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Nota di contenuto	Machine generated contents note: 1 Postmodernism, grand narratives and just-so stories -- Postmodernism and grand narratives -- Just-so stories -- Narrative and irony -- Language, culture and reality -- 2 Newton and Kissinger: Science as irony? -- Said, Kissinger and Newton -- Revolutions and paradigms -- Models of reality -- Ambiguity and irony -- 3 Learning to say 'I': Literature and subjectivity -- Interior and exterior worlds -- The idea of literature -- The ideal of the fragment -- Two kinds of truth? -- 4 Reconstructing religion: Fragmentation, typology -- and symbolism -- From religion to religions -- Religions of nature and of the heart -- Millenarian fragments and organic wholes -- The aesthetics of irony: Keble and Rossetti -- 5 The ache in the missing limb: Language, truth and -- presence -- Coleridge: The language of the Bible -- Newman: The physiognomy of development -- Polanyi: The

origins of meaning -- Steiner, Derrida and Hart: Presence and absence -- 6 Twentieth-century fundamentalisms: Theology, truth -- and irony -- Rorty: Language and reality -- Postmodernism and poetic language: Religion as aesthetics -- Logos and logothete: Reading reality -- 7 Science and religion: Language, metaphor and -- consilience -- Etching with universal acid -- Language as change -- A rebirth of images -- The fabric of the universe -- Concluding conversational postscript: The tomb -- of Napoleon.

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### Sommario/riassunto

An increasing number of contemporary scientists, philosophers and theologians downplay their professional authority and describe their work as simply 'telling stories about the world'. If this is so, Stephen Prickett argues, literary criticism can (and should) be applied to all these fields. Such new-found modesty is not necessarily postmodernist scepticism towards all grand narratives, but it often conceals a widespread confusion and naivety about what 'telling stories', 'description' or 'narrative', actually involves. While postmodernists define 'narrative' in opposition to the experimental 'knowledge' of science (Lyotard), some scientists insist that science is itself story-telling (Gould); certain philosophers and theologians even see all knowledge simply as stories created by language (Rorty; Cupitt). Yet story telling is neither innocent nor empty-handed. Prickett argues that since the eighteenth century there have been only two possible ways of understanding the world: the fundamentalist, and the ironic.

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