which would eliminate the actual sense of a person speaking to other persons face to face.

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Für die Sitzung
am 7.12.
nur Lecture I

Hilary Putnam,
The many Faces of Realism 1995

Lecture I

IS THERE STILL ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT REALITY AND TRUTH?

The man on the street, Eddington reminded us, visualizes a table as 'solid'—that is, as *mostly* solid matter. But physics has discovered that the table is mostly empty space: that the distance between the particles is immense in relation to the radius of the electron or the nucleus of one of the atoms of which the table consists. One reaction to this state of affairs, the reaction of Wilfrid Sellars,[1] is to deny that there are tables at all as we ordinarily conceive them (although he chooses an ice cube rather than a table as his example). The commonsense conception of ordinary middle-sized material objects such as tables and ice cubes (the 'manifest image') is simply *false* in Sellars's view (although not without at least some cognitive value—there are real objects that the 'tables' and 'ice cubes' of the manifest image 'picture', acccording to Sellars, even if these real objects are not the layman's tables and ice cubes). I don't agree with this view of Sellars's, but I hope he will forgive me if I use it, or the phenomenon of its appearance on the philosophical scene, to highlight certain features of the philosophical debate about 'realism'.

First of all, this view illustrates the fact that Realism with a capital 'R' doesn't always deliver what the innocent expect of it. If there is any appeal of Realism which is wholly legitimate it is the appeal to the commonsense feeling that *of course* there are tables and chairs, and any philosophy that tell us that there really aren't—that there

are really only sense data, or only 'texts', or whatever, is more than slightly crazy. In appealing to this commonsense feeling, Realism reminds me of the Seducer in the old-fashioned melodrama. In the melodramas of the 1890s the Seducer always promised various things to the Innocent Maiden which he failed to deliver when the time came. In this case the Realist (the evil Seducer) promises common sense (the Innocent Maiden) that he will rescue her from her enemies (Idealists, Kantians and Neo-Kantians, Pragmatists, and the fearsome self-described "Irrealist" Nelson Goodman) who (the Realist says) want to deprive her of her good old ice cubes and chairs. Faced with this dreadful prospect, the fair Maiden naturally opts for the company of the commonsensical Realist. But when they have travelled together for a little while the 'Scientific Realist' breaks the news that what the Maiden is going to get *isn't* her ice cubes and tables and chairs. In fact, all there *really* is—the Scientific Realist tells her over breakfast—is what 'finished science' will say there is—whatever that may be. She is left with a promissory note for She Knows Not What, and the assurance that even if there *aren't* tables and chairs, still there are some *Dinge an sich* that her 'manifest image' (or her 'folk physics', as some Scientific Realists put it) 'picture'. Some will say that the lady has been had.

Thus, it is clear that the name 'Realism' can be claimed by or given to at least two very different philosophical attitudes (and, in fact, to many). The philosopher who claims that only scientific objects 'really exist' and that much, if not all, of the commonsense world is mere 'projection' claims to be a 'realist', but so does the philosopher who insists that there *really are* chairs and ice cubes (and some of these ice cubes really are *pink*), and these two attitudes, these two images of the world, can lead to and have led to many different programs for philosophy.

Husserl[2] traces the first line of thought, the line that denies that there 'really are' commonsense objects, back to

Galileo, and with good reason. The present Western world-view depends, according to Husserl, on a new way of conceiving 'external objects'— the way of mathematical physics. An external thing is conceived of as a congeries of particles (by atomists) or as some kind of extended disturbance (in the seventeenth century, a 'vortex', and later a collection of 'fields'). Either way, the table in front of me (or the object that I 'picture as' a table) is described by 'mathematical formulas', as Husserl says. And this, he points out, is what above all came into Western thinking with the Galilean revolution: the idea of the 'external world' as something whose true description, whose description 'in itself', consists of mathematical formulas.

It is important to this way of thinking that certain familiar properties of the table—its size and shape and location—are 'real' properties, describable, for example, in the language of Descartes' analytic geometry. Other properties, however, the so-called 'secondary' properties, of which *color* is a chief example, are *not* treated as real properties in the same sense. No 'occurrent' (non-dispositional) property of that swarm of molecules (or that space-time region) recognized in mathematical physics can be said to be what we all along called its *color*.

What about dispositional properties? It is often claimed that color is simply a function of *reflectancy*, that is, of the disposition of an object (or of the surface of an object) to selectively absorb certain wavelengths of incident light and reflect others. But this doesn't really do much for the reality of colors. Not only has recent research shown that this account is much too simple (because changes of reflectancy across edges turn out to play an important role in determining the colors we see), but reflectancy itself does not have one uniform physical explanation. A red star and a red apple and a reddish glass of colored water are red for quite different physical reasons. In fact, there may well be an infinite number of different physical conditions which could result in the disposition to reflect (or emit) red light and absorb light of other wavelengths. A

dispositional property whose underlying non-dispositional 'explanation' is so very non–uniform is simply incapable of being represented as a mathematical function of the dynamical variables. And these—the dynamical variables—are the parameters that this way of thinking treats as the 'characteristics' of 'external' objects.

Another problem[3] is that *hues* turn out to be much more subjective than we thought. In fact, any shade on the color chart in the green part of the spectrum will be classed as 'standard green' by some subject—even if it lies at the extreme 'yellow-green' end or the extreme 'blue-green' end.

In sum, no 'characteristic' recognized by this way of thinking—no 'well-behaved function of the dynamical variables'—corresponds to such a familiar property of objects as *red* or *green* . The idea that there is a property all red objects have in common—the same in all cases—and another property all green objects have in common—the same in all cases—is a kind of illusion, on the view we have come more and more to take for granted since the age of Descartes and Locke.

However, Locke and Descartes did give us a sophisticated substitute for our pre-scientific notion of color; a substitute that has, perhaps, come to seem mere 'post-scientific common sense' to most people. This substitute involves the idea of a sense datum (except that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century vocabulary, sense data were referred to as 'ideas' or 'impressions'). The red sweater I see is not red in the way I thought it was (there is no 'physical magnitude' which is its redness), but it does have a disposition (a Power, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century idiom) to affect me in a certain way—to cause me to have sense data. And these, the sense data, do truly have a simple, uniform, non-dispositional sort of 'redness'.

This is the famous picture, the dualistic picture of the physical world and its primary qualities, on the one hand, and the mind and its sense data, on the other, that philosophers have been wrangling over since the time of

Galileo, as Husserl says. And it is Husserl's idea—as it was the idea of William James, who influenced Husserl—that this picture is disastrous.

But why should we regard it as disastrous? It was once shocking, to be sure, but as I have already said it is by now widely accepted as 'post-scientific common sense'. What is *really* wrong with this picture?

For one thing, *solidity* is in much the same boat as color. If objects do not have color as they 'naively' seem to, no more do they have solidity as they 'naively' seem to.[4] It is this that leads Sellars to say that such commonsense objects as ice cubes do not really exist at all. What *is* our conception of a typical commonsense object if not of something solid (or liquid) which exhibits certain colors? What there really are, in Sellars's scientific metaphysics, are objects of mathematical physics, on the one hand, and 'raw feels', on the other. This is precisely the picture I have just described as "disastrous"; it is the picture that denies precisely the common man's kind of realism, his realism about tables and chairs.

The reply to me (the reply a philosopher who accepts the post-Galilean picture will make) is obvious: 'You are just nostalgic for an older and simpler world. This picture works; our acceptance of it is an "inference to the best explanation". We cannot regard it as an objection to a view that it does not preserve everything that laymen once falsely believed.'

