*) also determines which states of affairs do not exist.'[26]

Indeed, such an account seems to be entailed by the Picture Theory. For false propositions have sense. According to the Picture Theory, having sense just is picturing a possible state of affairs, so there must be states of affairs which do not exist to be pictured by false propositions. Their character constitutes the sense of the relevant proposition; that they don't exist, or obtain, is what makes the proposition false.

But this is to overlook the problem of unity, not the unity of the proposition (the linguistic vehicle), as is often supposed, but the unity of the fact. The proposition, for Frege and for Wittgenstein, is a thought, and the unity of the thought is a thought unity, a unity which is independent of the facts. The real puzzle is the unity of the fact, or rather, of the non-fact.

Consider, to take Russell's famous example, Desdemona's love for Cassio. Desdemona did not love Cassio. Her love for Cassio was a figment of Othello's imagination, fostered by Iago. Nonetheless, Othello sincerely believed that she loved Cassio. What was the object of Othello's belief? The single-relation account of belief, Russell's early theory, sees Othello related by belief to a single object, Desdemona's love for Cassio. Since she did not in fact love him, Othello was at best related to a non-existent object, the possible but non-actual state of affairs of Desdemona's loving Cassio.

Russell came to reject this account of belief. He proposed in its place his 'multiple-relation' theory of belief, whereby belief is not a single relation between, in this case, Othello and a possible state of affairs (what Russell—see § 2 above—called a 'proposition'), but a multiple relation between Othello and the various components of the state of affairs, Desdemona, loving and Cassio, constituents which certainly existed even if Desdemona did not love Cassio. One aspect of Russell's theory was that belief (and other such attitudes) must be seen as multigrade, taking varying numbers of arguments, not fixed in its adicity. So the belief of Othello's to which Russell referred was 4-place, or tetradic (Othello, Desdemona, loving, Cassio), whereas Othello's belief that Iago was his friend was 3-

[26] *Tractatus* ¶ 2.05.

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place, or triadic (Othello, Iago, friendship). Nonetheless, the advantage, in Russell's eyes, was that belief and judgment were thereby construed as relations between things that exist, not a relation of a subject to a proposition (or fact) which might fail to exist.

Wittgenstein criticized Russell's theory savagely—so savagely that Russell abandoned the manuscript, *Theory of Knowledge*, on which he was working and in which the multiple-relation theory played a central role. Wittgenstein's criticism survived into the *Tractatus* (¶ 5.5422):

> 'The correct explanation of the form of the proposition, 'A makes the judgment *p*' must show that it is impossible for a judgment to be a piece of nonsense. (Russell's theory does not satisfy this requirement.)'

For example, as Wittgenstein had written in the *Notes on Logic*:

> 'Every right theory of judgment must make it impossible for me to judge that this table penholders the book.'[27]

Russell's theory treats the relation as just one term of the judgment among many, and to accommodate false belief, admits relations which do not actually relate. The cost is to admit judgments of nonsense.

One might hope that some typing discipline could deal with Wittgenstein's objection. But Somerville argues that it could not, and that this was the real point of Wittgenstein's objection.[28] For the purpose of the theory of judgment was to support the theory of types. If we needed to presuppose the theory of types in order to avoid judging nonsense, vicious circularity would result.[29] Russell had, first, to characterize elementary judgments of acquaintance, before proceeding, in the unwritten Part III of *Theory of Knowledge*, to develop the hierarchy of molecular judgments. So he could not, on pain of circularity, help himself to the distinctions of type and order in the ramified hierarchy when distinguishing sense from nonsense in elementary judgments.

[27] L. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914–1916*, G. E. M. Anscombe (tr.) (second edition, Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), Appendix A, 103.

[28] S. Somerville, 'Wittgenstein to Russell (July, 1913). "I am very sorry to hear ... my objection paralyzes you"', in *Language, Logic and Reality*: Proceedings of the 4th International Wittgenstein Symposium, R. Haller and W. Grassl (eds.) (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1980), 182–8: 186–7.

[29] Cf. Hylton, *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*, 359.

