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A CASE FOR EPISTEMOLOGICAL REALISM

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Abstract

The Epistemological Realist (ER) project, recently initiated by John McDowell in Mind and World and Hilary Putnam in his 1994 series of Dewey Lectures, is an extremely promising one. This project aims to show how a 'commonsense realism' about the world and our relationship to it can be made tenable in a philosophical climate increasingly dominated by various forms of anti-realism. At least part of the reason for the prevalence of anti-realism is the unsatisfactory way in which realism has traditionally been developed. Epistemological Realism departs from Traditional Realism in at least three key areas: (a) its account of how perception enables empirical knowledge, (b) its account of perception itself and (c) its account of how our empirical knowledge claims bear on reality. The ability of the ER theorist to give perfectly satisfactory accounts of (a)-(c) does much to reinstate 'commonsense realism' as a philosophically respectable position.

Epistemological Realism 'commonsense realism' Traditional Realism anti-realism perception empirical knowledge reality John McDowell Mind and World Hilary Putnam

Declaration

I declare that this Research Report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.



Victoria Bancroft Cook

31st day of August, 1998

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INTRODUCTION

My concern in this Research Report is to develop and defend the kind of realist project recently initiated by John McDowell in Mind and World and Hilary Putnam in his 1994 Dewey Lectures. This project - which I will term Epistemological Realism (ER) - aims to show how a 'commonsense re..'sm' about the world and our relationship to it can be made tenable.

[A] 'COMMONSENSE REALISM'

The 'commonsense realism' which the Epistemological Realist is concerned to defend involves a commitment to three general claims:

- we can (and do) have knowledge of the world,
- the world exists independently of our minds, and
- we have access to the world in perception.

Importantly, these claims are to be taken together rather than separately. On the realist view under consideration it is held that in perception we have access to the mind-independent world, this access being a crucial ground of the possibility of empirical knowledge. To put it in a slightly different way: the world of which we have knowledge in virtue of our perceptual access to it is mind-independent. Or again: our knowledge claims bear on the mind-independent world, this possibility being secured by the perceptual access we have to the latter.

There are two important qualifications which must be made concerning the above however. In defending 'commonsense realism' the Epistemological Realist is not claiming either that we do (or can) have knowledge of ALL aspects of the world, or that all aspects of the world are MIND-INDEPENDENT. With regard to the former, in holding that we can have knowledge of the world the ER theorist is primarily concerned with the ordinary everyday aspects of the world to which our senses give us access. With regard to the latter, in holding that the world is mind-independent the

ER theorist is happy to accept that this does not apply to the world in its entirety - the ER theorist does not mean to suggest that social constructs, or indeed such mental items as beliefs and desires, are not part of the furniture of the world.

It is worth taking note of the fact that the ER characterization of realism commits the 'errors' warned against by Michael Devitt of failing to distinguish the metaphysical (ontological) issue of realism from any semantic or epistemological issue, and of failing to settle the former before the latter (Devitt, 1991). On Devitt's view the realism/anti-realism distinction must be held to turn on the ontological nature of the world alone, and this issue must be decided before the issue of whether or not we can have knowledge of this world. Although a detailed discussion and criticism of Devitt's views here are beyond the scope of the Research Report, I do want to say something in support of how the Epistemological Realist characterizes realism. It seems to me that if the real world is not the one on which our most basic knowledge claims bear then the issue of its existence or non-existence ceases to be particularly interesting. There is something strange about referring to someone who claims that the world of which we have knowledge is not mind-independent, but who nevertheless retains a commitment to some noumenal realm of 'things in themselves', as a REALIST. What it is important to note here is that the way the realism/anti-realism distinction is being drawn in this Research Report, an account is anti-realist if it challenges the 'commonsense realist' picture outlined above.

What the Epistemological Realist is concerned to show, then, is that we can make good on our 'commonsense realist' intuition that we can and do have knowledge of the mind-independent world. Importantly, however, ER acknowledges that there is much work to be done in this regard. In particular the ER theorist argues that the way 'commonsense realism' has traditionally been developed must be abandoned.

[B] T .ADITIONAL REALISM

As both McDowell and Putnam note, the philosophical climate of the last century has become increasingly dominated by various forms of anti-realism. On the ER view, at least partly responsible for this rise in the popularity of anti-realism has been the failure of Traditional Realism (TR) to cash out the details of the 'commonsense realist' intuition in the right ways.

The ER theorist urges that there are at least three areas in which we must take issue with the Traditional Realist if a 'commonsense realism' about the world is to be secured:

(a) the TR account of how perception is able to make knowledge of the world possible,

(b) the TR account of perception itself, and

(c) the TR account of how our knowledge claims bear on reality.

The ER project is centrally concerned to show that once we take issue with (a)-(c) and replace them with the right kinds of accounts then there is nothing to prevent us from being 'commonsense realists'.

[C] REPORT OUTLINE

In Chapter One of this Research Report I will be concerned with the failure of TR to provide a satisfactory account of how perception enables empirical knowledge [(a) above]. I will follow Wilfred Sellars and McDowell in arguing that the TR characterization of perceptual content as 'raw data' prevents such content from being able to stand in the right kind of relation to our empirical knowledge claims. I will however take issue with Sellars' and McDowell's positive accounts, and argue that the ER project is made more secure by adopting the account advanced by Michael Pendlebury.

In Chapter Two I will turn my attention to the problems confronting the TR account of perception itself [(b) above]. I will follow both Putnam and McDowell in arguing that a 'commonsense realism' will remain untenable unless the TR idea that perception must form an INTERFACE between the perceiver and the world is abandoned. The main body of the chapter will be devoted to showing how a 'Direct Theory of Perception' can be unproblematically developed and advanced.

In the final chapter of this Research Report I will turn to consider the TR account of how our knowledge claims bear on reality. I will argue along with Putnam that the TR conception of language as a 'mirror image' of reality must be abandoned. I will be centrally concerned to argue that 'commonsense realism' is compatible with as sophisticated an understanding of the language-world relation as we could reasonably require.

[D] THE ER PROJECT

There is a final but important point that must be made. It might be objected in light of what follows that there is nothing particularly new about what the ER theorist proposes in a lot of instances. Indeed, it will become evident that very often the ER theorist explicitly appeals to the works of realist philosophers pre-dating the project by years. In what sense then is the Traditional Realist anything more than an ER construction? And isn't talk of 'the ER project' somewhat contrived?

The important point to see here is that the Epistemological Realist sees herself as situated within, and confronted by, a very different problematic to the realist of the past. The philosophical arena has become so dominated by various forms of anti-realism that a commitment to 'commonsense realism' is considered hopelessly naive in many quarters. Part of the reason for this is a widespread misconception of what realism must involve - many turn to anti-realism because they see the picture I am

calling 'Traditional Realism' as the only alternative. The ER project is one of correcting this misconception.

In a sense then 'Traditional Realism' IS something of an ER construction – it is the device the ER theorist employs in order to engage directly with the anti-realist. (Although of course TR is no MERE construction – the TR picture is one we are all well acquainted with.) What sets the ER project apart is its recognition of the NEED to engage with the anti-realist if 'commonsense realism' is to again become a philosophically respectable position.

CHAPTER ONE: THE MYTH OF *THE* GIVEN

The question of whether or not ER can provide us with a satisfactory account of how perception makes empirical knowledge possible is crucial to the success of the ER project. It has long been accepted that if the idea of empirical knowledge is to be so much as intelligible then perception will need to be appealed to as a ground of its very possibility. The difficulty comes in providing the right account of the relationship between the deliverances of perceptual experience and our empirical knowledge claims. In the absence of such an account, however, the idea that we do have knowledge of a mind-independent world is seriously threatened.

In this chapter I will be centrally concerned with the objections against the TR account of how perception enables empirical knowledge raised by Wilfred Sellars in his paper 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind' (Sellars, 1971a). It is Sellars' claim that the TR account involves a commitment to 'the myth of the Given'. While I will follow Sellars in arguing that the TR conception of perceptual content as raw data will not do, I will take issue with his assumption that it must be linguistically structured. Aside from the fact that Sellars' conception of perceptual content leads him to anti-realism, it will be my claim that there are good independent reasons for thinking that Sellars must be wrong. I will then turn to consider an argument put forward by John McDowell in Mind and World (McDowell, 1994) on the basis of which he concludes with Sellars that perceptual content must be conceptual. McDowell's claim however is that such a conception of perceptual content is necessary if 'commonsense realism' is to be secured. This will lead us to something of a dilemma, the solution to which, I will suggest, is to adopt the kind of account proposed by Pendlebury (see e.g., Pendlebury, 1997, 1998a).

[A] PERCEPTION AND KNOWLEDGE

Before turning to evaluate the TR account of the relation between perception and empirical knowledge, it is necessary to say something about what is required of such an account. In particular, we need to address the question of WHY perception is held to be an important ingredient of empirical knowledge. In Mind and World McDowell identifies two crucial roles which perception must play if we are to make sense of the possibility of having knowledge of the world.

The first is that our perceptual access to the world must serve to infuse our thought with empirical content. If our thoughts are to be ABOUT the world, if our concepts are to APPLY to it, then empirical content must somehow 'get into' our conceptual system. In the absence of experiential intake from the world our 'thought' would degenerate, in McDowell's terms, into 'the play of empty forms' (1994, p6). So one crucial role which perception must play is to inject our concepts with empirical substance.

The second role for which perception seems the only candidate is that of allowing the world to generate some kind of constraint on our thinking about it. While the first role is one of enabling empirical THOUGHT, the second is the specifically epistemological role of enabling empirical KNOWLEDGE. The idea here is that the justification or grounding of our beliefs about the world must be a matter of the world itself having provided some kind of resistance to their formation. If the world itself exerts no constraint upon the formation of our beliefs about it in our attempt to arrive at empirical knowledge, such that this constraint can serve as the ultimate source of their warrant, then our exercises of conceptual capacities reduce to nothing more than 'moves in a self-contained game' (McDowell, 1994, p5), 'a frictionless spinning in a void' (McDowell, 1994, p11). And indeed, if our being justified in holding some belief about the world is not a matter of the world's in some sense having constrained

its formation, then on what ground can we help ourselves to the notion that the belief is even ABOUT the world, never mind a potential candidate for knowledge?[1]

It is evident that in endorsing this second criterion I am following McDowell in ruling out a coherentist conception of the justificatory structure. Coherentism is the view that our beliefs are justified in virtue of their internal coherence with one another, and not through having some ultimate grounding in perception. Although many philosophers have argued that coherentism is perfectly compatible with realism (Bonjour, 1985 and Lehrer, 1978 are two examples here), I think that McDowell is exactly right to see that coherentism is not a very promising position for the ER theorist to adopt. We need to be able to make sense of the idea that a belief's being justified contributes strongly to the likelihood of the belief's being TRUE, and more than that to its being a true belief ABOUT the world. The point is that it does not seem that coherence BY ITSELF can give us what we need here. (This is obviously not to say that coherence does not play a role in justification.)

The second role which perception must play then is that of grounding our empirical knowledge claims through allowing the world to provide the required resistance to their formation. As McDowell points out, these two roles are intimately related. For it is BY in some sense fixing the content of our concepts in perception that the world is able to constrain the grounds of their correct application.

[B] TRADITIONAL REALISM

We must now turn to consider the Traditional Realist account of the relation between perceptual experience and empirical knowledge. The Traditional Realist holds that in perceptual experience we have access to 'raw data' caused by the world, this access either constituting or giving rise to a foundational form of knowledge. These

[1] As will become evident later, I am not entirely in agreement with McDowell on what the nature of this 'resistance' must be. For this reason, I leave it unspecified here just what 'justification', 'warrant'

foundational beliefs are held to be self-justified in virtue of being absolutely certain: they are incorrigible, indubitable and infallible. Given the claim for the status of 'absolute certainty' of these beliefs, they are held to presuppose no further knowledge at all: the apprehension of sense data is not held to entail the application of concepts, or any theoretical, ordering or inferential operations.[2] Our higher level empirical beliefs are held to be justified in virtue of the logical relations of support (such as implication and probalification) holding between these foundational beliefs and themselves, such relations also serving to transmit empirical substance from the foundational beliefs upwards.

The Traditional Realist account then both recognizes, and attempts to accommodate, the two roles that perception must play in relation to empirical knowledge if the latter is to be shown to be possible. The question that we need to address is whether or not the attempt is successful. It seems to me that upon reflection we must concede that it is not.

[C] SELLARS AND THE MYTH OF THE GIVEN

In his 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind' Sellars argues that the TR account of the relationship between perception and empirical knowledge will not do on the ground that it entails a commitment to 'the myth of the Given'. The myth is to suppose that access to 'raw data' can provide us with infallible epistemic foundations - or indeed with any epistemic foundations at all. On Sellars' view, the TR conception of perceptual content as raw sense data prevents perception from playing either of the roles necessary for the possibility of empirical knowledge.

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and the like must amount to.

[2] It is evident that if the application of concepts and/or such theoretical, ordering and inferential operations ARE required for the apprehension of such data, then the beliefs constituting such apprehension cannot be absolutely certain. In applying concepts or carrying out such operations there is always the possibility that one might go WRONG.

In this section I will consider Sellars' arguments against the TR attempt to accommodate each of these roles in turn. In each case I will agree with Sellars that the TR account will not do, and for the more particular reasons he gives. I will however take issue with his more positive account in each instance.

(i) Infusing thought with content

On the TR account then, it is our apprehension of 'raw data' in perception that is held to explain how our thoughts acquire their empirical substance - how they can be said to be ABOUT the world. It is Sellars' contention that a piece of 'raw data' as it is characterized by the Sense Datum theorist is simply incapable of performing the task required. In order to see what is at issue here, it is necessary to say a little more about the TR 'Sense Datum Theory'.

On Sellars' characterization (which I will adopt), Sense Datum theories offer an act-object account of the episodes of sensory awareness that constitute the non-inferential knowings of the TR justificatory structure. The theory distinguishes between some act of awareness - a sensing - and some singular piece of raw experiential intake - a 'sense datum' - which is the object of the act. Foundational beliefs consist in the sensings of 'sense data'.[3] The Sense Datum theorist thus equates 'X senses red sense datum S' with 'X non-inferentially knows that S is red'.

There is something that seems to jar on this account however. It is not clear that X's sensing of a red sense datum (S) CAN be equated with X's knowing THAT S is red. According to the TR theorist, our foundational beliefs are absolutely certain - it is impossible for them to be false. Now there does seem to be a sense in which X's apprehension of a red sense datum is not something that X can be wrong about. The problem is that the same does not seem to hold for X's believing of the sense datum

THAT it is red.

Sellars provides an excellent analysis of what is going on here. On Sellars' view, the concept of a sense datum is the result of the conflation of two ideas:

1. The idea that there are certain inner episodes which can occur to human beings, infants and even animals, and which are necessary IN SOME SENSE for us to be able to recognize that some physical object is red; and

2. The idea that there are certain inner episodes that constitute the non-inferential knowings that, for example, certain physical objects are red; and that these episodes are necessary for our having any kind of empirical knowledge at all.

Sellars maintains that the first of these two ideas takes its impetus from the attempt to explain the facts of sense perception scientifically. In particular, it is the attempt to explain the fact that people can have the experience of 'seeing' a red triangle both when a red triangular object is present and when it is not. What explains this fact is that in both kinds of experience - veridical and non-veridical - people have a 'sensation' of a 'red triangle'. What is crucial to note with regard to this idea is that 'having the sensation of a red triangle' is not specified by the explanation to have any epistemic import - it is not even specified by the explanation to be something of which we are aware.[4]

Now it is Sellars' contention that this idea is typically distorted by the Sense Datum Theorist to fit the requirements of another, radically confused line of thought. This line of thought runs along the following lines: The seeing that some object is red and triangular is a veridical member of a group of experiences, some of which are non-veridical. Call this group of experiences 'ostensible seeings'. Now it is a feature of

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[3] I will for the sake of simplicity ignore those accounts on which it is held that foundational beliefs are inferred FROM, and do not consist IN, the sensing of sense data. As will become apparent, nothing turns on my doing so.