If it is an inference to the best explanation, it is a strange one, however. How does the familiar explanation of what happens when I 'see something red' go? The light strikes the object (say, a sweater), and is reflected to my eye. There is an image on the retina (Berkeley knew about images on the retina, and so did Descartes, even if the wave aspect of light was not well understood until much later). There are resultant nerve impulses (Descartes knew there was some kind of transmission along the nerves, even if he was wrong about its nature—and it is not clear we know its nature either, since there is again debate about

the significance of chemical, as opposed to electrical, transmissions from neuron to neuron.) There are events in the brain, some of which we understand thanks to the work of Hubel and Wiesel, David Marr, and others. And then—this is the mysterious part—there is somehow a 'sense datum' or a 'raw feel'. *This* is an *explanation*?

An 'explanation' that involves connections of a kind we do not understand at all ("nomological danglers", Herbert Feigl called them[5]) and concerning which we have not even the sketch of a theory is an explanation through something more obscure than the phenomenon to be explained. As has been pointed out by thinkers as different from one another as William James, Husserl, and John Austin, every single part of the sense datum story is supposition—theory—and theory of a most peculiar kind. Yet the epistemological role 'sense data' are supposed to play by traditional philosophy required them to be what is 'given', to be *what we are absolutely sure of independently of scientific theory*. The kind of scientific realism we have inherited from the seventeenth century has not lost all its prestige even yet, but it has saddled us with a disastrous picture of the world. It is high time we looked for a different picture.

Intrinsic Properties: Dispositions

I want to suggest that the problem with the 'Objectivist' picture of the world (to use Husserl's term for this kind of scientific realism) lies deeper than the postulation of 'sense data'; sense data are, so to speak, the visible symptoms of a systemic disease, like the pock marks in the case of smallpox. The deep systemic root of the disease, I want to suggest, lies in the notion of an 'intrinsic' property, a property something has 'in itself', apart from any contribution made by language or the mind.

This notion, and the correlative notion of a property that is merely 'appearance', or merely something we 'project'

onto the object, has proved extremely robust, judging by its appeal to different kinds of philosophers. In spite of their deep disagreements, all the strains of philosophy that accepted the seventeenth-century circle of problems—subjective idealists as well as dualists and materialists—accepted the distinction, even if they disagreed over its application. A subjective idealist would say that there are only sense data (or minds and sense data, in some versions), and that 'red' is an intrinsic property of these objects, while persistence (being there even when we don't look) is something we 'project'; a dualist or a materialist would say the 'external' objects have persistence as an intrinsic property, but red is, in their case, something we 'project'. But all of these philosophers *have* the distinction. Even Kant, who expresses serious doubts about it in the first Critique (to the point of saying that the notion of a "Ding an sich" *may* be "empty"), makes heavy use of it in the second Critique.

Putting aside the Berkeleyan view (that there aren't really any external objects at all) as an aberrant form of the seventeenth-century view, we may say that the remaining philosophers all accept the account of 'redness' and 'solidity' that I have been describing; these are not 'intrinsic properties' of the external things we ascribe them to, but rather (in the case of external things) dispositions to affect us in certain ways—to produce certain sense data in us, or, the materialist philosophers would say, to produce certain sorts of 'states' in our brains and nervous systems. The idea that these properties are 'in' the things themselves, as intrinsic properties, is a spontaneous 'projection'.

The Achilles' Heel of this story is the notion of a disposition. To indicate the problems that arise—they have preoccupied many first-rate philosophical minds, starting with Charles Peirce's—let me introduce a technical term (I shall not introduce much terminology in this lecture, I promise!). A disposition that something has to do something *no matter what*, I shall call a *strict disposition*. A disposition to do something under 'normal conditions', I

shall call an ***'other things being equal' disposition***. Perhaps it would be wise to give examples.

The disposition of bodies with non-zero rest mass to travel at sub-light speeds is a ***strict*** disposition; it is physically impossible for a body with non-zero rest mass to travel at the speed of light. Of course, the notion of a 'strict disposition' presupposes the notion of 'physical necessity', as this example illustrates, but this is a notion I am allowing the 'scientific realist', at least for the sake of argument. What of the disposition of sugar to dissolve in water?

This is not a strict disposition, since sugar which is placed in water which is already saturated with sugar (or even with other appropriate chemicals) will not dissolve. Is the disposition of sugar to dissolve in ***chemically pure water***, then, a strict disposition?

This is also not a strict disposition; the first counterexample I shall mention comes from thermodynamics. Suppose I drop a sugar cube in water and the sugar cube dissolves. Consider sugar which is in water, but in such a way that while the situation is identical with the situation I just produced (the sugar is dissolved in the water) with respect to the position of each particle, and also with respect to the numerical value of the momentum of each particle, all the momentum vectors have the exactly opposite directions from the ones they now have. This is a famous example: what happens in the example is that the sugar, instead of staying dissolved, simply forms a sugar cube which spontaneously leaps out of the water! Since every normal state (every state in which sugar dissolves) can be paired with a state in which it 'undissolves', we see that there are infinitely many physically-possible conditions in which sugar 'undissolves' instead of staying in solution. Of course, these are all states in which entropy decreases; but that is not impossible, only extremely improbable!

Shall we say, then, that sugar has a strict disposition to dissolve unless the condition is one in which an entropy decrease takes place? No, because if sugar is put in water

and there is immediately a flash freeze, the sugar will not dissolve if the freezing takes place fast enough. . . .

The fact is that what we can say is that under ***normal*** conditions sugar will dissolve if placed in water. And there is no reason to think that all the various abnormal conditions (including bizarre quantum mechanical states, bizarre local fluctuations in the space-time, etc.) under which sugar would not dissolve if placed in water could be summed up in a closed formula in the language of fundamental physics.

This is exactly the problem we previously observed in connection with redness and solidity! If the 'intrinsic' properties of 'external' things are the ones that we can represent by formulas in the language of fundamental physics, by 'suitable functions of the dynamical variables', then ***solubility*** is also not an 'intrinsic' property of any external thing. And, similarly, neither is any 'other things being equal' disposition. The Powers, to use the seventeenth-century language, have to be set over against, and carefully distinguished from, the properties the things have 'in themselves'.

Intrinsic Properties: Intentionality

Well, what of it? Why should we not say that dispositions (or at least 'other things being equal' dispositions, such as solubility) are also not 'in the things themselves' but rather something we 'project' onto those things? Philosophers who talk this way rarely if ever stop to say what ***projection*** itself is supposed to be. Where in the scheme does the ability of the mind to 'project' anything onto anything come in?

Projection is thinking of something as having properties it does not have, but that we can imagine (perhaps because something else we are acquainted with really does have them), without being conscious that this is what we are doing. It is thus a species of ***thought***—thought about

something. Does the familiar 'Objectivist' picture have anything to tell us about thought (or, as philosophers say, about 'intentionality', that is, about *aboutness*)?

Descartes certainly intended that it should. His view was that there are two fundamental substances—mind and matter—not one, and, correspondingly there should be two fundamental sciences: physics and psychology. But we have ceased to think of mind as a separate 'substance' at all. And a 'fundamental science' of psychology which explains the nature of thought (including how thoughts can be true or false, warranted or unwarranted, about something or not about something) never did come into existence, contrary to Descartes' hopes. So to explain the features of the commonsense world, including color, solidity, causality—I include causality because the commonsense notion of 'the cause' of something is a 'projection' if dispositions are 'projections'; it depends on the notion of 'normal conditions' in exactly the same way—in terms of a mental operation called 'projection' is to explain just about every feature of the commonsense world in terms of *thought*.

