To James Conant
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Hilary Putnam

Hilary Putnam was born in Chicago in 1926. He took his B.A. in the University of Pennsylvania in 1948 and his Ph.D. at UCLA under the supervision of Hans Reichenbach in 1951. His doctoral topic was on the concept of probability. (This has recently been published under the title *The Meaning of the Concept of Probability in Application to Finite Sequences: with an Introduction Some Years Later*, by Garland, 1990.) After teaching in Northwestern University and in the Mathematics and Philosophy departments at Princeton, he joined the Faculty of MIT as Professor of the Philosophy of Science in 1961.

In the late 1950s he, together with Martin Davies and Julia Robinson, found the solution of the problem of the decidability of exponential diophantine equations and so provided the key to the solution of the tenth member of the list of major outstanding mathematical problems bequeathed to twentieth-century mathematics by David Hilbert.

In 1965 he moved to Harvard University as Professor of Philosophy and in 1976 was appointed Walter Beverley Pearson Professor of Mathematical Logic.
In the early 1960s he published a sequence of papers beginning with the now classic "Minds and Machines", which launched the "functionalist" account of mental life and which did so much to clarify the relationship between theories of computation, computability and the "mind-body" problem. In the 1970s he made outstanding contributions to the philosophy of language and the philosophy of natural science and mathematics; his work on the philosophy of space and time and the philosophy of geometry being particularly well known. In cooperation with the physicist David Finkelstein, he began an investigation into the foundations of quantum theory, which produced a series of papers on quantum logic, an investigation which is still continuing.

In 1976 he was elected President of the American Philosophical Association and in 1980 President of the Association of Symbolic Logic. In 1986 he gave the Carus lectures, which were published as The Many Faces of Realism in 1987 (Open Court); and in 1990 he gave the Gifford lectures in St Andrews, which were published as Renewing Philosophy (Harvard University Press, 1992).

Hilary Putnam is married to the American moral philosopher Ruth Anna Putnam, who teaches at Wellesley College, Massachusetts.

Preface

In 1991, Pino Donghi, Enrico Mistretta and Lorena Pretta raised the idea of my giving a series of lectures in Rome "on my current philosophical interests." I once again express my gratitude to them for this opportunity. As a result of their suggestion, in March 1992 I gave these three lectures in the distinguished series "Lezione italiane" under the sponsorship of the Sigma Tau Foundation and the Laterza publishing house, at the Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza." Apart from a few changes in the first one, the present volume contains the text of those lectures as they were delivered.

As the title indicates, I chose to talk about Pragmatism — not Pragmatism as a movement that had its day at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, but as a way of thinking that I find of lasting importance, and an option (or at least an "open question") that should figure in present-day philosophical thought. And since the invitation was to talk about "my current interests," I did not hesitate to talk about the ways in which I see the later philosophy of Wittgenstein as also paralleling certain themes in Pragmatism.
Preface

In a short series of lectures, there was no question of my attempting an exhaustive account of Pragmatism, or even of constructing a detailed argument for the correctness of those Pragmatist positions that I find sympathetic, although I do try to correct misunderstandings of Pragmatism and to reply to a number of likely objections. I have not chosen to focus on James’s theory of truth, or to see Peirce or James or Dewey primarily as participants in a debate about realism and antirealism. Rather, in the present lectures I stress the pluralism and the thoroughgoing holism which are ubiquitous in Pragmatist writing. If the vision of fact, theory, value and interpretation as interpenetrating undermines a certain sort of metaphysical realism, it equally, I believe, undermines fashionable versions of antirealism and “postmodernism.” In this short volume I try to articulate that vision, and develop its significance.

Cambridge, Massachusetts
Harvard University, 1994

Introductory Remarks

Today we tend to take the ideas of tolerance and pluralism for granted. If we are aware that there was diversity of views and the clash of different opinions in ancient Athens, for example, or in the late Roman empire, we are likely to regard that activity as a sign of vitality in those societies. Few people realize that that is not how those societies themselves saw the matter. Classical thinkers saw diversity of opinions as a sign of decay and heresy; only since the Enlightenment have we been able to see it as a positive good. One author\(^1\) has suggested that it is only when society came to be held together “through an alliance of enlightened self interest, rather than through shared moral and religious beliefs” that “the flourishing of diversity and pluralism, which in the past have existed only as a by-product and symptom of political decline, could be embraced for the first time as a form of social health.” While this author exaggerates – modern liberal states are still held together by sentiment and tradition as well as by self interest, enlightened or not so enlightened – and while he fails to see that the belief in tolerance is itself a “shared moral belief”, and a most important one,
it is true that modern societies are not held together by a single shared comprehensive world view. They are not held together by any one religion, and if there are still shared moral beliefs, there are no unchallenged moral beliefs. Moreover, except for a minority of reactionaries, we do not wish that our societies should be held together by unquestioned systems of moral and religious belief. We value our freedom to choose our own “destinies” (to use a term suggested by Agnes Heller), where that freedom is understood as not merely the freedom to choose a trade or profession, but also as the freedom to decide for oneself regarding values, goals, concrete norms, and even, to a certain extent, mores.

What we call the Enlightenment was in large part an intellectual movement devoted to providing a rationale for this kind of “open society”; it was not only a political and historical rationale, but also an epistemological rationale, one which included “arguments about the uncertainty of our moral and religious knowledge.” And the problems generated by the Enlightenment are still our problems; we value the tolerance and pluralism, but we are troubled by the epistemological scepticism that came with that tolerance and pluralism.

I remind you of all this, because the issues that I will be discussing are not just theoretical issues. It is an open question whether an enlightened society can avoid a corrosive moral scepticism without tumbling back into moral authoritarianism. And it is precisely this question that has led me, in recent years, back to pragmatism – to the writings of Peirce, and James and Dewey, and also to the writings of Wittgenstein, whose work, I shall argue in these lectures, bears affinities to American Pragmatism even if he was not willing to be classed as a “pragmatist”.

In the first of the lectures that follow, I try to explain the importance of the thought of William James, focussing in particular on the way in which fact and value are seen as inseparable by James, but also setting the stage for the discussion of the inseparability of fact and theory and fact and interpretation in the lectures which follow. In the second lecture, I try to situate the later philosophy of Wittgenstein not only with respect to pragmatism, but also with respect to the history of philosophy, and in the third and final lecture I try to bring the legacy of Peirce, James, Dewey, and Wittgenstein to bear on some of our contemporary philosophical debates. In particular, I hope to convince you that pragmatism offers something far better than the unpalatable alternatives which too often seem to be the only possibilities today, both philosophically and politically.

Notes

3 Melzer, pp. 11–12.
The Permanence of William James

William James is a figure who simply won’t go away. Not only has he never been forgotten, but the reactions to his work after his death, both the favorable and the unfavorable, have been surprisingly passionate. In his History of Western Philosophy, Bertrand Russell holds James’s views on truth up to ridicule. Yet a great contemporary of Russell’s wrote, “The view that seems to me to reconcile the materialistic tendencies of psychology with the anti-materialistic tendency of physics is the view of . . . the American new realists . . . Their views . . . are in large measure derived from William James, and before going further it will be well to consider the revolutionary doctrine which he advanced. I believe this doctrine contains important new truth, and what I shall have to say will be in considerable measure inspired by it.”

Who was this contemporary? It was none other than Russell himself! The Russell of The Analysis of Mind. (In fairness to Russell, there is no contradiction here; Russell despised James’s views on truth, of which he presents a mere caricature, but admired James’s “neutral monism”—which was Russell’s term for what James himself called
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“radical empiricism.” In fact, I. B. Cohen recently told me that when Russell lectured at Harvard in 1936, “there were two heros in his lectures – Plato and James”. Coming closer to our own time, in 1983, Martin Gardner, the well-known writer of columns of mathematical puzzles for *Scientific American* and debunker of telepathy and other things that he regards as fraudulent science, devoted a chapter of a book about his own philosophical convictions\(^2\) to criticizing James’s account of truth. (Gardner, I hasten to add, does not regard James as a fraud, but he does think that “There was a blindness on James’s part . . . to the kind of confusion that is inevitable when a philosopher takes a word with a commonly understood meaning and gives it a new and novel meaning. Pragmatists believed, of course, that great benefits would flow from redefining truth as the meeting of tests for truth [sic], but the actual results were decades of bewildering debate in which they wasted incredible amounts of time.”\(^3\) In the same year (1983) Jacques Barzun published his lovely volume, *A Stroll with William James*, in appreciation of “the originality and force of mind by which James met and subdued some of the old Sphinxes who challenge the earthly traveler, as always on pain of death.”\(^4\)

My purpose in adding to this cloud of praise and criticism that swirls around the figure of William James is not simply homage to a predecessor. I believe that James was a powerful thinker, as powerful as any in the last century, and that his way of philosophizing contains possibilities which have been too long neglected, that it points to ways out of old philosophical “binds” that continue to afflict us. In short, I believe that it is high time we paid attention to Pragmatism, the movement of which James was arguably the greatest exponent.

I hasten to add – to your relief, I am sure – that this lecture will not pretend to be the detailed and penetrating study that we need. It is rather an advertisement for that project, a presentation of the *prima facie* case for thinking that the project is worthwhile.

I can begin by indicating one of the reasons that James’s philosophy evokes such contradictory responses. One of the chief characteristics of James’s philosophy is its *holism*: there is an obvious if implicit rejection of many familiar dualisms: fact, value, and theory are all seen by James\(^5\) as interpenetrating and interdependent. (In the third lecture, I shall also defend the idea that interpretation (of meanings, and of forms of life) and knowledge of facts similarly interpenetrate, along lines that I believe James would approve.) Another characteristic of that philosophy – one which confused at least one of James’s principal followers\(^6\) – is a strong strain of what philosophers used to call *direct realism*, that is, the doctrine that perception is (normally) of objects and events “out there”, and not of private “sense data”. Holism and direct realism can seem inconsistent: that is how they seemed to the Oxford philosopher F. C. S. Schiller, the follower I mentioned, to whom the realism represented backsliding of some sort on James’s part, and that is how they seemed to Bertrand Russell, to whom they represented two distinct moments in James’s thought, the first misguided and the second full of insight. It is my conviction, and that of Ruth Anna Putnam, who is collaborating with me on a study of James’s philosophy, that far from being inconsistent these two aspects of James’s philosophy are interdependent; each presupposes the other, and each is necessary for the proper interpretation of the other. But I shall not try to substantiate this interpretative claim in detail; instead, I shall just try to give you some idea of what each of them comes to.
Truth

The passage which is most often plucked out of context and used as a stick with which to beat James is the following: “The ‘true’ is only the expedient in the way of our thinking . . . in the long run and on the whole of course.” That is verbatim how Russell quotes it. As his critics read this, what James is saying is that if the consequences of believing that p are good for humanity, then p is true. It is thus that Russell can write, “I find great intellectual difficulties in this doctrine. It assumes that a belief is ‘true’ when its effects are good.” But this is not what James means; indeed, it is not even what James says. What he actually wrote is:

“The true,” to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as “the right” is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient is almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course, for what meets expediently all the experience in sight won’t necessarily meet all further experiences equally satisfactorily. Experience, as we know, has ways of boiling over, and making us correct our present formulas.

I am not going to try your patience with close textual analysis – I shall, henceforth, just say dogmatically what I think James intends, without marshalling proof texts – but I cannot resist pointing out how Russell’s misreading of James resembles a common misreading of an equally famous passage of Wittgenstein’s. Wittgenstein wrote, “For a large class of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word ‘meaning’ it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.” Here many commentators simply ignore “though not for all”, and also substitute their own notion of what “use” is for Wittgenstein’s, and end up saying that Wittgenstein proposed the “theory” that “meaning is use” – at which point all possibility of understanding what Wittgenstein is actually saying vanishes! In the same way, Russell ignores “to put it very briefly” and “in almost any fashion” – obvious indications that what we have is a thematic statement, and not an attempt to formulate a definition of “true” – and also substitutes his own notion of what “expediency” is for James’s, and ends up saying that James proposed the theory that “true” means “has good effects” – at which point all possibility of understanding what James is actually saying vanishes!