[4] It is worth pointing out that Sellars in fact endorses something very like this idea. And indeed, I will argue in Chapter Two that the way out of 'the problem of illusion' for the ER theorist is to follow Sellars in this regard.

ostensible seeings that there is (in principle) no way to discern the veridical from the non-veridical. However, to suppose that the non-inferential knowledge upon which our entire world picture rests consists of those ostensible seeings as just happen to be veridical is to make empirical knowledge too risky an affair, a simple matter of chance. Consequently, the foundation of empirical knowledge cannot consist of such items as 'seeing that some object is red and triangular'.

According to Sellars (and I think he is exactly right here), few would accept this conclusion based on the reasoning above. Rather we are inclined to say, correctly, that since the foundation of empirical knowledge is in fact the non-inferential knowledge of such ostensible seeings (and hearings, touchings etc.,) as are veridical, it does consist of members of a group containing non-veridical members. Before this move is made, however, the above line of thought becomes entangled with the first. As Sellars writes, 'The idea springs to mind that SENSATIONS OF RED TRIANGLES have exactly the virtues which OSTENSIBLE SEEINGS OF RED TRIANGLES LACK' (1971a, p135). The primary virtue here is clearly the fact that it makes no sense to speak of unveridical sensations.

The point which is overlooked by the Sense Datum Theorist in her combination of these two ideas, argues Sellars, is that the sense in which it is unintelligible to say of a sensation that it is non-veridical is precisely the sense in which it is unintelligible to say of a sensation that it is VERIDICAL. Sensations are simply not the kinds of things that can be right or wrong. The reason for this is that they are not ABOUT anything - they do not represent anything AS BEING THE CASE.[5]

In equating 'X senses red sense datum S' with 'X non-inferentially knows that S is red' the Sense Datum Theorist is trying to have the best of both worlds. The apprehension of a piece of raw data is only something we cannot be wrong about if such data is not

[5] It is for the same reason that it cannot be held that we INFER foundational beliefs from the sensing of sense data. I will discuss this point in more detail shortly.

taken to have representational content. It is only if in the apprehension of some sense datum we are not apprehending THAT SUCH-AND-SUCH is the case that we cannot be mistaken. If sense data are NOT representational however, the apprehension of such data cannot be equated with non-inferentially knowing THAT-SUCH-AND-SUCH is the case. Indeed, if the apprehension of such data amounts to nothing more than the having of brute sensations then the term 'data' here is highly misleading - if sense data are not representational then they are incapable of providing us with information about anything at all.

The TR theorist is led to characterize the 'content' of perceptual experiences as brute sensations in an attempt to meet the misguided requirement that our foundational beliefs be absolutely certain.[6] What she fails to appreciate in doing so is that the content of perceptual experience ceases to be representational. And this clearly compromises the ability of perceptual experience to perform the role of infusing our thought with empirical content.

The point to see is that we need perception to explain how our concepts can be about - can apply to - the world. If perceptual intake itself is not representational - if it is not ABOUT anything at all - then it is difficult to see how it could perform the role required. If the contents of our perceptual experiences are not ABOUT the world then how on earth can they secure that our THOUGHTS are? It seems to me that if the ER project is to go through then it will have to characterize perceptual content as being representational - as being of the form THAT SUCH-AND-AND-SUCH IS THE CASE.

In holding that perceptual content is representational - that it represents a state of affairs as obtaining - we are committed to what Pendlebury terms the 'propositional account' of perceptual experience (Pendlebury, 1989). Perceptual content is

[6] The requirement is a result of the TR attempt to answer the Cartesian skeptic. It is commonly accepted now that absolute certainty is not required for knowledge however.

propositional in that it can be true or false, stand in logical relations to other propositional items, have informational content and be in principle accepted or rejected (Pendlebury, 1989, p219; 1997, p7). Although a detailed defense of this account of the nature of perceptual experience is beyond the scope of this Research Report, it is worth pointing out that there are many considerations apart from the one with which we are concerned which mitigate in its favor.[7]

While I agree with Sellars that against TR the content of perceptual experience must be representational, it is necessary to say something more about Sellars' views in this regard. For Sellars' central contention is that only linguistically (or, more generally, conceptually) structured items can be of the form THAT SUCH-AND-SUCH IS THE CASE. In particular, it is Sellars' claim that only what is conceptual can represent anything at all.

It is important to note that the ER theorist cannot simply go along with Sellars here, since it is this commitment which leads Sellars to embrace a strong anti-realism with regard to the world upon which our knowledge claims bear. If all representation must be linguistic, then it follows that something like the view that Sellars terms Psychological Nominalism must hold. Psychological Nominalism is the view that:

> ...all awareness of sorts, resemblances, facts etc., in short all awareness of abstract entities - indeed, all awareness even of particulars - is a linguistic affair ...not even the awareness of such sorts, resemblances and facts as pertain to so-called immediate experience is presupposed by the process of acquiring a language.
> (1971a, p160)

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[7] One such consideration is Pendlebury's point that we cannot explain animal behavior in terms of perception unless we hold that the animals perceptual experience is propositional. Pendlebury writes,

> We cannot, e.g., explain why an impala rushed off in a certain direction by appealing to the hypothesis that it smelled a lion, unless we take it for granted that its sense of smell provided it with information (or possibly misinformation) about the location of the lion which makes sense of the impala's rushing off in THAT direction. Such perceptual information is clearly propositional.
> (1997, p19)

It is Sellars' contention that the significance of Psychological Nominalism to the doctrine of the Given becomes apparent when it is contrasted with a naive but widespread conception of what language learning consists in. On this view, learning a first language consists to a greater or lesser degree in learning the names of certain items to which one has some kind of pre-linguistic access. As Sellars writes,

> ...we conceive of (the first language learner) ...in a world of physical objects, coloured, producing sounds, existing in Space and Time. But though it is we who are familiar with this logical space, we run the danger, if we are not careful, of picturing the language learner as having ab initio some degree of awareness - 'pre-analytic', limited and fragmentary though it may be - of this same logical space ...we can easily take for granted that the process of teaching a child to use a language is that of teaching it to discriminate elements within a logical space of particulars, universals, facts, etc., of which it is already undiscriminatingly aware, and to associate these discriminated elements with these tools.
>
> (1971a, pp161-162,

As against Psychological Nominalism, we can refer to this view, following the later Wittgenstein, as the Augustinian conception of the learning and use of language.[8]

What we need to see according to Sellars, is that we have no such conception of the world prior to our learning to use a language. What Psychological Nominalism asserts is that there can be no 'awareness of logical space prior to, or independent of, the acquisition of a language' (1971a, p162). Now if Psychological Nominalism holds then it is evident that the positing of the Given as an epistemological category is radically confused. For proponents of the Given make the mistake of holding that some item which requires no prior knowledge, concept formation or theoretical ordering for its apprehension can nevertheless put us in contact with the logical space upon which our knowledge claims bear. And this cannot be possible, since our

awareness of this logical space presupposes and is dependent upon the acquired ability of concept formation and application that is language.

It is important to note that Psychological Nominalism does not in and of itself entail that what Sellars refers to as 'logical space' is not the real world. What it does entail is that even the representational content of perceptual experience cannot be unstructured by language.[9] It is easy to see how this kind of consideration might push in the direction of anti-realism, however. If awareness of the world upon which our knowledge claims bear is only possible through language, then it is only a short step to supposing that this world is itself largely a product of language. And indeed, this is a step that Sellars takes.

There are two important qualifications that must be made regarding Sellars' account. The first is that while Sellars is not a 'commonsense realist', he is not a straightforward anti-realist either, given the way the realism/anti-realism distinction is being drawn in this Research Report. While it is the case that that on Sellars' view the world on which our everyday knowledge claims bear is in some very strong sense mind-dependent, Sellars does believe that there is an independently existing real world of which we can have knowledge. This real world is the world as understood by physics, and the knowledge in question is purely scientific.[10]

The second qualification is that Sellars is not denying that anything is 'given' at all, in any possible sense of 'given'. That is to say, he is not proposing that prior to learning a first language we all have radically different modes of experiencing. In this sense Sellars is happy to allow that there is a 'given'. But the point to note is that this 'given' has no bearing on the world of which we have knowledge. This non-cognitive 'given'

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[8] See Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations (1995) in this regard.
[9] As we shall see, McDowell argues that while perceptual experience is conceptual, the concepts involved serve to 'open us up' to the mind-independent world. As I shall argue in Chapter Two however, it is not evident that McDowell's account is not itself in danger of collapsing into some or other form of idealism.
[10] This side of Sellars' account will be considered in some detail in Chapter Two.

is itself an experience, not an experiencing of SOME THING. Intentionality or representation requires the application of concepts and is at bottom linguistic.

What then should the ER theorist say in response to Sellars' more positive account? For it seems that as long as it is allowed that something like Psychological Nominalism holds, the threat of anti-realism will remain real. The point to see however is that Psychological Nominalism is not a very happy position - it seems to make more mysteries than it solves. Most importantly, it makes a mystery of how we could ever come to acquire a language at all.

The point to see here is that if the pre-linguistic child does not have ANY kind of access to the world upon which language bears - if her perceptual experience is nothing but a series of brute sensations which are not ABOUT anything - then how could she ever COME to have access to such a world? To answer that it is through learning to use a language is entirely unsatisfactory, for this is the very point at issue. How could a creature without any access to the world upon which language bears come to learn to speak about it?

The point to see here is that the old Augustinian conception of language learning, however unsophisticated and unsatisfactory it might be, is not without insight. It does seem to be the case that unless it is allowed that the pre-linguistic child has some kind of access to the world upon which language bears, we cannot even begin to explain the acquisition of language. To be sure, Sellars is correct to challenge the view as it stands: to maintain that the world of our experience upon the acquisition of a language is not very different from that prior to such acquisition is unacceptably naive. But accepting this point does not mean that we have to deny the child any kind of access to the world at all. On the contrary, the child must be held to have access

enough that the crucial word-world connections can be set up upon which further development can proceed.[11]

It seems to me that it is only if we preserve this Augustinian insight that we can begin to tell an intelligible story about language learning. Given that Sellars provides no argument against even the full-blown Augustinian conception, and given that he provides no argument for his proposed Psychological Nominalism, it seems to me that in light of the fact that Sellars' account cannot explain language learning, we are entitled to help ourselves to this insight.

Thus I would conclude that while Sellars is correct that on the TR characterization of perceptual content as 'raw data' it cannot be said to represent the world (or anything at all), I would disagree with Sellars that intentionality requires language. At least in the case of the pre-linguistic child, it must be conceded that the content of perceptual experience is representational without being conceptually structured. Of course, the question of whether or not the ER theorist SHOULD hold that in the case of the linguistically competent adult perceptual experience is conceptual is one that remains to be addressed. Indeed, this question is one around which much of the subsequent discussion in this chapter will be centered.

(ii) Justification

It is evident that on Sellars' view the TR account must fail with regard to the second consideration as well.[12] To recall, the second role which perception must play is to

[11] It is important to note that this does not commit us to some or other version of the Referential Theory of Meaning, however. We need not, and indeed should not, hold that to have established these word-world connections is to have acquired the concepts expressed by such words. We can agree with Sellars and the later Wittgenstein that the meaning of a word is given not only by its worldly referent but also (and more informatively) by the word's role or use in the language system to which it belongs. What the acquisition of such word-world connections does secure is the possibility of our coming to acquire those concepts. I will return to this consideration in Chapter Three.

[12] Both McDowell (1994) and Pendlebury (1997) have read Sellars as (somewhat indirectly) objecting to the TR account on this score.

constrain the formation of our empirical beliefs such that those beliefs can count as justified. On the TR account this constraint takes the form of logical relations of support holding between the 'raw data' to which we have access in sense experience and our higher level empirical beliefs. For the same reason that the TR theorist is mistaken in EQUATING 'X senses red sense datum S' and 'X non-inferentially knows THAT S is red', so she is mistaken in holding that the apprehension of red sense datum S could logically SUPPORT the belief THAT S is red.

The point to see is that on the TR conception of a piece of 'raw data' as a brute sensation, it is not the kind of thing capable of standing in logical relations. Relations like implication and probalification can only hold between propositional items - items of the form THAT SUCH-AND-SUCH is the case. A 'sense datum', being non-representational, is not the kind of thing capable of standing in such a relation.

I am in firm agreement with Sellars in this regard. If the justification of our empirical beliefs is a matter of their being implied by perceptual experiences, then the content of perceptual experience cannot be characterized as a brute sensation - it must at minimum be propositional.

It is important to note that this is only one of the grounds upon which Sellars finds the TR account of how perception forms the ultimate source of justification unsatisfactory. Another problem Sellars has with the account stems from his anti-realism. a piece of 'raw data', being entirely non-linguistically structured, can have no bearing at all on the world to which our knowledge claims are answerable - this world is in some very real sense a product of language. As I have argued however, there is no good reason to follow Sellars into anti-realism.[13]

Let us take stock of what has been said so far. In light of Sellars' critique of the doctrine of the Given it has emerged that the Traditional Realist's characterization of

perceptual intake as 'raw data' or brute sensations prevents her from being able to give a satisfactory account of how empirical knowledge is possible. For in the first place, 'raw data' is not representational, and so our apprehension of it cannot explain how thought can be ABOUT the world. And in the second place, if the justification of our empirical beliefs is a matter of their being supported by what we apprehend in sensory experience, then what we apprehend in sense experience cannot be 'raw data'. Again it seems that the content of perceptual experience must be representational if it is to perform the role required.

Is this the end of the matter then? Can we secure the aim of the ER project with regard to the possibility of empirical knowledge by simply adopting an account of perceptual content on which it is held to be representational? Of course, this will mean that we will have to give up the TR requirement that our foundational beliefs be absolutely certain, but that requirement was always flawed. Unfortunately, we cannot just leave the matter here. The reason for this is that there is another objection to the TR account that must be considered - that advanced by John McDowell in Mind and World. It is McDowell's contention that if perceptual content is to serve as the ultimate ground of the justification of our empirical beliefs, it cannot be merely propositional - it must be conceptual as well.

[D] JOHN MCDOWELL

In Mind and World John McDowell is concerned to advance an account of the relation between perception and empirical knowledge such that a 'commonsense realism' about the world and our relation to it can be secured. It is McDowell's central claim that if such a 'commonsense realism' is to emerge as so much as a viable option for us, then it must be accepted that the content of our perceptual experience is conceptually structured.

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[13] On the basis of his Psychological Nominalism at any rate.

In this section I will first outline McDowell's argument against the TR conception of perceptual content, which he sees as a development of Sellars' attack on the doctrine of the Given. I will then turn to consider McDowell's positive account in which he holds that, contra Sellars, the concept-laden nature of perceptual experience serves to put us in contact with the independent world, rather than threatening its existence.

(i) Justification-as-reason-giving

It is McDowell's contention that if our empirical beliefs are to be justified by perceptual experience then it is not enough that we characterize perceptual content as propositional. The reason for this, argues McDowell, is that the fact that our empirical beliefs are objectively supported by the deliverances of experience does not mean that they are thereby justified. We are justified in holding some belief on McDowell's view only if we are able to give a REASON for holding it. It follows from this that if perceptual content is what justifies our higher level empirical beliefs, then perceptual content must be the kind of thing which could be somebody's reason. And the crucial point to see, argues McDowell, is that only what has conceptual content could function as a reason.

In advancing this account of what justification must amount to McDowell follows Sellars himself. In 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind' Sellars writes,

> ...in characterizing an episode or state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says.
> (1971a, p169)

The real problem with the TR account according to McDowell is that it attempts to make out 'that the space of reasons, the space of justifications or warrants, extends more widely than the conceptual sphere' (1994, p7).