But wasn't that what idealists were accused of doing? This is the paradox that I pointed out at the beginning of this lecture. So far as the commonsense world is concerned (the world we experience ourselves as *living* in, which is why Husserl called it the *Lebenswelt*), the effect of what is called 'realism' in philosophy is to deny objective reality, to make it all simply *thought*. It is the philosophers who in one way or another stand in the Neo-Kantian tradition—James, Husserl, Wittgenstein—who claim that commonsense tables and chairs and sensations and electrons are *equally real*, and not the metaphysical realists.

Today, some metaphysical realists would say that we don't need a perfected science of psychology to account for thought and intentionality, because the problem is solved by some philosophical theory; while others claim that a perfected 'cognitive science' based on the 'computer model' will solve the problem for us in near or distant future. I

obviously do not have time to examine these suggestions closely today, but I shall indicate briefly why I believe that none of them will withstand close inspection.

Why Intentionality is so Intractable

The problem, in a nutshell, is that thought itself has come to be treated more and more as a 'projection' by the philosophy that traces its pedigree to the seventeenth century. The reason is clear: we have not succeeded in giving the theory that thought is just a primitive property of a mysterious 'substance', mind, any content. As Kant pointed out in the first Critique, we have no theory of this substance or its powers and no prospect of having one. If ***unlike*** the Kant of the first Critique (as I read the *Critique of Pure Reason*), we insist on sticking to the fundamental 'Objectivist' assumptions, the only line we can then take is that ***mental phenomena must be highly derived physical phenomena in some way***, as Diderot and Hobbes had already proposed. By the 'fundamental Objectivist assumptions', I mean (1) the assumption that there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the properties things have 'in themselves' and the properties which are 'projected by us' and (2) the assumption that the fundamental science—in the singular, since only physics has that status today—tells us what properties things have 'in themselves'. (Even if we were to assume, with Wilfrid Sellars, that 'raw feels'—fundamental sensuous qualities of experience—are not going to be reduced to physics, but are in some way going to be added to fundamental science in some future century, it would not affect the situation much; Sellars does not anticipate that *intentionality* will turn out to be something we have to add to physics in the same way, but rather supposes that a theory of the 'use of words' is all that is needed to account for it.)

Modern Objectivism has simply become Materialism. And the central problem for Materialism is 'explaining the

emergence of mind'. But if 'explaining the emergence of mind' means solving Brentano's problem, that is, saying in *reductive* terms what 'thinking there are a lot of cats in the neighborhood' *is*, and what 'remembering where Paris is' *is*, etc., why should we now think *that*'s possible? If reducing color or solidity or solubility to fundamental physics has proved impossible, why should this vastly more ambitious reduction program prove tractable?

Starting in the late 1950s, I myself proposed a program in the philosophy of mind that has become widely known under the name 'Functionalism'. The claim of my 'Functionalism' was that thinking beings are *compositionally plastic*—that is, that there is no one physical state or event (i.e., no necessary and sufficient condition expressible by a finite formula in the language of first-order fundamental physics) for being even a *physically possible* (let alone 'logically possible' or 'metaphysically possible') occurrence of a thought with a given propositional content, or of a feeling of anger, or of a pain, etc. *A fortiori*, propositional attitudes, emotions, feelings, are not *identical* with brain states, or even with more broadly characterized physical states. When I advanced this claim, I pointed out that thinking of a being's mentality, affectivity, etc., as aspects of its *organization to function* allows one to recognize that all sorts of logically possible 'systems' or beings could be conscious, exhibit mentality and affect, etc., in exactly the same sense without having the same matter (without even consisting of 'matter' in the sense of elementary particles and electromagnetic fields at all). For beings of many different physical (and even 'non-physical') constitutions could have the same functional organization. The thing we want insight into is the nature of human (and animal) functional organization, not the nature of a mysterious 'substance', on the one hand, or merely additional physiological information on the other.

I also proposed a theory as to what our organization to function is, one I have now given up—this was the theory that our functional organization is that of a Turing

machine. I have given this up because I believe that there are good arguments to show that mental states are not only compositionally plastic but also *computationally plastic*. What I mean by this is that physically possible creatures who believe that there are a lot of cats in the neighborhood, or whatever, may have an *indefinite number of different 'programs'*. The hypothesis that there is a necessary and sufficient condition for the presence of a given belief in computational (or computational *cum* physical) terms is unrealistic in just the way that the theory that there is a necessary and sufficient condition for the presence of a table in phenomenalistic terms is unrealistic. Such a condition would have to be infinitely long, and not constructed according to any effective rule, or even according to a non-effective prescription that we could state without using the very terms to be reduced. I do not believe that even all *humans* who have the same belief (in different cultures, or with different bodies of knowledge and different conceptual resources) have in common a physical *cum* computational feature which could be 'identified with' that belief. The 'intentional level' is simply not reducible to the 'computational level' any more than it is to the 'physical level'.[6]

If this is right, then the Objectivist will have to conclude that intentionality *too* must be a mere 'projection'. But how can any philosopher think this suggestion has even the semblance of making sense? As we saw, the very notion of 'projection' *presupposes* intentionality!

Strange to say, the idea that thought *is* a mere projection is being defended by a number of philosophers in the United States and England, in spite of its absurdity. The strength of the 'Objectivist' tradition is so strong that some philosophers will abandon the deepest intuitions we have about ourselves-in-the-world, rather than ask (as Husserl and Wittgenstein did) whether the whole picture is not a mistake. Thus it is that in the closing decades of the twentieth century we have intelligent philosophers[7] claiming that intentionality itself is something we project by taking a 'stance' to some parts of the world (as if 'taking

a stance' were not itself an intentional notion!), intelligent philosophers claiming that no one really has propositional attitudes (beliefs and desires), that 'belief' and 'desire' are just notions from a false theory called 'folk psychology', and intelligent philosophers claiming there is no such property as 'truth' and no such relation as reference, that 'is true'"is just a phrase we use to 'raise the level of language'. One of these—Richard Rorty—a thinker of great depth—sees that he is committed to rejecting the intuitions that underly every kind of realism[8] (and not just metaphysical realism), but most of these thinkers write as if they were *saving* realism (in its Materialist version) by abandoning intentionality! It's as if it were all right to say 'I don't deny that there is an external world; I just deny that we *think* about it'! Come to think of it, this is the way Foucault wrote, too. The line between relativism *à la française* and Analytic Philosophy seems to be thinner than anglophone philosophers think! Amusingly enough, the dust-jacket of one of the lattest attacks on 'folk psychology'[9] bears an enthusiastic blurb in which a reviewer explains the importance of the book inside the dust-jacket by saying that most people *believe* that there are such things as beliefs!

"The Trail of the Human Serpent is Over All"

If seventeenth-century Objectivism has led twentieth-century philosophy into a blind alley, the solution is neither to fall into extreme relativism, as French philosphy has been doing, nor to deny our commonsense realism. There *are* tables and chairs and ice cubes. There are also electrons and space-time regions and prime numbers and people who are a menace to world peace and moments of beauty and transcendence and many other things. My old-fashioned story of the Seducer and the Innocent Maiden was meant as a double warning; a warning against giving up commonsense realism and, simultaneously, a warning

against supposing that the seventeenth-century talk of 'external world' and 'sense impressions', 'intrinsic properties', and 'projections', etc., was in any way a Rescuer of our commonsense realism. Realism with a capital 'R' is, sad to say, the foe, not the defender, of realism with a small 'r'.