The fact is James’s philosophy cannot be put in a nutshell any more than Wittgenstein’s. But what follows thematic statements like the one just quoted in James’s text, and in his other writings, are discussions of major types of statements, for example, statements about Memorial Hall and other perceivable objects, statements about more abstract things like the elasticity of the clock spring, statements in contemporary physical theories, mathematical statements, ethical statements, and religious statements. It emerges that different types of statements correspond to different types of “expediency”; there is no suggestion that an arbitrary statement is true if it is expedient in any way at all (even “in the long run”). For example, the view often attributed to James – that a statement is true if it will make people subjectively happy to believe it – is explicitly rejected by him. In the case of paradigm “factual” statements, including scientific ones, a sort of expediency that James repeatedly mentions is
usefulness for prediction,\textsuperscript{13} while other desiderata – conservation of past doctrine;\textsuperscript{14} simplicity,\textsuperscript{15} and coherence ("what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience’s demands, nothing being omitted"\textsuperscript{16}, p. 44) – are said to apply to statements of all types. Quine’s claim\textsuperscript{17} that success in satisfying these desiderata simultaneously is a matter of trade-offs rather than formal rules is also a Jamesian idea.\textsuperscript{18}

A second criticism of James – one sometimes made by admirers of James, like Morton White, as well as by critics like Martin Gardner – is that James is really talking about confirmation and not about truth. James is giving us an account of confirmation, these critics say, and he mistakenly believes that he is giving us an account of truth. The critics also claim that the problem of giving us a satisfactory account of truth was solved in this century, by the work of the great logician Alfred Tarski. I myself believe\textsuperscript{19} that Tarski’s great technical contribution notwithstanding, his work does nothing to explicate the notion of truth, but that is not my topic here. However, James is not guilty of confounding confirmation and truth,\textsuperscript{20} although he certainly believes there is a close connection.

The connection exists for the following reasons: To say that truth is “correspondence to reality” is not false but empty, as long as nothing is said about what the “correspondence” is. If the “correspondence” is supposed to be utterly independent of the ways in which we confirm the assertions we make (so that it is conceived to be possible that what is true is utterly different from what we are warranted in taking to be true, not just in some cases but in all cases), then the “correspondence” is an occult one, and our supposed grasp of it is also occult. Truth, James believes, must be such that we can say how it is possible for us to grasp what it is. And like Peirce, he frequently identifies truth with the “final opinion”, that is, not with what is presently confirmed, but with what is “fated” to be confirmed, if inquiry is continued long enough, and in a responsible and fallibilistic spirit. Truth, James writes in one place is “the fate of thought”. And (in the same place), “The only objective criterion of reality is coerciveness, in the long run, over thought.”\textsuperscript{21}

This is, of course, a very problematical position, although different elements of it continue to be reinvented and hotly discussed today, by philosophers some of whom never mention James. Let me just point out that these issues – the relationship of truth, warranted assertibility, permanent credibility, what, if anything, inquiry must converge to if conducted in the right way, etc. – figure today in books and papers by the Putnams, Michael Dummett, Nelson Goodman, Richard Rorty and Bernard Williams, who hold different and sometimes even opposed positions on these issues, but all of whom take very seriously just the point that James insisted on, that our grasp of the notion of truth must not be represented as simply a mystery mental act by which we relate ourselves to a relation called “correspondence” totally independent of the practices by which we decide what is and is not true.

To be sure, rejection of that sort of metaphysical realism does not require us to follow the pragmatists in identifying the true with what is (or what would be) “verified” in the long run. Unlike the pragmatists, I do not believe that truth can be defined in terms of verification. (Readers who are interested in my own most recent account of the concept of truth will find it presented in my Dewey Lectures, “Sense, Nonsense, and the Senses; An Inquiry Into the Powers of the Human Mind”\textsuperscript{22}.) Yet I do agree with the pragmatists that truth and verification are not
simply independent and unrelated notions. Knowing, for example, what it is to verify that there is a chair in front of me involves knowing what chairs look like, what we use them for, and what it is like to sit on one. But someone who lacked these abilities – for what this sort of knowledge comes to is just the possession of a set of practical abilities – would not just lack the ability to confirm the claim “There is a chair in front of me”; such a person would lack the very concept of a chair, and hence would lack the ability to understand what it is for “There is a chair in front of me” to be true.

I do not mean to suggest that for every statement it is the case that to understand it requires knowing how to confirm it. Yet even if we take a statement we do not at all know how to confirm (say, “Intelligent extraterrestrial life does not exist”), the fact is that the concepts which it employs are concepts which figure in other and simpler statements which we do know how to verify. Our ability to understand such an unverifiable statement is not a free standing ability. Understanding what truth is in any given case and understanding what confirmation is are interwoven abilities; and this is something that the pragmatists were among the first to see, even if (like any philosopher who first formulates an insight) they formulated their idea too simply. James’s “theory of truth” may have been wrong, but he knew perfectly well the difference between truth and confirmation, and he was not simply confusing the two. What he believed was that, since our claims get their substance from the roles they play in our lives, an account of truth will gain its substance from the accompanying account of how to get to truth. As he himself puts it, “If I tell you how to get to the railroad station, don’t I implicitly introduce you to the what, to the being and nature of that edifice?”

Holism

As I have explained it so far, James’s position can sound like positivism, and indeed the first misunderstanding of Pragmatism that James discusses in “The Pragmatist Account of Truth and its Misunderstanders” is that “Pragmatism is only a re-editing of positivism.” James’s reply is to dissociate himself from the phenomenalism of contemporary (Machian) positivism. Pragmatism does not assert that knowledge is confined to the succession of our sensations. But our present-day Neopositivists (I hope Van Quine will not object if I classify him as such) are no more phenomenalistic than James was, and I have already said that, at least in the case of scientific statements, James and Quine both see warranted assertibility as a matter of trade-offs between very similar desiderata – prediction, conservation of old doctrine, simplicity and overall coherence. For this very reason, it is necessary to distinguish James’s position from Neopositivism if we are to make out its present-day interest.

The difference has to do with the rejection of familiar dualisms – fact and value, fact and theory, fact and interpretation – that I mentioned at the outset of this talk. That rejection is, by the way, the first pragmatist theme that I was to be exposed to in my own undergraduate education. That education took place at the University of Pennsylvania, and one of James’s students, A. E. Singer Jr., was a famous professor in that Department for many years. Although Singer had already retired when I entered the university, he was still living in Philadelphia, and some senior members of the Department visited him regularly. One of those members, C. West Churchman,
wrote the following four principles, which he attributed to Singer, on the blackboard:

(1) Knowledge of facts presupposes knowledge of theories.
(2) Knowledge of theories presupposes knowledge of facts.
(3) Knowledge of facts presupposes knowledge of values.
(4) Knowledge of values presupposes knowledge of facts.

and I am sure that Singer’s teacher, William James, would have agreed!

(1) is no longer controversial, although it was very much so in James’s day (and even some decades after his death, when the idea of “protocol sentences”, reports of direct experience uncontaminated by theory, was defended by some members of the Vienna Circle). But (3) is as controversial today as it was then, so I should like to lay out some reasons for accepting it.

One desideratum accepted by both Pragmatists and Neopositivists is coherence. But what is a “coherent” body of belief? Mere deductive consistency is hardly enough; although why Positivists require even that is not wholly clear. (If the fundamental aim of science is prediction, might that aim not be more efficiently reached if we allowed a plurality of theories, each consistent and successful in its own domain, even if their conjunction were not consistent? We could simply disallow the conjunction of statements from different bodies of theory, barring special licence – indeed, this has even been defended by the Princeton philosopher Bas van Fraassen.) The fact is that coherence makes sense as a desideratum precisely because we view our system of knowledge as more than just a prediction machine; we aim at a Weltanschauung. As James remarks, “An outré explanation, violating all our preconceptions, would never pass for a true account . . . We should scratch around industriously until we found something less eccentric.”

But what is explanatory and what is “outré” is itself frequently a matter of controversy, even in the hardest science. The present form of quantum mechanics was the product of two conferences at Solvay in the 1930s – and those conferences discussed philosophical issues at least as much as physical ones! Moreover, the quantum mechanical Weltanschauung that emerged from the 2nd Solvay Conference – the “Copenhagen Interpretation” – remains controversial even today. A substantial minority of cosmologists have deserted it for the so-called “Many Worlds Interpretation” – an interpretation which implies, among other things, that there are “parallel worlds”, including, very probably, ones in which America is still a British Colony, ones in which the Revolution never took place, etc.! To me the Many Worlds Interpretation is simply too “outré”, I must admit. But both sides admit that what is at issue is not prediction. What is at issue is precisely what is explanatory and what is not, what is coherent and what is not. And when such disputes break out at a fundamental level they always cross boundaries; philosophical issues are mixed with “scientific” ones, and cultural and even metaphysical preconceptions play a role. James describes this situation accurately when he writes:

New truth is always a go-between, a smoother-over of transitions. It marries old opinion to new fact so as to
show a minimum of jolt, a maximum of continuity. We hold a theory true just in proportion to its success at solving this problem of “maxima and minima”. But success in solving this problem is eminently a problem of approximation. [Compare Quine’s “trade-offs”.] We say this theory solves it on the whole more satisfactorily than that theory; but that means more satisfactorily to ourselves, and individuals will emphasize their points of satisfaction differently. To a certain degree, therefore, everything here is plastic.  

Please note that I am not claiming that the fundamental methodological and philosophical issues that are debated when we make deep changes in our very paradigms of scientific explanation are ethical issues, but I am claiming that value issues are involved, for the decision as to what counts as “coherent” and what counts as “outrée” is in every sense a value judgment.

In physics, at least, empiricist philosophers of science like to claim that we can treat the “observation vocabulary” as fixed, for any physical phenomenon, however recherché, must, if demonstrated, make a difference to the motions of some middle-sized objects, such as our familiar dials and photographic plates. (Although historians of science and philosophers of science have reminded us that the description of the motions of those middle-sized objects is invariably theory loaded.) But when we come to the study of human beings, even this much cannot be assumed. We classify people as cruel or compassionate, socially skilled or inept, connoisseurs or tyros, and sometimes with a high degree of intersubjective agreement; yet there is no reason at all to think that these classifications could be reduced to some fixed physicalistic vocabulary. Moreover, some of these classifications are classifications of phenomena whose very existence is partly brought about and sustained by the classifications. Daniel Bell has sometimes termed this order of phenomena “the constructed order”. For example (this is Bell’s example), sex is a biological phenomenon, but gender is a “constructed” phenomenon; whether people are classified as male or female is a matter of biology, but whether they are classified as “maidenly” or “chivalrous” is a matter of culture, and, as we know, behaviors which are aptly classified as “maidenly” or “chivalrous” are unlikely to persist unless the classifications themselves do. Whether they do is hardly independent of the acceptance or rejection of the evaluations that those classifications presuppose. Similarly, it is probable that “feeling sorry” for someone else under some circumstances is a biologically innate capacity, but “being a compassionate individual” is not a possibility in the absence of a culture which classifies human behaviors under such rubrics, and which shares the evaluations implied by such rubrics. There is no “totality of observational facts” fixed in advance to be described; what is there, even at the level of observational fact, will depend partly on what cultures we create, and that means what languages we create. As James put it:

I, for my part, cannot escape the consideration, forced upon me at every turn, that the knower is not simply a mirror floating with no foothold anywhere, and passively reflecting an order that he comes upon and finds simply existing. The knower is an actor, and coefficient of the truth on one side, while on the other he registers the truth which he helps to create.  

I have argued that James was right (and Singer was right) to think that decisions about “facts” and “value
judgments” depend on and condition one another. And if James said that the true may be “expedient in almost any fashion”, it was, I suggest, precisely because one cannot foresee in advance what considerations may prove relevant to a given question in the long run. As Vivian Walsh has put it, modifying a metaphor of Quine’s, “To borrow and adapt Quine’s vivid image, if a theory may be black with fact and white with convention, it might well . . . be red with values.”

To the four principles James’s student Singer enunciated back in the 1940s, he could have added two more, viz.:

(5) Knowledge of facts presupposes knowledge of interpretations.
(6) Knowledge of interpretations presupposes knowledge of facts.

For talk of testing the system of scientific theory by “testing predictions” makes sense only when a common world and a common language are already in place. To know that you have tested the same prediction that I have tested I must understand what you say; and that means that issues of interpretation and questions of fact also presuppose and condition one another.

Daniel Dennett has recently argued, 35 that an interpretative stance is correct just to the degree that it is optimal for prediction — predicting what the interprtee will say and do; but I do not find this view at all plausible. I have, for example, convictions on what Aristotle meant by certain arguments; but I do not claim to be able to predict Aristotle’s “dispositions” any better than anyone else. (It is no use saying, “Well, you must be predicting that if Aristotle spoke present-day English, had read the current philos-

**Optical literature, etc., he would say your interpretation of his argument in present-day language is the correct one,” because the hypothetical situation is just too far-fetched for me to believe that the counterfactual makes sense. I don’t think Aristotle had dispositions to say things in present-day English! And even in the case of contemporaries too, there is a difference between interpreting someone’s speech or writing and predicting what their reaction to the interpretation might be. Hostile interpretations, for example — interpretations whose point is to show that the discourse in question is empty, or pompous, or silly, or hypocritical, etc. — are virtually never accepted by the interprte when they are correct. The fact is that while interpretation and prediction depend on one another, interpretation cannot be reduced simply to prediction.35)

If James’s views evoked hostility, both in his lifetime and after, they have always attracted adherents as well. And if I may hazard a guess, the very feature of James’s world view I have been pointing to — the vision of fact, theory, value, and interpretation as all interdependent — is one of the sources of that attraction. To some of us, to those of us of what James would call the Pragmatist “temperament”, that vision seems simply more realistic than the vision of those who try to convince us that the familiar dualisms must be correct.

