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Consequences of Pragmatism

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INTRODUCTION

1. Platonists, Positivists, and Pragmatists

The essays in this book are attempts to draw consequences from a pragmatist theory about truth. This theory says that truth is not the sort of thing one should expect to have a philosophically interesting theory about. For pragmatists, "truth" is just the name of a property which all true statements share. It is what is common to "Bacon did not write Shakespeare," "It rained yesterday," "E equals mc²" "Love is better than hate," "*The Allegory of Painting* was Vermeer's best work," "2 plus 2 is 4," and "There are nondenumerable infinities." Pragmatists doubt that there is much to be said about this common feature. They doubt this for the same reason they doubt that there is much to be said about the common feature shared by such morally praiseworthy actions as Susan leaving her husband, America joining the war against the Nazis, America pulling out of Vietnam, Socrates not escaping from jail, Roger picking up litter from the trail, and the suicide of the Jews at Masada. They see certain acts as good ones to perform, under the circumstances, but doubt that there is anything general and useful to say about what makes them all good. The assertion of a given sentence—or the adoption of a disposition to assert the sentence, the conscious acquisition of a belief—is a justifiable, praiseworthy act in certain circumstances. But, *a fortiori*, it is not likely that there is something general and useful to be said about what makes All such actions good-about the common feature of all the sentences which one should acquire a disposition to assert.

Pragmatists think that the history of attempts to isolate the True or the Good, or to define the word "true" or "good," supports their suspicion

that there is no interesting work to be done in this area. It might, of course, have turned out otherwise. People have, oddly enough, found something interesting to say about the essence of Force and the definition of "number." They might have found something interesting to say about the essence of Truth. But in fact they haven't. The history of attempts to do so, and of criticisms of such attempts, is roughly coextensive with the history of that literary genre we call "philosophy"—a genre founded by Plato. So pragmatists see the Platonic tradition as having outlived its usefulness. This does not mean that they have a new, non-Platonic set of answers to Platonic questions to offer, but rather that they do not think we should ask those questions any more. When they suggest that we not ask questions about the nature of Truth and Goodness, they do not invoke a theory about the nature of reality or knowledge or man which says that "there is no such thing" as Truth or Goodness. Nor do they have a "relativistic" or "subjectivist" theory of Truth or Goodness. They would simply like to change the subject. They are in a position analogous to that of secularists who urge that research concerning the Nature, or the Will, of God does not get us anywhere. Such secularists are not saying that God does not exist, exactly; they feel unclear about what it would mean to affirm His existence, and thus about the point of denying it. Nor do they have some special, funny, heretical view about God. They just doubt that the vocabulary of theology is one we ought to be using. Similarly, pragmatists keep trying to find ways of making anti-philosophical points in non-philosophical language. For they face a dilemma if their language is too unphilosophical, too "literary," they will be accused of changing the subject; if it is too philosophical it will embody Platonic assumptions which will make it impossible for the pragmatist to state the conclusion he wants to reach.

All this is complicated by the fact that "philosophy," like "truth" and "goodness," is ambiguous. Uncapitalised, "truth" and "goodness" name properties of sentences, or of actions and situations. Capitalised, they are the proper names of objects—goals or standards which can be loved with all one's heart and soul and mind, objects of ultimate concern. Similarly, "Philosophy" can mean simply what Sellars calls "an attempt to see how things, in the broadest possible sense of the term, hang together, in the broadest possible sense of the term." Pericles, for example, was using this sense of the term when he praised the Athenians for "philosophising without unmanliness" (*philosophein aneu malakias*). In this sense, Blake is as much a philosopher as Fichte, Henry Adams more of a philosopher than Frege. No one would be dubious about philosophy, taken in this sense. But the word can also denote something more specialised, and very dubious indeed. In this second sense, it can mean following Plato's and

Kant's lead, asking questions about the nature of certain normative notions (e.g., "truth," "rationality," "goodness") in the hope of better obeying such norms. The idea is to believe more truths or do more good or be more rational by knowing more about Truth or Goodness or Rationality. I shall capitalise the term "philosophy" when used in this second sense, in order to help make the point that Philosophy, Truth, Goodness, and Rationality are interlocked Platonic notions. Pragmatists are saying that the best hope for philosophy is not to practise Philosophy. They think it will not help to say something true to think about Truth, nor will it help to act well to think about Goodness, nor will it help to be rational to think about Rationality.

So far, however, my description of pragmatism has left an important distinction out of account. Within Philosophy, there has been a traditional difference of opinion about the Nature of Truth, a battle between (as Plato put it) the gods and the giants. On the one hand there have been Philosophers like Plato himself who were otherworldly, possessed of a larger hope. They urged that human beings were entitled to self-respect only because they had one foot beyond space and time. On the other hand—especially since Galileo showed how spatio-temporal events could be brought under the sort of elegant mathematical law which Plato suspected might hold only for another world—there have been Philosophers (e.g., Hobbes, Marx) who insisted that space and time make up the only Reality there is, and that Truth is Correspondence to *that* Reality. In the nineteenth century, this opposition crystallised into one between "the transcendental philosophy" and "the empirical philosophy," between the "Platonists" and the "positivists." Such terms were, even then, hopelessly vague, but every intellectual knew roughly where he stood in relation to the two movements. To be on the transcendental side was to think that natural science was not the last word—that there was more Truth to be found. To be on the empirical side was to think that natural science-facts about how spatio-temporal things worked-was all the Truth there was. To side with Hegel or Green was to think that some normative sentences about rationality and goodness corresponded to something real, but invisible to natural science. To side with Comte or Mach was to think that such sentences either "reduced" to sentences about spatio-temporal events or were not subjects for serious reflection.

It is important to realise that the empirical philosophers—the positivists—were still doing Philosophy. The Platonic presupposition which unites the gods and the giants, Plato with Democritus, Kant with Mill, Husserl with Russell, is that what the vulgar call "truth" the assemblage

of true statements-should be thought of as divided into a lower and an upper division, the division between (in Plato's terms) mere opinion and genuine knowledge. It is the work of the Philosopher to establish an invidious distinction between such statements as "It rained yesterday" and "Men should try to be just in their dealings." For Plato the former sort of statement was second-rate, mere *pistis* or *doxa*. The latter, if perhaps not yet *episteme*, was at least a plausible candidate. For the positivist tradition which runs from Hobbes to Carnap, the former sentence was a paradigm of what Truth looked like, but the latter was either a prediction about the causal effects of certain events or an "expression of emotion." What the transcendental philosophers saw as the spiritual, the empirical philosophers saw as the emotional. What the empirical philosophers saw as the achievements of natural science in discovering the nature of Reality, the transcendental philosophers saw as banausic, as true but irrelevant to Truth.

Pragmatism cuts across this transcendental/empirical distinction by questioning the common presupposition that there is an invidious distinction to be drawn between kinds of truths. For the pragmatist, true sentences are not true because they correspond to reality, and so there is no need to worry what sort of reality, if any, a given sentence corresponds to—no need to worry about what "makes" it true. (just as there is no need to worry, once one has determined what one should do, whether there is something in Reality which makes that act the Right one to perform.) So the pragmatist sees no need to worry about whether Plato or Kant was right in thinking that something non-spatio-temporal made moral judgments true, nor about whether the absence of such a thing means that such judgments are is merely expressions of emotion" or "merely conventional" or "merely subjective."

This insouciance brings down the scorn of both kinds of Philosophers upon the pragmatist. The Platonist sees the pragmatist as merely a fuzzy-minded sort of positivist. The positivist sees him as lending aid and comfort to Platonism by leveling down the distinction between Objective Truth—the sort of true sentence attained by "the scientific method"—and sentences which lack the precious "correspondence to reality" which only that method can induce. Both join in thinking the pragmatist is not really a philosopher, on the ground that he is not a Philosopher. The pragmatist tries to defend himself by saying that one can be a philosopher precisely by being anti-Philosophical, that the best way to make things hang together is to step back from the issues between Platonists and positivists, and thereby give up the presuppositions of Philosophy.