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What, then, can Wittgenstein offer as the right theory of judgment? Wittgenstein wrote:

> 'I am very sorry to hear that my objection to your theory of judgment paralyzes you. I think it can only be removed by a correct theory of propositions.' (22 July 1913)[30]

The key to Wittgenstein's solution is the notion of bipolarity. Bipolarity also shows that the above attribution to Wittgenstein of a Meinongian P-theory of states of affairs is mistaken, and it will bring us back once more to the unity of the fact.

Bipolarity is the focus of the *Notes on Logic*, dictated by Wittgenstein to Russell in October 1913. The crucial point (at least, for present purposes) is that 'p has the same meaning as not-p but opposite sense. The meaning is the fact.'[31] This, he writes (op. cit., 103), is 'the chief characteristic of my theory'. It is echoed in the *Tractatus* at ¶¶ 4.061–4.063: 'The propositions "p" and "$\sim p$" have opposite sense, but there corresponds to them one and the same reality.' (¶ 4.0621) That is, whichever of 'p' and '$\sim p$' is true, that state of affairs exists, and is the sense of both of them.

Consequently, Figure 1 is misleading. There are no non-actual situations or states of affairs. Figure 1 includes situations other than the actual. But there are only actual situations; the facts are all the situations there are: 'the facts in logical space are the world' (¶ 1.13). False propositions get their sense by picturing the situation which makes them false. 'The meaning of a proposition is the fact which actually corresponds to it.'[32] But that does not entail that every proposition is true. A proposition has two poles, truth and falsehood (or a and b), and to understand a proposition one must know both 'what is the case if [it] is true and what is the case if it is false'.[33] A fact makes p true if and only if it makes '$\sim p$' false, and makes '$\sim p$' true if and only if it makes p false. Just as a proposition has two poles, what makes it true and what makes it false, so too a fact will make one proposition true and another, its negation, false.

Wittgenstein's example concerns a black patch on a white sheet of paper.[34] 'The patch is black' and 'The patch is not black' (i.e. white: there are only two possibilities) have the same sense—the fact that

[30] *Notebooks 1914–1916*, Appendix III, 122; B. McGuinness and G. H. von Wright (eds.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Cambridge Letters* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 33.

[31] *Notebooks 1914–1916*, 95.

[32] *Notebooks 1914–1916*, 94.

[33] Op. cit., 98.

[34] Op. cit., 99; *Tractatus* ¶ 4.063.

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the patch is black. This is essential to the unity of the fact. If we let the patch's colour come apart from it, we will never unite them again. We can distinguish the patch and its colour (particular and universal). We can consider the patch's being white, a possible situation. But that is at the level of representation: there are two possibilities for the colour of the patch. There is only one reality, however: a black patch on a white sheet. Particular and universal, patch and colour, are united in the patch.

But if a proposition has two poles, we have reintroduced a symmetry which threatens to make truth indefinable once more. Wittgenstein considered this in the *Notes dictated to G. E. Moore in Norway* in April 1914: 'it seems at first as if the ab notation must be wrong, because it seems to treat true and false as on exactly the same level.'[35] The a and b poles show it can be true or false. But which is which? Russell recalls that Wittgenstein was asked by Whitehead on a visit in August 1913 to Whitehead's house what a and b were: '"a and b are indefinable," Wittgenstein answered in a voice of thunder.'[36]

Wittgenstein's solution came in April 1914: 'The description of the ab-symbol alone is symmetrical with respect to a and b; but this description plus the fact that what satisfies the description of a tautology *is* a tautology is asymmetrical with regard to them.'[37] Once we know that, for example, p∨~p is a tautology and not a contradiction, we know that '∨' is disjunction and so that a is the true pole. The three issues (the tautologies, the connectives and the truth-values) are intimately connected. Whether identifying the tautologies is better than identifying the true pole is a moot point. Nonetheless, the insight about unity remains. There are no 'false' facts or non-existent situations. To be distinguished from its terms as a relation, a relation must in fact relate its terms. Unless it does so, we do not have a situation or state of affairs at all, not even a non-existent one, but only a homogeneous collection or list of elements. The heterogeneity in the fact consisting in *a*, *R* and *b*, for example, is given by the fact that *R* relates *a* and *b*, that is, by the fact that *aRb*.

The fallacy typified by Stenius' interpretation of Wittgenstein is a common philosophical mistake. We can christen it the 'hypallagic' fallacy. Hypallage is the figure of speech involving a transferred epithet, as in 'a hot cup of tea', 'a sleepless night' or 'the condemned cell'. When philosophers move from denying that gods, golden

[35] *Notebooks 1914–1916*, 113–4.