**Realism**

Earlier in this talk, I mentioned that, in addition to this attack on the dualisms, James’s philosophy contains a strong strain of “direct” realism, that is of the doctrine that perception is of objects and events “out there”, and
not of private "sense data". And I said that Ruth Anna Putnam and I believe that, far from being inconsistent, each of these aspects of James's philosophy presupposes the other, and each is necessary for the proper interpretation of the other. The Essays on Radical Empiricism, in which James spells out his theory of perception, constitute the most technical part of James's philosophy (and, not coincidentally, the part that Russell admired so much). Partly because of this technicality, and partly because I do not wish to keep you here all night, I shall not even attempt to spell out the details. (Those of you who are interested can look at the two essays on James in the third part of Realism with a Human Face.) But I do want to say a word about the relation between these two elements in James's thought.

Some of you no doubt recall that the attack on dualitéss is today a feature of the thought of Jacques Derrida, but in Derrida's hands (or perhaps I should say "in Derrida's pen", given Derrida's relentless emphasis on writing) it turns into a sense of loss of the world, a loss of the "hors texte". To Derrida, any idea that we have access to a common external world is a return to what he calls "a metaphysics of presence", to discredited ideas of incorrigibility and a preconceptual given. It is precisely the fact that James's emphasis on what he calls the "plasticity" of truth, on our role as "coefficients of the truth on the one side", is balanced by the insistence that we share and perceive a common world, by the insistence that "we register the truth which we help to create", which distances him from all forms of scepticism. Indeed, from the earliest of Peirce's Pragmatist writings, Pragmatism has been characterized by antisepticism: Pragmatists hold that doubt requires justification just as much as belief (Peirce drew a famous distinction between "real" and "philosophical" doubt); and by fallibilism: Pragmatists hold that there are no metaphysical guarantees to be had that even our most firmly-held beliefs will never need revision. That one can be both fallibilistic and antiseptical is perhaps the basic insight of American Pragmatism.

Now this will seem a delicate (some will say an impossible) balancing act, but it represents the situation in which we live. It may remove some of the air of possibility if we realize – as Peirce, James, and Dewey all tried to help us realize – that access to a common reality does not require incorrigibility. Just as fallibilism does not require us to doubt everything, it only requires us to be prepared to doubt anything – if good reason to do so arises! The fact that perception is sometimes erroneous does not show that even non-erroneous perception is really perception of "appearances". And it may also help if we realize that access to a common reality does not require access to something preconceptual. It requires, rather, that we be able to form shared concepts.

Some of you may also be reminded of the controversy that swirls around the interpretation of the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein. Just as James tries to "humanize" the notion of truth, to view it (as he views all notions) as a human instrument, and not as an idea that dropped from the sky, Wittgenstein insists that all our notions depend on our "form of life". And there is also a realist element in Wittgenstein's philosophy. I recall once saying (mistakenly) that Wittgenstein would never use a phrase like "correspond to reality" and being brought up short by Cora Diamond, who pointed out that in a lecture on the philosophy of mathematics, Wittgenstein remarks that he would say that "This chair is blue" corresponds to a reality – although he can only say what reality by using that very sentence. And he reminds us that "the theses and thats we
can point to” are our paradigms of reality. And there are
those who find this realist strain (if they recognize its
presence at all) an inconsistency in Wittgenstein’s thought.
It may seem strange to compare James to the later
Wittgenstein, given Wittgenstein’s hostility to metaphysics
and James’s undeniable metaphysical bent, but it is not
t entirely unwarranted: indeed, in “The Moral Philosopher
and the Moral Life”, we find James offering what is
clearly an anticipation of Wittgenstein’s celebrated Private
Language Argument, and defending the proposition that
“truth presupposes a standard external to the thinker.”

These are immensely hard issues, and I do not wish to
give the impression that one can find the “answers” in the
work of James or the work of Wittgenstein, or that there
are final “answers” at all. But they are worth thinking
about, and I find James’s way of thinking about them
(and, in a different way, Wittgenstein’s way of thinking
about them) inspiring.

Philosophy and Life

In conclusion, let me say that in the process of defending
James from the charge of being an inconsistent thinker, I
hope I have not stressed the complexity and depth of his
argument to such an extent as to obscure the fact that for
James, as for Socrates, the central philosophical question
is how to live. But for James, as for Socrates and his
successors, the opposition between philosophy which is
concerned with how to live and philosophy which is
concerned with hard technical questions is a false oppo-
sition. We want ideals and we want a world view, and we
want our ideals and our world view to support one

another. Philosophy which is all argument feeds no real
hunger; while philosophy which is all vision feeds a real
hunger, but it feeds it Pabulum. If there is one overriding
reason for being concerned with James’s thought, it is that
he was a genius who was concerned with real hungers,
and whose thought, whatever its shortcomings, provides
substantial food for thought – and not just for thought,
but for life.

Notes

This lecture is a reworked version of a talk I delivered to the

1 The Analysis of Mind (London: George Allen and Unwin,
1921), p. 22.
2 The WHYS of a Philosophical Scrivener (New York: William
3 Ibid., p. 45.
4 A Stroll with William James (New York: Harper & Row,
5 On the interpenetration of fact and value, see, for example,
“The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experi-
ence” in Essays in Radical Empiricism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), which also attacks the
dualism of “inner” and “outer” events. I discuss the inter-
penetration of fact and theory in the third lecture of the
present series; the claim that our conception of any fact
involves a conception of lawlike consequences (how the
things in question may be expected to behave) was at the
heart of Peirce’s “pragmatic maxim” cited by James in
Pragmatism. James also attacks the idea of incorrigible
introspective knowledge: “If to have feelings or thoughts in
their immediacy were enough, babies in the cradle would
be psychologists, and infallible ones. But the psychologist must not only have his mental states in their absolute veritableness, but he must report them and write about them, classify and compare them and trace their relations to other things... And in the naming, classing, and knowing of things in general we are notoriously fallible, why not also here?" Principle of Psychology I (New York: Dover, 1950), pp. 189-190.

6 In a letter to William James, Strong reports that F. C. S. Schiller “wasn’t able to understand” James’s “A World More About Truth” (reprinted in The Meaning of Truth).

7 Some critics even read James – against repeated statements to the contrary, explicit and implicit, in his writing – as holding that if the consequences of believing that p are good for you, then p is “true for you”. Let me say once and for all that James never used the notion of “true for me” or “true for you”. Truth, he insists, is a notion which presupposes a community, and, like Peirce, he held that the widest possible community, the community of all persons (and possibly even all sentient beings) in the long run, is the relevant one. Note that even Russell, in caricaturing James’s position on truth, does not make this mistake.


10 Philosophical Investigations §43.

11 Another famous thematic statement is “The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite assignable reasons” (Pragmatism, p. 43). Note that James does not say, “for any reasons whatsoever” – he is going to go on and say what those “definite assignable reasons” are – yet he is often read as if he had written “for any reasons whatsoever”!


14 “We keep unaltered as much of our old knowledge, as many of our old prejudices and beliefs, as we can,” ibid., p. 83.

15 “A new belief counts as ‘true’ just in proportion as it gratifies the individual’s desire to assimilate the novel in his experience to his beliefs in stock”, ibid., p. 36.

16 Ibid., p. 44.


18 In addition, James insists that subjective “satisfaction” is irrelevant unless “reality also be incidentally led to”, The Meaning of Truth, edition cited, p. 272 [106]. This is, of course, connected with James’s realism, discussed below.

19 Cf. Chapter 4 of my Representation and Reality for a critical discussion of the claimed philosophical significance of Tarski’s work.

20 James is aware of this charge, and he replies to it, ibid., p. 274 [108].

21 Cf: “Spencer’s Definition of Mind as Correspondence,” in James’s Essays in Philosophy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 21. I should add that in this essay (from 1878), James makes it clear that what is “fated” to be thought is not strictly predetermined; the Jamesian doctrine that we help to determine what shall become “coercive over thought” is clearly present in the essay. In Pragmatism, truth, in this sense, becomes a “regulative notion” rather than something we are sure of attaining.

22 These were published as an issue of the Journal of Philosophy in September 1994. See especially the third lecture, “The Face of Cognition”.

23 This is the beginning of James’s reponse to the sixth of

24 This is Chapter VIII of The Meaning of Truth.

25 Ibid., p. 266 [106].

26 Note, however, that James’s notion of coherence (“what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience’s demands, nothing being omitted”) involves the “fit” of beliefs with the demands of experience and with life, not only with other beliefs.

27 Pragmatism, p. 35.

28 On the page cited in the previous note.


30 In “Spencer’s Definition of Mind as Correspondence,” p. 21.


33 This is a theme that has been stressed by Jürgen Habermas throughout his philosophical career.

34 “James’s Theory of Perception” and (with Ruth Anna Putnam) “William James’s Ideas,” both reprinted in Realism with a Human Face.


36 In The Will to Believe and Other Essays (Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press, 1978).

Was Wittgenstein a Pragmatist?

Although my subject today is the pragmatist strain in the philosophy of the later Wittgenstein, my title is, in a way, misleading, for I will be talking as much or more about the relation of Wittgenstein’s philosophy to Kant’s as about its relation to, say, William James’s. Thus this lecture might also have been titled “Was Wittgenstein a Neo-Kantian?”

By means of this double comparison, I hope to combat the prevalent idea that Wittgenstein is simply an “end of philosophy” philosopher, i.e. the idea that the whole “message” of the later philosophy of Wittgenstein is that philosophy is analogous to a neurosis, and that the purpose of Wittgenstein’s work is simply to enable us to “stop doing philosophy”.

One difficulty in talking about the later philosophy is that Wittgenstein very deliberately refuses to state philosophical theses. His purpose, as he explains, is to change our point of view,¹ not to utter theses. If there were theses in philosophy, he tells us, everyone would recognize them as trivial. Thus, while I can explain something that I think is fundamentally right in the philosophy of, for example,
Rudolf Carnap, by saying that there is something right in Carnap’s distinction between framework questions and internal questions, even if Carnap stated that distinction in a way which depends on what Quine called the “two dogmas of empiricism” – and while I can explain some things that I think are lastingly right in the philosophy of Hans Reichenbach by saying that Reichenbach was right in his criticism of Kant’s synthetic a priori” and that Reichenbach’s idea of equivalent descriptions is of lasting value – I cannot simply state a thesis of Wittgenstein’s which is lastingly right. Nevertheless, I think that seeing how, in a way, Wittgenstein’s reflections flow from and continue some of Kant’s reflections, and how they parallel a certain strain in pragmatism, may enable us to see better in just what way Wittgenstein wishes us to change our point of view, to change the way we see things, and also to see why it is so hard to express that change in the form of a “thesis”.

**Kant**

Let me begin, then, with Kant. If I had to say what was lastingly right in Kant’s first Critique – and I myself think there is something lastingly right in every one of Kant’s books – I would say that, whatever Kant’s mistakes (the synthetic apriori, for example), Kant was the first really to see that describing the world is not simply copying it. Kant saw that whenever human beings describe anything in the world, our description is shaped by our own conceptual choices. By saying that our descriptions of the world are shaped by our own conceptual choices I do not mean merely that they exhibit trivial semantic convention-
notion that our conceptual choices are fixed once and for all by some kind of thick transcendent structure of reason – it does seem to me that Kant made a decisive advance over all previous philosophers in giving up the idea that any description of the world can be simply a copy of the world.

We know, moreover, that the idea of taking this point from Kant, while scrapping the idea of a transcendent structure of reason which gives rise to a set of apriori categories and synthetic a priori truths, etc., was ubiquitous in German philosophy before Wittgenstein. For example, there was Schopenhauer’s replacement of Reason by Will in his own eccentric version of Kantianism, and we know that the young Wittgenstein was deeply influenced by Schopenhauer.

Another fascinating aspect of Kant’s thought is what I would call its inceptive pluralism. I have already alluded to that by referring to the fact that in Kant there is not just one image of the world but two images of the world, a scientific image of the world and a moral image of the world. This might, of course, be termed a dualism rather than a pluralism; but I think we see, especially in the third Critique and in Kant’s postcritical writings, a tendency towards genuine pluralism, which Kant perhaps resisted, but which nevertheless surfaces in his work. Specifically, instead of seeing the simple dualism of a scientific image of the world and a moral image of the world, we see various interactions between these two and various spin-offs – spin-offs that come from the interdependence of the moral image of the world and the scientific image of the world, which I will speak about in a few minutes; spin-offs that come from the interaction of pure practical reason with sensibility and inclination, and so on. In effect, Kant begins to speak not only of a moral image of the world and a scientific image of the world, but also (in Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone) of a religious image of the world, one which is subservient to the moral image of the world, but beginning to develop some autonomy of its own; and he also begins to speak (in The Critique of Judgement) of what one might call aesthetic images of the world, and also of legal images of the world, and so on.