To see what McDowell is saying here, we need to look more closely at the social practice of giving and asking for reasons, at that tract of human life which Sellars calls 'the space of reasons'. Having a reason in the sense meant here implies a number of things: the awareness of the reason as a reason (knowing that and how A supports B); being able to articulate the reason upon request; being able to reflect upon the extent to which the reason supports the belief in question; being able to reject or modify the belief in light of new evidence which weakens the reason's relation of support, etc. Perhaps most importantly, we are held responsible for our reasons in the sense that there is a standard of rationality with which reason holders are expected to comply.

Given the above considerations it is McDowell's contention that reasons must be conceptual. For it seems impossible to imagine how something which was not subject to a high degree of conceptual sophistication could possibly function as a reason in the sense outlined above. And the problem of course is that the Traditional Realist has characterized the 'raw data' which we receive from the world as radically non-conceptual.

If McDowell is right about what justification must amount to, then it is evident that the ER project can only go through if it can be made intelligible that perceptual content is conceptually structured. It is with this task that McDowell is centrally concerned.

(ii) McDowell's 'Natural Realism'

McDowell devotes the main body of Mind and World to the defense of the position he terms 'Natural Realism'. Natural Realism aims to show that while our perceptual experience is conceptually structured, it is nevertheless capable of affording us access to the mind-independent world. I will turn to the question of whether or not Natural Realism is successful in this regard in Chapter Two. For now I am simply concerned

with whether Natural Realism can make it intelligible that the content of perceptual experience is conceptual.

The idea that the deliverances of perception are conceptually structured is one that is likely to meet with a lot of resistance. McDowell argues that part of the reason for this is that the faculties of sensibility and the understanding have traditionally been characterized as being in opposition to one another. Sensibility is receptive and passive, while the understanding is the faculty of spontaneity - active and free in the sense that what we think, unlike what we experience, is in some sense 'up to us'.[14] It is easy to conclude from this that in sense experience the understanding plays no role. Rather, we are inclined to think that in perceptual experience we simply receive raw data from the world. At the level of judgement the understanding is held to act upon this data in some kind of ordering activity through the application of concepts.

McDowell urges that we need to resist this conclusion. For if we accept it, then we are prevented from characterizing perceptual experience as conceptual, and so from holding that perceptual experience can justify our empirical beliefs.

The alternative conception which McDowell proposes - Natural Realism - is that while empirical knowledge results from the co-operation of sensibility and the understanding, sensibility does not make 'an even notionally separable contribution to the co-operation' (1994, p9). This means that we must characterize perceptual experience very differently. In particular, there can be no non-conceptual content to experiences - insofar as sensibility passively receives experiential intake from the world, this experiential intake already has conceptual content. McDowell proposes that we understand perceptual experiences as 'states or occurrences in which capacities that belong to spontaneity are in play in actualization's of receptivity'

[14] That what we think is 'up to us' does not of course mean that there are no normative constraints on what we SHOULD think. The point is rather that these normative constraints are themselves evidence of the freedom of the understanding. I will return to this point in more detail in Section [F] of this chapter.

(1994, p66). In perceptual experience, the sensible and the conceptual cannot be prized apart.

It is McDowell's claim that Natural Realism provides us with exactly what we need. In particular, Natural Realism, unlike Traditional Realism, enables the world to impose the right kind of constraint on our thinking about it. That sensibility is passive means that the constraint is there in full force. That experience is nevertheless conceptual means that perceptual experiences are exactly the right kinds of things to act as justifiers - they can be reasons.

Is embracing McDowell's Natural Realism the way forward for ER then? Although it will become clear that I am not unsympathetic to the intuitions that lead McDowell to characterize perceptual experience as conceptual, I do not think that Natural Realism is the most promising route for the ER advocate to take. The reason for this is that Natural Realism has a highly troubling implication. It is to an examination of this that we must now turn.

[E] THE TROUBLE WITH NATURAL REALISM

The worrying implication of McDowell's account is that it entails that, in McDowell's own words, there are 'different stories to tell about perceptual goings on in creatures with spontaneity and creatures without it' (1994, p63). In particular, McDowell acknowledges that there can be absolutely no common element between human perceptual experience and that of other animals if Natural Realism holds. The reason for this is that human perceptual experience is so to speak conceptual 'through and through', and animals are entirely non-conceptual beings. Indeed, we are not to speak of animals as having perceptual experiences at all on McDowell's view, given his characterization of the latter. This is not to say of course that McDowell denies that animals are perceptually sensitive to features of their environments. The point is rather that there is absolutely no area of commonality between animal and human

perceptual sensitivity. It is uninformative on McDowell's view to say that both animals and humans are perceptually sensitive, since perceptual sensitivity takes radically different forms in either case.

As Hilary Putnam argues in his 1994 Dewey lectures however, it is impossible to shake the feeling that the difference between animal and human perception is one of degree rather than form. Putnam's point is made more acute by the consideration that infants must be classed with animals with regard to perceptual sensitivity to their environments. It just seems plainly implausible to suppose that upon the acquisition of a language the very form of human perceptual experience changes - that there is absolutely NO commonality between the perceptual experiences of the linguistically competent adult and the pre-linguistic child. Indeed, it seems that explaining the acquisition of a first language is likely to be as problematic for McDowell as it was seen to be for Sellars - we seem to make a mystery of how we could come to acquire conceptual capacities at all if we hold that the perceptual goings on in pre-linguistic children are completely different to those in linguistically competent adults. And indeed, it is considerably more plausible, given evolutionary theory, to suppose that perceptual sensitivity forms a continuum between lower grade sentient life forms and higher ones, than to suppose that it manifests itself in a variety of different forms.

Again, it is important to stress the point made in Section [C](i) above. It is very likely that there are certain aspects of human perceptual experience which ARE dependent upon the acquisition of sophisticated cognitive skills like self-consciousness and the capacity for critical reflection and rational appraisal. The point is simply that these aspects are surely not exhaustive of human perception as McDowell claims that they are. Indeed, when we reflect upon our own perception of the world in sense experience this point becomes even more compelling. Much of the time we are not even fully consciously aware of our perceptual experiences - think of here of the perceptual experiences one has when driving a car or walking down the road and being pre-occupied with something else entirely.

Although I am aware that the considerations raised above do not tell conclusively against McDowell's account, it seems to me that they pose enough of a potential obstacle to the ER project to warrant taking seriously. Unless we can find a way to avoid being committed to the idea that human perceptual experience is conceptually saturated, then it seems that the ER project is far from secure. Given that it is McDowell's conception of justification-as-reason-giving that leads to this problematic idea, it is necessary to examine this conception of justification in more detail.

[F] MUST JUSTIFICATION INVOLVE REASONS?

Why does McDowell think that the constraint imposed by perception upon the formation of our empirical beliefs must be in the form of reasons? In other words, why does McDowell rule out the possibility of the constraint's taking the form of an objective relation of support? After all, the conception of justification-as-reason-giving is not the only one on the market, and adopting it has certainly not done much to enhance the plausibility of McDowell's attempt to secure a 'commonsense realism'.

If I read McDowell correctly, he thinks that holding that we are rationally responsive to the deliverances of sense experience is the only way to do justice to the idea that the conceptual realm is a realm of freedom. It is McDowell's contention that the formation of a world view is not just a brute causal process but a case of 'making up one's mind as to how things are' (1988, p365). What constrains how we make up our minds must be some standard of rationality to which we are sensitive, and in virtue of which our empirical thought is held responsible to its subject matter on McDowell's view, otherwise the very notion of 'making up our minds' is lost.

It is for this reason that McDowell holds that not even a conception of perceptual content as (merely) propositional will do. For the only way in which such content could constrain the formation of our empirical beliefs is causally, and not rationally.

And while this might imply that we are not to blame with regard to the nature of our empirical beliefs, it cannot mean that we have discharged our rational responsibility to do justice to what we think about. McDowell writes, 'The idea of the (non-conceptual) Given offers us exculpations where we wanted justifications' (1994, p8).

It should be noted from the outset that I do not think that McDowell's intuitions here can simply be dismissed.[15] For in the first place, the Sellarsian idea of the 'space of reasons' with its accompanying ideas of rational responsiveness and cognitive responsibility clearly does have application to human life and social practice. And in the second place, there is a clear sense in which we do seem to be rationally responsive to the deliverances of sense experience. Not only do we often cite perceptual experiences as REASONS, but also we are able to REJECT certain experiences as unveridical.

This said however, it does not seem to me that the conception of justification-as-reason-giving can be the whole story either. The reason for this is that not all of our epistemic life takes place within the 'space of reasons'. We very often do attribute both justified beliefs and knowledge to people who are not in a position to provide reasons for thinking as they do. Indeed, we typically attribute knowledge to beings who are prevented from even entering 'the space of reasons' - animals and small children are the obvious examples here. It seems to me in light of the above that McDowell needs to make room for what Max de Gaynesford calls a more 'modest epistemology' in addition to that accompanying the 'space of reasons'.[16] For surely philosophy should take its cue in the analysis of concepts from how we actually use them.

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[15] Although as Michael Pendlebury pointed out to me, McDowell often sounds as though he is an incompatibilist about freedom, and I would not want to follow him in this.

[16] See de Gaynesford's Critical Notice on Mind and World in the Australasian Journal of Philosophy (1996) vol. 74.

Embracing such a 'modest epistemology' will involve the acceptance of some externalist conception of justification - for a certain range of circumstances at any rate. (As I have said, the conception of justification-as-reason-giving is not without its place.) On such a conception, whether or not some belief is justified WILL be a matter of how objectively likely it is to be true.

Indeed, it seems to me that there is one point at which the Epistemological Realist MUST adopt an externalist or reliabilist conception of justification - at the level of the very having of perceptual experience itself. The point to see here is that we do not CHOOSE the content of our perceptual experiences. As McDowell himself acknowledges,

> In experience one finds oneself saddled with content. One's conceptual capacities have already been brought into play, in the contents being available to one, before on has any choice in the matter.
> (1994, p10)

That experience represents the world as being one way and not another - indeed, that experience represents the world at all - is not something over which we have any rational control. On what ground then ARE we justified in forming a world view on the basis of perceptual experience? It is evident that the only possible answer here is an externalist one: perceptual experience can serve as the ultimate ground of the justification of our empirical beliefs because it is a generally reliable source of information about the world. As we shall see in Chapter Two, it is precisely because McDowell does not acknowledge any externalist conception of justification that he is prevented from giving an answer to this question at all.

Given that we have an externalist conception of justification at our disposal then, it seems that we can avoid a commitment to the problematic idea that perceptual content is conceptually structured. For now we need not hold that perceptual experience must be able to serve as a reason for our higher level empirical beliefs in order to justify them. That the propositional content of our perceptual experiences

stands in the right kind of objective relation of support to our higher level beliefs may well be enough.

Indeed, in light of the points made earlier I would argue that the objective relations of support holding between our higher level beliefs themselves are enough to render those beliefs justified in most circumstances (provided of course that these relations of support reach right down to the level of perceptual experience itself). For as we have seen, being justified in holding some belief is very often not dependent on being able to give a reason for it. Importantly, this does not mean that the Sellarsian idea of the 'space of reasons' must be dismissed - the objective relations of support holding between our higher level empirical beliefs will admit of inference from one belief to the next.

This seems to leave us confronting something of a dilemma however. For while there is no problem concerning the admittance of our higher level beliefs into the 'space of reasons' - such items ARE conceptually structured in the case of human beings - we have also acknowledged that perceptual experiences can enter into this logical space. How can it be the case both that perceptual experiences are non-conceptual, and that we can be rationally responsive to them?

The crucial point to see here is that McDowell suffers from oversight. Simply because it is granted that we are on occasion rationally responsive to the deliverances of sense experience, it does not follow that this rational responsiveness must attach directly to the deliverances of perceptual experience themselves. It could well be the case that we are rationally responsive to perceptual intake only once it has been raised to the level of the understanding. To see what is being suggested here, let us turn to consider the account put forward by Michael Pendlebury.

[G] THE WAY FORWARD FOR ER

On Pendlebury's view perceptual content is always merely propositional and should normally be understood as a rudimentary form of belief - the kind of belief which could be attributed to an animal as well as a human being. In the case of human beings however such beliefs can be taken up into the ambit of the understanding. Crucially, this does not entail that such beliefs are radically altered or even re-structured. All that has happened to such a belief is that 'certain of its logical powers have become available to consciousness' (1997, p22). A rudimentary perceptual belief's being raised to the level of the understanding is nothing more than 'a matter of (its) being embedded in and appropriately engaged by the high level patterns of consciousness and reasoning which are characteristic of judgement' (1998a, p5). Of course, once a perceptual belief becomes embedded in the understanding it ceases to have merely propositional content, and so it acquires the richness and determinacy that full-blown conceptual content brings. What is crucial on Pendlebury's view is that the belief does not thereby acquire NEW or DIFFERENT content however. Pendlebury writes rather of the content of the belief's being 'refined' as a result of being accessed by the understanding.

Now it seems to me that an account along the lines of Pendlebury's is able to solve the dilemma with which we were confronted above. On this account, it becomes intelligible how it can be the case both that perceptual content is non-conceptual AND that it is able to enter into the space of reasons. The crucial point to note is that the level at which we are rationally responsive to the deliverances of sense experiences is not that of the mere having of the experiences themselves. Given that perceptual experiences do not loose anything by way of content in being accessed by the understanding however, what we are rationally responsive to IS in some very real sense the way that perception represents the world as being.

Indeed, it is evident that Pendlebury's account is very well suited to meeting the first criterion of infusing our thought with empirical content as well. The conceptual content of our empirical beliefs is about the world by virtue of being a refinement of the content of our perceptual experiences themselves.

I would thus conclude that ER can give the right kind of account of the relation between perception and empirical knowledge such that the possibility of the latter is secured. In doing so however, the ER theorist needs to depart from the Traditional Realist in one important respect: the characterization of perceptual content. For it is only once perceptual content is viewed as propositional that perception is able to perform either of the roles required of it. Getting the right account of perceptual content is only half the story however. As we shall see in the next chapter, the TR account of perception itself needs to be radically amended if the ER project is to go through.

CHAPTER TWO: OPENNESS TO REALITY

In the last chapter I was concerned with the problems facing the TR account of the CONTENT of perceptual experience. In this chapter I will call attention to the equally problematic TR account of perceptual EXPERIENCE itself. For while the TR conception of perceptual content threatens our 'commonsense realist' intuition that we can (and do) have knowledge of the world, the TR conception of perceptual experience puts at risk the very notion of our having any kind of contact with the world at all. The problem with Traditional Realism in this regard is that it involves a commitment to what I will term the 'Indirect Theory of Perception' - we pe[illegible]he mind-independent world only in the sense that we perceive mental items suitably caused by it. As both McDowell and Putnam have recognized, the success of the ER project is crucially dependent on our being able to do away with the TR account of perceptual experience in favor of a 'Direct Theory of Perception'. We need to safeguard our 'commonsense realist' intuition that in perception we are in immediate contact with the world itself. After outlining the TR account of perception and showing how it leads to anti-realism, I will be concerned in this chapter with developing and defending the 'Direct Theory' of perceptual experience. In particular, I will address the following three questions:

1) Is the Direct Theory intelligible?
2) Is the Direct Theory possible?
3) Is the Direct Theory tenable?

It will be my argument that the answer to each of these questions is yes.

[A] TRADITIONAL REALISM

In Chapter One we were concerned with the TR Sense Datum theory, on which it is held that in perception we have access to raw data from the world. The feature of the

Sense Datum theory that I was concerned to draw attention to there was its characterization of this perceptual intake as 'RAW DATA'. My concern here is with another feature of the Sense Datum theory - its characterization of sense data as MENTAL items. In holding that what we have immediate perceptual access to in sense experience is something MENTAL, the Sense Datum theory advances what I will term the 'Indirect Theory of Perception'.