One difficulty the pragmatist has in making his position clear, therefore, is that he must struggle with the positivist for the position of radical anti-Platonist. He wants to attack Plato with different weapons from those of the positivist, but at first glance he looks like just another variety of positivist. He shares with the positivist the Baconian and Hobbesian notion that knowledge is power, a tool for coping with reality. But he carries this Baconian point through to its extreme, as the positivist does not. He drops the notion of truth as correspondence with reality altogether, and says that modern science does not enable us to cope because it corresponds, it just plain enables us to cope. His argument for the view is that several hundred years of effort have failed to make interesting sense of the notion of "correspondence" (either of thoughts to things or of words to things). The pragmatist takes the moral of this discouraging history to be that "true sentences work because they correspond to the way things are" is no more illuminating than "it is right because it fulfils the Moral Law." Both remarks, in the pragmatist's eyes, are empty metaphysical compliments—harmless as rhetorical pats on the back to the successful inquirer or agent, but troublesome if taken seriously and "clarified" philosophically.

2. Pragmatism and Contemporary Philosophy

Among contemporary philosophers, pragmatism is usually regarded as an outdated philosophical movement-one which flourished in the early years of this century in a rather provincial atmosphere, and which has now been either refuted or *aufgehoben*. The great pragmatists—James and Dewey—are occasionally praised for their criticisms of Platonism (e.g., Dewey on traditional conceptions of education, James on metaphysical pseudo-problems). But their anti-Platonism is thought by analytic philosophers to have been insufficiently rigorous and by non-analytic philosophers to have been insufficiently radical. For the tradition which originates in logical positivism the pragmatists' attacks on "transcendental," quasi-Platonist philosophy need to be sharpened by more careful and detailed analysis of such notions as "meaning" and truth." For the anti-Philosophical tradition in contemporary French and German thought which takes its point of departure from Nietzsche's criticism of both strands in nineteenth-century Philosophical thought—positivistic as well as transcendental—the American pragmatists are thinkers who never really broke out of positivism, and thus never really broke with Philosophy.

I do not think that either of these dismissive attitudes is ' justified. on the account of recent analytic philosophy which I offered in *Philosophy and*

the Mirror of Nature, the history of that movement has been marked by a gradual "pragmaticisation" of the original tenets of logical positivism. On the account of recent "Continental" philosophy which I hope to offer in a book on Heidegger which I am writing,' James and Nietzsche make parallel criticisms of nineteenth-century thought. Further, James's version is preferable, for it avoids the "metaphysical" elements in Nietzsche which Heidegger criticises, and, for that matter, the "metaphysical" elements in Heidegger which Derrida criticises.' On my view, James and Dewey were not only waiting at the end of the dialectical road which analytic philosophy travelled, but are waiting at the end of the road which, for example, Foucault and Deleuze are currently travelling.

I think that analytic philosophy culminates in Quine, the later Wittgenstein, Sellars, and Davidson—which is to say that it transcends and cancels itself. These thinkers successfully, and rightly, blur the positivist distinctions between the semantic and the pragmatic, the analytic and the synthetic, the linguistic and the empirical, theory and observation. Davidson's attack on the scheme/content distinction, in particular, summarises and synthesises Wittgenstein's mockery of his own *Tractatus*, Quine's criticisms of Carnap, and Sellars's attack on the empiricist "Myth of the Given." Davidson's holism and coherentism shows how language looks once we get rid of the central presupposition of Philosophy: that true sentences divide into an upper and a lower division-the sentences which correspond to something and those which are "true" only by courtesy or convention.

This Davidsonian way of looking at language lets us avoid hypostatising Language in the way in which the Cartesian epistemological tradition, and particularly the idealist tradition which built upon Kant, hypostatised Thought. For it lets us see language not as a *tertium quid* between Subject and Object, nor as a medium in which we try to form pictures of reality, but as part of the behaviour of human beings. On this view, the activity of uttering sentences is one of the things people do in order to cope with their environment. The Deweyan notion of language as tool rather than picture is right as far as it goes. But we must be careful *not* to phrase this analogy so as to suggest that one can separate the tool, Language, from its users and inquire as to its "adequacy" to achieve our purposes. The latter suggestion presupposes that there is some way of breaking out of language in order to compare it with something else. But there is no way to think about either the world or our purposes except by using our language. One can use language to criticise and enlarge itself, as one can exercise one's body to develop and strengthen and enlarge it, but one can-

not see language-as-a-whole in relation to something else to which it applies, or for which it is a means to an end. The arts and the sciences, and philosophy as their self-reflection and integration, constitute such a process of enlargement and strengthening. But Philosophy, the attempt to say "how language relates to the world" by saying what *makes* certain sentences true, or certain actions or attitudes good or rational, is, on this view, impossible.

It is the impossible attempt to step outside our skins-the traditions, linguistic and other, within which we do our thinking and self-criticism-and compare ourselves with something absolute. This Platonic urge to escape from the finitude of one's time and place, the "merely conventional" and contingent aspects of one's life, is responsible for the original Platonic distinction between two kinds of true sentence. By attacking this latter distinction, the holistic "pragmaticising" strain in analytic philosophy has helped us see how the metaphysical urge—common to fuzzy Whiteheadians and razor-sharp "scientific realists"—works. It has helped us be sceptical about the idea that some particular science (say physics) or some particular literary genre (say Romantic poetry, or transcendental philosophy) gives us that species of true sentence which is not *just* a true sentence, but rather a piece of Truth itself. Such sentences may be very useful indeed, but there is not going to be a Philosophical explanation of this utility. That explanation, like the original justification of the assertion of the sentence, will be a parochial matter-a comparison of the sentence with alternative sentences formulated in the same or in other vocabularies. But such comparisons are the business of, for example, the physicist or the poet, or perhaps of the philosopher -not of the Philosopher, the outside expert on the utility, or function, or metaphysical status of Language or of Thought.

The Wittgenstein-Sellars-Quine-Davidson attack on distinctions between classes of sentences is the special contribution of analytic philosophy to the anti-Platonist insistence on the ubiquity of language. This insistence characterises both pragmatism and recent "Continental" philosophising. Here are some examples:

> Man makes the word, and the word means nothing which the man has not made it mean, and that only to some other man. But since man can think only by means of words or other external symbols, these might turn around and say: You mean nothing which we have not taught you, and then only so far as you address some word as the interpretant of your thought … the word or sign which man uses is the man himself Thus my language is the sum-total of myself; for the man is the thought. (PEIRCE)

Peirce goes very far in the direction that I have called the de-construction of the transcendental signified, which, at one time or another, would place a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign. (DERRIDA)

… *psychological nominalism*, according to which all awareness of sorts, resemblances, facts, etc., in short all awareness of abstract entities—indeed, all awareness even of particulars—is a linguistic affair. (SELLARS)

It is only in language that one can mean something by something. (Wittgenstein)

Human experience is essentially linguistic. (GADAMER)

… man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter upon our horizon. (Foucault)

Speaking about language turns language almost inevitably into an object … and then its reality vanishes. (HEIDEGGER)

This chorus should not, however, lead us to think that something new and exciting has recently been discovered about Language—e.g., that it is more prevalent than had previously been thought. The authors cited are making only *negative* points. They are saying that attempts to get back behind language to something which "grounds" it, or which it "expresses," or to which it might hope to be "adequate," have not, worked. The ubiquity of language is a matter of language moving into the vacancies left by the failure of all the various candidates for the position of "natural starting-points" of thought, starting-points which are prior to and independent of the way some culture speaks or spoke. (Candidates for such starting-points include clear and distinct ideas, sense-data, categories of the pure understanding, structures of prelinguistic consciousness, and the like.) Peirce and Sellars and Wittgenstein are saying that the regress of interpretation cannot be cut off by the sort of "intuition" which Cartesian epistemology took for granted. Gadamer and Derrida are saying that our culture has been dominated by the notion of a "transcendental signified" which, by cutting off this regress, would bring us out from contingency and convention and into the Truth. Foucault is saying that we are gradually losing our grip on the "metaphysical comfort" which that Philosophical tradition provided-its picture of Man as having a "double" (the soul, the Noumenal Self) who uses Reality's own language rather than merely the vocabulary of a time and a place. Finally, Heidegger is cautioning that if

we try to make Language into a new topic of Philosophical inquiry we shall simply recreate the hopeless old Philosophical puzzles which we used to raise about Being or Thought.