To be sure, Kant, like Quine in our day, continued to insist that only the scientific image of the world contains what can properly be called “knowledge”. But this feature of Kant’s thought was to be called into question by William James, as well as by the later philosophy of Wittgenstein.

In a sense, then, I can already state one “thesis” of my lecture (you see, I have “theses”, even if Wittgenstein doesn’t), which is that Wittgenstein’s practice cannot be understood as a simple repudiation of something called “traditional philosophy”; Wittgenstein is as much continuing a tradition of philosophical reflection as he is repudiating certain kinds of philosophical reflection.

To be sure, the moment of repudiation is there in Wittgenstein, it is stark, and it is in a way shocking. Wittgenstein, I would say, tells us that the traditional enterprises of metaphysics and epistemology have failed; and not just that they have failed at the end of the day, but that they failed, so to speak, at the beginning of the day, that they were stillborn, that the questions which are supposed to generate metaphysics and epistemology are, as they are traditionally formulated, nonsensical. Epistemology, for example, is often thought to be generated by the question “What is the nature of knowledge?”; but Wittgenstein, as I read him, wants to tell us that the very assumption that knowledge has a “nature” is one that we have not succeeded in giving a sense. And it will not help
Was Wittgenstein a Pragmatist?

to restate it in the formal mode of speech, as, say, "What is the analysis of the concept of knowledge?", or "What is the meaning of the word 'know'?"; because Wittgenstein wants to tell us that the idea (which, today, is still common to both "causal theories of knowledge" and "justified true belief" theories) that the word "know" has a meaning that surrounds it, like an "aura" that accompanies it in all its contexts of use, determining how we use it in those contexts, is an illusion. The word "know" is a word we use to do many different jobs. You can, to be sure, describe various of the jobs that the word "know" performs, but you won't be doing traditional epistemology, or even modern, non-traditional epistemology in the style of Rudolf Carnap. You won't, for example, tell us, nor could you possibly tell us, what the criteria are by which we are to know which uses of "know" in the future will be legitimate or rational, and which uses of "know" in the future will be illegitimate or irrational, for that is not something that anyone can tell us once and for all.

Human beings are self-surprising creatures; we have always created new language games, and we shall continue to create new language games; we have always extended and modified the use of the word "know" and we shall continue to extend and modify the use of the word "know".

Rorty and Wittgenstein

Now, what I just said may sound very much like Richard Rorty, and in Contingency, Irony, Solidarity Rorty, in fact, presents his views as an extension of those of the later Wittgenstein. As Rorty interprets the ideas that I have just been describing, their upshot is this: we have a variety of language games; what is true and false in a language game is determined by a set of criteria; one can ask what the correct way to use the word "know" is in a particular language game, and one can investigate that question using ethnography, or using history of ideas, or using Wittgensteinian language analysis, but all that will give one will be a description of the use of the word in one particular language game. In addition, according to Rorty, there is no such thing as one language game being better than another except in the sense of "better relative to certain interests". Of course, Rorty would agree that we will always go on producing new language games, or at least Rorty hopes that that is the case.

This Rortian interpretation of the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, while undeniably influential today, seems to me as much a falsification of Wittgenstein as a clarification of his meaning, although it is close to interpretations that were given some thirty years ago by epigones of Wittgenstein like Norman Malcom; indeed, when I first started doing philosophy, a great deal of my activity was devoted to refuting Malcom's version of Wittgensteinianism, and my colleague Stanley Cavell spent a great deal of his time trying to show that that point of view, while it may be Malcom's, was not Wittgenstein's at all. The heart of Rorty's reading is his comparison of criteria with "programs". Ever since he published Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, Rorty has seen what he called "normal" discourse in that book, and what he calls by the Wittgensteinian term "language games" in Contingency, Irony, Solidarity, as governed by what he calls "algorithms" or "programs". When we are within "normal discourse", when we are "playing the same language game", we follow programs in our brains and we all agree. That is Rorty's picture.
This picture of language speakers as automata is deeply un-Wittgensteinian, I want to say. I think it is because Rorty sees language games as virtually automatic performances that he regards any normative notion of reason as just metaphysical gobbledygook. If I say, for example, that there are better and worse language games, and that human reason is not just one capacity but a large number of capacities which enable us, among other things, to tell which language games are better and worse, then Rorty's reaction is to say that "Putnam has become a metaphysical realist at the end of the day." And indeed, if reason, in the sense in which I have just used the term, were not needed at all to speak within one language game; if reason were something that we needed to invoke only when we philosophers are trying to explain why we sometimes give up a language game and adopt a new one, then it would be a suspect notion. Thus Rorty's picture of "normal discourse" deeply affects his picture of non-normal, or "hermeneutic", discourse.

But this picture of normal discourse, I want to say, is a caricature of our lives with our language. For one thing, people speaking what is in every sense one language, not adopting a "new vocabulary" or anything like that, very, very often are unable to come into agreement using the "criteria" they know. For example, Rorty and I both believe, and we think that all reasonable people who read good newspapers closely believe, that there are almost certainly no American prisoners of war still alive in Vietnam. Some people in our country (including, understandably, some relatives of soldiers who were listed as Missing in Action during the Vietnam war) believe that there are American prisoners of war still in Vietnam. Is Rorty going to say that the notion of "objectivity" doesn't apply in such a case? Is he going to say that the two sides are "playing different language games" and that there is no objective fact as to whether there are American prisoners of war still in Vietnam? Is he going to say that the sentence "There are no American prisoners of war still in Vietnam" is "true in the language game Rorty and I play" and false in the language game certain others play, and that is all there is to it? A view which takes seriously the notion of programs and algorithms in the brain, but does not take seriously the notion that either there are or aren't American prisoners of war still in Vietnam is certainly not to be equated with anything Wittgenstein ever believed.

Wittgenstein himself is quite clear in pointing out that language is not simply a matter of following rules (like calculating rules); and not just because rules are not the "foundation" of language (that is because rules themselves, according to Wittgenstein, rest on what he calls our "natural reactions"). The points in the text of the Investigations I want to recall here are the following: on the one hand, there are, to be sure, parts of language where we do all normally agree. Normally we do all call very much the same things red, for example. And we certainly do not come into disagreement on which color red is. (Sceptical doubt as to whether the color we all call "red" really is red is incoherent.) Similarly, we do not come into disagreement on which operation is adding one to a number (here I am thinking of numbers that people actually do write down and add, not numbers six light years long, or numbers in logically possible worlds, or what not). In cases that actually arise in our real everyday lives, we do not disagree about what it is to add one to a number, or to add two to a number. (And a sceptical doubt about whether the operation we all call "adding two" really is adding two would be dotty.) Wittgenstein is concerned to make these points – which are not "theses"
but, as he himself says are quite obvious – in order to combat a certain kind of mentalistic mystification about what it is to understand, say, the rule “add two”. Although Wittgenstein stresses these cases early on in the *Investigations*, he does not by any means think that all of language is governed by rules like calculating rules. To suppose otherwise is to read carelessly.

Let me quote a passage in which Wittgenstein makes it quite clear that language is not all like that. The context is one in which he imagines that people are having a disagreement about whether someone is pretending to have a feeling that he doesn’t have (Philosophical Investigations, IIxi, p. 227; I have rectified the translation):

> “You don’t understand a thing” – so one says when someone doubts what we recognize as clearly genuine, – but we can’t prove anything. “Is there such a thing as ‘expert judgment’ about the genuineness of expressions of feeling? – Even here there are those whose judgment is ‘better’ and those whose judgment is ‘worse’.

Correcter prognoses will generally issue from the judgments of those who understand people better (des besseren Menschenkenners).

Can one learn this knowledge? Yes; some can. Not, however, by taking a course in it, but through ‘experience’. – Can another be one’s teacher in this? Certainly. From time to time he gives him the right *tip*. This is what ‘learning’ and ‘teaching’ are like here. – What one acquires is not a technique; one learns correct judgments. There are also rules, but they do not form a system, and only experienced people can apply them right. Unlike calculating rules.”

Here also we see Wittgenstein recognizing quite explicitly that even within one language game there may be truths which not every one can see, because not everyone can develop the skill of recognizing the “imponderable evidence” (unwäßbare Evidenz, p. 228) involved. Some people are just better at telling what is going on. Nothing could be farther from the picture of a language game as an automatic performance, like the execution of an algorithm. (I neglect here the question of whether everything we do, including general intelligence, is “in the last analysis” a matter of executing algorithms, perhaps not at the level of our so-called “performance description” but at the level of our so-called “competence description”, because I think that these questions are not relevant to what Rorty is doing. Rorty’s notion of a “program” is one which leads to *identical* behavior in all the members of the speech community, whereas general intelligence does not always lead to agreement among all the members of a speech community; and, in any case, I dealt with the whole issue of Functionalism in *Representation and Reality*.)

Not only are there better and worse performances within a language game, but it is quite clear that Wittgenstein thinks that there are better and worse language games. For example, he regards the language games played by philosophers as constraining: philosophers are “in the grip of a picture”; they are talking nonsense. At the same time he is much more generous to other kinds of non-philosophical language and to other kinds of non-scientific language games, especially the language games of “primitive” people. (But, although he by no means shares the usual Western progressivist view that pre-literate people are simply in the stage of pre-science or pseudo-science or superstition, he does indicate that there
are some primitive language games that he would “combat” and some primitive language games that he finds “absurd”. He mentions, for example, ordeal by fire.)

To pull this together, then, Rorty’s reading of Wittgenstein is one from which very radical theses follow, for example, that there is no such thing as one language game being better than another, there is only being better relative to this, that, or the other interest, and that we cannot say (according to Rorty) that Newton’s physics is superior to Aristotle’s physics, or that there are things that Aristotle’s physics got wrong and that Newton’s physics got right. None of these theses should be read into Wittgenstein. Nevertheless, I do want to say that although Rorty’s reading is not right, it does catch a real feature of Wittgenstein’s view. Wittgenstein inherits and extends what I above called Kant’s pluralism; that is the idea that no one language game deserves the exclusive right to be called “true”, or “rational”, or “our first-class conceptual system”, or the system that “limns the ultimate nature of reality”, or anything like that. Wittgenstein, so to speak, splits the difference between Rorty and Quine; that is, he agrees with Rorty, against Quine, that one cannot say that scientific language games are the only language games in which we say or write truths, or in which we describe reality; but, on the other hand, he agrees with Quine as against Rorty that language games can be criticized (or “combatted”); that there are better and worse language games.

More about Wittgenstein and Kant

I want now to return to the question of the relation between the later philosophy of Wittgenstein and Kant's. I shall shortly focus on an aspect of that relation that has not yet been mentioned; but, for the moment let me say something about the differences between Wittgenstein and Kant in the areas that we have so far discussed. Some of them are obvious: Wittgenstein, as I already said, drops the notion of the thing in itself, drops the synthetic apriori, drops the table of categories, and so on. One might say that Wittgenstein “naturalizes” Kantianism (this has also been said of William James). But what does the “naturalization” here consist in? “Naturalize” is a dangerous word; especially today, when “naturalism” is often connected with reductive versions of physicalism; and Wittgenstein is no reductionist. The “naturalization” is, perhaps, best described as a deflation. It is natural to describe Kant’s view by saying that we can’t describe the world as it is in itself; and, indeed, this is the way Rorty repeatedly states one of his (as he thinks) points of agreement with Wittgenstein. But Wittgenstein, true to his strategy of not offering “theses”, tries to convince us that there is no interesting thesis in this area. For Wittgenstein, the negation of a pseudo-proposition is a pseudo-proposition; the negation of nonsense is nonsense. If we are persuaded that it is unintelligible to say “We sometimes succeed in describing reality as it is in itself”, then we should realize that it is equally unintelligible to say “We never succeed in describing reality as it is in itself”, and even more unintelligible (more, because it introduces the peculiar philosophical “can’t”) to say “We can’t describe reality as it is in itself”. This great Rortian thesis is the illusion of a truth, the
illusion of a cosmic discovery. In fact, one might say that it is characteristic of Wittgenstein to try to show us that when philosophers say that we can't do something, say that something is impossible, typically the thing that they tell us it is impossible to do is a nonsense thing, an unintelligible thing; that the philosopher, as it were, seems to be telling us of an Impotence, in the way the physicist tells us of an Impotence when he says “You can’t build a perpetual motion machine”, or of a barrier we can't cross, but it turns out on examination that the barrier is a mirage, or even less than a mirage – that it is chimerical. We can learn and change and invent languages, and in them we can state truths; that is describing reality. If you say, “Yes, but it is not describing reality as it is in itself”, you are saying nothing. Indeed, Wittgenstein himself may have fallen prey to the temptation to say that we can't do something which it makes no sense to do in the famous last line of the *Tractatus*. To say that whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent is precisely to say that we mustn’t try to express ... what? (James Conant has recently suggested that this is a deliberate contradiction; that the *Tractatus* puts itself into the abyss in this way in order to make exactly the point that I am making now.)