On the Indirect Theory of Perception, which has been advanced in various forms since Locke's Representative Realism, we are held to perceive the world 'indirectly' through perceiving mental items (sense data, impressions, ideas etc.,) which are suitably caused by the world and are held to thereby represent it. While we have immediate sensory access only to these mental items, the fact that they represent the world is held sufficient for it to be the case that we can be said to perceive the world itself.

As both McDowell and Putnam note, the Indirect Theory of Perception has done much to fuel the anti-realist turn so dominant this century. The picture that emerges from the TR view is one in which we are 'trapped' within a purely mental realm, forever experientially cut off from mind-independent reality. It is easy to see how this picture might lead one to question the epistemic relevance, or indeed the very existence, of the mind-independent world. If all that we have immediate experiential access to are mental items, and so it is to these mental items that our knowledge claims are responsible, then why bother to bring in the independent world? If the independent world is completely beyond our direct sensory access, then on what grounds are we justified in thinking of it as anything other than an entirely noumenal realm, or indeed as existing at all?

A crucial part of the ER project then is that of resisting this theory of what perception must amount to. McDowell speaks of perceptual experience as being 'openness to the layout of reality' (1994, p26), and urges us to do away with 'the outer boundary' that

is held to circumscribe the mind and so keep it at a remove from the external world (1994, p34). In a similar vein Putnam argues that winning through to ER is seeing 'the needlessness and unintelligibility of a picture that imposes an interface between ourselves and the world' (1994, p487). Against TR, the ER theorist is concerned to advance what I will refer to as the Direct Theory of Perception: what we are in immediate experiential contact with in sense perception is not some or other mental item but an aspect of the independent world itself.

[B] IS THE DIRECT THEORY INTELLIGIBLE?

It should be noted from the outset that ER theorists very often do make the possibility that we have direct access to the world in sense experience seem a mysterious one. At least a large part of the reason for this is attributable to the Wittgensteinian spirit in which many of these philosophers write: the task of philosophy is seen as one of making problems disappear through recalling our attention to what is obvious, rather than that of advancing detailed constructive accounts. Putnam and McDowell are both influenced by this kind of thinking (although to varying degrees), and Austin's Sense and Sensibilia (which takes a strongly ER view with regard to perception) is a paradigm example of this kind of approach. While I do share certain sympathies with this view of what philosophy should aim to do, I also think that there is constructive work that needs to be done, especially when refraining from engaging in the constructive work leaves open the possibility that what is being claimed in a certain area may seem unintelligible.

How then is direct access to the world in sense experience possible? The crucial point to see here is that in rejecting the Indirect Theory of Perception, we do not need to reject the claim that causation is a necessary ingredient of perception. Indeed, it seems to me that any account of perception that does not appeal to causal chains extending from the world to the mind will not be able to say very much about HOW we are able to perceive the world. (It is arguably through referring to TR accounts of

perception as 'Causal Theories', given his desire to distance his position from such accounts, that Putnam is led to say practically nothing about the mechanisms through which the direct perception he endorses is supposed to operate.) So in explaining how we could be in direct experiential contact with the external world the ER theorist will need to appeal to causation.

Part of the answer to the question about how we are able to perceive the world directly in sense experience then will be framed in terms of the causal chains running from objects in the world to mental states (sensory experiences) in the perceiving subject, and the physical laws and biological structures enabling this causation. Although a detailed account in this regard is beyond the scope of this Report, I take it that most of us are familiar with at least some of the details here, and that we in any rate take it for granted that science will have no in principle difficulty providing the explanation we require.[1]

Once ER appeals to causation in this way, it seems to me that perception becomes as unmysterious on the ER view as it does on any other. There are two points which might seem to mitigate against the availability of a causal explanation to ER however, and which must be addressed before we move on.

The first is that in appealing to causation as a crucial part of the answer to the question of how perception of the external world is possible, ER might be taken to be endorsing an externalist account of perceptual content. Although this is obviously not an objection in and of itself, externalism about content is clearly not something to which we can simply help ourselves - independent argument is required. The point to see however is that in appealing to world-mind causal chains in explaining the mechanics of perception, ER is not thereby committed to an externalist account of the content of sense experiences. For the Epistemological Realist need not hold that the

content of such experiences is individuation-dependent on its worldly causes. All that she is committed to is the (uncontentious) claim that our sensory experiences of the world are the result of the world's exerting a causal influence on us - and it seems to me that even the most committed internalists about content would not want to deny this. Of course, none of this is to suggest that the ER theorist may not have good reasons for holding an externalist position with regard to the content of sensory experience, or that externalism is a theory to be avoided at all costs (it does seem the right account for a substantial range of content). The point is rather that ER can afford to remain neutral on the internalism-externalism issue, and will be regarded as such in this Research Report.

The second is that in appealing to causation in explaining the possibility of the account of perception she advances, it might seem that the Epistemological Realist is committed to some form of the Indirect Theory of Perception after all. It has been suggested that ER explain perception in terms of the world's causing the occurrence of sense experiences in the perceiving subject, and now it might seem that these subjective sensory affections of the mind are playing more or less the role of the Traditional Realist's sense-data in terms of forming an 'interface' between mind and world. While the ER account of perceptual content fares better than that of TR in light of the epistemological concerns discussed in Chapter One, the worry is that from the stand-point of perceptual experience itself the two accounts are in the same boat. Just as on the TR account we are held to perceive the external world 'indirectly' through perceiving the internal mental items it causes, so it might seem that on the ER account we are held to perceive the external world in just such an 'indirect' fashion through perceiving the (mental) sensory experiences it causes.

Is ER then faced with the choice of abandoning the attempt to make perception intelligible in terms of world-mind causation and leaving its occurrence wholly

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[5] in the case of human beings at any rate. As Michael Pendlebury argues in 'Content and Causation in Perception' (Pendlebury, 1994), science will not be able to provide us with an answer general enough

mysterious on the one hand, and abandoning the Direct Theory of Perception on the other? It seems to me that unless this question is answered in the negative the tenability of the ER project is seriously threatened. For an account which makes perception wholly mysterious is a highly unsatisfactory one, and an account which advances an Indirect Theory of Perception is the sort of account which opens the very door to anti-realism that ER is centrally concerned to close.

Fortunately however there is a way out of the apparent dilemma confronting ER. The thought that we need to get a grip on in order to appreciate this is the following: sense-experiences do not constitute an interface, but a window, between mind and world. A sense-experience is not something that passes in lieu of some aspect of the external world, but our mode of access to it. Sensory-experience ENABLES the perception of objects in the world, it does not TAKE THE PLACE OF such perception. In short, sensory-experiences are to be conceived of as VEHICLES, and not OBJECTS of perception - they are not WHAT we perceive but the MEANS by which we do.

As Putnam points out, we need to be on our guard here. It will not do if all that is being proposed is a new way of TALKING about perceptual goings on. That is to say, the ER strategy suggested above will obviously not work if it amounts to nothing more than a different description of the very same Indirect Theory of Perception. Putnam thus warns against 'the verbal modification' which 'consists in allowing that we can SAY we 'observe' external things', but which holds that 'this must be UNDERSTOOD as meaning that those things cause us to have certain 'qualia' and that they do so in the appropriate way' (1994, p464). In order for ER to escape the charge of at bottom advancing an Indirect Theory of Perception, ER needs to do more than just adopt new terminology such that 'the perception of some external object' becomes nothing more than short-hand for 'the perception of some internal mental

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to cover all possible perceptual modalities.

item (a sense-datum; a sensory experience) which is caused by some object in the world and so represents it'.

If the ER account of perception is to go through then, the notion that sense-experience serves as a window and not an interface between the mind and the world must be taken seriously. To put it in another way, if the ER account of perception is to do the work required then the sense in which we understand sense-experiences as being vehicles (as opposed to objects) of perception must be (close to) that in which the sensory organs are held to be vehicles (as opposed to objects) of perception. And indeed, while Putnam is correct to point out that we need to be on our guard against those who claim to be friends of the ER project but whose Direct Realism amounts to no more than Indirect Realism 'with a bit of linguistic cover-up' (1994, p454), the majority of philosophers currently working on ER are centrally concerned to show that they are proposing a new THEORY of perception, and not just a new way of TALKING about the old one. Pendlebury, for example, writes that:

> ...in the standard case we perceive external objects directly. Of course we perceive them BY MEANS OF sense experiences, which are the VEHICLES of representation and thus of perception. But to say this is to say only that sense experiences are what do the representING. In the standard case they are not also representED. In other words, they are not themselves objects of consciousness.
>
> (1989, p218)

It is evident from what he says here that Pendlebury is advancing just the sort of theory of perception that ER requires. That the claim that sense experiences are held to be vehicles and not objects of perception is intended to be taken literally is evident from the point which Pendlebury makes at the end: sense experiences are not (standardly) objects of consciousness. If in our perception of external objects (*states* of affairs) in the world we are not even conscious of the sense experiences through which we so perceive them, the idea that WHAT we perceive are our sense experiences can clearly get no purchase.

The point to see here is that what distinguishes the Direct from the Indirect Theory is not that the former does away with causal distance, but that it does away with INTENTIONAL distance. The sense in which perception is held to be DIRECT on the ER view is the sense in which our use of language is. Just as we do not need to talk about language in order to talk about the world, so we do not need to perceive sense experiences in order to perceive the world through them.

The question then which must be answered is whether or not the Epistemological Realist is able to provide convincing grounds for thinking that her account of perception, once it has been spelled out in this way, is the right one. It is my contention that she can.

Perhaps the most persuasive evidence that the Epistemological Realist is on the right track derives from our reflection on our own experience of perception, as Pendlebury points out. Consider your perception of some external state of affairs - that there is a spotted dog directly in front of you, for example. Two things should be apparent. The first is that what you are aware of is that a spotted dog is directly in front of you, not that you are having a visual experience which represents a spotted dog's being in front of you. The second is that when you attempt to become aware of the sensory experience itself, no small amount of effort is required. And even when you do manage to become conscious of it, you find yourself continuously slipping back into perceiving the spotted dog itself.[2] All of this seems to mitigate very strongly in favor of the ER account of perception according to which sense experiences (standardly) serve as mere vehicles, and not objects, of perception.

Pendlebury draws attention to a number of related considerations supporting a Direct Theory of Perception here as well, one of which is worth mentioning briefly. This is

[2] These points are taken from Pendlebury's 'Sense Experiences and their Contents: a Defense of the Propositional Account' (1989).

that given the difficulty of bringing sense experiences to consciousness, it is highly unlikely that this is a skill animals and small children possess at all. As I argued in Chapter One however, there are very good reasons for not excluding these subjects from the class of perceivers, which it seems that anyone who holds that sense experiences are the objects of perception must.

I would thus conclude that the ER account of perception on which we are held to be directly open to the layout of reality need be no more mysterious than any other theory of perception. The ER theorist is as free to appeal to world-mind causal chains in explaining the mechanism which enables perception as the TR theorist. Importantly, appealing to causation in this way does not make the Epistemological Realist a closet Indirect Realist: as we have seen, ER is proposing a departure in how we understand perception, and not simply a departure in how we talk about it. And as I have attempted to show, the Direct Theory of Perception has the advantage over the Indirect Theory when it comes to making sense of our actual experience of perception.

[C] IS THE DIRECT THEORY POSSIBLE?

Even if it is acknowledged that the Direct Theory of Perception is intelligible, and indeed desirable, it might still be argued that it cannot be right. The reason for this is that many feel the pull of the so-called 'argument from illusion' - an argument which aims to show that the objects of perceptual experience MUST be mental. Let us turn then to consider this argument in some detail.

As Austin points out in Sense and Sensibilia, the argument from illusion is a two-part argument designed to convince us that,

> ...we never see or otherwise perceive (or 'sense'), or anyhow we never DIRECTLY perceive or sense, material objects (or material things), but only

sense-data (or our own ideas, impressions, sensa, sense-perceptions, percepts, etc.).

(1962, p2)

The first part of the argument attempts to establish that in certain atypical cases (illusions, hallucinations, dreams etc.,) what we are perceiving must be something mental (sense data), and the second part of the argument attempts to establish that in light of the qualitative similarity between such sensory experiences and normal ones, it is most rational to suppose that what we perceive in normal sensory experience must be likewise mental.

Let us turn to the version of the argument that Putnam considers in his 1994 Dewey Lectures, which runs as follows: Suppose that X has a dream that is so vivid that it is exactly like being in some place e.g., standing in front of the Taj Mahal, and suppose further that X has never seen the Taj Mahal. X is certainly having an experience of SOMETHING, and it is certainly not an experience of the Taj Mahal, or indeed of any physical object. On the basis of this we must conclude that X is having an experience of something MENTAL. Suppose next that a little while later X pays a visit to the Taj Mahal, and has a perceptual experience EXACTLY LIKE the one she had while she was dreaming. Given that we agreed that what X perceived in the first instance was something mental, surely we should say the same in this case too? It seems implausible to imagine that things as radically different as a physical building and a mental sense datum could seem exactly alike. Consequently we must hold that in the second case too what X perceived was something mental. The important difference between the two cases is that the sensory experience in the second case was caused by the Taj Mahal, while in the first case it was not. 'On the second occasion she was indirectly perceiving the Taj Mahal and on the first occasion she was not even indirectly perceiving it; but what she immediately perceived on both occasions were her sense data' (Putnam, 1994, p472).

What is the Epistemological Realist to say about the argument from illusion? The challenge that it poses cannot go unanswered, since in the absence of any ER rejoinder it will seem that we need to posit sense data as the objects of immediate or direct perception. The first point to note is one that Austin makes - it is simply taken for granted by the argument that in the case of a dream or a hallucination we must be perceiving SOMETHING. And surely it is far more natural to say in such cases that we are perceiving NOTHING AT ALL? (Think here of how natural it would be to say to someone who was in the throws of a hallucination and claimed to see a pink elephant: 'But there is nothing there!') Of course it might SEEM to us at the time that we are perceiving something, but there is a valid distinction to be drawn between its seeming to me that I am perceiving something and my actually perceiving something.

One might object at this point that even if the TR theorist cannot HELP HERSELF to the idea that we perceive something mental in the case of dreams and hallucinations, she can nevertheless introduce the idea that we perceive sense data both in these atypical cases and in those of ordinary (veridical) perception, on the basis that it is the best explanation of the qualitative similarity between the two. It is important to remember the point that Sellars raises in this regard however - what does the explanatory work here need not be some item of which we are conscious. In light of this it is evident that the ER theorist has an explanation at hand too - something in the causal chain which facilitates perception will be common to both cases.[3]

Indeed, it seems to me that the proposed ER explanation has the advantage over that of TR. As Austin points out, the normal and atypical cases are generally far more qualitatively distinct than the TR theorist makes out. It seems to me that our explanation should take cognizance of this fact just as much as it does of the fact that on occasion the two cases can be qualitatively very similar. The ER explanation has no problem accounting for this: two very different things are going on in the two cases. Indeed, ER is able to account for the fact that dreams can seem MORE or

LESS like cases of actual perception as well: the causal chains will be MORE or LESS similar. On the other hand, it does not seem that the Traditional Realist is able to do much by way of explaining either why the atypical cases are most often NOT qualitatively indistinguishable from the 'normal' ones, or why they should differ in degrees in this regard.

[D] IS THE DIRECT THEORY TENABLE?

Thus, [illegible]rect Theory of Perception is both intelligible and possible. Th[illegible] however, for at first glance it might seem that the Direct Theory is ne[illegible]e. The point to see here is that in advancing the Direct Theory o[illegible]s of the mind-world relation as being a far closer one than realism has traditi[illegible]lly held it to be. And the worry might arise in this regard that it makes the relation TOO close.

