

TRANSCENDING TRANSCENDENTALISM:  
A RESPONSE TO BOGHOSSIAN  
by  
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Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 72 (1991): 87-100

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Transcendental arguments are a risky business. They attempt to establish substantive claims about the world without any empirical thought. Too often the world has struck back, showing that what has seemed transcendental is incompatible with actual empirical results.

Although the lesson here seems to have been well learnt in regard to geometry and physics, it has yet to be fully appreciated in psychology. Perhaps the world has yet to fully strike back in this domain --or people presume too great a familiarity with it-- so that transcendental claims seem deceptively safe.

Particularly tempting in this regard have been claims about the truth-conditional content of mental states. Eliminativism about such content is thought to be not simply empirically false, as many of us suspect, but in some sense, "incoherent," "contradictory" or "unstable." We think it's important to be alive to the dangers of such claims.

Paul Boghossian took a transcendentalist approach to content in his recent article, "The Status of Content," ("SOC").<sup>i</sup> He argued that the content eliminativist must choose between various "irrealist" doctrines each of which is incoherent. Michael Devitt's "Transcendentalism About Content" ("TC")<sup>ii</sup> was an attempt to discredit such arguments. Its central theme was that the arguments follow a question-begging strategy: they start by applying notions to the eliminativist that presuppose precisely the theory that she aims to reject, failing to see that she would of course need to resort to notions from a replacement theory. TC argued that this was Boghossian's strategy in SOC. And so it is also, for the most part, in his reply to TC, "The Status of Content Revisited" ("SCR").<sup>iii</sup>

Boghossian's argument is quite intricate, and, we think, seriously flawed at almost every point. Attending to all the flaws, however, risks obscuring the essential points we wish to make, especially: that none of Boghossian's irrealist doctrines is both incoherent and plausibly attributable to the eliminativist. In the next section we shall try to establish this as directly as possible, calling attention only in a general way to the errors in his argument that we discuss in detail in section III.

**II. THE ESSENTIAL POINTS**

The content eliminativism that concerns us can be stated simply: nothing has referential or truth-conditional content.

Now, in general, someone who makes the metaphysical claim that nothing is P must provide some substantive semantic account of statements of the form 'x is P.' Since the content eliminativist rejects truth-conditional semantics, she must supply some non-truth-conditional semantics for such talk. She certainly cannot resort to the usual "robust" notions of truth and reference (with which she therefore also must not be burdened).

She can resort to "deflationary" notions. As has been widely noted, these are mere devices of "semantic ascent," permitting meta-linguistic paraphrases of object-language sentences, and unsuited to any explanatory semantic task. TC argued that a content-eliminativist might be so "austere" as to resist even this modest truth-conditional talk. In SCR Boghossian argues that this austere position is "necessarily false." His argument is a clear example of the transcendentalist strategy: it begins by assuming precisely what the austere eliminativist is denying, that there is a satisfactory deflationary sense of truth (see IIIC below).

Invariably, however, the eliminativist does accompany her objectual metaphysical-level claims with meta-linguistic, apparently truth-conditional ones. It is doctrines of this meta-linguistic sort that Boghossian calls "irrealism." The eliminativist may say, for example, that nothing satisfies the predicates 'is true' or 'refers' (Boghossian's "error" thesis); or she may say that those predicates don't refer to any real properties, and/or that sentences containing them are not truth-conditional ("non-factualism"). These latter claims can have the superficial appearance of self-contradiction: the eliminativist appears to be using the very truth-conditional talk she rejects. But that appearance can be dispelled by (a) carefully distinguishing robust from deflationary ways of understanding that talk, and (b) carefully avoiding burdening the eliminativist with the very semantic doctrines that she rejects.

The most straightforward meta-linguistic claims the eliminativist can make are deflationary error theses: robust semantic predicates are not deflationarily-true of anything. For example, she might claim,

(DCE) 'S has robust-truth conditions' is always  
deflationarily-false,

which is simply a meta-linguistic restatement of her eliminativism.