In sum, there is an enormous difference between Kantian tone, which Rorty retains by saying that we can't describe reality as it is in itself, and the Wittgensteinian tone which is to try to make his reader not want to say either “we can describe reality as it is in itself” or “we can't describe reality as it is in itself”. Even the profound-sounding remark I made in my own way a little while ago, that there are truths which don’t belong to what Quine would call our “first-class conceptual scheme” which are nonetheless fully intelligible and true, is, in a way, deflated for me by reading Wittgenstein; deflated by the fact that he gives very trivial examples. For example, if I give someone the instruction “Stand roughly here”, and I later describe what happened by saying, “I told him to stand roughly there, and then I took his picture”, I certainly “say what is true”, and yet “He stood roughly there” is hardly something that belongs to Quine’s “first-class conceptual scheme”. Again, instead of saying that we have “a moral image of the world and a scientific image of the world”, as a neo-Kantian might, Wittgenstein simply says that ethical words are also words which have uses in our language.

This aspect of Wittgenstein's practice, that he wants to make his new philosophical point of view seem homely to us; seem not a matter of philosophical theses, but of evident facts that we have known all along, reminds me at times (as it has reminded Stanley Cavell) of one side of American transcendentalism, the side expressed by Thoreau when he says that “there is a solid bottom everywhere” (although, of course, it lies under a fearful amount of mud). Wittgenstein, after all, describes his aim, in a passage worthy of Thoreau, as “to bring our words back to their home in the language” (emphasis added).

In spite of these differences – and they are profound – between Wittgenstein and Kant, I want to repeat that, even if you are as critical of the practice of philosophers as Wittgenstein is, you can see that a great metaphysician like Kant is not just someone who made some great, if very profound, mistakes; one must also say that there are some genuine insights in Kant, insights which were hard-won, and by which Wittgenstein himself was educated. Wittgenstein could not have seen so far if he had not stood on the shoulders of that giant.
perfection of human inquiry would be, from a certain image of human flourishing in the theoretical realm. (This is something that I myself have argued in Reason, Truth and History; that is to say, that our cognitive ideals only make sense considered as part of our idea of human flourishing.)

This idea of the primacy of practical reason, extends, for Kant, to philosophy itself. We cannot, Kant thinks, construct a moral image of the world by seeking to prove a priori that there are true value judgments. The famous Kantian strategy is the other way around (although today philosophers like Bernard Williams often forget this when they are criticizing Kant). The strategy is to say: As a being who makes value judgments every day, I am of course committed to the idea that there are true value judgments; what must be the case if there are to be true value judgments? In what kind of a world can there be true value judgments?

If you put Kant’s strategy that way, you find the same strategy, though not the apriorism, in the writings of John Dewey. I think that this idea of the primacy of practical reason (though not of “pure” practical reason) is a terribly important one now for the following reason: At the time of the Vienna Circle, it looked very easy to be an anti-metaphysician. To be an anti-metaphysician all you had to do was confine knowledge to the prediction and control of observables. And everybody knew what an “observable” was. In effect, you were either a “metaphysician” or you were an “empiricist”. The problem with that is that it quickly became obvious, as it did to me, for example, when I first entered the profession, that Mach and his followers in the Vienna Circle had simply exchanged one metaphysics for another. They rightly saw that to argue whether electrons “really exist” was to argue about a pseudo-question, and then they proceeded to say that to

The primacy of practical reason

But there is another side to Kant’s thought, a side that connects immediately with pragmatism: the side that we might call the primacy of practical reason. It is clear to students of Kant’s work that a great deal of that work had a directly political inspiration, as well as a political application. Even the central notion of “self-legislation” that Kant uses in the second Critique and in the Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals was, after all, directly inspired by Rousseau; and in the age of Kant, the idea that a society should be a free union of self-legislating citizens was a revolutionary idea. But I want to mention a different aspect of the primacy of practical reason in Kant, and this is Kant’s famous claim (in the Doctrine of Method section of the Critique of Pure Reason) that theoretical understanding would not by itself have given us the idea of science as a unified system of laws (by which I take it that Kant means we would not even have arrived at Newtonian physics, let alone the regulative ideal of an eventual science that would subsume physics, biology, etc.), that it would not have taken us beyond knowledge of individual inductive generalizations by itself. To get the kind of knowledge represented by Newton’s system of the world (or we might say today, by Einstein’s system of the world, or by quantum mechanics) one needs what Kant called the regulative idea of Nature. That is, you need the vision of nature as governed not just by individual laws, but by a system of laws. That vision, Kant tells us, does not come from theoretical reason, but from pure practical reason. Kant was saying that the norms which guide theoretical science in its greatest achievements are norms which derive from a certain notion we have of what the
say that electrons exist just means that observables behave in such and such a way, without seeing that they, in effect, had simply asserted the pseudo-thesis of phenomenalism in order to defeat the pseudo-thesis of transcendent realism. Saying that when I say that electrons are flowing through a wire I am talking about observables is just as much a metaphysician (perhaps a Berkeleyan metaphysician) as saying that electrons are things in themselves. This realization, that positivism was itself a metaphysics – and, indeed, an unbelievable one (why should I believe the world consists only of observables, after all?) – has led, however, to a plethora of metaphysical theories, including metaphysical theories in Princeton, New Jersey, according to which other possible worlds are just as real as our actual world. Questions which even the Middle Ages did not take seriously, such as, for example, Do Numbers Really Exist, are the subject of books and papers today. At least two books on these questions by good philosophers of mathematics have come out in the last five years. Yet it is hard to understand in what way this sort of philosophy can be subject to any kind of control at all, or, indeed, what the questions mean. Grown men and women arguing about whether the number three “really exists” is a ludicrous spectacle. It was in a similar context that John Dewey suggested that the primary task of philosophy should not be this kind of metaphysics, that is, the attempt to construct “a theory of everything”, but should rather be criticism of culture. Kant’s philosophy, in spite of its metaphysical excesses, was intended as a criticism of culture, as a sketch or plan for an enlightened society making progress towards a state in which social justice, as measured by the formula that reward would be proportional to virtue, would reign. Now, it may seem strange to argue that Wittgenstein’s philosophy also has a moral purpose, especially since it is often seen as just a kind of disinterested therapy born of a disgust with theoretical philosophy. But I want to close by arguing that Wittgenstein’s philosophy too has a moral purpose, and that it exhibits in a different way the same theme, the primacy of practical reason, that Kant’s philosophy does, although in a characteristically deflationary fashion.

The ethical aim of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy

To explain why I think there is a “primacy of practical reason” hidden in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy (and, for that matter, not only in his later philosophy), I need to say a few words more about how I interpret that later philosophy. Since I need to be brief, I will proceed by contrasting my own reading with one as different as possible: this is a way of reading Wittgenstein suggested by Michael Williams and by Paul Horwich. Since Horwich’s view is developed at greater length, I shall focus on it.

On Horwich’s view, a language game is to be understood as consisting of sentences for which (if we confine attention to assertoric language) there are “assertability conditions”. These conditions specify that under certain observable conditions a sentence counts as true or at least as “confirmed”. (Think of these conditions as stipulating that under certain observable conditions we are allowed to utter certain noises, or write certain marks, and also to expect certain observable events or certain reactions from others.) This model is obviously very similar to Carnap’s or Reichenbach’s models of a speaker-hearer of a natural
language. The key idea (as in Positivism) is that if you know under what conditions a statement is confirmed, you understand the statement. "Truth" is to be understood "disquotational": to say that a statement is true is just to make an equivalent statement. (More precisely, the "Tarski biconditionals" tell us all we need to know about the notion of truth.) Note that this account differs from Rorty's only in that the "criteria" which govern our use of words provide (in some cases) for degrees of assertability less than certainty. Still, speakers who understand their language in the same way and who have the same evidence should all agree on the degree of assertability of their sentences, in this model, just as in Rorty's.

The assumption that underlies this picture is that the use of words can be described in terms of what speakers are allowed to say and do in observable situations. "Use" is a theoretical notion, and there is a standard way of describing the use of expressions in an arbitrary language game. Let me call this the positivistic interpretation of Wittgenstein.

A very different interpretation (one suggested, or very nearly suggested, by Peter Winch in The Idea of a Social Science) is the following: the use of the words in a language game cannot be described without using concepts which are related to the concepts employed in the game. Winch has discussed the case of the language games of "primitive" peoples; but I believe the same point applies to scientific language games. Consider, for example, the language game of a good electrician. He learns to use such sentences as that old positivist favorite, "current is flowing through the wire". On the positivistic interpretation of Wittgenstein, Wittgenstein must hold (with Bridgeman and early Carnap) that the electrician understands this sentence by knowing that, e.g., it is assertable if the voltmeter needle is deflected, and he recognizes that something is a voltmeter by recognizing that it has a certain appearance (and it has VOLTOMETER printed on it, perhaps).

We have already seen what is wrong with this picture in our discussion of Rorty. A good electrician relies on "criteria" in this sense, to be sure; but when things go wrong (and anyone who has ever repaired his own appliances or fixed a car knows how much can go wrong when one is dealing with the real world) he also knows to distrust the criteria, and the knowledge of when to distrust the criteria is not itself something which is learned by rules. Rather, we can say here what Wittgenstein said in the passage I quoted earlier about learning to tell if another person is feigning a feeling they do not have:

Can one learn this knowledge? Yes; some can. Not, however, by taking a course in it, but through "experience". – Can another be one's teacher in this? Certainly. From time to time he gives him the right tip. This is what "learning" and "teaching" are like here. – What one acquires is not a technique; one learns correct judgments. There are also rules, but they do not form a system, and only experienced people can apply them right. Unlike calculating rules.

I want to apply to this case a remark that Habermas makes at a number of points in The Theory of Communicative Action: someone who does not see the "point" of the language game, and who cannot imaginatively put himself in the position of an engaged player, cannot judge whether the "criteria" are applied reasonably or unreasonably here. Someone who described the game by saying that the
players (the electricians) make certain noises in certain observable situations would not be able to make head or tail of what is going on.

On the other hand, consider the following description of the use of “electricity is flowing through the wire”. “One uses a voltmeter, etc., to tell if electricity is flowing through the wire. A voltmeter is constructed in such and such a way —— (here, imagine an explanation of how a voltmeter ‘works’ – not in observation language). In using a voltmeter it is important to be sure that no electromagnetic fields be present which might affect the accuracy of its readings . . .”

Knowing the “use” of “current is flowing through the wire” is knowing things like this. Of course, much else is presupposed; in fact, acculturation in a technical society, with all that that entails. Understanding a language game is sharing a form of life. And forms of life cannot be described in a fixed positivistic meta-language, whether they be scientific, religious, or of a kind that we do not have in Western industrial societies today.

Note that, on this reading of Wittgenstein, the famous remark22 that, in a large class of cases, we may say that the meaning of a word is its use in the language is not a theory of meaning (although it is the expression of a point of view from which one can question whether one knows what it means to ask for a “theory of meaning”, in any sense in which a “theory of meaning” might be metaphysically informative).

Two more points, and I am ready to return to “the primacy of practice”. (1) To know under what conditions a statement (not a “sentence”) is assertable is to know under what conditions it is true or liable to be true. The idea that assertability conditions are conditions for making a noise is a total distortion of Wittgenstein’s meaning.

“Assertability” and “truth” are internally related notions: one comes to understand both by standing inside a language game, seeing its “point”, 23 and judging assertability and truth. (2) Michael Williams has tried to deflect the criticism that this sort of “Wittgensteinianism” is naively positivistic by saying that he rejects the fact/value dichotomy (as I do), and that this permits him to add that assertability conditions can themselves be reformed. But this addition employs the notion of “reforming” a language game as though that were one fixed notion available to the theorist. To know what counts as a reform in the language game of the electrician one must know the point of his game: to figure out how circuits are behaving, and how to repair them when they need repairing, or to install them, or to design them. If you think of the language game as nothing but a game of making noises in certain observable situations in the hope that making those noises will help you get the lights to go on, then the only notion of “reforming” the rules you will be able to give is a narrowly positivistic one: in effect, we will be back to “the aim of science is prediction and control”. While that may look plausible in the case of applied electricity, it will give you no understanding at all of most human language. (In general, as I remarked in Reason, Truth and History, the purposes of a language game are not statable without using the language of that game or a related game.)

If this is true even of scientific language, where these ideas become especially important in understanding Wittgenstein is when we turn to Wittgenstein’s various discussions of forms of language other than scientific; to his discussion of religious language, of “primitive” language games, and of differing “forms of life” in On Certainty. In the “Lectures on Religious Belief”, Wittgenstein makes it clear that he, standing outside religious language (or
affecting to), cannot say that religious language is cognitive or non-cognitive; all he can say is that, from the "outsiders" perspective, the religious man is "using a picture". But he adds that in saying this he is not saying that the religious man is only using a picture, or only "expressing an attitude". I take Wittgenstein to be saying here that (1) the possibilities of "external" understanding of a deeply different form of life are extremely limited; and (2) that religious claims are not simply badly formulated "empirical" claims. Yet they are not rejected by Wittgenstein out of hand, as are metaphysical claims. So what is going on?