[36] B. Russell, *Autobiography*. Vol. II *1914–44* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968), 101.

[37] *Notebooks 1914–1916*, 113.

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mountains or winged horses exist to speaking of non-existent gods, golden mountains and winged horses, they are prone to inflate their ontology with the non-existent. Ayer tried to make a virtue of the hypallagic fallacy when he recommended replacing the formulation, 'it now seems to me that I see a cigarette case' with 'I am now seeing a seeming-cigarette case', in his defence of sense-data.[38] The hypallagic fallacy entices us to rephrase 'it is possible that there is a state of affairs ...' with 'there is a possible state of affairs ...', and our ontology has inflated to include the possible in addition to the actual.

We can now see how Wittgenstein's theory of propositions answers his criticism of Russell's theory for making the judging of nonsense possible. Russell had adopted the multiple-relation theory because he thought the single-relation theory could not account for false belief. But his multiple-relation theory threatened to be even worse: it permitted nonsensical beliefs. Rather than give up on propositions, as proposed in the multiple-relation theory, Wittgenstein defended the proposition by his bipolarity account. Propositions have two poles, true and false. Every proposition with sense must be true or false, and so either it or its negation is true. Whichever it is, there is a corresponding fact. That fact is what gives sense to both propositions, the one the negation of the other.

In that fact which constitutes their (joint) sense, the relation (more generally, the universal) has not become detached from the terms it relates (the particulars). It was allowing it to become so detached that opened up the possibility of judging nonsense. Thus the solution depends crucially on the unity of the fact. Only when the relation actually relates its terms can it be distinguished in type from the terms it relates.

Wittgenstein denies, therefore, that there are non-actual states of affairs. His ontology is one of facts. Logical space contains only facts. When we speak of situations which do not obtain we are not committing ourselves to the existence or being of non-actual states of affairs. What gives meaning, or sense, to what we say are the actual states of affairs, the states of affairs that do exist.

What. we may then ask, is the distinction between facts (*Tatsachen*) and situations (*Sachlagen*)? A clue is found in a letter from Wittgenstein to Russell in August 1919:

> 'Tatsache is, what corresponds to the logical product of elementary prop[osition]s when this product is true.'[39]

[38] A. J. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge* (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin, 1956), 96.

[39] *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Cambridge Letters*, 125.

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Sachlagen, however, correspond to any true proposition whatever. This is confirmed by Ramsey's notes for his lectures on Wittgenstein in Cambridge in 1925:[40]

'3 words for fact		atom prop (= W's elem prop)
Atom fact	Sachverhalt	p
Fact	Tatsache	$p.q$
State of Affairs	Sachlage	$p \vee q$'

That is, three words are used for facts. 'Sachverhalt' = 'atomic fact' corresponds to an atomic or elementary proposition. 'Tatsache' = 'fact' is a conjunction of atomic facts. 'Sachlage' = 'state of affairs' is what is represented by any proposition such as $p \vee q$.

4. Alethic Modality

This consequence of the right account of the unity of the fact, that there are no non-actual states of affairs, shows that a currently popular account of modality is mistaken. This is the topic of the final section of this paper.

Truth is one of the alethic modalities. Others are necessity, possibility, contingency and impossibility. I have suggested earlier that truth is a substantive and external property. For if it were internal, it would be either indefinable or insubstantial, and the only argument for its insubstantiality failed. (Of course, a full demonstration would require another occasion.) Are the other alethic modalities also substantive and external? If so, then there must be something in virtue of which propositions have these modalities.

What we might call the Leibnizian account interprets necessary truth as truth in all possible worlds and possibility as truth in some. Possible worlds are conceived as maximal states of affairs, each world differing from another in at least one respect, and the whole panoply of worlds covering every possible respect in which they may differ. The modal, intensional, notions of necessity and possibility are thus replaced by, in fact, reduced to, non-modal truth at different worlds, an extensional analysis.