This last point amounts to saying that what Gustav Bergmann called "the linguistic turn" should not be seen as the logical positivists saw it-as enabling us to ask Kantian questions without having to trespass on the psychologists' turf by talking, with Kant, about "experience" or "consciousness." That was, indeed, the initial motive for the "turn,"" but (thanks to the holism and pragmatism of the authors I have cited) analytic philosophy of language was able to transcend this Kantian motive and adopt a naturalistic, behaviouristic attitude toward language. This attitude has led it to the same outcome as the "Continental" reaction against the traditional Kantian problematic, the reaction found in Nietzsche and Heidegger. This convergence shows that the traditional association of analytic philosophy with tough-minded positivism and of "Continental" philosophy with tender-minded Platonism is *completely* misleading. The pragmaticisation of analytic philosophy gratified the logical positivists' hopes, but not in the fashion which they had envisaged. it did not find a way for Philosophy to become "scientific," but rather found a way of setting Philosophy to one side. This post-positivistic kind of analytic philosophy thus comes to resemble the Nietzsche-Heidegger-Derrida tradition in beginning with criticism of Platonism and ending in criticism of Philosophy as such. Both traditions are now in a period of doubt about their own status. Both are living between a repudiated past and a dimly seen post-Philosophical future.

3. The Realist Reaction (I): Technical Realism

Before going on to speculate about what a post-Philosophical culture might look like, I should make clear that my description of the current Philosophical scene has been deliberately oversimplified. So far I have ignored the anti-pragmatist backlash. The picture I have been sketching shows how things looked about ten years ago-or, at least, how they looked to an optimistic pragmatist. In the subsequent decade there has been, on both sides of the Channel, a reaction in favour of "realism" -a term which has come to be synonymous with "anti-pragmatism." This reaction has had three distinct motives: (1) the view that recent, technical developments in the philosophy of language have raised doubt about traditional pragmatist criticisms of the "correspondence theory of truth," or, at least, have made it necessary for the pragmatist to answer some hard, technical ques-

tions before proceeding further; (2) the sense that the "depth," the human significance, of the traditional textbook "problems of philosophy" has been underestimated, that pragmatists have lumped real problems together with pseudo-problems in a feckless orgy of "dissolution"; (3) the sense that something important would be lost if Philosophy as an autonomous discipline, as a *Fach*, were to fade from the cultural scene (in the way in which theology has faded).

This third motive—the fear of what would happen if there were merely philosophy, but no Philosophy—is not simply the defensive reaction of specialists threatened with unemployment. It is a conviction that a culture without Philosophy would be "irrationalist"—that a precious human capacity would lie unused, or a central human virtue no longer be exemplified. This motive is shared by many philosophy professors in France and Germany and by many analytic philosophers in Britain and America. The former would like something to do that is not merely the endless, repetitive, literary-historical "deconstruction" of the "Western metaphysics of presence" which was Heidegger's legacy. The latter would like to recapture the spirit of the early logical positivists, the sense that philosophy is the accumulation of "results" by patient, rigorous, preferably cooperative work on precisely stated problems (the spirit characteristic of the younger, rather than of the older, Wittgenstein). So philosophy professors on the Continent are casting longing glances toward analytic philosophy-and particularly toward the "realist" analytic philosophers who take Philosophical problems seriously. Conversely, admirers of "Continental" philosophy (e.g., of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Gadamer, Foucault) are more welcome in American and British departments of, e.g., comparative literature and political science, than in departments of philosophy. On both continents there is fear of Philosophy's losing its traditional claim to "scientific" status and of its relegation to "the merely literary."

I shall talk about this fear in some detail later, in connection with the prospects for a culture in which the science/literature distinction would no longer matter. But here I shall concentrate on the first and second motives I just listed. These are associated with two fairly distinct groups of people. The first motive is characteristic of philosophers of language such as Saul Kripke and Michael Dummett, the second with less specialised and more broadly ranging writers like Stanley Cavell and Thomas Nagel. I shall call those who turn Kripke's views on reference to the purposes of a realistic epistemology (e.g., Hartry Field, Richard Boyd, and, sometimes, Hilary Putnam) "technical realists." I shall call Cavell, Nagel (and others, such as Thompson Clarke and Barry Stroud) "intuitive realists." The latter ob-

ject that the pragmatists' dissolutions of traditional problems are "verificationist": that is, pragmatists think our inability to say what would count as confirming or disconfirming a given solution to a problem is a reason for setting the problem aside. To take this view is, Nagel tells us, to fail to recognise that "unsolvable problems are not for that reason unreal." Intuitive realists judge verificationism by its fruits, and argue that the pragmatist belief in the ubiquity of language leads to the inability to recognise that philosophical problems arise precisely where language is inadequate to the facts. "My realism about the subjective domain in all its forms," Nagel says, "implies a belief in the existence of facts beyond the reach of human concepts."

Technical realists, by contrast, judge pragmatism wrong not because it leads to superficial dismissals of deep problems, but because it is based on a false, "verificationist" philosophy of language. They dislike "verificationism" not because of its meta-philosophical fruits, but because they see it as a misunderstanding of the relation between language and the world. on their view, Quine and Wittgenstein wrongly followed Frege in thinking that meaning -something determined by the intentions of the user of a word-determines reference, what the word picks out in the world. On the basis of the "new theory of reference" originated by Saul Kripke, they say, we can now construct a better, non-Fregean picture of word-world relationships. Whereas Frege, like Kant, thought of our concepts as carving up an undifferentiated manifold in accordance with our interests (a view which leads fairly directly to Sellars's "psychological nominalism" and a Goodman-like insouciance about ontology), Kripke sees the world as already divided not only into particulars, but into natural kinds of particulars and even into essential and accidental features of those particulars and kinds. The question "Is 'X is f' *true*?" is thus to be answered by discovering what—as a matter of physical fact, not of anybody's intentions—'X' refers to, and then discovering whether that particular or kind is f only by such a "physicalistic" theory of reference, technical realists say, can the notion of "truth as correspondence to reality" be preserved. By contrast, the pragmatist answers this question by inquiring whether, all things (and especially our purposes in using the terms 'X' and 'f') considered, 'X is f' is a more useful belief to have than its contradictory, or than some belief expressed in different terms altogether. The pragmatist agrees that if one wants to preserve the notion of "correspondence with reality" then a physicalistic theory of reference is necessary — but he sees no point in preserving that notion. The pragmatist has no notion of truth which would enable him to make sense of the claim that if we achieved everything we ever hoped to achieve ' by making assertions

we might still be making *false* assertions, failing to "correspond" to something. As Putnam says:

> The trouble is that for a strong anti-realist [e.g., a pragmatist] truth makes no sense except as an intra-theoretic notion. The anti-realist can use truth intra-theoretically in the sense of a "redundancy theory" [*i.e.*, a theory according to which "*S* is true" means exactly, only, what "*S*" means) but he does not have the notion of truth and reference available extra-theoretically. But extension [reference] is tied to the notion of truth. The extension of a term is just what the term is *true of*. Rather than try to retain the notion of truth via an awkward operationalism, the anti-realist should reject the notion of extension as he does the notion of truth (in any extra-theoretic sense). Like Dewey, he can fall back on a notion of 'warranted assertibility' instead of truth ...

The question which technical realism raises, then, is: are there technical reasons, within the philosophy of language, for retaining or discarding this extra-theoretic notion? Are there non-intuitive ways of deciding whether, as the pragmatist thinks, the question of what '*X*' refers to is a sociological matter, a question of how best to make sense of a community's linguistic behaviour, or whether, as Hartry Field says,

> one aspect of the sociological role of a term is the role that term has in the psychologies of different members of a linguistic community; another *aspect, irreducible to the first* [italics added], is what physical objects or physical property the term stands for.