It is here that I detect a moral as well as a philosophical purpose in Wittgenstein's writing. Wittgenstein is urging a certain kind of empathetic understanding. (As he explicitly does in his "Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough".)

Wittgenstein thinks that secular Europeans see all other forms of life as "pre-scientific" or "unscientific" and that this is a vulgar refusal to appreciate difference. The reason I think that these concerns of Wittgenstein go to the heart of his philosophy is this: To me the remarks near the end of On Certainty about our relationship to other forms of life, as well as the Lectures on Religious Belief and the remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough just mentioned, are a declaration that the language philosopher cannot qua philosopher tell us whether the putative "statements" made in a form of life very different than the scientific are statements or not; I can say "I would never talk like that", or, on the contrary, I can make a form of life my own. But this is not something that philosophy can decide for me. (On this interpretation, Wittgenstein's rejection of metaphysics is a moral rejection: metaphysical pictures are bad for us, in Wittgenstein's view.) The question, the one we are faced with over and over again, is whether a form of

life has practical or spiritual value. But the value of a form of life is not, in general, something one can express in the language games of those who are unable to share its evaluative interests.

This sounds like pragmatism. But it is not the mythical pragmatism (which the real pragmatists all scorned) which says "It's true (for you) if it is good for you". It is much closer to the attitude that Dewey expressed when he wrote:

[Philosophy's] primary concern is to clarify, liberate, and extend the goods which inhere in the naturally generated functions of experience. It has no call to create a world of "reality" de novo, nor to delve into secrets of Being hidden from common sense and science. It has no stock of information or body of knowledge peculiarly its own; if it does not always become ridiculous when it sets up as a rival of science, it is only because a particular philosopher happens to be also, as a human being, a prophetic man of science. Its business is to accept and to utilize for a purpose the best available knowledge of its own time and place. And this purpose is criticism of beliefs, institutions, customs, policies with respect to their bearing upon good. This does not mean their bearing upon the good, as something itself formulated and attained within philosophy. For as philosophy has no private store of knowledge or of methods for attaining truth, so it has no private access to good. As it accepts knowledge of facts and principles from those competent in science and inquiry, it accepts the goods that are diffused in human experience. It has no Mosaic or Pauline authority of revelation entrusted to it. But it has the authority of intelligence, of criticism of these common and natural goods . . .
In the third of these three lectures, I shall say more about Dewey, and about the way in which this conception of philosophy is worked out by him. Today I have tried to show that, even if Wittgenstein was not in the strict sense a "pragmatist" nor a "neo-Kantian" he shares with pragmatism a certain Kantian heritage (which William James, too, was extremely loath to acknowledge), and he also shares a central – perhaps the central – emphasis with pragmatism: the emphasis on the primacy of practice.

Notes

3 I say that they are nonsensical “as traditionally formulated” because I do not wish to say, and I do not wish to interpret Wittgenstein as saying, that there is no point in reflecting on these questions. On this, see James Conant’s Introduction to the collection of my papers that he edited, Realism with a Human Face.
5 See his “Solidarity or Objectivity” in C. West and

6 “It is certainly possible to be convinced by evidence that someone is in such-and-such a state of mind, for instance that he is not pretending. But ‘evidence’ here includes imponderable evidence” (Philosophical Investigations, Ixii, p. 228).
7 See §605 in On Certainty.
8 Suppose a terrestrial rock were transported to the moon and released. Aristotle’s physics clearly implies that it would fall to the earth, while Newton’s physics gives the correct prediction (that it would stay on the moon, or fall to the surface of the moon if lifted and released). There is a certain magnificent indifference to detail in saying grandly that Aristotle’s physics and Newton’s are “incommensurable”.
9 This is Quine’s term for (properly formalized) science.
10 I say this even though, at first blush, support for Rorty’s reading might seem to come from the following passages in On Certainty.

§608: Is it wrong for me to be guided in my actions by the propositions of physics? Am I to say that I have no good grounds for doing so? Isn’t it precisely this that we call a “good ground”?
§609: Suppose that we met people who did not regard this as a good ground, and who did not regard that as a telling reason. Now how do we imagine this? Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. And for that we consider them primitive.

Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it? – If we call this “wrong”, aren’t we using our language game as a base from which to combat theirs?
§610: And are we right or wrong to combat it. Of course there are all sorts of slogans which will be used to support our proceeding.
§611: Where two principles really do meet which
cannot be reconciled with one another, each declares
the other a fool and a heretic.
§612: I said I would "combat" the other man. But
wouldn't I give him reasons? Certainly, but how far do
they go? At the end of reasons comes persuasion. (Think
what happens when missionaries convert natives.)

But on closer reading, the Rortian interpretation is not
supportable. First of all, notice one small point. If all we
had was §609, then one might say that Wittgenstein was
distancing himself from those who say that consulting an
oracle is "wrong". It is not clear that the "we" in "if we
call this wrong aren't we using our language game as a
base from which to combat theirs" includes Wittgenstein
himself. But this ambiguity is immediately removed in
§612, when Wittgenstein says "I said I would 'combat' the
other man". So Wittgenstein isn't just an onlooker here.
Wittgenstein himself will at least sometimes combat a
different language game. Who wouldn't? (What decent
person wouldn't combat a language game that involved
ordeal by fire, for example?) And we cannot suppose that
the things that Wittgenstein would say if he were combat-
ting another language game (e.g., that it is "absurd" to try
to reach a verdict on anything by ordeal by fire) are in
some sense not believed by Wittgenstein, or that they are
given a special metaphysical reinterpretation by Wittgen-
stein, for the whole burden of On Certainty is that we have
no other place to stand but within our own language game.
If words like "know", for example, cannot bear a meta-
physical emphasis, as Wittgenstein suggests in one place,
that is all the more reason for using them where they
belong and without that metaphysical emphasis. Wittgen-
stein simply thinks it absurd to settle questions by ordeal
by fire.

Well, what about the end of §612, "But wouldn't I give
him reasons? Certainly, but how far do they go? At the
end of reasons comes persuasion. (Think what happens when
missionaries convert natives.)"? I take Wittgenstein here to
be simply telling us what is the case; that when we try to
argue with, say, the Azande, there are times when we
cannot find reasons that are reasons for them; the world
views are so totally different that we sometimes find that
in an argument with an intelligent Azande we cannot resort
to ordinary argument based on premises that we share with
the Azande but have to resort to persuasion.

11 See his "Must we Show What We Cannot Say?" in The
Senses of Stanley Cavell (Lewisburgh, Pennsylvania: Buck-

12 Walden, Chapter xviii, par. 14. But Thoreau also writes, in
the same paragraph, "We read that the traveler asked the
boy if the swamp before him had a hard bottom. The boy
replied that it had. But presently the traveler's horse sunk
in up to the girths, and he observed to the boy, 'I thought
you said the swamp had a hard bottom.' 'So it is', said the
boy, 'but you have not got half way to it yet.' So it is with
the bags and quicksands of society; but he is an old boy
that knows it." For Cavell's discussion see Chapter 3
("Portions") of his The Senses of Walden (Viking Press, 1972

13 Cf. my "Pragmatism and Moral Objectivity," in Martha
Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover (eds.), Women, Culture and
Equality: A Study in Human Capabilities (Oxford: Clarendon
Press, 1994); collected in my Words and Life (Cambridge,

14 For a discussion, see Yirmiyahu Yovel, Kant and the
Philosophy of History (Princeton: Princeton University

15 In this section I draw on material from "Does the Dis-
quotation Theory of Truth Solve All Philosophical
Problems," collected in my Words and Life. See also "Sense,
Nonsense and the Senses", my Dewey Lectures (published
in the Journal of Philosophy September 1994), especially
lecture 3, "The Face of Cognition."
Was Wittgenstein a Pragmatist?

16 In a letter to a publisher, Ludwig von Ficker, Wittgenstein described the purpose of the *Tractatus* as delimiting “the ethical” *von Innen her*. See von Wright’s introduction to the *Prototractatus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 15.


20 I say “very nearly suggested” because there is a tendency in Winch – one against which he struggles, to be sure – to regard the language games of primitive peoples as incomparably measurable with ours. This is no part of what Wittgenstein believed. But Winch deserves the credit for having seen much more clearly than almost any other interpreter what Wittgenstein was driving at. In this respect, the essays by Winch collected together as *Ethics and Action* are much superior to *The Idea of a Social Science*.

21 For example, p. 114ff.

22 §43 of the *Investigations*.

23 Cf. §563–4 of *Philosophical Investigations*.


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3

Pragmatism and the Contemporary Debate

We have seen that the holistic interdependence of fact, value and theory is a central theme in the writing of William James. I have sometimes used the term “interpenetration” in these lectures, to emphasize that the interdependence of which I speak is not an interdependence of elements which can always be distinguished, even notionally. To be sure, if I say “beating children is wrong” then, by established usage, if you like, I have made a “value judgment”, while if I say “my umbrella is in the closet” I have stated a “fact” – but what if I say “Caligula was a cruel emperor”? Here I have both made a value judgment and stated a historical fact. Or again, if I say “In the 1940s, Walter Gieseking played unaccompanied Bach and Mozart piano music with an amazing sensitivity to all the nuances, and without a trace of inappropriate bravura” I have described Gieseking’s playing and, as we say, expressed my appreciation of it.

Philosophers of science have sometimes distinguished between “observations” and “inductive generalizations”, while others advocated a three-fold contrast between observations, inductive generalizations, and “abductions”,
theory occurs at the beginning of Ian Hacking's *Representing and Intervening*. Hacking argues that we should be nonrealists with respect to theories (which are just calculating devices, according to him) and realists with respect to what we can "manipulate", either literally or with the aid of instruments. And in a well-known passage, he includes positrons in the class of things we can manipulate. Hacking is describing an experiment in which the charge initially placed on a supercooled niobium ball is gradually changed:

"Now how does one alter the charge on the niobium 'ball'? 'Well, at that stage,' said my friend, 'we spray it with positrons to increase or decrease the charge.' From that day forth I've been a scientific realist. *So far as I am concerned, if you can spray them then they are real*" [emphasis in the original].

Now what does it mean to believe that "they" are "real"? If it means that one believes that there are *distinct things* called "positrons", then we are in trouble — a lot of trouble — with the theory. For the theory — quantum field theory — tells us that positrons do not in general have a definite number! In the particular experimental setup Hacking is describing, they do have a definite number, perhaps, but it would be quite possible to set up an experiment in which one "sprayed" the niobium ball, not with three positrons, and not with four positrons, but with a *superposition of three and four positrons*. And elementary quantum mechanics already tells us that we cannot think of positrons as having *trajectories* or as being, in general, *reidentifiable*.

If being "a scientific realist" does not mean believing
that positrons exist as distinct things, what content is the notion supposed to have? If, on the other hand, it does mean believing that they are things in the sense of having continuous identities, position in space and time, number, etc. — and, as Wittgenstein reminds us, our paradigm of what is "real" is what we can point to, and what we can point to certainly has continuous identity, position, can be counted, etc. — then being a "scientific realist" about positrons means believing quantum field theory is actually false, and not just interpreting it "nonrealistically" (whatever that means). But then, we lose all power to understand just the characteristic quantum phenomena of interference, nonlocality, etc.

I suspect that this is not what Hacking wants, however. I suspect that Hacking wants to say that here, in this experiment, positrons are "real" without saying what that means. In Hacking's prose, "real" is just a comforting noise, stripped of all its conceptual connections with reidentifiability, countability, locatability, etc. Even Bohr would not deny that a realist picture of positrons as separate pellets that one can "spray" is appropriate to some experiments (that's what Complementarity is all about); but it is because we have to use different pictures in different experiments that we cannot just say "positrons are real" as if that were a self-interpreting statement.

I do not, of course, wish to say that positrons aren't real. But believing that positrons are real has conceptual content only because we have a conceptual scheme — a very strange one, one which we don't fully "understand", but a successful one nonetheless — which enables us to know what to say when about positrons, when we can picture them as objects we can spray and when we can't. Hacking's attempt to draw a sharp line between fact and theory, and to say that one should be a realist about the facts and a nonrealist about the theories, founders on precisely the interpenetration of fact and theory. As James might have put it, the word "positron" isn't a copy of a reality, but a "notation", and it is the theory that instructs us in the use of the notation. Again the theory and the fact (positrons were sprayed) are not even notionally separable.