A metaphysical claim backs up the Leibnizian interpretation. Possible worlds really exist, and a proposition is necessarily true if it is true of all possible situations, or worlds. This does not mean that it need be true in those worlds, and certainly it is not a question

[40] Frank Ramsey Collection, University of Pittsburgh Libraries #002-29-01 'Wittgenstein': p. 3. Quoted by permission of the University of Pittsburgh. All rights reserved.

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of whether the sentence expressing the proposition is true in other situations—snow could still be white even if 'snow' meant grass. Nonetheless, it is contingent that snow is white, for, according to possible-world semantics, there are worlds in which snow is not white as well as others like our own in which it is white.

The Leibnizian explication is certainly psychologically useful. It provides a fertile model to illustrate modal notions. The present question, however, is whether it provides philosophical illumination. An immediate objection is that it is circular, since the definiendum appears in the definiens: possibility is explained as truth in some possible world. Nothing has yet been explained until we are told which worlds are possible. What distinguishes one world from another are the contingencies—what might be true or might be false. What worlds have in common are what cannot be false. That ensures that necessity is modelled by truth in every world, but it doesn't provide any explanation of the notion of necessity.

4.1 Modal Realism

Two theories may be thought to answer that criticism. One is modal realism, which claims that all possible worlds are equally real, that each is a complete concrete totality of objects in all their variety. This world, the world which contains us, and makes non-modal claims true, the actual world, is only one among the infinitely many worlds. To say that this is the actual world is a relative and indexical claim, referring to our world. Inhabitants of other possible worlds will rightly describe their own world as actual.

It is this infinity of real, alternative worlds which the modal realist says gives content to the notion of 'possible world'. In contrast, an actualist claims that our world, the actual world, is the only real possible world—other worlds are only possible, not real, and do not really exist. The actualist is forced, therefore, to characterize other worlds relative to the actual world, as possible alternatives, and so needs to explain which alternatives are possible prior to giving an account of the modal notions in terms of worlds. This is not incumbent on the modal realist, who can point to the entire range of worlds, the full reality in explanation. There is in themselves nothing modal about his worlds. They are real concrete existents. The sense in which they are possible and non-actual is not inherent in them, but simply a consequence of our being inhabitants of a different one, the actual world. Their modality has been reduced to an external and non-modal feature. In David Lewis' words:

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> 'The other worlds are of a kind with this world of ours. To be sure, there are differences of kind between things that are parts of different worlds—one world has electrons and another has none, one has spirits and another has none—but these differences of kind are no more than sometimes arise between things that are parts of one single world, for instance in a world where electrons coexist with spirits.'[41]

The modal realist like Lewis is claiming that the states of affairs are far more numerous and various than we ordinarily take them to be: e.g., that there exist states of affairs such as donkeys talking, Desdemona loving Cassio and so on. Such a doctrine has become so widespread and unquestioned that one feels like the child before the Emperor without clothes in speaking up: donkeys do not talk, and Desdemona did not love Cassio. There are no such states of affairs.

The modal realist response is that this conflates what exists with what actually exists. According to the modal realist, the notion of actuality is relative and indexical. Lewis explains:

> '[M]odality turns into quantification: possibly there are blue swans iff, for some world W, at W there are blue swans ... [T]he phrase 'at W' which appears within the scope of the quantifier ... needs explaining. It works mainly by restricting the domains of quantifiers within its scope ... At some strange world W, all swans are blue—all swans are indeed blue, if we ignore everything not part of the world W; quantifying over things that are part of W, all swans are blue.'[42]

The actual world of the modal realist is a restricted domain, the world of the speaker. That analysis fails to do justice to the notion, however. For what actually happens is what really happens. Other possibilities are only that, possibilities. Although possible, it must be recognized that if they did not eventuate, they really did not eventuate and are unreal. Modal realism confuses what is really possible with what is real *tout court*. Only what the actual world contains is real. Descriptions of other possible worlds portray or represent things as being different from how they (really) are. As ways the worlds might be, or have been, they are abstract representations of (mere) possibilities. Although the representations are real, what they describe is not. Only the actual world is real. Modal realism divorces reality from what is actually the case, and so fails to give a

[41] D. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 2.
[42] Op. cit., 5.

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proper analysis of the notion of actuality—and hence of reality and of possibility.