It is not clear, however, what these technical, non-intuitive ways might be. For it is not clear what data the philosophy of language must explain. The most frequently cited datum is that science *works, succeeds-enables* us to cure diseases, blow up cities, and the like. How, realists ask, would this be possible if some scientific statements did not correspond to the way things are in themselves? How, pragmatists rejoin, does *that* count as an explanation? What further specification of the "correspondence" relation can be given which will enable this explanation to be better than "dormitive power" (Molière's doctor's explanation of why opium puts people to sleep)? What, so to speak, corresponds to the microstructure of opium in this case?

What is the microstructure of "corresponding"? The Tarskian apparatus of truth-conditions and satisfaction-relations does not fill the bill, because that apparatus is equally well adapted to physicalist "building-block"

theories of reference like Field's and to coherentist, holistic, pragmatical theories like Davidson's. When realists like Field argue that Tarski's account of truth is merely a place-holder, like Mendel's account of "gene," which requires physicalistic "reduction to non-semantical terms," pragmatists reply (with Stephen Leeds) that "true" (like "good" and unlike "gene") is not an explanatory notion. (Or that, if it is, the structure of the explanations in which it is used needs to be spelled out.)

The search for technical grounds on which to argue the pragmatist-realist issue is sometimes ended artificially by the realist assuming that the pragmatist not only (as Putnam says) follows Dewey in "falling back on a notion of 'warranted assertibility' *instead* of truth " but uses the latter notion to analyse the meaning of "true." Putnam is right that no such analysis will work. But the pragmatist, if he is wise, will not succumb to the temptation to fill the blank in

S is true if and only if *S* is assertible …

with "at the end of inquiry" or "by the standards of our culture" or with anything else. He will recognise the strength of Putnam's naturalistic fallacy" argument: Just as nothing can fill the blank in

A is the best thing to do in circumstances *C* if and only if …

so, *a fortiori*, nothing will fill the blank in

Asserting *S* is the best thing to do in *C* if and only if …

If the pragmatist is advised that he must not confuse the *advisability of asserting S* with the *truth of S*, he will respond that the advice is question-begging. The question is precisely whether "the true" is more than what William James defined it as: "the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons." On James's view, "true" resembles "good" or "rational" in being a normative notion, a compliment paid to sentences that seem to be paying their way and that fit in with other sentences which are doing so. To think that Truth is "out there" is, on their view, on all fours with the Platonic view that The Good is "out there." To think that we are "irrationalist" insofar as it does not "gratify our souls to know/That though we perish, truth is so" is like thinking that we are "irrationalist" just insofar as it does not gratify our moral sense to think that The Moral Law shines resplendent over the noumenal world, regardless of the vicissitudes of spa-

tio-temporal lives. For the pragmatist, the notion of "truth" as something "objective " is just a confusion between

(I) Most of the world is as it is whatever we think about it (that is, our beliefs have very limited causal efficacy)

and

(II) There is something out there in addition to the world called "the truth about the world" (what James sarcastically called "this tertium quid intermediate between the facts per se, on the one hand, and all knowledge of them, actual or potential, on the other")."

The pragmatist wholeheartedly assents to (I)—not as an article of metaphysical faith but simply as a belief that we have never had any reason to doubt—and cannot make sense of (II). When the realist tries to explain (II) with

(III) The truth about the world consists in a relation of "correspondence" between certain sentences (many of which, no doubt, have yet to be formulated) and the world itself the pragmatist can only fall back on saying, once again, that many centuries of attempts to explain what "correspondence" is have failed, especially when it comes to explaining how the final vocabulary of future physics will somehow be Nature's Own—the one which, at long last, lets us formulate sentences which lock on to Nature's own way of thinking of Herself.

For these reasons, the pragmatist does not think that, whatever else philosophy of language may do, it is going to come up with a definition of "true" which gets beyond James. He happily grants that it can do a lot of other things. For example, it can, following Tarski, show what it would be like to define a truth-predicate for a given language. The pragmatist can agree with Davidson that to define such a predicate—to develop a truth-theory for the sentences of English, e.g,—would be a good way, perhaps the only way, to exhibit a natural language as a learnable, recursive structure, and thus to give a systematic theory of meaning for the language. But he agrees with Davidson that such an exhibition is *all* that Tarski can give us, and all that can be milked out of Philosophical reflection on Truth.

Just as the pragmatist should not succumb to the temptation to capture the intuitive content of our notion of truth" (including whatever it is in that notion which makes realism tempting), so he should not succumb to the

temptation held out by Michael Dummett to take sides on the issue of "bi-valence." Dummett (who has his own doubts about realism) has suggested that a lot of traditional issues in the area of the pragmatist-realist debate can be clarified by the technical apparatus of philosophy of language, along the following lines:

> In a variety of different areas there arises a philosophical dispute of the same general character: the dispute for or against. realism concerning statements within a given type of subject-matter, or, better, statements of a certain general type. [Dummett elsewhere lists moral statements, mathematical statements, statements about the past, and modal statements as examples of such types.] Such a dispute consists in an opposition between two points of view concerning the kind of meaning possessed by statements of the kind in question, and hence about the application to them of the notions of truth and falsity. For the realist, we have assigned a meaning to these statements in such a way that we know, for each statement, what has to be the case for it to be true. … The condition for the truth of a statement is not, in general, a condition we are capable of recognising as obtaining whenever it obtains, or even one for which we have an effective procedure for determining whether it obtains or not. We have therefore succeeded in ascribing to our statements a meaning of such a kind that their truth or falsity is, in general, independent of whether we know, or have any means of knowing, what truth-value they have …

> Opposed to this realist account of statements in some given class is the anti-realist interpretation. According to this, the meanings of statements of the class in question are given to us, not in terms of the conditions under which these statements are true or false, conceived of as conditions which obtain or do not obtain independently of our knowledge or capacity for knowledge, but in terms of the conditions which we recognise as establishing the truth or falsity of statements of that class.

"Bivalence" is the property of being either true or false, so Dummett thinks of a "realistic" view about a certain area (say, moral values, or possible worlds) as asserting bivalence for statements about such things. His way of formulating the realist *vs.* anti-realist issue thus suggests that the pragmatist denies bivalence for all statements, the "extreme" realist asserts it for all statements, while the level-headed majority sensibly discriminate between the bivalent statements of, e.g., physics and the non-bivalent statements of, e.g., morals. "Bivalence" thus joins "ontological commitment" as a way of expressing old-fashioned metaphysical views in up-to-date se-

mantical language. If the pragmatist is viewed as a quasi-idealist metaphysician who is ontologically committed only to ideas or sentences, and does not believe that there is anything "out there" which makes any sort of statement true, then he will fit neatly into Dummett's scheme.

But, of course, this is not the pragmatist's picture of himself. He does not think of himself as *any* kind of a metaphysician, because he does not *understand* the notion of "there being … out there" (except in the literal sense of 'out there' in which it means "at a position in space"). He does not find it helpful to explicate the Platonist's conviction about The Good or The Numbers by saying that the Platonist believes that "There is truth-or-falsity about … regardless of the state of our knowledge or the availability of procedures for inquiry." The "is" in this sentence ' seems to him just as obscure as the "is" in "Truth is so." Confronted with the passage from Dummett cited above, the pragmatist wonders how one goes about telling one "kind of meaning" from another, and what it would be like to have "intuitions" about the bivalence or non-bivalence of kinds of statements. He is a pragmatist just because he doesn't have such intuitions (or wants to get rid of whatever such intuitions he may have). When he asks himself, about a given statement S, whether he "knows what has to be the case for it to be true' ' or merely knows "the conditions which we recognise as establishing the truth or falsity of statements of that class," he feels as helpless as when asked, "Are you really in love, or merely inflamed by passion?" He is inclined to suspect that it is not a very useful question, and that at any rate introspection is not the way to answer it. But in the case of bivalence it is not clear that there is another way. Dummett does not help us see what to count as a good argument for asserting bivalence of, e.g., moral or modal statements; he merely says that there are some people who do assert this and some who don't, presumably having been born with different metaphysical temperaments. If one is born without metaphysical views—or if, having become pessimistic about the utility of Philosophy, one is self-consciously attempting to eschew such views—then one will feel that Dummett's reconstruction of the traditional issues explicates the obscure with the equally obscure.