When I spoke of "interpretation" in the first lecture, I had in mind the interpretation of linguistic utterances. That "fact" (in the sense of observational data) and "interpretation" (in this sense) are interdependent should be clear, although it has been contested by Quine (of all people!). To know that a prediction has been verified/not verified I must first of all be able to understand the prediction, that is, interpret the linguistic expression in question. All talk of "confirmation" in a public activity like science (one, moreover, which is conducted in many different languages and dialects) presupposes interpretation.

Quine rejects this argument on the grounds that observation statements allegedly possess "intersubjective stimulus meaning", and this "stimulus meaning" (which can be determined behavioristically, without any hermeneutical worries, according to Quine) suffices to determine their meaning for scientific purposes. For example, the fact that we can't tell whether the word gavagai in a hypothetical "jungle language" means rabbit or undetached rabbit parts without using "analytic hypotheses" — i.e., an interpretation — is irrelevant, according to Quine, since, as observation reports, these are equivalent.

What is wrong with this claim is that sentences which are "prompted" by the same stimuli need not be alike in truth value. If a tribe says bosorkanyok when they see an ugly old woman with a wart on her nose, should we
translate this as “ugly old woman with a wart on her nose” or as “witch”? If they expect a “bosorkanyok” and one appears (according to them), did they make a true prediction or a false accusation of witchcraft? The answer requires interpretation of the utterance, and not just knowledge of its “stimulus meaning”.

A quite different, but ultimately also unsuccessful, contrast between fact and interpretation has been defended by Gadamer: statements as to what words mean (e.g., parlez-vous Français means “Do you speak French?”) are to be classified as facts, while interpretations of, say, religious traditions and of texts within those traditions belong to “hermeneutics”. On Gadamer’s view, interpreting “Love your neighbor as yourself” breaks up into two parts: saying what the meaning of the sentence is (fact) and interpreting that meaning (interpretation or hermeneutics). Thus, while Quine’s aim is to separate scientific fact (observational data) from even minimal connection with the ascription of linguistic meaning, Gadamer’s aim is to separate ascriptions of linguistic meaning from “interpretation” in a more elevated sense. As Gadamer puts it: “To understand a language is not itself any real understanding (Verstehen) and includes no real interpretation process, but is a life-accopmlishment.”

What lends Gadamer’s view plausibility is that in the case of the languages which most interest him – for example, the languages in which the Bible and most of the commentaries on the Bible have been written – there are long established translations of the words and established ways of translating most sentences. This justifies calling truths about the meanings (translations) of these words and sentences “facts” – and, indeed, they are facts, for they function as such. But the case of radical translation is quite different. To know whether bosorkanyok means “witch” I must understand a whole culture; and while this is indeed simply a Lebensvollzug (“life accomplishment”) for someone brought up in the culture, for an outsider it is decidedly an Interpretationsvorgang (“interpretation process”). Like Quine, but in a different area, Gadamer fails to see that what he takes to be “fact” is conceptually connected to what he takes to be “interpretation” – indeed, in this case the content of the “fact”, if it is one, that bosorkanyok means “witch” is given by the explanation of what we are calling “witchcraft” in that culture. The interpretation is not even notionally separable from the fact.

In the second lecture, we saw that there is also a holistic element in the thinking of the later Wittgenstein. For Wittgenstein, as is well known, a language belongs to a “form of life” (in the Lectures on Aesthetics, he speaks of just how much would be required to appreciate African art as a native appreciates it, and how different such appreciation – e.g., the ability to point out relevant features – is from the appreciation of the same art by even an informed connoisseur). But a form of life is not factorizable into a set of beliefs about “facts” and a bunch of “values”. (In addition, I have had occasion to refer to On Certainty in illustrating the interdependence of fact and theory.)

Many years ago, Morton White spoke of a “revolt against formalism” in connection with pragmatism. This revolt against formalism is not a denial of the utility of formal models in certain contexts; but it manifests itself in a sustained critique of the idea that formal models, in particular, systems of symbolic logic, rule books of inductive logic, formalizations of scientific theories, etc. – describe a condition to which rational thought either can or should aspire. Wittgenstein, as you all know, began his
career on the formalist side and spent the whole latter part of his life as an antiformalist. Indeed, *On Certainty* explicitly uses images of plasticity and fluidity ("In time, the banks and the river may change places."). We have also seen that, although Richard Rorty describes himself as a "pragmatist" and an admirer of the later Wittgenstein, his habit of dichotomizing human thought into speech within "criterion governed language games" and speech "outside" language games is both unpragmatist and un-Wittgensteinian.

But have we lost the world?

If the features of pragmatism we have been discussing are appealing, they may also seem threatening. As I said in the first lecture, holism may seem to threaten the loss of the world. If fact, value, theory and interpretation interpenetrate in the ways I have described in these lectures, then are we not committed to a "coherence theory of truth"?

Coherence theorists have always pointed out that what they require for truth is not mere coherence of sentences but coherence of beliefs and that we are not free to believe anything we want. Belief is under causal constraints. For example, in "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge," Donald Davidson attempted to convince us that a coherence theory of truth is not so bad, provided we remember that one of the constraints on interpretation is that our words should be interpreted, in most cases, as referring to the sorts of things with which we have had causal (and especially perceptual) interactions. But Davidson's argument does not work for two reasons. The first reason is that if "the cause" is supposed to be something non-conceptual, something simply "built into" the extralinguistic world, then we get a monstrously unrealistic view of causation. One cannot say, as, for example, Jerry Fodor does, that what makes it the case that the word *cat* refers to cats is that "cats cause cat-tokenings". The question, "What is the cause of Jones's using the word *cat*" has no meaning at all, apart from a context. In a context, depending on the interests of the questioner, the answer may be "The fact that the Anglo-Saxon word was *cat*", "The meow she just heard", etc. Nor, for that matter, can we imagine that the world divides itself into "sorts" in just one determinate way. Davidson avoids these problems by speaking of what the interpretation of our words would be from the point of view of an omniscient interpreter. But, and this is the second reason his argument does not work, the very reference to an interpreter, omniscient or not, misses the depth of the problem.

Davidson writes as if the only problem were ordinary scepticism, the sort of scepticism that assumes that our utterances are true or false, and worries that we cannot know which they are. But the real worry is that sentences cannot be true or false of an external reality if there are no justificatory connections between things we say in language and any aspects of that reality whatsoever. If that is one's worry -- and that is the deep worry -- then saying "If there were an omniscient interpreter, your utterances would be interpreted by that interpreter as having truth conditions which refer to extralinguistic things and events" is no help. It is no help because, if our only model of language is a model of a scheme which is closed under justificatory relations, a scheme in which literally nothing reaches outside of language (except for the fact that there are brute causal forces acting on language, forces which have no one "built
in" description), then we will not be able to see how there could be speakers or interpreters at all, and a fortiori we will not be able to see how there could be an omniscient interpreter. The assumption that the notion of an omniscient interpreter so much as makes sense begs the entire question.

John McDowell has suggested that the solution is to think of perception as an exercise of our conceptual powers, and not merely of our sense organs, so that (contrary to what is said by Davidson and many others) a non-linguistic event, e.g., hearing a cat, can justify, and not merely cause, a linguistic event ("Mitty wants some food"). This suggestion would probably meet with the approval of William James. But it may also make the problem seem worse rather than better.

An example may help us to see how perception can be an exercise of our conceptual abilities. Suppose I perceive a resistor lying on a table. I know what a resistor is and what a resistor looks like. I am not supposing that I think the words "that is a resistor" (I rarely if ever think the words "that is a chair" when I see a chair), but I would be able to answer the question "what is that thing?". How does my visual experience differ from the visual experience I had when I saw the same thing but did not know what it was?

Well, consider the auditory experience I have when I now hear an English sentence. When I returned to the United States from France at age eight not speaking any English, even a simple English sentence — say, "We're going to eat in a few minutes" sounded like noise. Now that sentence says something to me; I cannot hear it as noise. I can have a similar experience today: if I learn the meaning of an Italian sentence that I did not previously understand, the way I hear that sentence will change. To be sure, I am aware that the sounds did not "change"; but what I hear is not correctly described as the sounds I heard before plus an interpretation. Nor is what I see when I see a resistor correctly described as the visual experience I had when the resistor was just a "thing" plus an interpretation. As William James put it, the perception is "thought and sensation fused". The knowledge that what I am seeing is a resistor and the "sensation" are not two components of the experience. The experience is not factorizable, any more than the experience of hearing someone say "We're going to eat in a few minutes" is factorizable into the sound I heard when that was still unintelligible and the knowledge that what is being said is that we are going to eat in a few minutes.

John McDowell's point goes beyond James's phenomenological observation in noting that once we think of hearing and seeing as accessing information from the environment — something with full right to be regarded as a rational accomplishment — there is no reason to accept the dictum that a perception can only cause (and not justify) a verbalized thought. The reason that I said a few moments ago that this may make the threat of loss of the world seem worse rather than better is that if perception is always already informed with conceptual content, that content cannot be thought of as always benign. Our concepts may contaminate our perceptions as well as "inform" them; perceptions supply misinformation as well as information. Here I do not have in mind the relatively harmless possibility (although it was not always thought of as harmless in the history of philosophy!) of illusions of a traditional kind, e.g., mistaking a reflection for a person, or a shadow for an animal. I have in mind seeing someone as a witch (as in the persecutions that swept Europe and the American colonies in the late Renaissance), or seeing a
person as a representative of an “inferior race”. If we can see resistors, we can also see (or think we see) witches. It will seem to some that McDowell has not removed the danger of losing the world but rather extended it to perception itself.

The pragmatist response to scepticism

Part of the pragmatist response is the Peircean distinction between real and philosophical doubt that I mentioned in my first lecture. I know that the evils and tragedies that I see around me are not caused by witches; I also know that a few centuries ago intelligent people believed the contrary. That knowledge can, and according to pragmatists should, produce a healthy awareness of human fallibility; but it should not, and indeed cannot, produce universal scepticism. One cannot summon up real doubt at will ("Doubting is not as easy as lying", Peirce once said). Ceasing to believe anything at all is not a real human possibility. The fact that we have sometimes been mistaken in even very fundamental beliefs cannot, by itself, make me doubt any specific belief. The fact that there are no witches does not make me worry that perhaps there are no resistors.

This too may seem like “small comfort”. If the fact that we are sometimes wrong is not a reason for doubting – really doubting – any particular belief, neither is the Peircean point just reviewed a reason for trusting any particular belief. What we want, it may seem, is a method for telling which of our beliefs are really justified, by perception or otherwise, and which are not. But is not the desire for such a method a hankering for an impossible Archimedean point, a vestige of what Dewey excoriated as “the quest for certainty”?

Yes and No. A “method” in the sense of an algorithm which solves all of our epistemological problems is a philosopher’s fantasy (recall what I said about the pragmatist “revolt against formalism”). But, Peirce also reminded us – and this side of pragmatism was continued by John Dewey throughout his long philosophical life – that the fact that we cannot reduce scientific inquiry (in the generous sense of “scientific” that both Peirce and Dewey tried to introduce to us) to an algorithm, on the one hand, nor provide a metaphysical guarantee that any of our beliefs or methods will never need revision, on the other, does not mean that we don’t know anything about how to conduct inquiry. Peirce and Dewey believed that we have learned a good deal about how inquiry should be conducted – learned from our past experience with inquiry – and that some of what we have learned applies to inquiry in general, and not just to particular kinds of inquiry or particular subject matters.

A view like Peirce’s or Dewey’s will not be intelligible if one starts with what I may call a “Carnapian” view of inquiry. For this reason, we need to recall the differences between the way in which a philosopher like John Dewey sees the scientific method and the way in which a philosopher like Rudolf Carnap did. It is noteworthy that in Carnap’s great work on inductive logic – the work to which he devoted almost all of his energy in the last two decades of his life – there is virtually no reference to experiment. The word does not even occur as an entry in the index to The Logical Foundations of Probability! Scientific theories are confirmed by “evidence”, in Carnap’s systems of inductive logic, but it is immaterial (that is to say, there is no way to represent the difference in the formalism)
whether that evidence—those "observation sentences"—is obtained as the result of intelligently directed experimentation, or it just happens to be available. Passive observation and active intervention are not distinguished, and the question, whether one has actually tried to falsify the hypotheses that have been "highly confirmed" is not a question which can be asked or answered in the language Carnap constructed. Even more important, for our purposes, is the fact that the term that Carnap used to characterize his own stance in the Aufbau, the term "methodological solipsism", could also be applied, though in a different sense, to this later philosophical work of Carnap's. For just as it makes no difference from the point of view of Carnapian inductive logic whether our observation is passive or active, whether we just look or whether we intervene, it also makes no difference whether observation is cooperative or not. Fundamentally, the standpoint is that of a single isolated spectator who makes observations through a one-way mirror and writes down observation sentences. Appraising theories for their cognitive virtues is then simply a matter of using an algorithm to determine whether a sentence has a mathematical relation to another sentence (the conjunction of the observation sentences the observer has written down), on this picture. The scientific method is reconstructed as a method of computation, computation of a function like Carnap's famous "c*".