If this is hard to see, it is because the task of overcoming the seventeenth-century world picture is only begun. I asked—as the title of this lecture—whether there is still anything to say, anything really new to say, about reality and truth. If "new" means 'absolutely unprecedented', I suspect the answer is 'no'. But if we allow that William James might have had something 'new' to say—something new to *us*, not just new to his own time—or, at least, might have had a program for philosophy that is, in part, the right program, even if it has not been properly worked out yet (and may never be completely 'worked out'); if we allow that Husserl and Wittgenstein and Austin may have shared something of the same program, even if they too, in their different ways, failed to state it properly; then there is still something new, something *unfinished and important* to say about reality and truth. And that is what I believe.

The key to working out the program of preserving commonsense realism while avoiding the absurdities and antinomies of metaphysical realism in all its familiar varieties (Brand X: Materialism; Brand Y: Subjective Idealism; Brand Z: Dualism. . . . .) is something I have called *internal realism*. (I should have called it pragmatic realism!) Internal realism is, at bottom, just the insistence that realism is *not* incompatible with conceptual relativity. One can be *both* a realist *and* a conceptual relativist . Realism (with a small 'r') has already been introduced; as was said, it is a view that takes our familiar commonsense scheme, as well as our scientific and artistic and other schemes, at face value, without helping itself to the notion of the thing 'in itself'. But what is conceptual relativity?

Conceptual relativity sounds like 'relativism', but has none of the 'there is no truth to be found. . . "true" is just

a name for what a bunch of people can agree on' implications of 'relativism'. A simple example will illustrate what I mean. Consider 'a world with three individuals' (Carnap often used examples like this when we were doing inductive logic together in the early nineteen-fifties), **x1**, **x2**, **x3**. How many ***objects*** are there in this world?

Well, I ***said*** "consider a world with just three individuals", didn't I? So mustn't there be three objects? Can there be non-abstract entities which are not 'individuals'?

One possible answer is 'no'. We can identify 'individual', 'object', 'particular', etc., and find no absurdity in a world with just three objects which are independent, unrelated 'logical atoms'. But there are perfectly good logical doctrines which lead to different results.

Suppose, for example, that like some Polish logicians, I believe that for every two particulars there is an object which is their sum. (This is the basic assumption of 'mereology', the calculus of parts and wholes invented by Lezniewski.) If I ignore, for the moment, the so-called 'null object', then I will find that the world of 'three individuals' (as Carnap might have had it, at least when he was doing inductive logic) actually contains *seven* objects:

World 1	**World 2**
x1, x2, x3	**x1, x2, x3, x1+x2, x1+x3, x2+x3, x1+x2+x3**
(A world à la Carnap)	**('Same' world à la Polish logician)**

Some Polish logicians would also say that there is a 'null object' which they count as a part of every object. If we accepted this suggestion, and added this individual (call it

O), then we would say that Carnap's world contains *eight* objects.

Now, the classic metaphysical realist way of dealing with such problems is well-known. It is to say that there is a single world (think of this as a piece of dough) which we can slice into pieces in different ways. But this 'cookie cutter' metaphor founders on the question, 'What are the "parts" of this dough?' If the answer is that **O**, **x1**, **x2**, **x3**, **x1+x2**, **x1+x3**, **x2+x3**, **x1+x2+x3** are all the different 'pieces', then we have not a ***neutral*** description, but rather a ***partisan*** description—just the description of the Warsaw logician! And it is no accident that metaphysical realism cannot really recognize the phenomenon of conceptual relativity—for that phenomenon turns on the fact that ***the logical primitives themselves, and in particular the notions of object and existence, have a multitude of different uses rather than one absolute 'meaning'***.

An example which is historically important, if more complex than the one just given, is the ancient dispute about the ontological status of the Euclidean plane. Imagine a Euclidean plane. Think of the points in the plane. Are these ***parts*** of the plane, as Leibniz thought? Or are they 'mere limits', as Kant said?

If you say, in ***this*** case, that these are 'two ways of slicing the same dough', then you must admit that what is a ***part*** of space, in one version of the facts, is an abstract entity (say, a set of convergent spheres—although there is not, of course, a ***unique*** way of construing points as limits) in the other version. But then you will have conceded that which entities are 'abstract entities' and which are 'concrete objects', at least, is version-relative. Metaphysical realists to this day continue to argue about whether points (space-time points, nowadays, rather than points in the plane or in three-dimensional space) are individuals or properties, particulars or mere limits, etc. My view is that God himself, if he consented to answer the question, 'Do points really exist or are they mere limits?', would say 'I don't know'; not because His omniscience is limited, but because there is a limit to how far questions make sense.

One last point before I leave these examples: *given* a version, the question, 'How many objects are there?' has an answer, namely 'three' in the case of the first version ('Carnap's World') and 'seven' (or 'eight') in the case of the second version ('The Polish Logician's World'). Once we make clear how we are using 'object' (or 'exist'), the question 'How many objects exist?' has an answer that is not at all a matter of 'convention'. That is why I say that this sort of example does not support *radical* cultural relativism. Our concepts may be culturally relative, but it does not follow that the truth or falsity of everything we say using those concepts is simply 'decided' by the culture. But the idea that there is an Archimedean point, or a use of 'exist' inherent in the world itself, from which the question 'How many objects *really* exist?' makes sense, is an illusion.

If this is right, then it may be possible to see how it can be that what is in one sense the 'same' world (the two versions are deeply related) can be described as consisting of 'tables and chairs' (and these described as colored, possessing dispositional properties, etc.) in one version *and* as consisting of space-time regions, particles and fields, etc., in other versions. To require that all of these *must* be reducible to a single version is to make the mistake of supposing that 'Which are the real objects?' is a question that makes sense *independently of our choice of concepts*.

What I am saying is frankly programmatic. Let me close by briefly indicating where the program leads, and what I hope from it.

Many thinkers have argued that the traditional dichotomy between the world 'in itself' and the concepts we use to think and talk about it must be given up. To mention only the most recent examples, Davidson has argued that the distinction between 'scheme' and 'content' cannot be drawn; Goodman has argued that the distinction between 'world' and 'versions' is untenable; and Quine has defended 'ontological relativity'. Like the great pragmatists,

these thinkers have urged us to reject the spectator point of view in metaphysics and epistemology. Quine has urged us to accept the existence of abstract entities on the ground that these are indispensible in mathematics,[10] and of microparticles and space-time points on the ground that these are indispensible in physics; and what better justification is there for accepting an ontology than its indispensibility in our scientific practice? he asks. Goodman has urged us to take seriously the metaphors that artists use to restructure our worlds, on the ground that these are an indispensible way of understanding our experience. Davidson has rejected the idea that talk of propositional attitudes is 'second class', on similar grounds. These thinkers have been somewhat hesitant to forthrightly extend the same approach to our moral images of ourselves and the world. Yet what can giving up the spectator view in philosophy mean if we don't extend the pragmatic approach to the most indispensible 'versions' of ourselves and our world that we possess? Like William James (and like my teacher Morton White[11]) I propose to do exactly that. In the remaining lectures, I shall illustrate the standpoint of pragmatic realism in ethics by taking a look at some of our moral images, and particularly at the ones that underlie the central democratic value of *equality*. Although reality and truth are old, and to superficial appearances 'dry', topics, I shall try to convince you in the course of these lectures that it is the persistence of obsolete assumptions about these 'dry' topics that sabotages philosophical discussion about all the 'exciting' topics, not to say the possibility of doing justice to the reality and mystery of our commonsense world.