At this point, we need to distinguish two modal realist approaches, transworld identity versus counterpart theory. According to transworld identity theory, what makes modal statements about individuals true are non-modal facts about those very individuals, namely, how they are at other worlds. The very same individual is one way in one world and a different way in another, and that shows that being that way (in either) is contingent. It is necessarily that way if it is that way in all worlds, possibly that way if it is that way in some. Individuals are identical across worlds.

The problem faced by transworld identity theory again hinges on the unity of the fact. If loving did unite Desdemona and Cassio, then Desdemona did indeed love Cassio, and Othello's suspicion was well grounded. If, however, loving did not relate Desdemona and Cassio, then it really did not, and no fancy footwork with possible worlds can connect them. It was certainly possible for Desdemona to love Cassio, but she didn't, and Othello's belief was false. Truth is absolute, not relative to one world or another. Either the constituents of the fact are united, or they are not. Perhaps they could have been, but if they had been, then they were. The problem with possible but non-actual states of affairs is that they cannot be states of affairs without actually uniting their terms—and so being actual.

Once again, the hypallagic fallacy has snared the ontologist. Things are as they are. They might have been different. There are other possible outcomes. So it seems to follow that there are non-actual states of affairs. But there cannot be, for the relating relation has no reality beyond the fact that it relates and unites its terms. If things were not united in fact—in fact united—then there was no unity to constitute a possible fact.

Lewis' counterpart-theoretic modal realism escapes the problem of the unity of the fact. For his non-actual states of affairs are not constituted of actual objects, but of their counterparts. For example, what makes it possible that Desdemona love Cassio is not Desdemona's being non-actually related by loving to Cassio, but Desdemona's counterpart really loving Cassio's double. The counterparts really are united. So the state of affairs uniting them really is a state of affairs. Lewis accordingly calls it non-actual, but that is again hypallage.

The unity problem is avoided, but a further problem emerges. Only Lewis' fiat connects Desdemona's modal properties with the real non-modal properties of her counterparts. What Lewis in fact

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says is that Desdemona's counterpart 'represents' Desdemona as loving Cassio. He writes:

> 'Humphrey may be represented *in absentia* at other worlds, just as he may be in museums in this world ... Another world ... can have as a part a Humphrey of its own, a flesh-and-blood counterpart of our Humphrey, a man very like Humphrey in his origins, or in his historial role. By having such a part, a world represents *de re*, concerning Humphrey ... that he exists and does thus-and-so.'[43]

But this is confusion. It is propositions which represent. Different states of affairs are what is represented—or perhaps, given the bipolar account of representation in § 3, what would be represented were they actual, and what are represented if they are actual.

So, whether modal realism is framed in terms of transworld identity or using counterparts, it fails to explain modal properties adequately. The first way founders on the unity of the fact, the fact that there are no non-actual states of affairs. The second way, using counterparts, fails because, however well a counterpart may illustrate or represent a possibility, it cannot constitute that modal fact. Of course, a proposition can represent something as thus-and-so, and so describe its modal properties. But a world was meant to do more than that. It was meant to be how things are, not just how they are represented to be. Modal realism fails to explain the modal attributes of things.

4.2 Combinatorialism

As treated above, modal realism was developed in answer to the circularity objection. It has been found wanting. The other theory which might be thought to counter that criticism is Combinatorialism. This doctrine says that the possible is constituted by all re-combinations of actual elements. Consider the constituents of all actual facts. Recombine them in all possible ways. Then each of those ways of combining them constitutes what might be called a possible world—a possible world is, and is no more than, a maximal way of recombining what there is.

> 'The Naturalist theory of possibility now to be advanced will be called a Combinatorial theory. It traces the very idea of possibility to the idea of the combinations—*all* the combinations—of given, actual elements.'[44]

[43] Op. cit., 194.

[44] D. M. Armstrong, *A Combinatorial Theory of Possibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1989), 37.