What I have said about Field and about Dummett is intended to cast doubt on the "technical realist's" view that the pragmatist-realist issue should be fought out on some narrow, dearly demarcated ground within the philosophy of language. There is no such ground. This is not, to be sure, the fault of philosophy of language, but of the pragmatist. He refuses to take a stand to provide an "analysis" of "*S* is true," for example, or to either assert or deny bivalence. He refuses to make a move in *any* of the

games in which he is invited to take part. The *only* point at which "referential semantics" or "bivalence" becomes of interest to him comes when somebody tries to treat these notions as explanatory, as not *just* expressing intuitions but as doing some work—explaining, for example, "why science is so successful." At this point the pragmatist hauls out his bag of tried-and-true dialectical gambits." He proceeds to argue that there is no pragmatic difference, no difference that makes a difference, between "it works because it's true" and "it's true because it works" any more than between "it's pious because the gods love it" and "the gods love it because it's pious." Alternatively, he argues that there is no pragmatic difference between the nature of truth and the test of truth, and that the test of truth, of what statements to assert, is (except maybe for a few perceptual statements) not "comparison with reality." All these gambits will be felt by the realist to be question-begging, since the realist intuits that some differences can be real *without* making a difference, that sometimes the *ordo essendi* is different from *ordo cognoscendi*, sometimes the nature of *X* is *not* our test for the presence of *X*ness. And so it goes.

What we should conclude, I think, is that technical realism collapses into intuitive realism—that the *only* debating point which the realist has is his conviction that the raising of the good old metaphysical problems (are there really universals? are there *really* causally efficacious physical objects, or did we just *posit* them?) served some good purpose, brought something to light, was important. What the pragmatist wants to debate is just this point. He does not want to discuss necessary and sufficient conditions for a sentence being true, but precisely *whether* the practice which hopes to find a Philosophical way of isolating the essence of Truth has, in fact, paid off. So the issue between him and the intuitive realist is a matter of what to make of the history of that practice-what to make of the history of Philosophy. The real issue is about the place of Philosophy in Western philosophy, the place within the intellectual history of the West of the particular series of texts which raise the "deep" Philosophical problems which the realist wants to preserve.

4. The Realist Reaction (II): Intuitive Realism

What really needs debate between the pragmatist and the intuitive realist is not whether we have intuitions to the effect that "truth is more than assertibility" or "there is more to pains than brain-states" or "there is a clash between modem physics and our sense of moral responsibility." *Of course* we have such intuitions. How could we escape having them? We

have been educated within an intellectual tradition built around such claims—just as we used to be educated within an intellectual tradition built around such claims as "If God does not exist, everything is permitted," "Man's dignity consists in his link with a supernatural order," and "One must not mock holy things." But it begs the question between pragmatist and realist to say that we must find a philosophical view which "captures" such intuitions. The pragmatist is urging that we do our best to *stop having* such intuitions, that we develop a new intellectual tradition.

What strikes intuitive realists as offensive about this suggestion is that it seems as dishonest to suppress intuitions as it is to suppress experimental data. On their conception, philosophy (not merely Philosophy) requires one to do justice to *everybody's* intuitions. just as social justice is what would be brought about by institutions whose existence could be justified to every citizen, so intellectual justice would be made possible by finding theses which everyone would, given sufficient time and dialectical ability, accept. This view of intellectual life presupposes either that, contrary to the prophets of the ubiquity of language cited above, language does *not* go all the way down, or that, contrary to the appearances, all vocabularies are commensurable. The first alternative amounts to saying that some intuitions, at least, are *not* a function of the way one has been brought up to talk, of the texts and people one has encountered. The second amounts to saying that the intuitions built into the vocabularies of Homeric warriors, Buddhist sages, Enlightenment scientists, and contemporary French literary critics, are not really as different as they seem—that there are common elements in each which Philosophy can isolate and use to formulate theses which it would be rational for all these people to accept, and problems which they all face.

The pragmatist, on the other hand, thinks that the quest for a universal human community will be self-defeating if it tries to preserve the elements of every intellectual tradition, all the "deep" intuitions everybody has ever had. it is not to be achieved by an attempt at commensuration, at a common vocabulary which isolates the common human essence of Achilles and the Buddha, Lavoisier and Derrida. Rather, it is to be reached, if at all, by acts, of making rather than of finding—by poetic— rather than Philosophical achievement. The culture which will transcend, and thus unite, East and West, or the Earthlings and the Galactics, is not likely to be one which does equal justice to each, but one which looks back on both with the amused condescension typical of later generations looking back at their ancestors. So the pragmatist's quarrel with the intuitive realist should be about the *status* of intuitions about their *right* to be respected

as opposed to how particular intuitions might be "synthesised" or explained away." To treat his opponent properly, the pragmatist must begin by admitting that the realistic intuitions in question are as deep and compelling as the realist says they are. But he should then try to change the subject by asking, "And what should we *do* about such intuitions-extirpate them, or find a vocabulary which does justice to them?"

From the pragmatist point of view the claim that the issues which the nineteenth century enshrined in its textbooks as "the central problems of philosophy" are "deep" is simply the claim that you will not understand a certain period in the history of Europe unless you can get some idea of what it was like to be preoccupied by such questions. (Consider parallel claims about the "depth" of the problems about Patripassianism, Arianism, etc., discussed by certain Fathers of the Church.) The pragmatist is even willing to expand his range and say, with Heidegger, that you won't understand the West unless you understand what it was like to be bothered by the kinds of issues which bothered Plato. Intuitive realists, rather than "stepping back" in the historicist manner of Heidegger and Dewey, or the quasi-anthropological manner of Foucault, devote themselves to safeguarding the tradition, to making us even more deeply Western. The way in which they do this is illustrated by Clarke's and Cavell's attempt to see "the legacy of scepticism" not as a question about whether we can be sure we're not dreaming but as a question about what sort of being could ask itself such a question." They use the existence of figures like Descartes as indications of something important about *human beings*, not just about the modem West.

The best illustration of this strategy is Nagel's way of updating Kant by bringing a whole series of apparently disparate problems under the rubric "Subjective-Objective", just as Kant brought a partially overlapping set of problems under the rubric "Conditioned–Unconditioned". Nagel echoes Kant in saying:

> It may be true that some philosophical problems have no solution. I suspect that this is true of the deepest and oldest of them. They show us the limits of our understanding. In that case such insight as we can achieve depends on maintaining a strong grasp of the problem instead of abandoning it, and coming to understand the failure of each new attempt at a solution, and of earlier attempts. (That is why we study the works of philosophers like Plato and Berkeley, whose views are accepted by no one.) Unsolvable problems are not for that reason unreal.

As an illustration of what Nagel has in mind, consider his example of the problem of "moral luck"—the fact that one can be morally praised or blamed only for what is under one's control, yet practically nothing is. As Nagel says:

> The area of genuine agency, and therefore of legitimate moral judgment, seems to shrink under this scrutiny to an extensionless point. Everything seems to result from the combined influence of factors, antecedent and posterior to action, that are not within the agent's control.

Nagel thinks that a typically shallow, verificationist "solution" to this problem is available. We can get such a solution (Hume's) by going into detail about what sorts of external factors we do and don't count as diminishing the moral worth of an action:

> This compatibilist account of our moral judgments would leave room for the ordinary conditions of responsibility—the absence of coercion, ignorance, or involuntary movement—as part of the determination of what someone has done-but it is understood not to exclude the influence of a great deal that he has not done.