Lecture II

REALISM AND REASONABLENESS[1]

Some questions in philosophical logic are able to divide philosophers into warring camps. Since the middle of the twentieth century, this has been the case with the question of the status of dispositional statements (and with the closely related question of the status of counterfactual conditionals). For some philosophers dispositions are simply part of 'the furniture of the universe'; for others, the use of a dispositional notion in a philosophical analysis is a sign of 'low standards', of willingness to 'explain the obscure by the still more obscure'; while for still others (perhaps the silent majority) dispositional notions are unavoidable in what we do but troubling to the conscience. This is a relatively new state of affairs: the writers who make up the canon of 'Modern Philosophy' (or at least of seventeenth-century to mid-nineteenth-century philosophy) all availed themselves of the notion of a Power (i.e., a dispositional property) without any visible pangs of conscience.

Perhaps this is not surprising, as it is only since the appearance of mathematical logic that we have realized how hard it is to give an interpretation of counterfactual conditionals and of dispositional predicates in truth-functional[2] terms. But, in a way, it should have been realized a long time ago that the talk of Powers in 'modern' philosophy was problematical, for such talk is a hang-over from medieval philosophy, not something that belongs in its own right to the new picture. The heart of the new picture is the new conception of the 'external' world, the

conception of the external world as governed by ***strict*** laws of the form with which we are familiar from the work of Newton and his successors. It is this conception that motivates the division of properties into primary and secondary, or into intrinsic properties of the external things and powers to affect the mind of the observer. A world governed by a system of differential equations is one thing; a medieval (or an Aristotelian) world governed by Substantial Forms which manifest themselves as 'tendencies' rather than as exceptionless laws is something else. The Cartesian picture is confused. It exhibits both modern physicalist and medieval 'tendency-ist' forms of explanation in an unhappy coexistence. The new image of nature—the World Machine—ought to have no place for the classical 'tendencies'.

In the previous lecture this was argued with the aid of the example of the color predicate 'red'. Something is red if it has a certain tendency—the tendency to produce certain 'sense impressions' (according to the seventeenth and eighteenth century story), or a certain 'brain-state' (an alternative to the dualist story that goes back at least as far as Diderot if not to Hobbes), or (in a story which is overly simple but at least avoids the mind-body problem) if it has the tendency to selectively absorb and reflect certain wavelengths of light. But what does 'have the tendency' mean? Tendencies, as I said in yesterday's lecture, do not exemplify the operation of strict laws (in the modern sense of 'strict law'); they are sloppy things, that manifest themselves 'under normal conditions'. To analyze the dispositional idiom we need an analysis of the phrase 'under normal conditions', or something similar, and, in fact, the attempts to produce a theory which have been made by contemporary authors[3] involve such notions as the 'similarity' of a whole possible world with another whole world—notions which attempt to express, or at least to substitute for, the desired notion of a 'normal' state of affairs. But the currently most fashionable of these—the notion of 'similarity' of possible worlds—only illustrates

the distance of counterfactual (and dispositional) talk from the world picture of physics—illustrates it by introducing a metaphysical primitive which sticks out like a sore thumb.

Other philosophers content themselves with introducing dispositional predicates one by one, as needed, without any attempt to analyze or account for the general dispositional idiom. Sometimes this can be justified (from an 'Objectivist' point of view) by showing that the predicate so introduced is coextensive with a non-dispositional (perhaps a structural) predicate. But most dispositional notions—e.g., 'red', 'poisonous', 'tending to say ***da*** if the linguist says ***gavagai*** and both of them are watching a rabbit'— are almost certain not to be coextensive with predicates definable in the language of fundamental physics.

Certain other philosophers have suggested that dispositional predicates are not, in general, the sorts of predicates for which one ought to expect there to be necessary and sufficient conditions. Perhaps such a word as 'poisonous' is only partly defined; perhaps when we encounter a new substance that human beings are capable of ingesting or breathing or touching we just extend the notion of being poisonous as we extend our other notions (including the notion of what is 'normal') in the given circumstances.[4] Other philosophers have suggested that such dispositional statements as 'X is poisonous' do not predicate a ***property*** at all; they are ways in which we perform the speech act of ***licensing an inference***. As the late J. L. Mackie put it, such statements can be assertible under appropriate conditions without possessing any property a realist would recognize as 'truth'. (They are 'not simply true', he claimed.[5]) What many of these theories have in common is a denial that the semantics of dispositional sentences is the classical bivalent truth-conditional semantics. Either dispositional sentences aren't 'simply true' and 'simply false' at all, these authors say, or else they are true and false only in certain cases (the cases in which the dispositional predicate has been defined), and

remain to be given a truth value in all other cases. (On either form of the view, the dispositional predicate lacks a well-defined extension.)

As I mentioned in the last lecture, similar issues arise in connection with the notions of ***causality*** and of ***explanation*** (conceived of as a relation between events or between 'situations', rather than as a relation between statements). Like dispositions, causal and explanatory relations may be strict (the event or 'situation' described as the cause may be connected by strict laws with the event or situation which is taken to be the effect) or may be loose (the event or situation described as the cause may bring about the effect only 'under suitable circumstances'). And the loose causal relations are, once again, an embarrassment from the point of view of the 'Objectivist' picture—the picture of nature as the World Machine.

If we could define in physicalistic terms what it is for a feature of a situation to be only an 'attendant circumstance', we might be able to explain '*X* brought about *Y*' as meaning that ***given the attendant circumstances***, it followed from physical laws that *Y* would happen if *X* did; but unfortunately, an intrinsic distinction between situations which are capable of being 'bringers about' and situations which are only attendant 'circumstances' has much more to do with medieval (and Aristotelian) notions of 'efficient causation' than with post-Newtonian ones. And once again, some philosophers have proposed either to ***reject*** the loose causal and explanatory relations altogether[6], while others have proposed that the loose causal and explanatory relations[7] have only 'assertibility conditions' and not 'truth conditions'.

My own view—the view I began to sketch out for you in the last lecture—differs from all of these. These authors all assume we can make the distinction between what is 'simply true' and what has only 'assertibility conditions', or the cut between what is already true or false and what is an 'extension of previous use' (albeit one that we all make the same way), or between what is a 'projection' and what is an independent and unitary property of things in

themselves. I think that, epistemically at least, the attempt to draw this distinction, to make this cut, has been a total failure. The time has come to try the methodological hypothesis that no such cut can be made.

I recall a conversation with Noam Chomsky many years ago in which he suggested that philosophers often take perfectly sensible continua and get in trouble by trying to convert them into dichotomies. Consider, for example, the continuum between the relatively 'subjective' (or, at least, interest- and culture-relative) and the relatively 'objective' (or, at least, interest- and culture-independent). Prephilosophically, most of us would probably agree on the ordering of the following properties along this continuum:

(1) Being very amusing (as in 'the behavior of young babies is often very amusing')

(2) Being a region of space which contains at least one hydrogen atom (assume classical physics for this one—no relativity or quantum mechanics, please!)

(3) Being soluble.