The pragmatist picture is totally different. For Peirce and Dewey, inquiry is cooperative human interaction with an environment; and both aspects, the active intervention, the active manipulation of the environment, and the cooperation with other human beings, are vital. The first aspect, the aspect of intervention, is connected with pragmatist fallibilism. Of course, Carnap was also a fallibilist, in the sense of recognizing that future observation might disconfirm a theory which is today very well confirmed; but for the pragmatists this was not fallibilism enough. Before Karl Popper was even born, Peirce emphasized that very often ideas will not be falsified unless we go out and actively seek falsifying experiences. Ideas must be put under strain, if they are to prove their worth; and Dewey and James both followed Peirce in this respect.

For the positivists—e.g., for both Carnap and Reichenbach—the most primitive form of scientific inquiry, and the form that they studied first when they constructed their (otherwise very different) theories of induction, was induction by simple enumeration. The model is always a single scientist who determines the colors of the balls drawn successively from an urn, and tries to estimate the frequencies with which those colors occur among the balls remaining in the urn. For the pragmatists, the model is a group of inquirers trying to produce good ideas and trying to test them to see which ones have value.

In addition, as I already pointed out, the model of an algorithm, like a computer program, is rejected. According to the pragmatists, whether the subject be science or ethics, what we have are maxims and not algorithms; and maxims themselves require contextual interpretation. The problem of subjectivity and intersubjectivity was in the minds of the pragmatists from the beginning—not as a metaphysical worry about whether we have access to a world at all, but as a real problem in human life. They insisted that when one human being in isolation tries to interpret even the best maxims for himself and does not allow others to criticize the way in which he or she interprets those maxims, or the way in which he or she applies them, then the kind of "certainty" that results is
practice fatally tainted with subjectivity. Even the notion of "truth" makes no sense in such a "moral solitude" for "truth presupposes a standard external to the thinker". Notions like "simplicity", for example, have no clear meaning at all unless inquirers who have proven their competence in the practice of inquiry are able to agree, to some extent at least, on which theories do and which theories do not possess "simplicity". The introduction of new ideas for testing likewise depends on cooperation, for any human being who rejects inputs from other human beings runs out of ideas sooner rather than later, and begins to consider only ideas which in one way or another reflect the prejudices he or she has formed. Cooperation is necessary both for the formation of ideas and for their rational testing.

But that cooperation must be of a certain kind in order to be effective. It must, for example, obey the principles of discourse ethics. Where there is no opportunity to challenge accepted hypotheses by criticizing the evidence upon which their acceptance was based, or the application of the norms of scientific inquiry to that evidence, or by offering rival hypotheses, and where questions and suggestions are systematically ignored, then the scientific enterprise always suffers. When relations among scientists become relations of hierarchy and dependence, or when scientists instrumentalize other scientists, again the scientific enterprise suffers. Dewey was not naive. He was aware that there are power plays in the history of science as there are in the history of every human institution. He would not have been surprised by the findings of historians and sociologists of science; but he differs from some of our contemporary ones in holding that it makes sense to have a normative notion of science.

It is not only that, on Dewey's conception, good science requires respect for autonomy, symmetric reciprocity, and discourse ethics - that could be true even if scientific theories and hypotheses were, in the end, to be tested by the application of an algorithm, such as the inductive logic for which Carnap hoped - but, as we already observed, the very interpretation of the non-algorithmic standards by which scientific hypotheses are judged depends on cooperation and discussion structured by the same norms. Both for its full development and for its full application to human problems, science requires the democratization of inquiry.

What I have just offered is, in part, an instrumental justification of the democratization of inquiry. But Dewey opposes the philosophers' habit of dichotomization. In particular, he opposes both the dichotomy "pure science/applied science" and the dichotomy "instrumental value/terminal value". Pure science and applied science are interdependent and interpenetrating activities, Dewey argues. And similarly, instrumental values and terminal values are interdependent and interpenetrating. Science helps us to achieve many goals other than the attainment of knowledge for its own sake, and when we allow inquiry to be democratized simply because doing so helps us achieve those practical goals, we are engaged in goal-oriented activity. At the same time, even when we are engaged in a goal-oriented activity we also are guided by norms of rationality which have become terminal values for us, and which cannot be separated from the modern conception of "rationality" itself. Moreover, we are not - nor were we ever - interested in knowledge only for its practical benefits; curiosity is coeval with the species itself, and pure knowledge is always, to some extent, and in some areas, a terminal value even for the least curious among us. It is not, for us, any longer just a sociological-
descriptive fact that choosing theories for their predictive power and simplicity, and fostering democratic cooperation and openness to criticism in the generation and evaluation of theories, are part of the nature of scientific inquiry; these norms describe the way we ought to function when the aim is knowledge.

Rortian Relativism

Rorty will reply that all of this is excellent advice, but we should not pretend that it rests on anything but the interests and preferences of our “Western democratic culture”. Lyotard will worry that even this advice is exploitative — valorizing democratic discussion may oppress the “inarticulate”, according to this “postmodern” thinker. But refusal to discuss certainly does not help anyone — even Lyotard does not think we will benefit from mindless activism. And Rorty’s constant insistence that talk of “truth” is merely emotive (a “compliment” we pay to certain beliefs) rests on his curious notion that we are connected to the world “causally but not semantically”. Rorty is in the grip of the picture that the Eliminative Materialism is true of the Noumenal World, even if he is debarred by the very logic of his own position from stating that belief. What the pragmatist thinkers I have discussed in these lectures had in common was the conviction that the solution to the problem of “loss of the world” is to be found in action and not in metaphysics (or “postmodern” anti-metaphysics, either). Peirce and James and Dewey would have said that democratically conducted inquiry is to be trusted; not because it is infallible, but because the way in which we will find out where and how our procedures need to be revised is through the process of inquiry itself. (These pragmatists would have added that what we have learned about inquiry in general applies to ethical inquiry in particular.) At the same time, James and Wittgenstein would have asked us to remember that what is publicly verified (or even what is intersubjectively “warrantedly assertable”) is not all of what any human being or any culture can live by: James in The Varieties of Religious Experience and Wittgenstein in Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychoanalysis, and Religious Belief and On Certainty explore the problems posed by what might be called the limits of intersubjectivity. The need for intersubjectively validated knowledge, the need for tolerance, and the need for forms of life that rest on existential commitments that not everyone can or should make, are all real needs. There is plenty for philosophy to do in exploring those needs; but telling us again and again that “there is nothing outside the text”, or that all our thought is simply “marks and noises” which we are “caused” to produce by a blind material world to which we cannot so much as refer, is not an exploration of any of them, but a fruitless oscillation between a linguistic idealism which is largely a fashionable “put on” and a self-refuting scientism. I hope to have made it plausible that there is a better alternative, and to have inspired you to explore that alternative further.

Notes

1 On the impossibility of factoring such a judgment into a “value component” and a “descriptive component” see my Reason, Truth and History (Cambridge: Cambridge Univer-
2 On this sort of description, see Wittgenstein’s discussion of aesthetic appreciation in Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief, edited by Cyril Barrett (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1966). Note in particular Wittgenstein’s observation that the word beautiful “plays an absolutely minor role”.
3 For example, although Reichenbach stressed the way in which observations are theory loaded in his 1920 Relativity Theory and Aproiri Knowledge, his famous “vindication of induction” in Experience and Prediction ignores this. Carnap’s writing displays a similar oscillation between recognizing the interdependence of observation and theory, most notably in The Logical Syntax of Language, and (in his later writing) treating observation statements (which are said to be “completely interpreted”) as radically different from theoretical statements (which are said to be only “partially interpreted”).
5 For example, if I am not in a spaceship in orbit.
6 In conversation, Rogers Albritton has objected to calling such statements as “I see a chair” theory loaded on the grounds that these generalizations are not part of the meaning of the statement. But Wittgenstein’s point was that something may function as a pivot on which the language game turns even though “in time the bank and the river may change places” – we do not need analytic implications here to see that the “fact” and the “generalizations” depend on one another for their very intelligibility in our language game as it is right now.

7 Ian Hacking, Representing and Intervening (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
8 Ibid., p. 23.
10 In his reply to me in The Philosophy of W. V. Quine (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1986).
11 Note that in present-day European languages, “witch” has no ‘stimulus meaning’ for most speakers, and is thus not an “observation sentence” in Quine’s sense, while bosorkanyak is, by hypothesis, an observation sentence in the jungle language. But translating bosorkanyak as “witch” and not as “ugly old woman with a wart on her nose” – even though the latter sentence is an observation sentence, and does have the same stimulus meaning as bosorkanyak – may be right!
14 Cf. Morton White’s Social Thought in America: The Revolt Against Formalism (New York, 1949).
16 I do not wish to suggest that this is what Donald Davidson thinks, although it is what Jerry Fodor thinks (in Psychosemantics, for example). On why this is an unrealistic view of causation see my “Is the Causal Structure of the Physical Itself Something Physical?” in Realism with a Human Face (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990) and

17 I am indebted to John McDowell's forthcoming *Mind and World* for this observation and for the point which follows, although he should not be held responsible for my formulation.

18 This is the theme of the book cited in the preceding note.

19 I was born in Chicago, but I was taken to France by my father and mother when I was a few months old, and did not learn English until we came back to the States in 1934.

20 According to Jerry Fodor (*The Modularity of Mind*), the reason for this is that a "module"—a subpersonal automatic processor—has been formed in my brain which "recognizes" this sentence using a fairly simple heuristic. Fodor uses this hypothesis to deny that the recognition of the sentence is a conceptual activity. But this is a confusion on more than one ground: (1) If the module were removed from my brain and kept alive artificially and stimulated electrically the result would not be an "auditory sense datum" occurring in a handful of neurons, but just a physical event. By identifying the outputs of his modules with *appearances*, Fodor is making a mistake against which James repeatedly warns in the *Principles of Psychology* [cf. my review of Fodor's book in *Cognition*]; the fact that a bit of machinery in the brain is necessary for a mental function does not mean that we can simply identify the mental function and the operation of the machinery. Hearing and understanding a sentence involves much more than the operation of the module; although the operation of the module is (if Fodor's theory is right) part of what enables us to hear and understand the sentence. (2) If the relevant conceptual knowledge were somehow removed from my brain without disturbing the module, I might have a feeling of "recognizing" the sentence, but this would be followed by the disturbing realization that I had no idea what it meant—this would not be an experience of *hearing someone* say "We're going to eat in a few minutes", or whatever. It is only with the conceptual system in place that the operation of the subpersonal mechanism enables me to hear that. As James points out, the localized "brain traces", etc., that neurobiologists loved to identify with mental functions even in his day may do quite different things depending on what is going on in the rest of the brain and body. As McDowell puts it, hearing a sentence or seeing a chair is accessing information from the environment; this is the function of perception, and—since it involves the entire transaction between the organism and the environment [here I am using John Dewey's way of conceptualizing the situation to explain McDowell's point! ]—perception should not be thought of as taking place in the head, even though the neurological mechanisms on which it depends are in the head. *The mind is not in the head.* (3) Another reason Fodor has for wanting speech recognition to be non-conceptual is that on Fodor's theory of meaning (as subsequently developed in *Psychosemantics* and *The Modularity of Mind*), the meaning of the words is not determined, even in part, by the conceptual relations among the various notions I have mastered—e.g., between "minute" and my other time concepts—but depends only on "nomic relations" between the words (e.g., *minute*) and the corresponding "universals" (e.g., minuteness). These "universals" are just word-shaped objects which Fodor's metaphysics projects out into the world for the words to latch on to via mysterious "nomic relations"; the whole story is nothing but a "naturalistic" version of the Museum Myth of Meaning.


23 "It is a very grave mistake to attach much importance to
the antecedent likelihood of hypotheses, except in extreme cases; because likelihoods are mostly merely subjective, and have so little real value, that considering the remarkable opportunities that they will cause us to miss, in the long run attention to them does not pay. Every hypothesis should be put to the test by forcing it to make verifiable predictions.” Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, volume V. Pragmatism and Pragmaticism, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 419 [5.599].


25 James in “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”.


27 I have used the vocabulary of Agnes Heller’s A Philosophy of Morals (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) in this sentence to bring out the “ethical” tone of the norms governing scientific inquiry.

28 To the objection that we do not consider all views when a scientific hypothesis is under discussion – instructed opinions are the ones that matter – Dewey’s reply (in the Logic) is that, while this is true, there is a stage at which lay opinion should count. The application of science is also a test of the hypotheses applied, and that test needs to be under democratic control. (Think of what happens when medical drugs and devices are tested only by the companies that manufacture them!)

29 This is discussed in R. A. Putnam’s and my “Epistemology as Hypothesis”.

30 This is a famous (and gnomic) saying of Derrida’s.

31 This is the way Rorty presented his view at a conference on Truth in Paris (May 3, 1990) sponsored by the Collège Internationale de Philosophie.