(i) McDowell and the charge of Idealism

The first point which must be noted is that ER needs to be very careful about how it unpacks its central thesis of 'openness to the lay-out of reality' such that the relation between mind and world does not become so close that the distinction between the two is lost entirely. That this is a real danger for ER can be best appreciated by examining McDowell's Natural Realism. As Michael Friedman argues in 'Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition: Comments on John McDowell's MIND AND WORLD' (Friedman, 1996), it is not clear that Natural Realism is not in danger of collapsing into the very idealism cum coherentism that McDowell is centrally concerned to avoid.

According to McDowell's Natural Realism, it is not only the content of sensory experience that is conceptual - the world to which we have access through such

This is obviously not to say that the causal chains will be identical.

experience must be as well. As we saw in Chapter One, McDowell's conception of what justification must amount to entails that justificatory relations can only hold between conceptually structured items. On McDowell's view, justification can never be a matter of brute causal constraint on belief formation – the constraint must also be rational. It will clearly not do on McDowell's account then for our very having of conceptual perceptual states to be a matter of the world's having exerted some brute causal force upon us, if we are to be justified in forming a world view on the basis of perceptual experience. The world must be held to exert a rational constraint in this regard, on pain of invoking what de Gaynesford calls the 'myth of the CONCEPTUALISED given' - 'all content is always already conceptual; but it is instantiated by impacts from outside the sphere of concepts' (1996, p504). As McDowell writes,

> This talk of impingements on our senses is not an invitation to suppose that the whole dynamic system, the medium within which we think, is held in place by extra-conceptual links to something outside it. That is just to stress again that we must not picture an outer boundary around the sphere of the conceptual, with reality outside the boundary impinging inward on the system. Any impingements across such an outer boundary could only be causal and not rational...
>
> (1994, p34)

On McDowell's view then, the world to which we have experiential access is itself comprised of thinkable contents. Just as any of our intentional states is conceptual, and as such is capable of entering into the rational relations constitutive of the space of reasons, so too the world is not external to this logical space. Reality itself falls within the space of reasons - the conceptual sphere is completely unbounded.

It is worth pointing out that McDowell's radical conceptualism is not entailed by his Direct Theory of Perception, as he sometimes seems to suggest. We must guard against confusing the MANNER or MODE in which something is represented, with WHAT is thereby represented. It seems to me that there is no reason in principle why

one could not hold a view in terms of which the content of sensory experience is held to be conceptual, a Direct Theory of Perception is advanced, and yet the world itself is characterized as non-conceptual. Of course, such a view might be seen as problematic for a number of independent reasons, some of which were outlined in Chapter One - the point here is simply that it is not an inherently incoherent one.

McDowell's claim that the world is conceptual is one that causes a significant amount of discomfort, given his commitment to realism. It seems extremely implausible to suggest that something which is concept-laden - which the world must be if the Myth of the Given as McDowell characterizes it is to be avoided - could exist as such independently of the human (or any) mind. On McDowell's view, to place something in the conceptual sphere is to place it in the space of reasons (1994, p5), to attribute to it the kind of intelligibility proper to meaning (1994, p71-72), and to see it as standing in the rational relations constitutive of this logical space (1994, p5). Surely it is not the case that meaning resides in the mind-independent world, that the states of affairs making up reality stand in relations of implication to one another in the sense that propositions do?

McDowell himself is well aware of this problem. He writes,

> According to the picture I have been recommending, our sensibility yields states and occurrences with conceptual content. That enables us to see an experiencing subject as open to facts. The conceptual sphere does not exclude the world we experience. To put it another way: what we experience is not external to the realm of the kind of intelligibility that is proper to meaning. But in so far as what we experience includes merely natural facts, this can look like a crazily nostalgic attempt to re-enchant the natural world.... (1994, p72)

The image of 're-enchantment' McDowell appeals to here is designed to capture the difference between the kind of intelligibility we find in something as a result of placing it in the space of reasons, and that which natural science finds in its subject

matter as a result of placing it in the realm of law. The scientific revolution resulted in the 'disenchantment of nature' ie. that the natural world became 'emptied of meaning' - the way to render a natural phenomenon comprehensible was no longer to approach it as one would a text, but to see it as a law-governed process. Crucially, McDowell thinks that any satisfactory account of mind-world relations must fully respect the claim that the subject matter of natural science IS dis-enchanted in the relevant sense - he hails the marking off of the realm of law from the space of reasons as 'an achievement of modern thought' signifying 'intellectual progress' (1994, p71). So it must be shown that Natural Realism does not lead to re-investing the world of science with meaning.

It is worth pointing out that the contrast between the space of reasons and the realm of law is central to McDowell's diagnosis of why the idea that sensory experience is conceptual has not traditionally been viewed as so much as a possibility. According to McDowell, the obstacle that stands in the way of embracing his account of sensory content is the deeply pervasive 'naturalism that equates nature with the realm of law' (1994, p77). Given that sensibility is surely a natural phenomenon (it is something that we share with 'mere animals'), and given the assumption that what makes something natural is its placement in the realm of law, then, argues McDowell, it becomes impossible to see how sensibility could be conceptual. According to the naturalism under consideration, if sensory intake is a natural occurrence, then it is what it is in virtue of its place in the realm of law. To then claim that sensory intake is conceptual is incoherent, since this is to imply that its being what it is is also a matter of its placement in the contrasting logical space of reasons. In order for Natural Realism to emerge as a tenable position then, it must be shown how our sensibility COULD be conceptual, given that it is surely a purely natural fact about the human animal.

The two problems raised above are closely related - both result from a perceived gulf between reason and nature, between the space of reasons and the realm of law.

Crucially, McDowell does not think that the way out is to embrace a 'bald naturalism', according to which the gulf between nature as the realm of law on the one hand, and the space of reasons on the other, is simply denied. On McDowell's view the space of reasons is sui generis in comparison with the realm of law, and its structure cannot be captured or reconstructed out of 'conceptual materials that already belong in a natural-scientific depiction of nature' (1994, p73). But McDowell sees a 'rampant platonism', according to which the space of reasons is viewed as a structure entirely divorced from nature, as equally untenable. On this view, the space of reasons acquires super-natural status, and the human capacity to operate within it comes to 'look like an occult power' (1994, p83).

The way out of the dilemma posed by the incompatibility of the realm of law and the space of reasons, and so the answer to the two worries we are concerned with, according to McDowell, is a 'relaxed naturalism of second nature'. We need to refuse to equate the idea of being natural with that of having a place in the realm of law. The domain of the natural includes the realm of law to be sure, but it is not exhausted by it - it incorporates the space of reasons as well. In order to secure this relaxed naturalism we need to do no more than point to the 'second nature' of the human animal - our nature as rational beings. We need to see that becoming a rational animal is a natural part of the ordinary maturation of the human being. In coming to maturity, the human animal is initiated into the space of reasons through the acquisition of conceptual capacities, whereupon she comes to see everything from this perspective. Crucially, in so acquiring these capacities the human being is doing nothing more than actualizing the nature she is born with the disposition to develop, given the right sort of upbringing. This should be enough, argues McDowell, to diffuse the threat of 'rampant platonism', since it shows that 'second nature could not float free of potentialities that belong to a normal human organism' (1994, p84).

It is evident how McDowell's relaxed naturalism is supposed to solve the second of the two problems mentioned earlier. It enables us to say that our capacity to operate

within the space of reasons is a natural fact about us, and so there is no obstacle to the idea that the operations of our purely natural faculty of sensibility are conceptually structured. What is less clear, as Friedman points out, is how relaxed naturalism is supposed to provide an answer to the first problem. How is reflection on the second nature of the human animal supposed to show that Natural Realism does not involve a re-enchantment of the empirical world APART from human beings? After outlining his relaxed naturalism of second nature, McDowell simply concludes that we can thereby keep nature 'partially enchanted, but without lapsing into pre-scientific superstition' (1994, p85). The partial re-enchantment of nature McDowell speaks of here must refer to the fact that nature stands revealed as comprising not only the realm of law, but also the second nature of the human animal which is governed exclusively by the rational relations constituting the sui generis space of reasons. What is not immediately obvious is why McDowell thinks that this insight enables us to see how we can hold both that the realm of law is 'devoid of meaning' and that 'the realm of law, not just the realm of meaningful doings, is not external to the conceptual' (1994, p97).

Why might McDowell think that reflecting on the fact that human beings experience the world from within the space of reasons, or that they EXPERIENCE the world AS falling within the space of reasons (as a result of the conceptual capacities drawn into play in sensory experience), provides the solution to the threat of re-enchantment? The only answer which makes any sense here is that McDowell, in saying that the world is conceptual, means only that human beings experience it as such. Natural Realism does not involve the re-enchantment of nature because the world does not fall within the space of reasons in and of itself - it is the human perceiver who brings the world into the space of reasons in virtue of her second nature.

The sense in which the conceptual is unbounded then, the sense in which there is nothing external to it, is that once one has acquired one's second nature, one EXPERIENCES the world as being conceptual. The realm of law does not need to

impact upon us across an outer boundary because we bring the realm of law into the space of reasons in sense experience. In this way we are able to conceive of the causal impacts from the realm of law upon our sensibility precisely as elements of the space of reasons requiring our rational response. There is nothing outside the conceptual realm to which we need to relate it because once we have been initiated into the space of reasons we perceive everything, including the empirical world, from within this point of view. The realm of law gives rise to the space of reasons, whereupon the space of reasons becomes completely unbounded. And it is as a result of the unboundedness of the conceptual, understood in this sense, that the myth of the ('conceptualized') given is avoided.

If this is the correct reading of McDowell (and I can see no other which makes sense of why he thinks that appealing to our second nature as rational animals should vindicate Natural Realism of the charge of re-enchantment), then it seems to me to be highly problematic on a number of counts. The problem I am concerned with here however is the one noted by Friedman - it is not clear that McDowell's account is not in danger of collapsing into some or other form of idealism. Paradoxically, through avoiding a too close construal of the mind-world relation whereby the mind-independent world is held to be conceptual, it seems that McDowell has put the very mind-independence of the world at risk.

On McDowell's view, the world that our thought is about, the world which we have perceptual access to, is the world 'as it appears or makes itself manifest to the experiencing subject' (1994, p39). The world we are said to have knowledge of is the one we bring into the sphere of the conceptual when we acquire our second nature. Now the crucial problem for Natural Realism here can best be brought out by considering the following question: what secures the fact on McDowell's account that the world which our perceptual experiences are of, and so our empirical thought is about, is the real mind-independent world? As we have seen, McDowell holds that we conceptualize the realm of law in sense experience. The question which needs to

be answered is: Given that the realm of law is not conceptual in and of itself, what assurance can McDowell give us that the world to which we are rationally responsive is not partly a product of our own minds?

McDowell is aware of the fact that Natural Realism - through entailing that the sphere of the conceptual is unbounded and so that the understanding is not rationally responsive to anything outside of it - can seem susceptible to the charge of idealism. We might worry that if the world itself falls within the conceptual sphere, then the independence of the world of our thinking about it is compromised. In response to this worry McDowell argues that Natural Realism gives us as satisfactory an account of the independence of reality as we could reasonably require. The reason for this on McDowell's view is that the faculty of sensibility is entirely passive - in sense experience we find ourselves 'saddled' with conceptual content before we have any choice in the matter. It is this notion of the passivity of sense experience that enables us to capture the sense in which reality is independent of our thinking about it, and so available to exert the required external constraint that saves us from the coherentist image of empirical thought as a 'frictionless spinning'. For what the passivity of sensibility in essence shows is that while the world does not lie outside the sphere of thinkable contents, it is independent of the ACT of thinking, of our thinking or judging that such and such is the case. McDowell thus concludes that while Natural Realism entails that the facts which constitute the world are conceptual, it specifically does not entail that they are to be equated with exercises of conceptual CAPACITIES, and so the charge of idealism cannot be made to stick.

McDowell's response does not address the real worry, however, which is not that the way the world appears to us is dependant on our ACTIVE THINKING about it, but rather that it is nevertheless dependant on our MINDS. To be sure, that sensory experience is passive does secure the fact that our empirical thinking is not entirely 'free' in that the operations of the conceptual system are not completely 'up to us'. The problem however, as Friedman points out, is that 'the idea of passive receptivity is not

yet the idea of constraint from an independent objective world' (1996, p443). The fact that our perceptual states are 'thrust upon us' so to speak does not mean that they afford us access to an independent reality. And as Friedman notes, McDowell is well aware of this fact given his discussion of impressions of inner sense. Regarding these impressions, it is McDowell's claim that while we are just as passive with respect to them as we are to the impressions of outer sense, it is only the latter through which we are able to perceive the independent world. The crucial question then becomes that of how McDowell distinguishes between impressions of outer and inner sense such that the former are expressions of constraint by an independent world while the latter are not.

As Friedman points out, McDowell's answer is extremely illuminating here. It seems to be McDowell's view that what makes an outer experience an experience of the independent world is nothing other than the fact that it is conceived as such by the perceiver. McDowell writes,

> In 'outer experience', a subject is passively saddled with conceptual contents, drawing into operation capacities seamlessly integrated into a conceptual repertoire that she employs in the continuing activity of adjusting her world view, so as to enable it to pass a scrutiny of its rational credentials. It is this integration that makes it possible for us to conceive of experience as awareness, or at least seeming awareness, of a reality independent of experience.
> (1994, p31).

On McDowell's view then, a veridical 'outer experience' provides us with access to independent reality only because its conceptual content enables it to be taken as doing so. On the other hand, while an 'inner experience' is just as passive, 'the mode of integration (of its conceptual content with that of the rest of the system) ...is not such as to confer independence on the objects of awareness' (1994, p37). In the end then, that independent reality is in McDowell's picture at all is not held to be secured by the passive receptivity of sensibility, but rather by the idea that we TAKE the operations

of sensibility to provide us with access to the independent world. It is the fact that we experience the constraint on our empirical thinking (in the form of the passivity of sense experience) as being imposed on us by independent reality, and not the fact that the existence of the constraint itself implies an independent reality, that is supposed to diffuse the threat of idealism.

The problem, as Friedman points out, is that far from showing the fear of idealism to be ungrounded, McDowell's response seems positively to encourage it. Through holding that our outer experiences are only expressions of constraint by the independent world in virtue of being taken as such by the perceiver, 'the crucial notion of independence is, in the end, given a purely coherence-theoretic reading' (Friedman, 1996, p444, fn.).

The point to see here is that there is no other way McDowell CAN draw the distinction between inner and outer experiences, and so provide an account of the independence of the world, given his theoretical resources. The problem is that on McDowell's account the conceptual sphere is unbounded for rational creatures - everything they experience falls within it. And the sense in which this is the case is not the now reassuring idea that world falls within the space of reasons in and of itself, but that we experience it as doing so. Given that the conceptual is in this sense unbounded, there is nothing external to it to which we can relate it. And so now we seem trapped in the realm of the conceptual, unable to ever make contact with the mind-independent reality (the realm of law) which lies forever out of our view.

The crucial problem with McDowell's view is that his theoretical commitments prevent him from being able to give the right kind of account of the relation between the space of reasons and the realm of law. The reassurance that we want from McDowell is that the conceptual contents of sensory experience bear on or represent the world external to the human mind. And that is precisely the reassurance that McDowell is unable to give us, since it necessarily involves an appeal to some

relation cutting across a boundary separating the conceptual from the non-conceptual, if we are to escape re-enchanting the world. That our experiences are OF the (mind-independent) world, that the concepts that are brought into play in sense experience can be said to accurately REPRESENT it, must remain on McDowell's account a matter of faith. And this seems to make the fear of idealism entirely appropriate. When we remember that it is McDowell's account of justification that leads him to require that the conceptual be unbounded in the first place, we have yet another reason for rejecting that account.