(4) A single case counterfactual conditional—e.g., the property we predicate of a particular match at a particular time when we say it ***would have*** lit ***if*** it ***had been*** struck at that time.

(5) Meaning 'Do you speak French?' (predicated of a particular utterance).

I suppose the average person might rank these predications as follows (taking the left hand end of the line to represent the 'subjective' and the right hand end to represent the 'objective'):

Being Amusing	**Counter-factual**	**Meaning '.....'**	**Being Soluble**	**Contains Hydrogen**

(A Plausible Objective-Subjective Ranking)

—Yet as soon as we are asked to make a 'Dedekind cut'—to turn this ranking into a dichotomy— we find that

there is no agreement at all in our philosophical intuitions. Quine, for example would put the cut between 5 and 3—counting both dispositional predicates (such as 'soluble') and non-dispositional predicates from fundamental physics as 'objective' and all the others as more or less subjective (or 'second class', in his terminology). Some philosophers might disagree with me on the position of the meaning-assigment 5—some counting it as more 'objective' than the assignment of ***solubility*** to a substance—and draw the line after 1, 4, and 3. Philosophers who are 'comfortable' with counterfactuals would make still another choice for the location of the 'cut', placing it immediately after 1—i.e., counting 'amusing' as subjective and all the rest as 'objective'. But my own view, as I have said (and perhaps Chomsky's as well, if I understood him aright) is that the enterprise isn't worth the candle. The game is played out. We can make a rough sort of rank ordering (although even here there are disagreements), but the idea of a 'point at which' subjectivity ceases and Objectivity-with-a-capital-O begins has proved chimerical.

If this is right, then a number of other famous dichotomies must be abandoned. Two of these have already been mentioned, namely:

Projection/Property of the thing in itself

and

'Power'/ Property of the thing in itself

The rejection of these three dichotomies is the essence of the 'internal realism' I defended before this very assembly nine years ago.

My rejection of these dichotomies will trouble many, and it should. Without the constraint of trying to 'save the appearances', philosophy becomes a game in which anyone can—and, as a rule does—say just about ***anything***. Unless we take our intuitions seriously, we cannot do ***hard*** philosophy at all. So I respect philosophers who insist that the traditional dichotomies are deeply intuitive, and who 'need a lot of convincing' before they will give them up.

But if philosophy which simply scorns our intuitions is not worth the candle, philosophy which tries to preserve ***all*** of them becomes a vain attempt to have the past over again. There are phenomena which really do challenge our intuitions—the phenomenon Husserl described in ***Crisis of the European Sciences***, the breakdown of the great seventeenth-century project of trying to turn physics into metaphysics ('Objectivism')—the breakdown I described in the preceding lecture—is one such. On the one hand, seventeenth-century science succeeded in smashing the medieval foundations of knowledge—and not just of knowledge, but of religion, politics, and morality as well. On the other hand, the line of thinking that said, 'Well, if science smashed all that, well and good. Science will give us better in its place,' now looks tired. (It already seemed tired to Kant—and not because Kant was a foe of science or Enlightenment; on the contrary, he was a great scientist and a great man of the Enlightenment.) Science is wonderful at destroying metaphysical answers, but incapable of providing substitute ones. Science takes away foundations without providing a replacement. Whether we want to be there or not, science has put us in the position of having to live without foundations. It was shocking when Nietzsche said this, but today it is commonplace; ***our*** historical position—and no end to it is in sight—is that of having to philosophize without 'foundations'.

The impossibility of imagining what credible 'foundations' might look like is one phenomenon, but not the only phenomenon, that challenges our 'intuitions'. Since the end of the nineteenth century science itself has begun to take on a 'non-classical'—that is, a non-seventeenth-century-appearance. In the last lecture I described the phenomenon of conceptual relativity—one which has simple illustrations, like the ones I used, but which has become pervasive in contemporary science. That there are ways of describing what are (in some way) the 'same facts' which are (in some way) 'equivalent' but also (in some way) 'incompatible' is a strikingly non-classical phenomenon. Yet contemporary logicians and meaning

theorists generally philosophize as if it did not exist. If claiming to abandon *all* our 'intuitions' is mere show, retaining all of them would require us to philosophize as if the phenomena I just reminded you of did not exist. The task of the philosopher, as I see it, is to see *which* of our intuitions we can responsibly retain and which we must jettison in a period of enormous and unprecedented intellectual, as well as material, change.

If I reject the dichotomies I depicted, it is not, then, because I fail to recognize their intuitive appeal, or because that intuitive appeal counts for nothing in my eyes. It is rather because these dichotomies have become distorting lenses which prevent us from seeing real phenomena—the phenomena I have been describing—in their full extent and significance.

Yet I still term myself a 'realist'—even if I spell it all in lower case—and *can* one be any sort of a realist without the dichotomies? In particular, is not the dichotomy between what is a 'human projection'—what is not 'simply true', what has 'assertibility conditions' rather than 'realist truth conditions'—and what is in the things 'in themselves' *constitutive* of realism?

Part of my answer to that question was given in the first lecture. Far from being constitutive of *commonsense* realism, that dichotomy tends to undermine it, as I tried to show. But another part of the answer must consist in showing that the rejection of this dichotomy is not a simple capitulation to garden-variety cultural relativism, or to the idea that every conceptual scheme is as good as every other.

What is strange about the fear that only the Metaphysical Realist can save fair Common Sense from Demon Relativism is that even Metaphysical Realists recognize that the writ of rationality runs farther than what they are pleased to call 'realist truth'. Mackie did not think that ordinary-language causal statements, e.g., 'the failure of the safety valve caused the boiler to explode', are 'simply true', but he would certainly have distinguished between 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' ones. Perhaps such

statements have only 'assertibility' conditions rather than 'truth' conditions, perhaps they are used to issue 'inference licenses' rather than to 'describe', but that does not make them arbitrary. If we license one another to expect X to dissolve when put in water when X is a piece of sugar, this is part of a practice whose success we can explain; and if we issued the same license when X was a piece of steel, nature would show us our mistake. In the same way, Quine denies that 'X means *Do you speak French?*' states a 'fact', even when X is the familiar French utterance, *Parlez-vous français?*; but he would certainly answer the question 'What does *Parlez-vous français?* mean?' with 'It means *Do you speak French?*' and not with 'It means *Coachman, stop, the road is jerky; look out! you will lose the turkey.*' That one answer to this sort of question has 'heuristic' value and the other does not is something he himself points out. (I am not claiming that Quine is a 'metaphysical realist', in my sense, since he does not accept the correspondence theory of truth; but his 'robust realism' has an important feature in common with metaphysical realism—namely, the existence of a sharp line between what there is a 'fact of the matter' about, and what has only 'heuristic' value, or value when our interests are less than 'theoretical'.)

In sum, my own position involves the denial of yet another dichotomy:

(Type of Statement)

Possesses only		**Possesses**
assertibility-	**VS.**	**truth-**
conditions		**conditions**

We can know that it is 'true', speaking with the vulgar, that the water would have boiled if I had turned on the stove, without having the slightest idea whether this 'truth'

is 'realist truth' (Mackie's 'simply true') or only an idealization of 'warranted assertibility'. Nor need we suppose the question makes sense. Rejecting the dichotomy *within* kinds of 'truth'—kinds of truth in the commonsense world—is not the same thing as saying 'anything goes'.