But this relaxed, pragmatical, Humean attitude-the attitude which says that there is no deep truth about Freedom of the Will, and that people are morally responsible for whatever their peers tend to hold them morally responsible for-fails to explain why there has been *thought* to be a problem here:

> The only thing wrong with this solution is its failure to explain how sceptical problems arise. For they arise not from the imposition of an arbitrary external requirement, but from the nature of moral judgment itself. Something in the ordinary idea of what someone does must explain how it can seem necessary to subtract from it anything that merely happens-even though the ultimate consequence of such subtraction is that nothing remains.

But this is not to say that we need a metaphysical account of the Nature of Freedom of the sort which Kant (at least in some passages) seems to give us. Rather,

> … in a sense the problem has no solution, because something in the idea of agency is incompatible with actions being events or people being things.

Since there is, so to speak, nothing *else* for people to be but things, we are left with an intuition-one which shows us "the limits of our understanding," and thus of our language.

Contrast, now, Nagel's attitude toward "the nature of moral judgment" with iris Murdoch's. The Kantian attempt to isolate an agent who is not a spatio-temporal thing is seen by Murdoch as an unfortunate and perverse turn which Western thought has taken. Within a certain post-Kantian tradition, she says:

> immense care is taken to picture the will as isolated. it is isolated from belief, from reason, from feeling, and is yet the essential center of the self …

This existentialist conception of the agent as isolated will goes along, Murdoch says, with "a very powerful image" of man which she finds "alien and implausible"-one which is "a happy and fruitful marriage of Kantian liberalism with Wittgensteinian logic solemnised by Freud."" On Murdoch's view,

> Existentialism, in both its Continental and its Anglo-Saxon versions, is an attempt to solve the problem without really facing it: to solve it by attributing to the individual an empty lonely freedom. …. What it pictures is indeed the fearful solitude of the individual marooned upon a tiny island in the middle of a sea of scientific facts, and morality escaping from science only by a wild leap of will

instead of reinforcing this picture (as Nagel and Sartre do), Murdoch wants to get behind Kantian notions of will, behind the Kantian formulation of an antithesis between determinism and responsibility, behind the Kantian distinction between the moral self and the empirical self. She wants to recapture the vocabulary of moral reflection which a sixteenth-century Christian believer inclined toward Platonism would have used: one in which "perfection" is a central element, in which assignment of moral responsibility is a rather incidental element, and in which the discovery of a self (one's own or another's) is the endless task of love."

In contrasting Nagel and Murdoch, I am not trying (misleadingly) to enlist Murdoch as a fellow-pragmatist, nor (falsely) to accuse Nagel of blindness to the variety of moral consciousness which Murdoch represents. Rather, I want to illustrate the difference between taking a standard philosophical problem (or cluster of interrelated problems such as free will, selfhood, agency, and responsibility) and asking, on the one hand, "What is

its essence? To what ineffable depths, what limit of language, does it lead us? What does it show us about *being human*? " and asking, on the other hand, "What sort of people would see these problems? What vocabulary, what image of man, would produce such problems? Why, insofar as we are gripped by these problems, do we see them as deep rather than as *reductiones ad absurdum* of a vocabulary? What does the persistence of such problems show us about *being twentieth-century Europeans*?" Nagel is certainly right, and splendidly lucid, about the way in which a set of ideas, illustrated best by Kant, shoves us toward the notion of something called "the subjective"—the personal point of view, what science doesn't catch, what no "stepping back" could catch, what forms a limit to the understanding. But how do we know whether to say, "So' much the worse for the solubility of philosophical problems, for the reach of language, for our 'verificationist' impulses," or whether to say, "So much the worse for the Philosophical ideas which have led us to such an impasse"?

The same question arises about the other philosophical problems which Nagel brings under his "Subjective-Objective" rubric. The clash between "verificationist" and "realist" intuitions is perhaps best illustrated by Nagel's celebrated paper "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" Nagel here appeals to our intuition that "there is something which it is like" to be a bat or a dog but nothing which it is like to be an atom or a brick, and says that this intuition is what contemporary Wittgensteinian, Rylean, anti-Cartesian philosophy of mind "fails to capture." The culmination of the latter philosophical movement is the cavalier attitude toward "raw feels"—e.g., the sheer phenomenological qualitative ipseity of pain-suggested by Daniel Dennett:

> I recommend giving up incorrigibility with regard to pain altogether, in fact giving up all "essential" features of pain, and letting pain states be whatever "natural kind" states the brain scientists find (if they ever do find any) that normally produce all the normal effects. … One of our intuitions about pain is that whether or not one is in pain is a brute fact, not a matter of decision to serve the convenience of the theorist. I recommend against trying to preserve that intuition, but if you disagree, whatever theory I produce, however predictive and elegant, will not be in your lights a theory of pain, but only a theory of what I illicitly choose to call pain. But if, as I have claimed, the intuitions we would have to honour were we to honour them all do not form a consistent set, there can be no true theory of pain, and so no computer or robot could instantiate the true theory of pain, which it would have to do to feel real pain. … The inability of a robot model to satisfy all our intuitive de-

mands may be due not to any irredeemable mysteriousness about the phenomenon of pain, but to irredeemable incoherence in our ordinary concept of pain.

Nagel is one of those who disagrees with Dennett's recommendation. His anti-verificationism comes out most strongly in the following passage:

… if things emerged from a spaceship which we could not be sure were machines or conscious beings, what we were wondering would have an answer even if the things were so different from anything we were familiar with that we could never discover it. It would depend on whether there was something it was like to be them, not on whether behavioural similarities warranted our saying so. …

I therefore seem to be drawn to a position more 'realistic' than Wittgenstein's. This may be because I am drawn to positions more realistic than Wittgenstein's about everything, not just the mental. I believe that the question about whether the things coming out of the spaceship are conscious must have an answer. Wittgenstein would presumably say that this assumption reflects a groundless confidence that a certain picture unambiguously determines its own application. That is the picture of something going on in their heads (or whatever they have in place of heads) that cannot be observed by dissection.

Whatever picture may use to represent the idea, it does seem to me that I know what it means to ask whether there is something it is like to be them, and that the answer to that question is what determines whether they are conscious—not the possibility of extending mental ascriptions on evidence analogous to the human case. Conscious mental states are real states of something, whether they are mine or those of an alien creature. Perhaps Wittgenstein's view can accommodate this intuition, but I do not at the moment see how.

Wittgenstein certainly *cannot* accommodate this intuition. The question is whether he should be asked to: whether we should abandon the pragmatical "verificationist" intuition that "every difference must *make* a difference" (expressed by Wittgenstein in the remark "A wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, is not part of the mechanism")' or instead abandon Nagel's intuition about consciousness. We certainly have *both* intuitions. For Nagel, their compresence shows that the limit of Understanding has been reached, that an ultimate depth has been plumbed—just as the discovery of an antinomy indicated to Kant that

something transcendental had been encountered. For Wittgenstein, it merely shows that the Cartesian tradition has sketched a compelling picture a picture which "held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably."

I said at the beginning of this section that there were two alternative ways in which the intuitive realist might respond to the pragmatist's suggestion that some intuitions should be deliberately repressed. He might say either that language does not go all the way down—that there is a kind of awareness of facts which is not expressible in language and which no argument could render dubious—or, more mildly, that there is a core language which is common to all traditions and which needs to be isolated. In a confrontation with Murdoch one can imagine Nagel making the second claim-arguing that even the kind of moral discourse which Murdoch recommends must wind up with the same conception of "the isolated will" as Kantian moral discourse. But in a confrontation with Dennett's attempt to weed out our intuitions Nagel must make the first claim. He has to o all the way, and deny that our knowledge is limited by the language we speak. He says as much in the following passage:

> if anyone is inclined to deny that we can believe in the existence of facts like this whose exact nature we cannot possibly conceive, he should reflect that in contemplating the bats we are in much the same position that intelligent bats or Martians would occupy if they tried to form a conception of what it was like to be us. The structure of their own minds might make it impossible for them to succeed, but we know they would be wrong to conclude that there is not anything precise that it is like to be us. … we know they would be wrong to draw such a sceptical conclusion because we know what it is like to be us. And we know that *while it includes an enormous amount of variation and complexity, and while we do not possess the vocabulary to describe it adequately*, its subjective character is highly specific, and in some respects describable in terms that can be understood only by creatures like us [italics added].