In SOC, Boghossian argued that all error theses led to contradictions (pp. 174-175). This argument ignored the possibility of using deflationary notions to deny the application of robust ones and so failed to consider (DCE). As a result, the argument failed, as TC pointed out (pp. 255-257) and Boghossian now concedes.<sup>iv</sup> (DCE) is one of the three irrealist doctrines between which he now thinks the

eliminativist must choose. So it may seem as if the eliminativist has solved her problem.

However, in SCR, he advances another argument, "the a fortiori argument," to show that deflationary error theses like (DCE) are incoherent (SCR: 275). This new argument arises from considering what the eliminativist is committed to saying when she actually uses robust terms instead of deflationary ones to deny the application of the robust ones.

Now, usually, it is not necessary for her to do so. In particular, the eliminativist would never even consider another of the three irrealist doctrines that Boghossian presents to her for choice, robust content eliminativism,

(RCE) `S has robust-truth condition p' is always robustly-false,<sup>v</sup>

a doctrine that is obviously incoherent. Boghossian supplies absolutely no argument for thinking that this is an appropriate expression of content irrealism. This is another striking example of the transcendentalist strategy of trying to burden the eliminativist with the very notions she rejects (IIIA below).

Although the eliminativist avoids using robust notions positively to express her views, she is logically committed to using them to make certain negative claims. For example, since she believes that no predicate robustly-refers to a property and that no sentence is robustly-truth-conditional (and so equivalently believes (DCE)), she is committed a fortiori to content non-factualism:

(CNF) The predicate `has robust-truth condition p' does not robustly-refer to a property; and the sentence `S has robust-truth condition p' is not robustly-truth-conditional.<sup>vi</sup>

This is the third of the allegedly incoherent irrealist doctrines that Boghossian presents to the eliminativist. In SOC, and initially in SCR, (CNF) is said to be an optional expression of irrealism. It is no more suitable for that purpose than is (RCE) (IIIA below). But, although it is not a reasonable expression of her view, Boghossian is right to think it is a logical consequence of it.

However, what is actually wrong with (CNF)? In SOC, Boghossian argues that the two conjuncts of (CNF) yield "a contradiction" (p. 175). TC did not discuss this argument but conceded its conclusion in passing (p. 258). This quick concession was careless. (CNF) is in perfect order. The eliminativist does not deny herself the right to use the word `robust-truth'. She can use the word to deny that anything is robustly-true, just as the atheist can similarly use the word `divine' (see TC: 262n).

Boghossian's argument to show that (CNF) is contradictory is complicated and error-ridden.<sup>vii</sup> He finds incoherence under every stone: not only are the two conjuncts of (CNF) alleged to contradict one another but each conjunct on its own is unstable; even deflationary theories of truth and reference are incoherent. None of these claims is correct. Among other things they rest upon erroneously assuming (1) that the denial that a sentence has robust-truth conditions entails that 'true' refers to a property, and (2) that every predicate deflationarily-refers to a property. We suspect that Boghossian is confused about the traditional (non-)problem of "nonbeing,"<sup>viii</sup> and about the issue of property realism (IIIB below).

In sum, Boghossian thinks that the three doctrines, (DCE), (RCE), and (CNF), are incoherent and attributable to the eliminativist. (DCE) and (CNF) are attributable but are perfectly coherent; (RCE) is incoherent but is not attributable.

Boghossian usually presents his argument as an a priori argument that eliminativism is incoherent. Occasionally, however, he retreats merely to issuing a "challenge" to the eliminativist to avoid incoherency by formulating irrealism in a non-standard way (e.g. SCR: 270). On our view, this splits into two challenges, one to state her metaphysical view about content and the other, her semantic view about the ascription of content. Neither challenge is interesting. The metaphysical challenge is uninteresting because there is no incoherence in the standard objectual formulations or in (DCE). The semantic challenge is uninteresting because it is obvious from the start that the eliminativist owes us a non-standard way of talking about mind and language in general (TC: 255, 260). She needs to provide a non-truth-conditional theory to describe, predict, and explain what we are all doing and saying every day.<sup>ix</sup> This is a serious problem for the eliminativist beside which stating special philosophical doctrines like irrealism pales into insignificance.