(ii) Appearances and things in themselves

Now it is evident that the account advanced in Chapter One is not in danger of making the mind-world relation too close in the way that was seen to pose a problem for McDowell. As a result of embracing the more modest account of justification defended earlier, the ER theorist can allow for justificatory relations obtaining across a boundary circumscribing the conceptual sphere. We saw in Chapter One that being able to appeal to an externalist conception of justification enables ER to give a more satisfactory account of both animal and human perception, and the relation between them. We are now in a position to appreciate a further advantage of reliabilism - it enables us to bring the realm of law into the picture AS the realm of law and so provide the required reassurance that our sensory experiences afford us access to the mind-independent world. The ER theorist who takes the route recommended here is able to say something about the relationship between states of affairs in the mind-independent world and the propositional contents of sensory experiences such that the latter can be said to represent the former.

That ER is not guilty of courting the charge of idealism in the manner of McDowell's Natural Realism is well and good. But an account along the lines of Natural Realism is not the only one that might be accused of making the relationship between the mind and the world out to be too close. While ER does not entail that the distinction

between the mind and the world is so close that it is in danger of collapsing, it can seem that it is still too close to be acceptable.

To see what is at issue here, it is necessary to say a little more about the conception of the mind-world relation advanced by TR. In essence, the TR account of perception encourages the view that there is a fundamental 'gap' between the mind and the world, such that what we are in direct sensory contact with is something distinct from the world itself. While TR maintains that our appearances nevertheless represent the world, the way is now open for the anti-realist to exploit this 'gap'. As long as we are held to perceive the world only indirectly (through our direct sensory contact with the mental items (e.g., sense-data) it is held to cause), this leaves room for the world to be one way and what we experience 'of it' altogether another.

The point to see here is that we have become extremely comfortable with this conception of a fundamental 'gap' between mind and world - the appearance-thing in itself divide has become integral to our thinking about a whole range of other issues. For example, the very different pictures of physical objects arising from physics and ordinary perceptual experience respectively, are resolved in the view that physical objects only SEEM to have the properties that sense experience presents them as having - what such objects REALLY are is nothing but swirling masses of sub-atomic particles. Or again, the idea that what organisms perceive is to a large extent determined by their own biological interests is typically cashed out in terms of the idea that what we perceive in sense experience is to a greater or lesser degree THERE FOR US, and not otherwise.

In light of the above, it can come to seem that the ER conception of the world that emerges from its theory of perception is hopelessly naive. For what the Direct Theory of Perception tells us is that there is no ultimate appearance-thing in itself divide: the world to which we have direct sensory access is the real world. On the ER account, the states of affairs that the content of (veridical) sensory experience represents, such

facts as the dog's being in front of the tree, are objective constituents of mind-independent reality. And the problem is that once we have abandoned the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, it seems that we have lost a host of other distinctions that were cashed out in terms of it as well. It now seems that we cannot say that physical objects are at bottom a mass of sub-atomic particles, or that much of our perception is interest-dependant. And this, most would argue, is simply unacceptable. If ER is to emerge as being at all tenable, it must be shown that doing away with the appearance-thing in itself divide does not lead to a hopelessly naive conception of the world and our relation to it.

The task confronting us then is that of showing how we can retain the distinctions and ideas that we are unwilling (for very good reasons) to abandon, while getting rid of the framework in terms of which the latter have come to be cast. We need to be able to show how we can hold both that our experience for the most part gives us direct access to physical objects as they are in themselves, AND that these objects are comprised of collections of sub-atomic particles. We need to make it intelligible how it can be the case that what we perceive in sense experience is in some very real sense determined by our biological interests, AND that the states of affairs that we so perceive are constituents of the mind-independent world.

One way out for ER which might suggest itself here is to draw a distinction between what it is that we perceive in sense experience, and the way that we perceive it to be. According to this line of thought, the Epistemological Realist can claim that while WHAT we are in direct contact with in sense experience is the mind-independent world, the shape that our experience of the world takes is to a large extent influenced by our mode of access to it. On this view it is claimed that in perceptual experience our faculty of sensibility imposes some or other kind of framework over the raw stuff of the world, such that we are only able to perceive the latter through the grid of the former. The suggestion then is that the Epistemological Realist can hold that what we

have direct access to in sense experience is the mind-independent world, while denying that this world is anything very much like the way we perceive it to be.

It does not seem to me that this is a possible route for the ER theorist to take, however. The crucial problem is that it makes the world of our experience, and so the world that our empirical thinking is about, to an indeterminate extent the product of our own minds. And this is the very idealist sentiment that ER is concerned to dispel. On the suggested response, the ordinary world of objects like dogs and trees and properties like spotted and tall is held to be the product of our imposition of some structural framework onto a reality in which no such things REALLY exist. And the problem is that it is the reality of the ordinary world that ER is concerned to defend.

It is important to note that the objection to the ER response under consideration is not that it involves a return to the TR Indirect Theory of Perception. The account is very specific about the fact that we do have direct access to the independent world in sense experience. The problem with the account is that we do not have ENOUGH direct access to it - too much of WHAT we experience is mind-dependant. This point serves to bring out that not just any Direct Theory of Perception will do. The kind of Direct Theory which ER needs to embrace is one which says not only that we directly perceive the mind-independent world in sense experience, but which further holds that sense experience provides us with enough access to the independent world for it to be the case that the world more or less is the way we perceive it to be.

That I say 'more or less' here is important. It may well be the case that our sensory access to the world does to some extent shape what we thereby perceive, and it need not be the case that sensory experience provides us with equally as much access to everything which we perceive. What is important for present purposes however is that the Epistemological Realist cannot afford to make the gap between the way the world objectively is, and the way the world appears to us to be, too wide, on pain of abandoning ER itself.

How then IS ER to answer the charge of making the mind-world relation out to be too close? How is ER to make it intelligible for example that it can be the case that while the world more or less is the way we perceive it to be in sense experience, the objects to which we have sensory access are in fact swirling masses of sub-atomic particles? Again, how is ER to retain the idea that what we perceive in sense experience is in some very real sense determined by our biological interests, while at the same time holding that what we perceive in sense experience is the mind-independent world? The answer to these questions can be summed up as follows: ER NEED NOT, AND SHOULD NOT, HOLD THAT WE HAVE SENSORY ACCESS TO ALL ASPECTS OF THE MIND-INDEPENDENT WORLD IN SENSE EXPERIENCE. The ER theorist can accommodate all of the distinctions and ideas necessary for an acceptably sophisticated understanding of the world and our relationship to it, without abandoning the idea that the world of our experience is the real world, if she further holds that our sensory experience does not open us up to all aspects of reality.

The way out for ER then is to hold that while the aspects of the world to which sensory experience gives us access are more or less the way we perceive them as being, these aspects are not exhaustive of the world in its entirety. Things like dogs and trees exist in the mind-independent world, and they objectively instantiate (most of) the properties we experience them as having. The point is that they instantiate a whole range of other properties to which we are not open in sense experience as well - like the properties attributed to them by physics. (Indeed, the properties of physical objects that form the subject matter of science are likely to explain those to which we have sensory access.) Crucially, ER holds that we must not privilege the properties of the world that physics is concerned with over those which we have sensory access to - both are equally as real and mind-independent.

It is evident from what has been said so far that ER can accommodate the idea that what we perceive is determined by our biological interests as well. The claim that

what we perceive is interest-dependant, and so in some sense there for us and not otherwise, can be taken in two ways. It can mean that THE WORLD of our experience is to a large extent dependant on the kinds of creatures we are, and it can also mean that WHICH ASPECTS of the mind-independent world we experience is dependent on the kinds of creatures we are. The ER theorist is then able to fully accommodate the fact that the way a creature with one set of biological needs will experience the world to be is likely to be very different to the way another creature with entirely different biological needs will. This does not mean however that the real world must be very different from the way either experiences it, or that the two creatures experience two different worlds. All that the Epistemological Realist needs to say is that the differing biological interests of the two creatures will be responsible for the fact that they have sensory access to different aspects of the mind-independent world.

I would thus conclude that through recognizing that we are not open to all aspects of reality in sense experience the ER theorist is able to give as sophisticated an account of the world and our relationship to it as any other, while doing away with the appearance-thing in itself divide. It should be pointed out however that in advancing the ER line of response outlined above I have up until now made an important assumption, about which something needs to be said.

(iii) The Manifest and the Scientific Images

It has been assumed up to now that the picture of physical objects arising from science, and that arising from our perceptual experience, are compatible. It has been proposed that the Epistemological Realist maintain that physical objects instantiate both the properties which we have sensory access to and those which form the subject matter of physics. In light of this it is evident that if these two kinds of properties turn out to be incompatible then the proposed ER response cannot go through. If it should turn out to be the case that it is impossible for a tree to (objectively) be both the way

we perceive it to be in sense experience, and a collection of sub-atomic particles, then it would seem that the Epistemological Realist has no choice but to be an anti-realist about scientific entities and properties. The question to which we must turn then is whether there is any reason to think that the two pictures of physical objects arising from science and perceptual experience respectively are at bottom incompatible. In 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man' Wilfred Sellars argues that there is (Sellars, 1971b).

Sellars draws a distinction between what he terms the 'manifest image of man-in-the-world' and the 'scientific image' thereof. The manifest image refers to the conception or picture of the world and our relation to it which is the result of 'sophisticated common sense' (1971b, p20). It is not to be distinguished from the scientific image on the grounds that it is 'pre-scientific', 'uncritical' or 'naive', however (1971b, p6). Indeed, the manifest image is partly the result of employing a type of reasoning appropriately called scientific on Sellars' view - that of 'correlational induction' (1971b, p7). What distinguishes the scientific image from the manifest one is that the former is the conception of the world and our relation to it which is the result of POSTULATIONAL theory (1971b, p19). As Sellars writes,

> ...the contrast I have in mind is not that between an UNSCIENTIFIC conception of man-in-the-world and a SCIENTIFIC one, but between that conception which limits itself to what correlational techniques can tell us about perceptibles and introspectible events and that which postulates imperceptible objects and events for the purpose of explaining correlations among perceptibles.
> (1971b, p19).

The question we are concerned to answer then can be re-phrased in Sellars' terms as follows: are the manifest and scientific images compatible with regard to their respective accounts of the physical objects of our experience? If physical objects

objectively are as we perceive them to be, can they also be constituted by collections of sub-atomic particles?

It is Sellars' argument that the above question must be answered in the negative. The crucial point to see according to Sellars is that the scientific image construes physical objects as systems of imperceptible objects which do not themselves instantiate the perceptible properties which we experience physical objects as having. Now Sellars himself acknowledges that there is 'nothing immediately paradoxical about the view that an object can be both a perceptible object with perceptible qualities AND a system of imperceptible objects, none of which has perceptible qualities' (1971b, p26). The reason for this is that it seems plainly obvious that systems can instantiate properties not instantiated by any one of their parts. Sellars gives the example of a ladder here - it is evident that a collection of pieces of wood can be a ladder while no individual piece is. The point to note however, argues Sellars, is that in this case we can say that the system instantiates the property of being a ladder IN VIRTUE OF the relations which hold between its parts and the properties these parts themselves instantiate. In light of this Sellars introduces the following principle: 'EVERY PROPERTY OF A SYSTEM OF OBJECTS CONSISTS OF PROPERTIES OF, AND RELATIONS BETWEEN, ITS CONSTITUENTS' (1971b, p27).

The problem with viewing 'manifest objects' as systems comprised of 'scientific objects' on Sellars' view, is that to do so violates the principle introduced above. Sellars argues that the perceptible properties of the objects of our experience cannot be viewed as consisting of the properties of, and relations between, the sub-atomic particles of the scientific image. He cites the example of a pink ice cube in this regard. It is Sellars contention that the property of being pink cannot be construed as being made up of a number of imperceptible properties in the way in which the property of being a ladder is made up of 'being cylindrical (the rungs), rectangular (the frame), wooden, etc' (1971b, p26). In sense experience we perceive the ice cube as instantiating the property of being 'homogeneously pink' - as being 'pink through

and through ...a pink continuum, all the regions of which, however small, are pink' (1971b, p26). And the problem, according to Sellars, is that it is impossible to see how this 'ultimate homogeneity of the manifest image' could be a matter of the relations and properties obtaining in the ultimately non-homogeneous scientific realm. It simply cannot be made intelligible that the property of being HOMOGENOUSLY pink consists of the relations between a COLLECTION of imperceptible particles.

Sellars thus concludes that the respective pictures of physical objects arising from the manifest and scientific images are incompatible. A physical object cannot be both the way we perceive it to be in sense experience and what physics tells us it is. In light of this we can retain a commitment to the mind-independence of manifest objects only by becoming scientific anti-realists, and this is on Sellars' view too high a price to pay.

While I am in agreement with Sellars that if ER does entail scientific anti-realism then we have every reason to treat it with suspicion, I do not think that it does. In particular, I do not think that Sellars' argument succeeds in showing that the manifest and scientific images are incompatible with regard to physical objects.

It is important to note that in many ways Sellars' choice of the pink ice cube to illustrate his point is a fortunate one for his own purposes. There does seem to be something strange about the idea that the property of being homogeneously pink is to be explained in terms of the properties of and relations between sub-atomic particles. What it is crucial to see, however, is that there are a whole range of perceptible properties which do not seem to face the same problem. Examples here include the internal integrity, the size, the mass and the spatio-temporal location of objects in the manifest image. There seems to be nothing problematic for example, about the idea that the perceptible property instantiated by a dog of being a discreet entity - of having its head, legs, torso etc., stand to one another in a far more intimate relation

than they do to the tree behind it - is a matter of the relations between and properties of the sub-atomic particles of which it is composed.

It seems to me then that even if we accept Sellars' argument, the most it can be held to establish is that CERTAIN of the properties that we experience objects as instantiating are incompatible with what science tells us about them. And as was noted in part (ii) of this section, the ER theorist can allow that objects need not be as we perceive them to be in ALL respects. The question to which we must now turn is whether Sellars' argument secures even this much, however. In particular, does Sellars' argument succeed in establishing that the property of being pink cannot be one instantiated by objects as they are in themselves?

I said earlier that Sellars' choice of the example of the pink ice cube was a fortunate one - there does seem to be something prima facie problematic with holding that the property of being homogeneously pink is a matter of the properties of and relations between a collection of sub-atomic particles. Part of the reason for this seeming difficulty is that the property of being coloured is one of th · se-called 'secondary qualities'. A distinction has long been drawn by TR between properties like mass, shape, size, etc., on the one hand, and those like colour, texture, warmth, etc., on the other. While the former are held to represent objects as they are in themselves, of the latter it is argued that they represent only the ways in which such objects affect the human faculty of sensibility. The so-called secondary properties on the TR account then are not instantiated outside of the human mind - objects are not REALLY coloured or sweet or fragrant. The TR argument in this regard typically turns on the fact that we often experience these properties to change while nothing in the object that we take to instantiate them does. Russell for example argues that because the shaded parts of a table and those that are in glare look different from one another, the colours which we experience the table as having cannot be properties of the table itself.

Now it seems to me that part of the reason why we might find ourselves initially sympathetic towards Sellars' argument is that we are under the sway of the TR account of colour as a secondary property. The point to see however is that both Sellars and the Traditional Realist are guilty of failing to draw a distinction between properties and concepts. Both think that because our concept of e.g., being coloured involves the idea of 'ultimate homogeneity', that the property of being coloured must as well. Once such a distinction is made however, there is no problem with holding that the PROPERTY of being pink is in the table while we acknowledge that what this property amounts to is nothing very much like what the CONCEPT of being pink does.

To see what is being suggested here consider the account of the so-called 'secondary properties' proposed by Putnam in his 1994 Dewey Lectures. Putnam suggests that we think of the property of being pink, for example, as that of having the potentiality of having a certain (range of) 'looks' under a certain (set of) condition(s). The property of being pink, of having the aforesaid potentiality, WILL be a matter of the sub-atomic structure of the object which instantiates it. The property of being pink is IN - it is instantiated by - the ice-cube. The 'looks' themselves, while certainly RELATIONAL properties of the object, need not in this case be MENTAL.[4] That we are the kinds of animals we are, that we are viewing the object from the distance we are and that we are viewing it under the conditions we are may all be required for the apprehension of these relational properties, but this is no way entails that such properties exist only in our minds.