Reality without the Dichotomies

How can one assure oneself that this is not sheer linguistic idealism? Perhaps the best place to start is with the explanation of internal realism that I gave in the first lecture. That explanation certainly sounds like 'linguistic idealism'; according to me, how many objects there are in the world (and even whether certain objects—individual space-time points, in the second of the examples I used—exist at all as individual 'particulars') is relative to the choice of a conceptual scheme. How can one propound this sort of relativistic doctrine and still claim to believe that there is anything to the idea of 'externality', anything to the idea that there is something 'out there' independent of language and the mind?

Well, it really isn't so hard. Look again at the picture I showed you:

World 1	**World 2**
x1, x2, x3	**x1, x2, x3, x1+x2, x1+x3, x2+x3, x1+x2+x3**
(A world à la Carnap)	**('Same' world à la Polish logician)**

How we go about answering the question, 'How many objects are there?'—the method of 'counting', or the notion

of what constitutes an 'object'—depends on our choice (call this a 'convention'); but the *answer* does not thereby become a matter of convention. If I choose Carnap's language, I must say there are three objects because *that is how many there are*. If I choose the Polish logician's language (this is the language of a Polish logician who has not yet invented the 'null object' **O**, remember), I must say there are seven objects, *because that is how many objects* (in the Polish logician's sense of 'object') *there are*. There are 'external facts', and we can *say what they are*. What we *cannot* say—because it makes no sense—is what the facts are *independent of all conceptual choices*.

A metaphor which is often employed to express this is the metaphor of the 'cookie cutter'. The things independent of all conceptual choices are the dough; our conceptual contribution is the shape of the cookie cutter. Unfortunately, this metaphor is of no real assistance in understanding the phenomenon of conceptual relativity. Take it seriously, and you are at once forced to answer the question, 'What are the various parts of the dough?'. If you answer, that (in the present case) the 'atoms' of the dough are **x1,x2,x3** and the other parts are the mereological sums containing more than one 'atom', then you have simply *adopted* the Polish Logician's version. Insisting that this is the correct view of the metaphysical situation is just another way of insisting that mereological sums *really* exist. But internal realism denies that this is *more* the 'right' way to view the situation than is insisting that only Carnap's 'individuals' really exist. The metaphysician who takes the latter view can also explain the success of the Polish Logician's Version, after all: he can say that when the Polish Logician says, as it might be, that

> **(I) There is at least one object which is partly red and partly black.**

—this is to be understood as a useful *façon de parler*, rather than as something which is 'literally true'. Under an adequate translation scheme (and such a scheme can be easily given in a recursive way, in the case of the kind of

first-order language that Carnap had in mind in these simple examples), **I** turns out to say no more than

> **(II) There is at least one red object and there is at least one black object.**

—says when written in the Carnapian language. (To verify this, assuming that 'red' and 'black' are predicates of Carnap's language, observe that the only way a Polish Logician's object—a mereological sum—can be partly red is by containing a red atom, and the only way it can be partly black is by containing a black atom. So if **I** is true in the Polish Logician's language, then there is at least one red atom and at least one black atom—which is what **II** says in Carnap's language. Conversely, if there is at least one black atom and at least one red atom, then their mereological sum is an 'object'—in the Polish Logician's sense—which is partly red and partly black.) To claim that such a translation scheme shows what is 'really going on' is just a way of insisting that mereological sums *don't* 'really exist'.

The Cookie Cutter Metaphor *denies* (rather than explaining) the phenomenon of conceptual relativity. The other way of dealing with our little example—producing a translation scheme which *reinterprets the logical connectives (in this case, existence)*, in such a way that each statement in the 'richer' language can be 'translated' into the more 'parsimonious' language—may also be used to deny the phenomenon of conceptual relativity; but it is, nonetheless, more sophisticated than the Cookie Cutter Metaphor. The Cookie Cutter Metaphor assumes that all existence statements that we count as true in our several versions really are true; it's just that the variables of quantification pick out different mereological sums as their ranges in the case of different languages. The device of *reinterpretation* goes beyond this in recognizing that one person's 'existence' claim may be another person's something else.

Sometimes it is suggested that in such cases we should *not* be 'neutrals'; we should always adopt the more parsimonious version. 'If we don't have to postulate such

strange discontinuous objects as mereological sums, then should't we take that as a reason for concluding that they don't really exist, that they are just (at best) a *façon de parler*?'

To this metaphysical move there is, inevitably, an equally metaphysical rejoinder: 'Aren't almost all the "objects" we talk about—chairs and tables, our own bodies, countries, not to mention such scientific objects as solar systems and galaxies—"strange discontinuous objects"? It hardly follows that they don't really exist. Yet, if my body exists, if this chair exists, if the solar system exists, then why should we not say that the discontinuous object consisting of *my nose and the Eiffel Tower* also exists? This is an unnatural object to talk about, to be sure, but what has the "naturalness" of an object to do with its *existence*?'

What is right with the second of the ways we considered of reconciling the two versions or 'worlds'—reinterpreting the existential quantifier—is that the notions of 'object' and 'existence' are not treated as sacrosanct, as having just one possible use. It is very important to recognize that the existential quantifier itself can be used in different ways—ways consonant with the rules of formal logic. What would be wrong, were we to do it, would be to accept this idea, and then go on to single out *one* use of the existential quantifier—the use in Carnap's Version—as the only metaphysically *serious* one. But go one step farther: take the position that one may *either* treat Carnap's Version as 'correct' and interpret the Polish Logician's Version as a *façon de parler* in the manner illustrated by the reinterpretation of **I** as **II**, or treat the Polish Logician's Version as 'correct' and interpret Carnap's Version as a language in which the range of the individual variables is restricted to atoms (as suggested by the Cookie Cutter Metaphor). That is, take the position that one will be equally 'right' in either case. Then you have arrived at the position I have called 'internal realism'!

What is wrong with the notion of objects existing 'independently' of conceptual schemes is that there are no standards for the use of even the logical notions apart from

conceptual choices. What the Cookie Cutter Metaphor tries to preserve is the naive idea that at least one Category—the ancient category of Object or Substance—has an absolute interpretation. The alternative to this idea is not the view that, in some inconceivable way, it's all *just* language. We can and should insist that some facts are there to be discovered and not legislated by us. But this is something to be said when one has adopted a way of speaking, a language, a 'conceptual scheme'. To talk of 'facts' without specifying the language to be used is to talk of nothing; the word 'fact' no more has its use fixed by Reality Itself than does the word 'exist' or the word 'object'.

Of course, the adoption of internal realism is the renunciation of the notion of the 'thing in itself'. And here lies the connection between the almost trivial example we have been discussing and the profound metaphysical dichotomies (or would-be dichotomies) we discussed earlier. Internal realism says that the notion of a 'thing in itself' makes no sense; and *not* because 'we cannot know the things in themselves'. This was Kant's reason, but Kant, although admitting that the notion of a thing in itself *might* be 'empty', still allowed it to possess a formal kind of sense. Internal realism says that we don't know what we are talking about when we talk about 'things in themselves'. And that means that the dichotomy between 'intrinsic' properties and properties which are not instrinsic also collapses—collapses because the 'intrinsic' properties were supposed to be just the properties things have 'in themselves'. The thing in itself and the property the thing has 'in itself' belong to the same circle of ideas, and it is time to admit that what the circle encloses is worthless territory.