Now for the details. We have seen that Boghossian's case against the eliminativist comes down to three allegations: that the incoherent (RCE) is her statement of the error thesis; that (CNF), to which she is clearly committed, is incoherent; and that the fall-back position, austere eliminativism, is necessarily false. We shall consider his arguments for these allegations in turn.

### III. BOGHOSSIAN'S ARGUMENTS

#### A. THE ATTRIBUTION OF (RCE)

Where Boghossian's irrealist doctrines talk of robust truth or reference, TC took the doctrines to be distinct from eliminativism. It took them to be at the semantic level, occasioned perhaps by eliminativism at the metaphysical level, but additional to that eliminativism. TC did this because a robust irrealist doctrine about the sentence 'x is P' is indubitably semantic and hence different from the metaphysical claim that there are simply no P's. It is fashionable, of course, to overlook or downplay the distinction between semantics and metaphysics, particularly in the realism debate. As one of us has argued long and hard elsewhere, this practice leads to serious errors.<sup>x</sup>

The view that irrealist doctrines are additional to eliminativism is the source of Boghossian's main response to TC's criticisms. Throughout SCR he charges it with a "master confusion," "simple mistake," "fallacious assumption," and so forth. His complaint has two related aspects. First, TC misunderstood his intentions: he intends the doctrines to be not distinct from eliminativism but rather expressive of eliminativism. Second, he claims that the doctrines are indeed expressive of eliminativism. It would appear that the "master confusion" Boghossian attributes to TC is its having failed to confuse metaphysics and semantics in the way that he insists that they be confused.<sup>xi</sup>

Metaphysical eliminativist doctrines, whether about gods, atoms or minds, have of course typically been accompanied by semantic doctrines. Provided the metaphysical doctrines are not obscured, nothing much hinges on whether the semantic ones are described as "expressive of" or "additional to" eliminativism. The substantive issue in the present case is this: Are Boghossian's particular irrealist doctrines appropriately attributed to the content eliminativist? Boghossian has to establish that the content eliminativist can plausibly be seen as committed to doctrines that are incoherent, whether they are expressive or additional.

In considering Boghossian's attempt to establish this, we shall treat lightly his claim about the non-factualist (CNF) because the eliminativist is committed to it anyway by the a fortiori argument. Commitment to the deflationary error thesis, (DCE), is uncontroversial. Our concern is with the robust error thesis, (RCE).

We must start with irrealist doctrines in general, for Boghossian derives the particular irrealist doctrines about content by applying those general ones.

Boghossian thinks that history is on his side in two respects.

1. According to TC, Boghossian claims, the general metaphysical-level doctrine of eliminativism about P's is:

(E) There are no P's.

Boghossian claims (SCR: 265) that "the slightest knowledge of the history" reveals two different versions of this:

(E1) There is a property of being P, but nothing has it;

(E2) There is no such property as that of being P.

From these, Boghossian moves quickly to his two meta-linguistic expressions of irrealism, the error thesis and non-factualism.

We agree that P-eliminativism might take two forms,<sup>xii</sup> but we doubt that even a thorough knowledge of history would show that these must be (E1) and (E2). Insofar as eliminativists have talked in those ways about properties, that talk should be seen as either a mere manner of speaking to be paraphrased away when the ontological chips are down; or it should be seen as involving a stand on the issue of property realism. A stand on this issue is additional to eliminativism because the issue is independent of eliminativism. Thus, an eliminativist can be a nominalist, rejecting all properties; she can be an unselective realist, accepting a property for every predicate; or she can be a selective realist, accepting properties only where they are explanatory.<sup>xiii</sup> (E1) would be appropriate only for an unselective realist; (E2), only for a selective one. Thus, one must be extremely careful in attributing property talk to eliminativists, much more careful than Boghossian is (see IIIB below).

2. Boghossian appeals to history again to support the next step in his move to irrealism. The error thesis, which he intends to be an expression of (E1), is

(3) 'x is P' is always false.