I would thus conclude then that against Sellars the manifest and scientific images are not incompatible even with regard to the case of the pink ice cube. The property of

[4] It is worth taking note of the fact that many have recently advanced accounts along these and similar lines. David Lewis for example in 'Naming the Colours' (Lewis, 1997) distinguishes between 'red' and 'experience of red', holding of the former that it is 'the surface property of things which typically causes experience of red in people who have such things before their eyes' (1997, p327). For another recent account along similar lines see Colin McGinn (1996).

being pink – of having the potentiality of looking to be a pink continuum to a certain range of creatures in a certain range of circumstances – is a property instantiated by objects in 'the scientific image' itself.

In this chapter I have tried to show that the central ER thesis of 'openness to reality' is intelligible, possible and tenable. Not only can ER give a satisfactory account of how perception enables empirical knowledge, but also it can give the right kind of account of perception itself. Before resting the case for the ER project however, there is one important issue to which we must turn. For one of the grounds upon which TR has been most criticized concerns its account of the relationship between our empirical knowledge claims and the world upon which they are held to bear. If the ER project is to go through, then it needs to be shown that a 'commonsense realism' is compatible with as sophisticated account of the language-world relation as we could reasonably require.

CHAPTER THREE: LANGUAGE AND REALITY

The final question I will address in this Research Report is whether or not Epistemological Realism can give the right kind of account of the relationship between language and reality. In particular, I will be concerned with examining the extent to which ER can avoid what Putnam refers to as the 'metaphysical fantasy' entailed by the TR account of how our empirical knowledge claims bear on reality. I will argue in this regard that while ER will of necessity share some kind of common ground with the TR picture of the language-world relation, it is nevertheless able to avoid what is problematic about the TR conception. Indeed, it will be my central contention that ER is in principle able to provide as sophisticated an account of the language-world relation as we could reasonably require. It should be noted from the outset however that the defense of a detailed account of the relationship between language and the world is beyond the scope of this Research Report. My concern here is to show (in a programmatic way) that ER is ABLE to advance an unproblematic account of the language-world relationship, rather than to outlir e fully developed theories of reference, meaning, truth and the like.

[A] TRADITIONAL REALISM

In his 1994 Dewey lectures Putnam characterizes the TR conception of the language-world relation as emerging from the following three claims:

(1) The world consists of a determinate totality of mind-independent objects and properties, fixed in advance of human experience, and fixed rigidly.

(2) The words in language stand in a one-one correspondence relation to these objects and properties, this relation grounding reference, meaning and truth. With regard to truth it is held that a structural isomorphism holds between true propositions in language and facts in the world.

(3) Given that knowledge claims are claims about the distribution of properties over objects (and logical functions of such claims), it follows in light of (1) and (2) that there is a definite totality of all possible knowledge claims, likewise fixed in advance, and fixed independently of the language user or thinker. There is exactly one true and complete description of the world.

On the TR account then, the relationship between language and the world is held to be a very neat and tidy affair. The world consists of a determinate number of mind-independent objects and properties, to which the words in our language stand in a one-one correspondence relation. The object or property to which any such word refers determines the meaning of the word. Our empirical knowledge claims are simply claims about the distribution of properties over objects, and so it follows that there is some set or totality of all possible knowledge claims, which is fixed in advance of human experience and cognition.[1] As Putnam puts it, on the TR account both the form of all our knowledge claims, and the way in which they are responsible to reality, are 'fixed once and for all in advance' (1994, p449).

The picture of the language-world relation which arises from TR commitments (1)-(3) is one in which language is viewed as nothing more than some sort of mirror-image of the world. The metaphor of language as mirror image here is appropriate on two counts. The first is that, on the TR view, language is held to 'mirror' the world quite literally - a structural isomorphism is posited to hold between (true) propositions in language and states of affairs in the world. (I will return to this idea in more detail later.) The second is that, according to TR, the world rigidly dictates both the totality and the form of our possible descriptions of it - the nature of the word-world correspondence relation ensures that our descriptions of the world can never

[1] Of course, as Putnam points out, the Traditional Realist is perfectly free to accept that the nature of the language users or thinkers will determine which of the possible knowledge claims they are able to think or verbalize. The point is simply that on the TR account the language users or thinkers play no role in determining what the possible knowledge claims are.

amount to anything over and above what Putnam terms 'a mere copying' of it (1994, p452).

The TR account of the relationship between language and the world has been (rightly) subject to a wide range of criticism, an appreciation of which has done much to trigger the familiar 'recoil' to various forms of anti-realism. And indeed, it seems evident in this post-Wittgensteinian era that if realism is to remain even so much as an option for us it cannot involve anything very much like the TR conception of the language-world relation at all. Before moving on to consider the resources available to ER in avoiding what Putnam terms the 'metaphysical fantasy' of TR, it is necessary to get a clearer sense of exactly what is wrong with the picture emerging from TR commitments (1)-(3).

[B] THE METAPHYSICAL FANTASY

Although many philosophers have criticized the TR account of the language-world relation, I will be almost exclusively concerned in this section with the arguments of Hilary Putnam. There are a number of reasons for focussing on Putnam in this regard, perhaps the most important being that while Putnam is one of the few contemporary philosophers concerned with developing a tenable realist position, none is as fully appreciative as he of the shortcomings of the Traditional Realist picture. Indeed, it was an acute awareness of the problems confronting the TR conception of the relationship between language and the world that led the earlier Putnam to embrace anti-realism.

Let us turn then to consider Putnam's arguments against the TR account of language and its relation to reality. In his 1994 Dewey Lectures Putnam takes issue with the TR account of the language-world relation in its entirety, claiming that the TR

commitments (1)-(3) amount to nothing more than a 'metaphysical fantasy'.[2] It is Putnam's claim that when we reflect seriously on human experience, it becomes very evident that the idea that the world dictates the totality of our possible descriptions of it is radically misguided. Language does not stand to the world in the neat relation of a mirror-image - our language is continuously developing, and with it the ways in which it can be responsible to reality.

Putnam directs his first line of attack at the core of the TR conception of the relationship between language and the world: the idea that our words stand in a one-one correspondence relation to objects in the world, the latter giving the meaning of the former. As was mentioned in Section [A] above, if knowledge claims are taken to be claims about the distribution of properties over objects, then it is a commitment to this kind of correspondence relation that is directly responsible for the picture in which the world fixes the totality of our possible descriptions 'in advance'.

The point to see, Putnam argues, is that this account of reference and meaning is hopelessly naive. On this view, the meanings of words are given by their worldly referents, to which they stand in a one-one relation. In the case of a general name, the word is held to refer to one KIND of object, and the meaning of the word is held to be some property common to all the objects denoted by the word. As the later Wittgenstein points out however, we cannot take this idea very seriously when we reflect on our actual linguistic practices. For, in the first place, when we do turn our attention to these practices, it becomes evident that the meanings of our words are given less by their worldly referents than by their roles or uses in the various language systems to which they belong. And in the second place, the nature of reference itself is not one-one. Wittgenstein notes in this regard that there are many

[2] It is worth pointing out that Putnam's arguments against the 'fantasy' entailed by what he terms 'metaphysical realism' date back much earlier than this – the 'metaphysical realist' has been a recurrent figure in Putnam's work for at least the last eighteen years. (See Putnam, 1981, 1983, 1989 and 1990 in this regard.)

words that we use perfectly well in spite of the fact that the things to which they refer have no single property in common.[3]

In order to illustrate how these Wittgensteinian considerations cut against the very heart of the TR conception of the language-world relation, Putnam turns his attention to the term 'object'. The Traditional Realist makes the 'comfortable assumption' that it is so much as intelligible to speak of a fixed totality of 'objects' that our propositions can be about. As Putnam points out however, even the word 'object' does not correspond to any one kind of thing. There is no one set of identity conditions for 'object-hood' - our understandings of what being an object amount to are multiple and strongly context dependent. Putnam gives the example of a lamp with a loose shade which falls off whenever the lamp is moved - does the lamp count as one object or two? On the old criterion that a single object is one whose parts move with the object when it is moved, it seems that the lamp will not count as a single object. But we can imagine many situations in which this criterion is inappropriate. If we were to point to the lamp, a chair and a book, and ask of a young child 'How many objects are there?', the desired result would be for the child to answer 'Three'. In this case we DO count the lamp as a single object. Again, we can think of a physicist who would count the lamp as a system of billions of objects. And the list goes on.

It emerges very strongly from the above that the TR conception of language as a mere 'mirror-image' of the world is extremely inaccurate. As Putnam writes, "description' is never a mere copying ... we constantly add to the ways in which language can be responsible to reality' (1994, p452). With regard to the lamp considered above, we can describe it as a single object, or as a composite of two objects, or as a system of billions of objects. (This of course is directly related to the fact that there is no neat one-one correspondence relation grounding reference and meaning, contra the

[3] Wittgenstein used the (by now well-known) example of the word 'game' to illustrate this point. (See his Philosophical Investigations in this regard.)

Traditional Realist.) There is simply no sense to the idea that the world fixes the totality of our possible descriptions of it 'in advance'.[4]

[C] DE-MYSTIFYING REALISM

I am in firm agreement with Putnam that if ER is to emerge as a tenable position then it must fully accommodate the points made in Section [B] above. The ER theorist must have no part in the 'metaphysical fantasy' entailed by TR commitments (1)-(3). In particular, the image of language as a 'mirror-image' of the world must be rejected - ER must acknowledge the sense in which, as Putnam puts it, 'we continuously renegotiate ... our notion of reality as our language and life develops' (1994, p452).

It is important to say something in defense of this proposal however. The reason for this is that it might seem (at first glance at any rate) that the kinds of insights into the language-world relation outlined in Section [B] are not compatible with realism. Indeed, many have argued - the earlier Putnam is himself one such example - that the insights under consideration push very strongly in the direction of anti-realism.

To see what is at issue here, let us return to Putnam's example of the lamp. Suppose the lamp is placed on a table. According to Putnam, it can be true to say that there is one object on the table, and that there are two objects on the table, and that there are billions of objects on the table. There is no sense to the TR claim that there is some fixed totality of 'objects' that our propositions can be about. This has suggested to many that whatever there is on the table is in an important sense 'up to us' - the world is to an indeterminate extent the product of our own minds.

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[4] Putnam's point here becomes even more evident when we imagine what the QUANTUM physicist would have to say about the example of the lamp. And indeed, Putnam himself cites Quantum Mechanics as,

> ...a wonderful example of how with the development of knowledge our idea of what counts as even a POSSIBLE knowledge claim, our idea of what counts as even a POSSIBLE object, and our idea of what counts as even a POSSIBLE property are all subject to change. (1994, p452)

Crucially, the move to idealism is completely unwarranted here, however. What the example of the lamp serves to illustrate is that the word 'object' does not correspond to any one kind of thing - we can use the word, and so describe the world, in a variety of different ways. This point alone cannot carry any implications about the mind-dependence (or indeed, independence) of the world. The ER theorist is perfectly free to acknowledge the point that HOW WE CHOOSE TO DESCRIBE what is on the table is 'up to us', without thereby being committed to the further claim that WHAT IS ON THE TABLE is 'up to us'.

The anti-realist argument under consideration trades on an ambiguity in the use of the word 'object'. We can use the term 'object' to speak about the concept itself, or we can use it to speak about the worldly things that fall under it. The anti-realist takes Putnam to be using the term in the second way, when he is in fact using it in the first. What Putnam says of our concept 'object', the anti-realist takes him to be saying of worldly objects themselves.

It is worth pointing out here that Putnam (unintentionally) invites this sort of anti-realist response through not always being sufficiently clear about how he is using the term 'object'. Indeed, it seems that Putnam is not concerned to draw the 'object'-object distinction in this way at all, tacitly preferring to treat the term 'object' as a purely grammatical notion.[5] Because this use of 'object' tends to push in the direction of anti-realism, I will not follow Putnam in this regard. In my terms, Putnam's point can be put as follows: the mind-independent objects of which the world is comprised do not rigidly dictate or determine how we can think about them. The meaning of the term 'object' is not given by some property instantiated by all these worldly things. (Indeed, the term 'object' does not have just one meaning – what being an object amounts to will vary in accordance with which aspect of mind-independent reality we are attempting to describe, and our interests in so describing it.) It should be noted

however that departing from Putnam's account in this way obviously commits me to some version of the TR commitment (1).[6]

Even if the anti-realist acknowledges that the considerations raised in [B] do not entail full-blown idealism, it might still be argued that they tell against the ER project in another way. According to this line of thought it is argued that while the example of the lamp does not show that the mind-independent world does not exist, it does show that our knowledge claims are not responsible to it. If the choice of how we describe the world is 'up to us', then what sense is left to the idea that our descriptions are nevertheless 'responsible to reality'?

The point to see here however is that in claiming up until now that the choice of how to describe the world is 'up to us', we have been speaking loosely. What such talk was designed to capture is the sense in which our empirical concepts (and so our empirical descriptions) are continuously changing and developing - they are not fixed once and for all by the world. What needs to be emphasized however is that the freedom implicit in our conceptual formation carries with it a certain rational responsibility. As Putnam notes, in the pursuit of empirical knowledge we have a 'cognitive responsibility to do justice to whatever we describe' (1994, p452). It follows from this that not all possible systems of describing the world will be equally good - indeed some may well be entirely unacceptable.

[D] TRUTH

Before we can rest the case for Epistemological Realism there is one final issue that remains to be addressed. One of the grounds upon which the TR conception of the language-world relation has been most criticized concerns its theory of truth. Indeed,

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[5] This was pointed out to me by Michael Pendlebury.

[6] If the notion of 'object' appealed to in (1) is not grammatical, then (1) is not a problematic claim, however – it amounts to no more than a commitment to the mind-independence of the world. (This

dissatisfaction with the TR conception of truth alone has led many philosophers to embrace anti-realism.[7] The question with which I will be concerned in this section then is the extent to which ER can avoid what is problematic about the TR theory of truth.

(i) The Correspondence Theory of Truth

TR advances what is commonly referred to as the Correspondence Theory of Truth. On the Correspondence Theory, a proposition is true just in case there is a fact in the world to which it 'corresponds'. To attribute the property 'truth' to some proposition is to attribute to it the property of corresponding to some fact. The proposition THAT THERE IS A CAT BEFORE ME has the property 'truth' if there is in actual fact a cat before me. That there is a cat before me is the fact that corresponds to the proposition THAT THERE IS A CAT BEFORE ME and so makes it true. As Fred Sommers notes in 'Putnam's Born-Again Realism' (Sommers, 1997), on the Correspondence Theory, 'any claim of the form 'it is true that p' is understood as the claim that 'p' corresponds to - is made true by - some feature of reality.' (1997, p457).

From the way it has been characterized above it seems that far from being problematic, the Correspondence Theory is perfectly tailored to meet the requirements of realism. In order to secure the possibility of empirical knowledge, the realist of any stripe - including the ER theorist - must maintain that it is the world that determines the truth or falsity of our claims about it. If it is held that the world does not occupy the role of 'truth-maker' in this regard, then it becomes difficult to see how our claims could be accurately described as being ABOUT the world. If it is not the mind-independent world that determines the truth or falsity of our empirical knowledge claims, then it is not this world upon which our knowledge claims bear.

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said, the ER theorist has no reason to hold that the objects comprising the mind-independent world constitute a 'fixed totality', whatever this might mean.)

[7] Michael Dummett and the early Putnam are the two most obvious examples here. I will say something about their arguments in this regard in part (iii) of this section.

