Introduction: Preliminary ‘sketches of landscapes’
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What a Copernicus or a Darwin really achieved
was not the discovery of a true theory but
of a fertile new point of view.
Wittgenstein (1980: 18e)

The scientist who supposes that he is
single-mindedly dedicated to the search for truth
deceives himself. . . . He as much decrees as discovers
the laws he sets forth, as much designs as discerns
the patterns he delineates.
Goodman (1978: 18)

1. One dialect of the language game that is (relatively) mainstream academic philosophy can plausibly be said to constitute itself from any one of three principal points of view. From the first of these the questions that it asks, and the answers that it seeks, are metaphysical ones. For example:

1. What is truth?
2. What is justice?
3. What is beauty?

These are questions that have engaged the discourse of the discipline since Plato (if not before). Their answers are considered adequate when, for each question, a coherent and consistent set of necessary and sufficient conditions is provided. Rarely, if ever, have such answers been wholly

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satisfactory. 1 From the second of these the questions that it asks, and the answers that it seeks, are semantic ones. For example:

4. What is the meaning of the word ‘truth’?
5. What is the meaning of the word ‘justice’?
6. What is the meaning of the word ‘beauty’?

These are questions of a more recent vintage (as we shall see). Their answers are considered adequate when, for each question, a descriptively accurate and elegant set of correspondence conditions is provided. These sets, especially when conjoined with sets of truth conditions for declarative sentences, have sharpened analytic appreciation into the nature of (some parts of) natural language. And from the third of these the questions and the answers are pragmatic ones. For example:

7. How is the word ‘truth’ used?
8. How is the word ‘justice’ used?
9. How is the word ‘beauty’ used?

These questions are fashionable in present times, but it is not entirely clear what persuasive and convincing answers to them consists in. The ‘vocabularies’ of use are far from adequately developed.

2. There may be a natural, historical development in the appearance of these points of view. Recanati (e.g. 1994, 2004, 2005) certainly seems to think so. 2 Whilst he has relatively little to say about metaphysics, he is, in some of his work, quite confident that there is, and indeed should be, an historical, descriptive and theoretical evolution from semantic to pragmatic questions. 3

1 Or, somewhat more emphatically (to introduce someone whose work will be considered a little later): ‘The pattern of attempted definition, counterexample, amended definition, further counterexample, ending with a whimper of failure, is repeated with variations throughout the Socratic and middle Platonic dialogues. Beauty, courage, virtue, friendship, love, temperance are put under the microscope, but no convincing definitions emerge. The only definitions Plato seems happy with are tendentious characterizations of what it is to be a sophist. He also gives a few trivial samples of correct definitions: of a triangle; of mud (earth and water)’ (Davidson, 1996: 263).

2 So, in some of his moods, does Davidson (e.g. Davidson, 1999: 42–43, 2006: 1067).

3 Note for the post-preliminary sketch: Recanati (2005) makes a rather more interesting point than is acknowledged here in that he suggests that a focus be put on (the varieties of) semantic and pragmatic answers. Thus, to abbreviate too radically, he identifies such increasingly context-sensitive positions as ‘proto-literalism’, ‘eternalism’, ‘conventionalism’ and others, as attempts to provide the resources to answer the questions (4)–(6) above without the inquiry having to be ‘tipped over’ and faced with the questions (7)–(9). For the record, it is curious to note that, for Recanati (1994), Grice is a