The non-factualist thesis, which he intends to be an expression of (E2), is

(1) The predicate 'is P' does not refer to a property

and (hence)

(2) 'x is P' does not express a truth condition. (SCR: 266)

Boghossian thinks that TC's failure to realize that these irrealist theses are, in these ways, expressions of eliminativism is its "master confusion." He gives a number of quotations from content eliminativists which, he suggests, TC "conveniently ignored" (SCR: 268) and which he thinks support these meta-linguistic formulations of eliminativism.

In considering whether (1) to (3) are expressions of P-eliminativism, it is essential to distinguish the deflationary and robust uses of the key terms. If the terms are deflationary then (3) is certainly an expression of P-eliminativism: it is simply a restatement of the metaphysical-level (E),<sup>xiv</sup> as TC pointed out (pp. 253-4).

Similarly, (1) is simply a restatement of (E2).<sup>xv</sup> If the terms are robust, however, (1) to (3) are not mere expressions of eliminativism. On the contrary, they are substantive additional semantic-level claims which P-eliminativism alone does not express.

So, if the quotations from the literature are to give any support to Boghossian's view of what is in contention, they must be construed robustly. He makes no attempt to show that they must.<sup>xvi</sup>

Apart from these tendentious appeals to history, Boghossian offers two arguments. One is a surprisingly insouciant walk in the footsteps of McX, Quine's famous protagonist in "On What There Is".<sup>xvii</sup>

Boghossian supposes that a negative singular existence statement, taken literally, presupposes the existence of the entity whose existence it denies.<sup>xviii</sup> We need not concern ourselves further with this. Its only purpose is to show that (1) is an expression of (E2) and hence to commit the content eliminativism to (CNF) which she is committed to anyway by the a fortiori argument. The other argument establishes, uncontroversially, that the deflationary version of (3) is an expression of eliminativism. Following these arguments, Boghossian concludes that his definition of eliminativism, which includes both the deflationary and the robust versions of (3), "subsumes [TC's definition] as part of a larger and fuller picture of the ideas that have been important in this area" (SCR: 267). Unfortunately, he has entirely neglected to argue that this larger picture needs to include the crucial, robust, version of (3),

(3A) 'x is P' is always robustly-false.

Boghossian offers nothing else in support of the move to his irrealist doctrines. He does say frequently that he intends the robust (1), (2), and (3) to be versions of eliminativism; and he says once that he wants them to be so. But intending them so does not make them so. And we can't always have what we want.

Boghossian intends (3A) to be an expression of P-eliminativism. He applies it to yield

(RCE) 'S has robust-truth condition p' is always robustly-false

as an expression of content eliminativism (SCR: 269, 271-2). Yet (3A) and (RCE) are obviously inconsistent with content eliminativism. Why in the world would someone who thinks that nothing is robustly-false state her position by claiming that something is robustly-false?<sup>xix</sup>

We need a powerful argument that the eliminativist is really committed to such claims. TC emphasized this obvious-enough point in claiming that Boghossian's SOC followed the usual question-begging transcendentalist strategy. It is striking that Boghossian responds to TC and still fails to produce an argument for saddling the eliminativist with (3A). This is a remarkable example of the persistence of the strategy.\*\*

## **B. THE ALLEGED INCOHERENCE OF (CNF)**

The eliminativist is committed to (CNF) by the a fortiori argument. Boghossian argues that the two conjuncts of (CNF) contradict one another. He argues that each conjunct on its own is incoherent. He even finds deflationary truth and reference incoherent. None of these arguments is good.

Contradictory Conjuncts: The conclusion that the two conjuncts of (CNF) contradict one another depends on the following assumption:

(9)\*\*i The idea that a sentence\*\*ii lacks truth conditions presupposes that 'true' refers to a property.

Using this, with 'refers' construed robustly, Boghossian argues that the second conjunct of (CNF),

(CNF2) 'S has robust-truth condition p' is not robustly-truth-conditional,

presupposes what the first,

(CNF1) 'Has robust-truth condition p' does not robustly-refer to a property,

denies (SOC: 175).