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Combinatorialism requires that there be a base of logically independent propositions. For the important point is that *all* features of some sort be combinable, and that that sort be capable of characterization without recourse to the concept of possibility. But there is no such base of logically independent atomic propositions and atomic states of affairs. Wittgenstein attempted to defend this claim in ¶ 6.3751 of his *Tractatus*, but recognized its problematic nature in 'Some remarks on logical form' and subsequently.[45] The problem is that the determinates of a determinable logically exclude one another. Take, for example, the determinates 'scarlet' and 'crimson' of 'red', or 'red' and 'green' of 'colour'. Nothing can be both red and green, or both crimson and scarlet all over at any one time. This is a necessary truth and so demands explanation by our theory of necessity. If the determinates 'crimson' and 'scarlet' were logically independent elements, then they could be combined, and it would be possible for something to be both crimson and scarlet, even though nothing actually is. Since it is impossible, they cannot be logically independent, and so not atoms, not even the relative atoms which Armstrong concedes may be the only atoms there are.[46]

Armstrong in fact denies that red and green are universals, since two objects can both be red and yet have nothing in common, if, say, one is scarlet and the other is crimson. Perhaps the same is true of scarlet and crimson, if two scarlet things can in fact differ in exact shade. Nonetheless, suppose one found the ultimate determinates of 'red', call them *a*, *b*, ... (perhaps 'this exact shade of red', 'that exact shade of red', ..., specified ostensively). These would be the universals. But they could not be atoms, since they are not logically independent, for nothing can be two different shades of red all over at any one time.

Wittgenstein's belief expressed in ¶6.3751 was that further analysis, possibly physical analysis into wavelengths, could explain this incompatibility. Armstrong seems to share this hope. Following his return to philosophy in the late 1920s, however, Wittgenstein realized that such reduction was impossible. For if the analysantia were compatible, the reduction would have failed; while if the reduction succeeded, it would simply repeat the incompatibility at the lower level. The problem is this: suppose *p* and *q* are incompatible ('This is red' and 'This is green', say). *p* and *q* are not just any two incompatible propositions—analysis is not always impossible. They ascribe incompatible determinates of a determinable. Then

[45] L. Wittgenstein; 'Some Remarks on Logical Form', *Aristotelian Society* Supp. Vol. 9 (1929), 162–71.

[46] *A Combinatorial Theory of Possibility*, ch. 5.

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whatever analysis is applied to p, resulting in an analysans p', there will be a similar analysis q' of q. If p' and q' are compatible, something must have gone awry with the analysis—it won't explain why p and q are incompatible; while if p' and q' are incompatible, they will again ascribe incompatible determinates of a determinable (in Wittgenstein's case, different positions to a light-particle), and so p' and q' cannot be atomic. The original problem has simply been repeated. Not all necessity could be explained in the truth-functional, or combinatorialist manner he had hoped for in the *Tractatus*. Determinates of a determinable are inherently incompatible.

Recall from § 3 Wittgenstein's example of the black patch on white paper.[47] 'This patch is black' has only two poles, and each point of the surface has only two possibilities, white or black. But the structure of determinates and determinables is not bi-polar. The atoms are not logically independent, and so cannot be arbitrarily recombined.

Armstrong nonetheless believes that the solution of ¶ 6.3751 will work, and offers a 'model... for typical cases'.[48] The states of affairs of incompatible determinates are not wholly distinct, he says. For example, the state of affairs of being 5 kg in mass consists of five states of affairs of mereological parts of the whole being 1 kg in mass. Yet this analysis cannot answer Wittgenstein's puzzle. Wittgenstein commented in late 1929:

> 'All this I did not yet know when I was writing my work [i.e. the *Tractatus*]: at that time I thought all inference was based on tautological form. At that time I had not yet seen that an inference can also have the form: This man is 2m tall, therefore he is not 3m tall.'[49]

For Armstrong's model does not have the necessary generality. Just because a state of affairs concerning a has as a proper part that of b's being F does not exclude a's being F. That a patch of colour has proper parts which are red does not exclude the whole's being red—indeed, it can entail it.

Armstrong here appeals to the Headless Woman illusion. It is an observed failing of humans, he notes, that they see a headless woman where they see a woman but fail to see a head—a negation

[47] *Notebooks 1914–1916*, 99.

[48] *A Combinatorial Theory of Possibility*, 78.

[49] F. Waismann, *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*, B. McGuinness (ed.), J. Schulte and B. McGuinness (trs.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 64.

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shift converts lack of awareness to awareness of a lack. The same mechanism, he suggests, can extrapolate from our failure to perceive *a*'s being *F* (when it is not *F*, and when we perceive its parts to be *F*) to our concluding (correctly) that *a* is not *F*. But this is illogical. A mechanism which misleads us on some occasions is not proved reliable by leading us to a correct conclusion on others. Our not perceiving that the man is 3m tall does not entail that he is not that tall, and so does not explain why his being 2m tall does entail it.