Here we hit a bedrock meta-philosophical issue: can one ever appeal to nonlinguistic knowledge in philosophical argument? This is the question of whether a dialectical impasse is the mark of philosophical depth or of a bad language, one which needs to be replaced with one which will not lead to such impasses. *That* is just the issue about the status of intuitions, which I said above was the real issue between the pragmatist and the realist. The hunch that, e.g., reflection upon anything worthy of the name "moral judgment" will eventually lead us to the problems Nagel de-

scribes is a discussable question—one upon which the history of ethics can shed light. But the-intuition that there is something ineffable which it is like to be us—something which one cannot learn about by believing true propositions but only by *being* like that—is not something on which anything could throw further light. The claim is either deep or empty.

The pragmatist sees it as empty-indeed, he sees many of Nagel's discussions of "the subjective" as drawing a line around a vacant place in the middle of the web of words, and then claiming that there is something there rather than nothing. But this is not because he has independent arguments for a Philosophical theory to the effect that (in Sellars's words) "All awareness is a linguistic affair," or that "The meaning of a proposition is its method of verification." Such slogans as these are not the result of Philosophical inquiry into Awareness or Meaning, but merely ways of cautioning the public against the Philosophical tradition. (As "No taxation without representation" was not a discovery about the nature of Taxation, but an expression of distrust in the British Parliament of the day.) There are no fast little arguments to show that there are no such things as intuitions—arguments which are themselves based on something stronger than intuitions. For the pragmatist, the *only* thing wrong with Nagel's intuitions is that they are being used to legitimise a vocabulary (the Kantian vocabulary in morals, the Cartesian vocabulary in philosophy of mind) which the pragmatist thinks should be eradicated rather than reinforced. But his only argument for thinking that these intuitions and vocabularies should be eradicated is that the intellectual tradition to which they belong has not paid off, is more trouble than it is worth, has become an incubus. Nagel's dogmatism of intuitions is no worse, or better, than the pragmatist's inability to give non-circular arguments.

This upshot of the confrontation between the pragmatist and the intuitive realist about the status of intuitions can be described either as a conflict of intuitions about the importance of intuitions, or as a preference for one vocabulary over another. The realist will favour the first description, and the pragmatist, the second. it does not matter which description one uses, as long as it is clear that the issue is one about whether philosophy should try to find natural starting-points which are distinct from cultural traditions. This is, once again, the issue of whether philosophy should be Philosophy. The intuitive realist thinks that there is such a thing as Philosophical truth because he thinks that, deep down beneath all the texts, there is something which is not just one more text but that to which various texts are trying to be "adequate." The pragmatist does not think that there is anything like that. He does not even think that there is anything

isolable as "the purposes which we construct vocabularies and cultures to fulfil" against which to test vocabularies and cultures. But he does think that in the process of playing vocabularies and cultures off against each other, we produce new and better ways of talking and acting—not better by reference to a previously known standard, but just better in the sense that they come to seem clearly better than their predecessors.

5. A Post-Philosophical Culture

I began by saying that the pragmatist refused to accept the Philosophical distinction between first-rate truth-by-correspondence-to reality and second-rate truth-as-what-it-is-good-to-believe. I said that this raised the question of whether a culture could get along without Philosophy, without the Platonic attempt to sift out the merely contingent and conventional truths from the Truths which were something more than that. The last two sections, in which I have been going over the latest round of "realist" objections to pragmatism, has brought us back to my initial distinction between philosophy and Philosophy. Pragmatism denies the possibility of getting beyond the Sellarsian notion of "seeing how things hang together"—which, for the bookish intellectual of recent times, means seeing how all the various vocabularies of all the various epochs and cultures hang together. "Intuition" is just the latest name for a device which will get us off the literary-historical-anthropological-political merry-go-round which such intellectuals ride, and onto something "progressive" and "scientific"—a device which will get us from philosophy to Philosophy.

I remarked earlier that a third motive for the recent anti-pragmatist backlash is simply the hope of getting off this merry-go-round. This hope is a correlate of the fear that if there is nothing quasi-scientific for philosophy as an academic discipline to do, if there is no properly professional *Fach* which distinguishes the philosophy professor from the historian or the literary critic, then something will have been lost which has been central to Western intellectual life. This fear is, to be sure, justified. If Philosophy disappears, something will have been lost which was central to Western intellectual life—just as something central was lost when religious intuitions were weeded out from among the intellectually respectable candidates for Philosophical articulation. But the Enlightenment thought, rightly, that what would succeed religion would be *better*. The pragmatist is betting that what succeeds the "scientific," positivist culture which the Enlightenment produced will be better.

The question of whether the pragmatist is right to be so sanguine is the question of whether a culture is imaginable, or desirable, in which no one-or at least no intellectual-believes that we have, deep down inside us, a criterion for telling whether we are in touch with reality or not, when we are in the Truth. This would be a culture in which neither the priests nor the physicists nor the poets nor the Party were thought of as more "rational," or more "scientific" or "deeper" than one another. No particular portion of culture would be singled out as exemplifying (or signally failing to exemplify) the condition to which the rest aspired. There would be no sense that, beyond the current intra-disciplinary criteria, which, for example, good priests or good physicists obeyed, there were other, transdisciplinary, transcultural, ahistorical criteria, which they also obeyed.

There would still be hero-worship in such a culture, but it would not be worship of heroes as children of the gods, as marked off from the rest of mankind by closeness to the Immortal. It would simply be admiration of exceptional men and women who were very good at doing the quite diverse kinds of things they did. Such people would not be those who knew a Secret, who had won through to the Truth, but simply people who were good at being human.

A fortiori, such a culture would contain nobody called "the Philosopher" who could explain why and how certain areas of culture enjoyed a special relation to reality. Such a culture would, doubtless, contain specialists in seeing how things hung together. But these would be people Who had no special "problems" to solve, nor any special "method" to apply, abided by no particular disciplinary standards, had no collective self-image as a "profession." They might resemble contemporary philosophy professors in being more interested in moral responsibility than in prosody, or more interested in the articulation of sentences than in that of the human body, but they might not. They would be all-purpose intellectuals who were ready to offer a view on pretty much anything, in the hope of making it hang together with everything else.

Such a hypothetical culture strikes both Platonists and positivists as "decadent." The Platonists see it has having no ruling principle, no center, no structure. The positivists see it as having no respect for hard fact, for that area of culture—science—in which the quest for objective truth takes precedence over emotion and opinion. The Platonists would like to see a culture guided by something eternal. The positivists would like to see one guided by something temporal—the brute impact of the way the world is. But both want it to be guided, constrained, not left to its own devices.

For both, decadence is a matter of unwillingness to submit oneself to some-
thing "out there"—to recognise that beyond the languages of men and
women there is something to which these languages, and the men and
women themselves, must try to be "adequate." For both, therefore, Phi-
losophy as the discipline which draws a line between such attempts at ad-
equacy and everything else in culture, and so between first-rate and sec-
ond-rate truth, is bound up with the struggle against decadence.

So the question of whether such a post-Philosophical culture is desir-
able can also be put as the question: can the ambiguity of language ever
really be taken seriously? Can we see ourselves as never encountering re-
ality *except under a chosen description*—as, in Nelson Goodman's phrase,
making worlds rather than finding them ? This question has nothing to do
with "idealism"—with the suggestion that we can or should draw meta-
physical comfort from the fact that reality is "spiritual in nature." It is,
rather, the question of whether we can give up what Stanley Cavell calls
the impossibility that one among endless true descriptions of me tells who
I am." The hope that one of them will do just that is the impulse which,
in our present culture, drives the youth to read their way through libraries,
cranks to claim that they have found The Secret which makes all things
plain, and sound scientists and scholars, toward the ends of their lives, to
hope . that their work has "philosophical implications" and "universal hu-
man significance." In a post-Philosophical culture, some other hope
would drive us to read through the libraries, and to add new volumes to
the ones we found. Presumably it would be the hope of offering our de-
scendants a way of describing the ways of describing we had come across-a
description of the descriptions which the race has come up with so far. if
one takes "our time" to be "our view of previous times," so that, in
Hegelian fashion) each age of the world recapitulates all the earlier ones,
then a post-Philosophical culture would agree with Hegel that philosophy
is "its own time apprehended in thoughts."