Boghossian offers a lengthy argument for (9) (SOC: 161-5). It starts well enough:

(10) Every sentence must have truth conditions if the sense of truth in question is deflationary.

This seems right. So,

(11) The idea that a sentence lacks truth conditions presupposes that the sense of truth in question is robust not deflationary.

If we overlook the possibility of austere eliminativism this also seems right. And, of course, it is in precisely that robust sense of truth that the eliminativist does claim that sentences lack truth conditions.



Boghossian moves from (11) to (9) in one sentence, without argument, as if (11) and (9) were equivalent (SOC: 165). But they are not. If we are selective property realists we will agree with his view that the difference between robust and deflationary truth is the difference between truth being and not being a property. Using this we can infer from (11) that the idea that a sentence lacks truth conditions presupposes that the sentence does not, in any circumstances, have a property truth. We can accept talk of reference: the idea presupposes that the sentence does not, in any circumstances, have a property referred to by 'true.' But there is simply no legitimate way to come close to concluding that the idea presupposes that 'true' refers to a property. The denial that something has a property truth no more implies that 'true' refers than does the denial that something has a property divinity imply that 'divine' refers. We cannot reach any version of (9) and so even if Boghossian had good reason for ruling out the deflationary interpretation of (9) --which he has not (see below)-- the robust interpretation of (9) that his argument requires would not have been established.<sup>xxiii</sup> So (CNF2) does not presuppose what (CNF1) denies.

Incoherent Deflationary Reference: Boghossian gives the following characterization of deflationary-reference:

(12) A term refers to a property provided it has the syntax of a predicate and possesses a role in the language. (SOC:166)

This extraordinary characterization, offered without any argument, plays a role in four of his incoherence arguments. It leads him to conclude that deflationary reference is incoherent. It is the basis for his preference for the robust over the deflationary construal of (9) in the argument we have just considered (SOC: 180-181). It is part of his arguments that (CNF1) and deflationary truth are incoherent.

We had (12) particularly in mind earlier in emphasizing the need for care in the use of property talk (IIIA). (12) as a characterization of deflationary reference raises irrelevant ontological considerations. It wrongly prevents both a nominalist and a selective realist from being deflationists. Consider, for example, a selective property realist who is also a moral non-factualist. She believes that wrongness, (unlike, say, squareness) is not a property. Deflationary-reference can then be used to express this belief: 'wrong' (unlike 'square') does not deflationarily-refer to a property. Deflationary-reference, properly understood,<sup>xxiv</sup> yields not (12) but

(13) A predicate 'P' refers to a property if and only if there is a property P-hood.

So, which predicates the deflationist takes to refer will depend, as it should, on which properties she believes in.<sup>xxv</sup>

When (12) is combined with a common characterization of deflationary-reference --reference is not a relation-- it obviously generates a contradiction.<sup>xxvi</sup> Boghossian endorses this common characterization in the same breath as (12) (SOC: 166) and later brings out the contradiction. Astonishingly, this does not lead him to reject (12) as a characterization but rather to conclude that deflationary-reference is incoherent (SOC: 181-182).

Incoherent (CNF2): Boghossian argues that

(CNF2) `S has robust-truth condition p' is not robustly-truth-conditional

alone is unstable. For it

presupposes...that `true' does name a genuine property. But if `true' does name a genuine property, how could sentences which attribute such properties be...non-factual, not capable of genuine truth and falsehood? (SOC:177)

But (CNF2) does not presuppose that `true' names a property; (9) is false.<sup>xxvii</sup> (CNF2), like other uses of robust notions to make negative claims, poses no problem for the eliminativist.

Incoherent (CNF1) and Deflationary Truth: Finally, Boghossian combines his characterization of deflationary-reference and what he takes to be a "platitude" to argue that both (CNF1) and deflationary-truth itself are unstable (SOC: 180-181). Since the characterization is incorrect, and the platitude false,<sup>xxviii</sup> the argument (which is in any case obscure) does not warrant further discussion here.