A dichotomy whose relation to these notions may be somewhat less evident is the dichotomy between 'truth conditional semantics' and 'assertibility conditional semantics'. Yet what could ground the claim that certain sorts of statements, for example, 'If I *had* put a pan of water on the stove and turned on the flame, the water

would have boiled', have only 'assertibility conditions' and not 'truth conditions'? What, that is, but a preconceived idea of what is and is not 'ontologically queer', that is, what is and is not capable of being a part of the world as the world is 'in itself'? As I argued in yesterday's lecture, the problem with that preconceived idea, in its Humean as well as in its Cartesian version, was its inability to tell any story about the mind (or, if you prefer, about 'intentionality') which was not riddled with contradictions or saddled with arbitrary and unconvincing posits; and I argued that this remains its problem today.

What does the world look like without the dichotomies? It looks both familiar and different. It looks familiar, insofar as we no longer try to divide up mundane reality into a 'scientific image' and a 'manifest image' (or our evolving doctrine into a 'first-class' and a 'second-class' conceptual system). Tables and chairs (and yes, pink ice cubes) exist just as much as quarks and gravitational fields, and the fact that this pot of water would have boiled if I had put it on the stove and turned on the flame is as much a 'fact' as is the circumstance that the water weighs more than eight ounces. The idea that most of mundane reality is illusion (an idea which has haunted Western philosophy since Plato, in spite of Aristotle's valiant counterattack) is given up once and for all. But mundane reality looks different, in that we are forced to acknowledge that many of our familiar descriptions reflect our interests and choices.

Imagine that the escape valve on a pressure cooker sticks and the pressure cooker explodes. We say—and the conceptual relativist regards this as a perfectly 'true' statement, without making any fuss about whether it is 'simply true' or only a 'good inference license'—'The stuck valve caused the pressure cooker to explode'. We do not say 'The presence of Δ caused the pressure cooker to explode', where Δ is, say, an arbitrary irregularly shaped piece of the surface of the cooker, 0.1 cm. in area. Yet, in the physics of the explosion, the role played by the stuck

valve is exactly the same as the role of Δ: the absence of either would have permitted the steam to escape, bringing down the pressure and averting the explosion.

Why, then, do we speak of one of these things and not the other as 'causing' the explosion? Well, we know that the valve 'should have' let the steam escape—that is its 'function', what it was designed to do. On the other hand, the surface element Δ was not doing anything 'wrong' in preventing the steam from escaping; containing the steam is the 'function' of the surface of which Δ is a part. So when we ask 'Why did the explosion take place?', knowing what we know and having the interests we do have, our 'explanation space' consists of the alternatives:

(1) Explosion taking place
(2) Everything functioning as it should

What we want to know, in other words, is why **1** is what happened, *as opposed to* **2**. We are simply not interested in why **1** is what happened *as opposed to* such alternatives as:

(3) The surface element Δ is missing, and no explosion takes place.

This 'explanatory relativity' is parallelled by a relativity in our use of such locutions as 'caused' and 'the cause'. Since the question 'Why did the pressure cooker explode?' assumes an explanation space which does not include the alternative **3**, or similar alternatives, we understand such factors as the presence of Δ to be 'background conditions' and not 'causes'.

This relativity of causes to interests, and to background conditions not mentioned in the 'hard science' explanation of the event in question, does not make causation something we simply legislate. Given our interests and what we regard as the relevant background conditions, it would be simply false to say that it was the wall of the pressure cooker that caused the explosion (unless it happened to be defective, and it should happen to be the

defect and not the condition of the valve that 'explains' the explosion). Our conceptual scheme restricts the 'space' of descriptions available to us; but it does not predetermine the answers to our questions.

It is understandable, however, that many philosophers should read a different moral into this story. Does not the situation lend itself naturally to a dichotomy? Should we not regard the 'hard science' description of the situation ('The pressure increased in the closed container until a certain coefficient was exceeded. The material then ruptured...') with its exact laws and numerical coefficients as the description of the 'objective facts', and regard the singling out of the bit of material, or whatever, that kept the valve from working as 'the cause' as semi-magical Stone Age thinking? If we want to be generous and leave a place for this useful way of speaking, while denying that there exists a distinction between 'causes' and 'background conditions' in Nature Itself, we can just say that causal statements have 'assertibility' conditions in ordinary language but not, strictly speaking, 'truth conditions'.

The problem with all this—the problem I discussed in the first lecture—is that if the causes/background conditions distinction is fundamentally subjective, not descriptive of the world in itself, then current philosophical explanations of the metaphysical nature of *reference* are bankrupt. Barwise and Perry, for example, tell us that what links certain states of affairs to certain mental states is that the states of affairs *cause* those states; this is the intentional link, at least in certain metaphysically basic cases. Glymour and Devitt (independently) both tell us that words are connected to their referents by 'causal connection'. Richard Boyd tells us that 'the causal theory of reference is correct because the causal theory of knowledge is correct.' But the notions on which causal theories of knowledge and reference depend—the difference between a cause and a mere background condition, the legitimacy of counterfactuals—are precisely what is called into question by the 'inference

licence' interpretation of causal statements and counterfactuals. If these notions are 'saved' only to the extent of being treated as heuristics (as 'projections', in the terminology of the first lecture), then it cannot also be held that they explain how reference comes to exist in the world as the world is 'in itself'.

Nor would dualism help, if we were willing to adopt it. For what description do we have of the mind 'in itself'? Kant's exposure of the bankruptcy of 'rational psychology' still stands.

Rather than succumb to the temptation to repeat verbatim all the proposals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we have to recognize that such familiar statements as the statement that the stuck valve caused the pressure cooker to explode reflect both the way things are and our interests and assumptions about the way things are ***without*** giving in to the temptation to suppose that the philosophically relevant description of 'the way things are' is something ***other*** than 'the valve stuck and caused the pressure cooker to explode' (or whatever the example may be). ***Given*** a language, we can describe the 'facts' that make the sentences of that language true and false in a 'trivial' way—using the sentences of that very language; but the dream of finding a well-defined Universal Relation between a (supposed) totality of ***all*** facts and an arbitrary true sentence in an arbitrary language, is just the dream of an absolute notion of a fact (or of an 'object') and of an absolute relation between sentences and the facts (or the objects) 'in themselves'; the very dream whose hopelessness I hoped to expose with the aid of my little example involving three Carnapian individuals and seven non-empty mereological sums.

Lecture III

EQUALITY AND OUR MORAL IMAGE OF THE WORLD

In the preceding lecture, I tried to explain and defend a position that combines elements of 'realism' with elements of 'antirealism'. Many have perceived that my position belongs to the Kantian tradition (broadly conceived). And it may be well to say something about the relationship between my views and the work of Kant.

There are readings of Kant on which such a relationship is not at all apparent, just as there are some readings of Kant on which the relationship of what I am about to say to Kant's moral philosophy will not be at all apparent. And the fault is not entirely on the part of Kant's readers. Kant has, in a way, two philosophies. Kant says in places that the notion of a ***Ding an sich***, a 'thing in itself', may be empty—an interpretation of this in contemporary language (a controversial one, to be sure) might be to say that while thoughts about what things are like 'in themselves' may be syntactically well formed, and while it may be that we have a natural propensity to engage in such thoughts, they lack any real intelligibility. I think that almost all of the ***Critique of Pure Reason*** is compatible with a reading in which one is not at all committed to a Noumenal World, or even, as I said, to the intelligibility of thoughts about noumena.

Kant gave very strong arguments for the view just described, the view that we cannot really form any intelligible notion of a noumenal thing. Yet, when Kant came to write his moral philosophy, he postulated a 'need of pure practical reason' which requires us to believe that