In a post-Philosophical culture it would be clear that that is all that phi-
losophy can be. It cannot answer questions about the relation of the
thought of our time—the descriptions it is using, the vocabularies it em-
ploys —to something which is not just some alternative vocabulary. So it
is a study of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the various
ways of talking which our race has invented. it looks, in short, much like
what is sometimes called "culture criticism"—a term which has come to
name the literary-historical-anthropological-political merry-go-round I
spoke of earlier. The modern Western "culture critic" feels free to com-
ment on anything at all. He is a prefiguration of the all-purpose intellec-

tual of a post-Philosophical culture, the philosopher who has abandoned pretensions to Philosophy. He passes rapidly from Hemingway to Proust to Hitler to Marx to Foucault to Mary Douglas to the present situation in Southeast Asia to Ghandi to Sophocles. He is a name-dropper, who uses names such as these to refer to sets of descriptions, symbol-systems, ways of seeing. His specialty is seeing similarities and differences between great big pictures, between attempts to see how things hang together. He is the person who tells you how all the ways of making things hang together hang together. But, since he does not tell you about how all *possible* ways of making things hang together must hang together—since he has no extra-historical Archimedean point of this sort—he is doomed to become outdated. Nobody is so *passé* as the intellectual czar of the previous generation—the man who redescribed all those old descriptions, which, thanks in part to his redescription of them, nobody now wants to hear anything about.

The life of such inhabitants of Snow's "literary culture," whose highest hope is to grasp their time in thought, appears to the Platonist and the positivist as a life not worth living-because it is a life which leaves nothing permanent behind. In contrast, the positivist and the Platonist hope to leave behind true propositions, propositions which have been shown true once and for all inheritances for the human race unto all generations. The fear an d distrust inspired by "historicism"—the emphasis on the mortality of the vocabularies in which such supposedly immortal truths are expressed—is the reason why Hegel (and more recently Kuhn and Foucault) are *bêtes noires* for Philosophers, and especially for spokesmen for Snow's scientific culture. "(Hegel himself, to be sure, had his Philosophical moments, but the temporalisation of rationality which he suggested was the single most important step in arriving at the pragmatist's distrust of Philosophy.)

The opposition between mortal vocabularies and immortal propositions is reflected in the opposition between the inconclusive comparison and contrast of vocabularies (with everybody trying to *aufheben* everybody else's way of putting everything) characteristic of the literary culture, and rigorous argumentation—the procedure characteristic of mathematics, what Kuhn calls "normal" science, and the law (at least in the lower courts). Comparisons and contrasts between vocabularies issue, usually, in new, synthetic vocabularies. Rigorous argumentation issues in agreement in propositions. The really exasperating thing about literary intellectuals, from the point of view of those inclined to science or to Philosophy, is their inability to engage in such argumentation-to agree on what would count as resolving disputes, on the criteria to which all sides must appeal. In a post-Philosophical culture, this exasperation would not be felt. In such a

culture, criteria would be seen as the pragmatist sees them-as temporary resting-places constructed for specific utilitarian ends. On the pragmatist account, a criterion (what follows from the axioms, what the needle points to, what the statute says) *is* a criterion because some particular social practice needs to block the road of inquiry, halt the regress of interpretations, in order to get something done." So rigorous argumentation—the practice which is made-possible by agreement on criteria, on stopping-places—is no more *generally desirable* than blocking the road of inquiry is generally desirable." It is something which it is convenient to have if you can get it. if the Purposes you are engaged in fulfilling can be specified pretty clearly in advance (e.g., finding out how an enzyme functions, preventing violence in the streets, proving theorems), then you *can* get it. If they are not (as in the search for a just society, the resolution of a moral dilemma, the choice of a symbol of ultimate concern, the quest for a "post-modernist" sensibility), then you probably cannot, and you should not try for it. If what you are interested in is *philosophy, you certainly* will not get it—for one of the things which the various vocabularies for describing things differ about is the purpose of describing things. The philosopher will not want to beg the question between these various descriptions in advance. The urge to make philosophy into Philosophy is to make it the search for some final vocabulary, which can somehow be known in advance to be the common core, the truth of, all the other vocabularies which might be advanced in its place. This is the urge which the pragmatist thinks should be repressed, and which a post-Philosophical culture would have succeeded in repressing.

The most powerful reason for thinking that no such culture is possible is that seeing all criteria as no more than temporary resting-places, constructed by a community to facilitate its inquiries, seems morally humiliating. Suppose that Socrates was wrong, that we have not *once* seen the Truth, and so will not, intuitively, recognise it when we see it again. This means that when the secret police come, when the torturers violate the innocent, there is nothing to be said to them of the form "There is something within you which you are betraying. Though you embody the practices of a totalitarian society which will endure forever, there is something beyond those practices which condemns you." This thought is hard to live with, as is Sartre's remark:

> Tomorrow, after my death, certain people may decide to establish fascism, and the others may be cowardly or miserable enough to let them get away with it. At that moment, fascism will be the truth of man, and so much the worse for us. In reality, things will be as much as man has decided they are.

This hard saying brings out what ties Dewey and Foucault, James and Nietzsche, together—the sense that there is nothing deep down inside us except what we have put there ourselves, no criterion that we have not created in the course of creating a practice, no standard of rationality that is not an appeal to such a criterion, no rigorous argumentation that is not obedience to our own conventions.

A post-Philosophical culture, then, would be one in which men and women felt themselves alone, merely finite, with no links to something Beyond. On the pragmatist's account, position was only a halfway stage in the development of such a culture-the progress toward, as Sartre puts it, doing without God. For positivism preserved a god in its notion of Science (and in its notion of "scientific philosophy"), the notion of a portion of culture where we touched something not ourselves, where we found Truth naked, relative to no description. The culture of positivism thus produced endless swings of the pendulum between the view that "values are merely 'relative' (or 'emotive,' or 'subjective')" and the view that bringing the "scientific method" to bear on questions of political and moral choice was the solution to all our problems. Pragmatism, by contrast, does not erect Science as an idol to fill the place once held by God. It views science as one genre of literature-or, put the other way around, literature and the arts as inquiries, on the same footing as scientific inquiries. Thus it sees ethics as neither more "relative" or "subjective" than scientific theory, nor as needing to be made "scientific." Physics is a way of trying to cope with various bits of the universe; ethics is a matter of trying to cope with other bits. Mathematics helps physics do its job; literature and the arts help ethics do its. Some of these inquiries come up with propositions, some with narratives, some with paintings. The question of what propositions to assert, which pictures to look at, what narratives to listen to and comment on and retell, are all questions about what will help us get what we want (or about what we *should* want).

The question of whether the pragmatist view of truth—that it is a profitable topic—is itself *true* is thus a question about whether a post-Philosophical culture is a good thing to try for. It is not a question about what the word "true" means, nor about the requirements of an adequate philosophy of language, nor about whether the world "exists independently of our minds," nor about whether the intuitions of our culture are captured in the pragmatists' slogans. There is no way in which the issue between the pragmatist and his opponent can be tightened up and resolved according to criteria agreed to by both sides. This is one of those issues which puts everything up for grabs at once—where there is no point in trying to find

agreement about "the data" or about what would count as deciding the question. But the messiness of the issue is not a reason for setting it aside. The issue between religion and secularism was no less messy, but it was important that it got decided as it did.

If the account of the contemporary philosophical scene which I offer in these essays is correct, then the issue about the truth of pragmatism is the issue which all the most important cultural developments since Hegel have conspired to put before us. But, like its predecessor, it is not going to be resolved by any sudden new discovery of how things really are. It will be decided, if history allows us the leisure to decide such issues, only by a slow and painful choice between alternative self-images.