### **C. AUSTERE ELIMINATIVISM**

TC introduced the unlikely position, austere eliminativism, to show that the coherence of eliminativism was not at stake in Boghossian's intricate manipulations of notions of truth. The austere eliminativist is unimpressed by, perhaps even ignorant of, attempts to explain not only robust truth but deflationary truth too. As a result, she denies that sentences are true or false in any sense.

Boghossian points out, rightly, that if his a fortiori argument counts against the ordinary eliminativist it will count equally against the austere one (SCR: 275). But it does not count against either.

Boghossian finds a further problem for austerity: it "looks to be necessarily false" because, as he has argued, "it is impossible for a declarative sentence to fail to be deflationarily truth-conditional." TC is alleged to accept this conclusion (SCR: 276).

What he has argued, and what we accept, is that every sentence must have truth conditions provided that there is a satisfactory deflationary notion of truth; cf. (10) above. But, of course, a central part of what the austere eliminativist denies is that there is such a notion. Boghossian's argument to show that it is impossible for a declarative sentence to fail to be deflationarily truth-conditional presupposes precisely what the austere eliminativist denies: that a good theory of deflationary-truth can be given. This is another example of the usual question-begging strategy of the transcendentalists.

Boghossian may think that austere eliminativism is very implausible and we would agree with him. But a response to this austerity that does not beg the question must make the case for deflationary truth. Perhaps a compelling deflationary theory of truth could show that austerity is not just implausible but incoherent. So perhaps it could show that TC's claim that austerity is coherent is mistaken.<sup>xxxix</sup> But Boghossian certainly does not make this argument.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Boghossian claims that his irrealist theses are both problematic and plausibly attributed to the eliminativist. We have argued that insofar as they are attributable they are not problematic and that insofar as they are problematic they are not attributable.

Philosophers are usually taught to follow arguments wherever they may lead. We are less often taught something that is surely as important: to search hard for false premises when arguments lead to improbable conclusions. Transcendentalism about content may not be as improbable as many philosophical doctrines, but it certainly ought to give its proponents pause. If we have thoughts with truth-conditional content, that is a very substantial fact about the world. How could transcendentalists establish it so cheaply? How could it be established without any presentation of evidence that robust-truth can be satisfactorily explained? How could it be established without any presentation of evidence that robust-truth serves some theoretical purpose? Transcendentalists clearly cannot imagine a world without truth-conditional semantics. But this does not show that there could not be such a world. If we are to show that ours is in fact not such a world, we must return to the toil of empirical theory.<sup>xxx</sup>

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## NOTES

- i. Philosophical Review, 99 (1990): 157-184.
- ii. Pacific Philosophical Quarterly, 71 (1990): 247-263.
- iii. Pacific Philosophical Quarterly, 71 (1990): 264-278.
- iv. The concession might escape notice. It is to be found at the end of Boghossian's concluding remarks: "his criticism of my argument against the deflationary error thesis is strictly correct" (SCR: 277; see also p.278, n.14).
- v. (RCE) and (DCE) are versions of SOC's (4). (DCE) is TC's (4)\*.
- vi. This is the conjunction of (5) and (6) in SOC, construed robustly.
- vii. But it provides an interesting departure from the usual transcendentalist strategy in that it does not start by begging the question.
- viii. See Quine, W.V.O, "On What There Is," in From a Logical Point of View (New York: Harper & Row, 1963, 2nd ed. rev.), pp. 1-19, for an excellent disposal of the problem.
- ix. Some eliminativists, of course, have tried to meet this challenge: most notably, Quine advances a behaviorist theory of our talk (Word and Object, Cambridge: MIT, 1960); and Paul Churchland, a "state space" semantics (A Neurocomputational Perspective: the Nature and the Structure of Science, Cambridge: MIT 1989).
- x. Michael Devitt, Realism and Truth (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984; 2nd ed. rev., 1991); "Aberrations of the Realism Debate," Philosophical Studies, 61 (1991): 43-63.
- xi. Boghossian's very definition of "irrealism" invites this confusion. The term 'answer' in the phrase "no real properties answer to the central predicates" can be understood deflationarily (along the lines of 'refer' in our (13), section IIIB below), in which case irrealism is the metaphysical claim that certain properties do not exist. Or the term can be understood robustly, in which case irrealism is the semantic claim that the central predicates --unlike, by implication, others-- do not stand in a robust answering relation to properties.
- xii. TC did not claim otherwise. It took (E) to be the metaphysics underlying the error thesis but did not discuss the metaphysics underlying non-factualism.