Moreover, the proposed solution, even if it worked for mass or height, is inapplicable to colour. An object's being crimson does not have to contain anything scarlet, or vice versa. These determinates of red simply exclude one another. The point of Wittgenstein's remark in ¶ 6.3751 was to try to analyse colour incompatibility in terms of incompatibility of wavelength and so ultimately of position. But colour and wavelength do not aggregate as mass does, so Armstrong's 'model', consciously inspired by Wittgenstein's proposal, cannot be applied.

Combinatorialism depends for its success on reducing possibility to some non-modal aspect of the parts which are combined. The structure of determinates is irreducibly modal, and so Combinatorialism must also fail to give a non-circular account of modality.

What has happened is that Combinatorialism too has fallen foul of the problem of the unity of the fact. The Combinatorialist idea is to take the constituents of the actual facts and recombine them to form all possible facts. But, as we have seen, once one has taken a fact apart, there is no way to put it back together again. If the constituents are united, then it is a fact that they are united—in the actual state of affairs. If not, then nothing can unite them. There are no recombinations of the elements of facts: the only states of affairs there are, are the actual states of affairs—how the elements are in fact combined and united. If all that is meant by recombination is at the level of description, then modality has become a purely internal property: what can be thought together can be thought together. Of course, we can describe their (possible) recombination. As we saw with the Identity Theory of Truth, the elements can be thought together; but then we have no explanation of modality. The Combinatorialist proposal was to ground the substantive modal properties of propositions in recombinations of elements. But there literally are no recombinations of elements. What combinations there are, are all there are.

This entails, however, that Wittgenstein's notion of bipolarity is a false model. Patches are not just black or white. Propositions do

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not have just two poles. Determinates are not bipolar: any ascription of a determinable corresponds to a single determinate fact. That the patch is crimson, say, makes it false that it is scarlet, vermilion, ultramarine, cyan and so on, just as the fact that a man is 2 m tall makes it false that he is 1 m, 3 m, 2.5 m tall—that he is any other height.

5. Conclusion

I have not shown that the alethic modalities are not substantive and external properties. Indeed, I believe they are. But neither modal realism nor the combinatorial theory of possibility properly describes these notions. The reason is that there are no non-actual possible facts—whether concrete realities or *Ersatz* recombinations—to constitute the possible worlds which the Leibnizian strategy deploys.

The Leibnizian strategy destroys the unity of the fact. The unity of the fact shows that the Leibnizian ontology of possible worlds is mistaken. Descriptions of how the world might be describe possible worlds, and one description describes how it is. But nothing corresponds to those descriptions except for those which are true. It's the fact that nothing corresponds to the others which constitutes their being false representations, ways the world is not.

The Leibnizian strategy trades on the hypallagic fallacy. The possibility of alternative states of affairs transmutes into the existence of possible states of affairs. But the possibility here properly attaches to their existence, not to the states themselves. The world might have been different, but that does not warrant belief in possible worlds. The phantasmogoria of possible worlds is a wonderful metaphor and the basis of useful mathematical and logical techniques, but it is bad philosophy and ontological myth.

Wittgenstein realised these dangers, and saw them in Russell's early theory of propositions. Rather than eliminate propositions, as Russell subsequently did, leading literally to belief in nonsense, Wittgenstein recognized a bipolarity in propositions, picturing the state of affairs which makes one proposition true, its contradictory false. Propositions cannot picture what does not exist, though they can represent it as not existing by picturing what does exist. Facts are how things are, and 'false facts' is a solecism. Things are united in the fact, and without that unity they are nothing. They can be thought together, even when not united in fact. But they cannot be disunited and yet retain any combinatorial character.

There are no non-actual states of affairs. The actual states of

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affairs, the facts, determine which representations, the propositions, are true and which false. To each fact there correspond a multitude of propositions, and truth is the substantial, relational property of corresponding to a fact. Recognising the unity of the fact is a necessary prolegomenon to establishing that last claim.[50]

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[50] I wish to express particular thanks to my (former) colleague, Fraser Macbride, for lively discussions concerning the topic of this paper.

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