xiii. The independence of the two issues is obvious in the case of error eliminativism. Any position on property realism could subscribe to (E), which is a perfectly suitable statement of the metaphysics that underlies the error thesis. The independence may not be so obvious in the case of non-factualist eliminativism. The metaphysics of non-factualism is difficult to identify and deserves much more discussion than Boghossian has provided or than we can undertake here. In brief, non-factualism differs sharply from the error thesis in holding that some things are P (e.g. moral non-factualists agree that murder is wrong); it's just that their being P has some sort of inferior status. The nominalist would try to capture this by saying that when things are P they are not so "explanatorily" (or "factually," "substantively," "robustly" "naturalistically," "scientifically," or whatever). An unselective realist would say that although some things are P, P-hood is not an "explanatory" property. And a selective realist who is choosy about her properties on "explanatory" grounds would say that although some things are P, there is no property P-hood. Whatever one's position on property realism, the crux to explaining non-factualism lies in explaining the metaphysics of being "explanatory" (or whatever). And the difficulty of doing that plausibly is a serious issue for non-factualism.

xiv. Ignoring austerity, of course.

xv. Boghossian wrongly rejects deflationary (1) as an expression of eliminativism; see note 25.

xvi. To see that showing this is not easy, consider two of Boghossian's eliminativist quotations from history (SCR:268):

(1) Stich's claim, "The predicate 'is a belief that p' does not express or correspond to a property," can be construed as the claim that the predicate in question does not deflationarily-refer to a property, which is equivalent to the claim that being a belief that p is not a property; (2) Ayer's claim, "The word 'true' does not stand for anything," can be construed as the claim that 'true' does not deflationarily-refer, which is equivalent to the claim that truth is not anything. Boghossian, himself, would reject these construals because of his peculiar characterization of deflationary reference (see the discussion of (12) in section III B below.) But he has made no effort to show that either Ayer, Stich or other eliminativists would agree to that characterization.

xvii. Op cit, pp. 1-2, 8-10.

xviii. The argument runs as follows:

it is hard to see how

[(E2) There is no such property as that of being P]

is to be read as saying anything other than:

The property of being P is such that there isn't  
such a property.

And that couldn't be true.

The trouble is that the property whose existence...is being denied  
must be specified...and yet not in terms that presuppose its  
existence. And I cannot see what coherent thought that is to  
be, if not a metalinguistic one. Namely, [(1)] (SOC: 266)

Boghossian does not provide any reason to think that the original  
negative existence statement is not perfectly all right as it is,  
much less that it invites the incoherent or meta-linguistic  
paraphrases. Negative existence statements may pose a problem for  
a semantic theory: it must allow that they can be true. But that  
is of no special concern to the eliminativist. Beyond this semantic  
problem there is nothing to "the problem of nonbeing": "we need no  
longer labor under the delusion that the meaningfulness of a statement  
containing a singular term presupposes an entity named by the term"  
(Quine, op cit, pp. 8-9); the meaningfulness of 'being P' does not  
presuppose the existence of P-hood.

xix. The eliminativist thinks that nothing is robustly-true but it  
would, of course, be a gross error to infer from this that she thinks  
that anything is robustly-false. Robust-falsity requires much more  
than the absence of robust-truth.

xx. Compare:

Why does Devitt think that it is "question-begging" to suppose that  
the eliminativist is committed to (RCE)? This is puzzling, is  
it not? (RCE) is supposed to be a statement of content  
eliminativism. How can the statement of a position beg its own  
question? (SCR: 271)

xxi. To avoid confusion, the numbers we choose for propositions will  
continue on from those in SOC.

xxii. Boghossian actually talks of "a significant declarative  
sentence." The qualification should be taken as read.

xxiii. What has gone wrong? We suspect that Boghossian may be confused  
by nonbeing, as we suggested in section II (see also note 18). The  
superficial form of (11) may also be a source of error. It is important  
to see that what (11) amounts to is the following: the idea that a

sentence lacks truth conditions presupposes that the sentence is not, in any circumstances, robustly-true.

xxiv. Deflationary-reference is, roughly, the idea that there is nothing more to reference than is captured by all instances of schemata like the following,

- (x) (e denotes x if and only if  $a=x$ ),
- (x) (e applies to x if and only if x is F),
- (x) (e refers to x if and only if  $x=F$ -hood),

where what is substituted for 'a' or 'F' "translates" what is referred to by the term substituted for 'e.'

xxv. And so the eliminativist could adopt yet another position that Boghossian wrongly rejects as incoherent: general deflationary non-factualism (see SOC: 165; SCR: 266-267). He thinks that his non-factualist theses, (1) ("The predicate 'is P' does not refer to a property") and (2) ("'x is P' does not express a truth condition"), cannot be understood deflationarily. He rightly dismisses deflationary (2) because of (11) but wrongly dismisses deflationary (1) because of (12). (1) is a natural way for the selective realist to express her eliminativism, as the example of wrongness shows. Because Boghossian thinks that a deflationary non-factualism is unintelligible in general, he does not present deflationary content non-factualism to the eliminativist as a possible way of stating irrealism. Yet deflationary (1) provides as natural a way to express eliminativism about content as about morality: 'true' does not deflationarily-refer to a property (cf. the quotations from Stich and Ayer discussed in note 16). And so this view joins (DCE), objectual statements of eliminativism, and statements reflecting the eliminativist's non-truth-conditional semantics, as a way to draw the "invidious distinction" between truth-conditional semantics and physics that Boghossian finds so problematic (cf. SOC: 178-179).

xxvi. A deflationist who was an unselective property realist would reject this common characterization and accept (12). She could then express her position by claiming that truth and reference were merely "logical" properties or relations, not explanatory ones; cf. Horwich, Truth (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 38-39. The important point is that one obviously can't accept both (12) and the common characterization that Boghossian takes for granted.

xxvii. Even if 'true' did name a property, there need be nothing unstable about (CNF2). The unselective property realist will accept that 'true' deflationarily-names a property, but can still hold that nothing is robustly-truth-conditional. Sentences that attribute this property can be genuinely true or false because they can be deflationarily so, and they can be non-factual in that their meaning

is not explained by the (non-truth-conditional) semantics that the eliminativist must offer for factual sentences (TC: 258-259). Perhaps Boghossian means explanatory by "genuine." But then it is obvious that no eliminativist would accept that 'true' names a genuine property in that sense; see note 13.

xxviii. Unless one is an unselective property realist. The platitude is: "'x is P' is true if and only if the object denoted by 'x' has the property expressed by 'P'" (SOC: 166). A platitude ought to be more ontologically neutral: e.g. 'x is P' is true if and only if there is something that 'x' denotes and that 'P' applies to.

xxix. Notice that many people may have good reasons to reject a language transcendent deflationism: they may be skeptical of propositions or worried about the semantic paradoxes. But what about 'truth-in-L' (for carefully selected L's)? Since this is a stipulatively defined predicate in model theory, perhaps Tarski has shown that it would be incoherent to reject it. But is it incoherent to dispute model theory (perhaps because of qualms about sets or about arithmetic)? We think 'incoherence' is best reserved for blatant logical contradiction, but don't care to argue the matter.

xxx. Some of the ideas included here were presented by GR at le Centre de Recherche en Epistemologie Appliquée (CREA) in Paris, and at the University of Rijeka in May 1990. We are grateful to members of the audiences there, and also to Barbara Herman, Brian Loar, Greg Currie and others who prefer to remain nameless.