And indeed, I do not think that there is anything wrong with the Correspondence Theory as it has been outlined so far. I think that ER is at its most plausible when it holds that what makes our propositions true is that facts stand in some sort of truth-making relation to them.[8] The problem with the Correspondence Theory lies in its conception of what such 'truth-making' must amount to. To say simply of propositions that they 'correspond' to facts is not in and of itself problematic. It is the TR CHARACTERISATION of this correspondence relation that causes the trouble. The question which must be addressed then is whether ER is able to offer an account of how the truth of our propositions can be a mater of their standing in the right kind of relation to the facts, without subscribing to the highly problematic TR correspondence relation.

As was mentioned briefly in Section [A] above, the Traditional Realist cashes out the truth-making correspondence relation in terms of a supposed structural isomorphism posited to hold between true propositions in language and facts in the world. On the TR view, true propositions and facts stand to one another in a one-one relation – this is a direct result of the TR commitment to the lower level one-one correspondence of words to objects criticized in Section [B]. As William P. Alston points out in A Realist Conception of Truth (Alston, 1996), the TR theorist needs to be able to explicate this correspondence relation such that it is one particular fact – and not one of the innumerable others which obtain – that stands in the relation of truth-maker to some proposition. This has traditionally been done in terms of what Alston calls a 'structural 'matching' or 'fitting' of the two' (1996, p32).

So for example the early Wittgenstein in Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (Wittgenstein, 1961) argues that our everyday propositions are analyzable into atomic

[8] It is important to note that it is no way evident that ER is INCOMPATIBLE with other ways of thinking about truth. Indeed, in his 1994 Dewey Lectures Putnam argues that a strongly deflationist account of truth in no way undermines the ER project. I am not concerned to take issue with Putnam in

propositions, these latter consisting of simple names in a particular arrangement. Such atomic propositions are held to bear something analogous to a 'pictorial representation' to fac.: ' atomic states of affairs in logical space.[9] Atomic states of affairs consist of parti..lar configurations of objects, the names in atomic propositions standing in a one-one relation of reference to these objects. A particular atomic proposition represents an atomic state of affairs just in case there is both a name-object match and an arrangement-configuration match. A proposition is true if the atomic propositions into which it is analyzable represent actual states of affairs in the world.

That the TR correspondence relation posited to hold between true propositions and facts is highly unsatisfactory should be obvious in light of the considerations raised in Section [B]. For in the first place, the Traditional Realist's characterization of the correspondence between true propositions and facts as a one-one relation will be no less problematic than her c ption of the word-object relation as one-one. (As has been mentioned, the form nception is a direct consequence of the latter.) And in the second place, the TR correspondence relation held to ground truth is even more metaphysically suspect than that held to ground reference and meaning. Here language is held to LITERALLY stand in the relation of a mirror-image to the world. And this is surely nothing but bad ...staphysics. I will discuss each of these objections in turn.

The first problem with the TR characterization of the truth-making correspondence relation then is that it entails that propositions stand in a one-one relation to the facts that make them true.[10] As Pendlebury points out in 'Facts as Truthmakers' (Pendlebury, 1986), this seems plainly false however. With regard to the TR idea that the fact-proposition truth-making relation must be one-one Pendlebury writes,

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this regard – if Putnam is right then so much the better for ER. It does seem to me that ER should take as few risks with its realism as possible however, given the current anti-realist climate.

[9] Wittgenstein defines 'logical space' as the totality of possible and actual states of affairs.

> ...for those of us who do not regard facts as artifacts of thought and language,[11] this is surely, on reflection, incredible. I find it far more plausible to assume that a relatively simple thought or sentence may be made true by a relatively complex set of facts, and vice versa. The set of facts that makes it true that Smith is a bachelor is clearly far more complex than the thought that he is. On the other hand, an enormously complex disjunction may be made true by a very simple fact. The 1-1 theory cannot account for such intuitions. (1986, p177)

And indeed, from what was said in Section [B] it seems that Pendlebury is exactly right here. Consider again Putnam's example of the lamp: it is the same fact that makes the three propositions - that there is one object on the table, that there are two objects on the table and that there are billions of objects on the table - true.

It is important to note that the (early) Wittgensteinian idea that while this one-one correspondence does not hold between our ordinary propositions and our everyday conception of facts, it nevertheless does hold between the atomic propositions into which the former are analyzable and the atomic states of affairs of which the latter are constituted, is of no help here. Wittgenstein's failure to provide even one such analysis of an ordinary proposition into a set of atomic ones mitigates heavily against the existence of these latter entities.

If the ER theorist is to advance that what makes our true propositions true is that they stand in the right kind of relation to the facts then, she will have to depart from the Traditional Realist's characterization of this relation as one-one. Importantly, there is nothing standing in the way of her doing so. For unlike the Traditional Realist, the

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[10] As Austin writes of the TR correspondence theory, 'for every statement there exists 'one' and its own precisely corresponding fact – for every cap the head it fits' (Austin, 1961, p91).

[11] It is worth pointing out here that many have thought that facts MUST be linguistic entities, and have consequently argued that the realist understanding of the fact-proposition truth-making relation is incoherent. I will turn to consider this idea in part (ii) of this section. For now however I will continue to characterize facts as non-linguistic states of affairs in the world.

ER theorist is not committed to the lower level one-one correspondence of words to objects.

The second problem with the TR truth-making correspondence relation with which I am concerned here is that it is cashed out in terms of a 'structural match' posited to hold between propositions and the facts that make them true.[12] On the TR account, a proposition and a fact are held to correspond to one another just in case they are structurally isomorphic. As Austin points out in 'Truth' however, when we turn our attention to our actual use of language it becomes extremely difficult to take this idea seriously (Austin, 1961). As Austin writes,

> We are absolutely free to appoint ANY symbol to describe ANY type of situation as far as merely being true goes. In a small one-spade language (the statement that) nuts might be true in exactly the same circumstances as the statement in English that the National Liberals are the people's choice. There is no need whatsoever for the words used in making a true statement to 'mirror' in any way, however indirect, any feature whatsoever of the situation or event; a statement no more needs, in order to be true, to reproduce the 'multiplicity', say, or the 'structure' or 'form' of the reality, than a word needs to be echoic or writing pictographic.
>
> (1961, pp92-93)

I am in firm agreement with Austin in this regard. It seems plainly obvious that the 'fitti: g' of some proposition to some or other (set of) fact(s) is a matter of our linguistic conventions, and nothing more. If ER is to involve a commitment to the idea that facts stand in a truth-making relation to propositions, then this relation will have to be explicated as a purely conventional one.

[12] Of course, once it is granted that the fact-proposition truth-making relation is not one-one, then it follows that this relation can no longer be explicated in terms of structural isomorphism. If a number of distinct propositions can be made true by the same fact, then this cannot be a matter of such propositions 'mirroring' the structure of that fact – the propositions are distinct from one another.

Austin's own account of truth, despite its obvious limitations, provides a convenient example of what is being suggested here.[13] Austin argues that in order to give a satisfactory account of the fact-proposition truth-making relation we need to appeal to two different sets of conventions:

DESCRIPTIVE conventions correlating the words (sentences) with the TYPES of situation, thing, event etc., to be found in the world.

DEMONSTRATIVE conventions correlating the words (statements) with the HISTORIC situations etc., to be found in the world.

Austin claims that given the above we can say that a statement is true when 'the historic state of affairs to which it is correlated by the demonstrative conventions (the one to which it 'refers') is of a type with which (or, is sufficiently like those standard states of affairs with which) the sentence used in making it is correlated by the descriptive conventions' (1961, p90).[14] The crucial point about Austin's characterization of the fact-proposition truth-making relation is that it is purely a matter of convention. It is we who decide that a certain set of words will represent or refer to a certain aspect of the world.

It is worth pointing out that at least part of the reason for the Traditional Realist's appealing to structural isomorphism in explicating the fact-proposition correspondence relation is her commitment to the Indirect Theory of Perception. To recall, it is a consequence of the Indirect Theory that we are never in direct perceptual contact with the world itself. This can make it difficult to see how a determinate

[13] Importantly, in appealing to Austin's account here I am in no way endorsing it as the more particular account of truth that the ER theorist should advance. My purpose here is simply to show that it is possible in principle to construe the fact-proposition truth-making relation as a conventional, as opposed to a metaphysically suspect, matter. As has been mentioned, my concern in this chapter is not to advance a detailed account of the language-world relation, but rather to show that a commitment to 'commonsense realism' is compatible with as sophisticated an understanding of this relation as we could reasonably require.

[14] As should be evident from what Austin says here, he views statements and not propositions as the rightful bearers of truth-value. While I am not concerned to defend it here, I prefer the more popular account that truth-value attaches to the propositions EXPRESSED by statements. On this account, the statement, 'There is a cat before me' expresses the proposition THAT THERE IS A CAT BEFORE ME, and it is this proposition to which truth-value attaches. See Alston (1996) and Sommers (1997) for a more detailed exposition of this idea.

relation between language and the world – between propositions and facts – could ever come to be set up. Putnam in his anti-realist days expresses this worry as follows:

> The mind never compares an image or word with an object, but only with other images, words, beliefs, judgements etc. The idea of a comparison of words or mental representations with objects is a senseless one. So how can a determinate correspondence between words or mental representations and external objects ever be singled out? How is the reference supposed to be fixed?
>
> (1983, pix)

'Structural isomorphism' is the TR answer to Putnam's question, with regard to the fact-proposition relation at any rate.

Once the Indirect Theory of Perception is rejected in favor of the Direct Theory defended in Chapter Two however, the worry expressed by the early Putnam cannot take hold. Once it is made intelligible th . ve have direct perceptual access to the facts themselves, there can be no problem concerning our ability to refer to them in the ways that we do simply because we choose to.

(ii) A word about facts

It has bee n suggested above that the ER theorist retain a commitment to the TR idea that our propositions are made true by standing in the right kind of relation to the facts, while taking issue with the TR characterization of this relation. Many have argued however that facts are simply not the kinds of things CAPABLE of standing in this relation, on the ground that they are not constituents of mind-independent reality. The idea here as Sommers puts it, is that 'while things like cats and mats are out there, a fact like the cat being on a mat is not' (Sommers, 1997, p459).[15]

[15] It is important to note that Sommers in no way supports this idea. Indeed, his concern is rather with developing an unproblematic account of how facts could be aspects of mind-independent reality.

Why has the ontological status of facts become a contentious issue? After all, the idea that the world is comprised of facts is an intuitively compelling one. It seems as intelligible to admit states of affairs into our ontological account of the world as it does objects and properties. As a number of philosophers committed to the idea of a fact-proposition truth-making relation have pointed out, at least a part of the answer to this question is that the term 'fact' is an ambiguous one.[16] In particular, we do not only use the term 'fact' to refer to worldly states of affairs – very often we mean by a 'fact' a true proposition itself. With regard to this latter use of 'fact' Austin writes, 'We note that when a detective says 'Lets look at the facts' he does not crawl around on the carpet, but proceeds to utter a string of statements: we even talk of 'stating the facts'' (1961, p91). In light of this latter use of the term 'fact', it can come to seem that facts are not aspects of the independent world at all, but linguistic entities themselves in need of some account of truth.

The problem with this line of thought is that it overlooks the former (and equally legitimate) use of the expression 'fact'. Very often we DO use the expression to refer to worldly states of affairs themselves. In 'Putnam's Born-Again Realism', Sommers suggests that it is because of overlooking this former use of the expression 'fact' that certain philosophers have fallen under the sway of the so-called 'same words' argument (Sommers, 1997, p462). The argument runs as follows: For any given proposition we can only say what fact corresponds to it (if it is true) by using the same words as we do in expressing the proposition itself. To return to the example given in Part (i) of this section, if we are asked what fact stands in the relation of truth-maker to the proposition THAT THERE IS A CAT BEFORE ME, we seem compelled to give the answer: the fact that there is a cat before me. Therefore, the fact that there is a cat before me cannot be distinct from the true proposition that there is a cat before me – the idea of a two-place relation holding between the two is unintelligible.

Sommers points out quite correctly, however, that simply because we use the same words in describing the fact that makes some proposition true as we do in expressing that proposition itself does not mean that the fact and the proposition cannot be distinct from one another. As was emphasized in the last section, that we use the words we do to refer to things is a purely conventional matter, and can carry no implications whatsoever for WHAT is thereby referred to. As Sommers writes, 'That 'the words themselves' just used in speaking of the FACT (true proposition) are also conventionally used in referring to the fact (state of affairs in the world) is no reason to impugn their correspondence' (Sommers, 1997, p462).[17] It is Sommers contention that it is only if we have already embraced the equation of 'fact' with 'true proposition' as a result of the ambiguity attaching to the former expression that we will find the 'same words' argument compelling.

(iii) The Verificationist Challenge

There is a potential objection to the kind of account of truth being advanced here that must be considered. It is a widely accepted idea that sentence-meaning is analyzable in terms of truth conditions - the meaning of any sentence is (at least partly) a matter of the conditions under which it is true. If this account of sentence-meaning is correct however, then it can seem to pose problems for the idea that the truth of our propositions is a matter of their standing in the right kind of relation to the facts.[18]

Michael Dummett points out that on the sort of account advanced here, truth is in principle beyond our epistemic access (Dummett, 1959). It is a consequence of this account that in order to ascertain whether or not some proposition is true we must

[16] Austin (1961) and Sommers (1997) are two examples here.
[17] Sommers draws the distinction between FACT (true proposition) and fact (worldly state of affairs) in order to avoid the ambiguity attaching to our use of the term 'fact' discussed above.
[18] I will use 'sentence' and 'proposition' interchangeably for the purposes of this discussion, since nothing of relevance turns on my doing so. On the view I favor, a statement – which expresses a proposition – just is a sentence in use.

establish whether or not some or other fact obtains. And the point to see is that we do not have access to all possible facts. It is Dummet's perfectly correct point that if it is held that what makes propositions true is that they stand in the right kind of relation to the facts, then in many instances the truth of our propositions will be verification-transcendent. Obvious examples here would include propositions about the distant past and future.

Dummet argues that if the idea that sentence-meaning is analyzable in terms of truth-conditions is correct however, truth cannot be a verification-transcendent property. For if the meaning of (certain) of our sentences is to be analyzed in terms of something to which we have no access, then we will not be able to give an account of how we could have come to understand the sentence – to grasp its meaning - in the first place. And the point here is that such an account is required, unless we are prepared to accept the plainly false idea that we do not understand the meaning of e.g., propositions about the distant past and future.

As Alston points out, it is this objection to the idea of a fact-proposition truth-making relation that forms a large part of the motivation behind what we can follow Alston in calling 'the epistemic conception of truth' (Alston, 1996). On the epistemic conception, the truth of any given proposition is held to consist in some or other kind of 'positive epistemic status' of the proposition. Thus in Realism With a Human Face (Putnam, 1990), the earlier Putnam advances the view that we understand by truth 'idealized rational acceptability' - for a proposition to be true is for it to be 'warrantable on the basis of experience and intelligence for creatures with 'a rational and sensible nature'. In a similar vein Dummett argues that a proposition is true if we are able to recognize the (set of) fact(s) as obtaining that we have been taught justify us in asserting the statement. Dummett suggests that:

> ...we no longer explain the sense of a statement by stipulating its truth values in terms of the truth of its constituents, but by stipulating when it may be

> asserted in terms of the conditions under which its constituents may be asserted.
> (1959, p161).

As Alston points out, the essential idea behind epistemic conceptions of truth is that 'the truth of a truth-bearer (a proposition) ... consists in the epistemic values (it) displays WITHIN our thought, experience and discourse' (1996, p189).

What then is the Epistemological Realist to say in response to the objection raised by Dummett? To embrace an epistemic conception of truth is not open to the ER theorist since that is the route to anti-realism - as has already been mentioned, the realist cannot afford to give up the idea that it is the world which determines the truth or falsity of what we say about it. But as long as ER involves a commitment to the idea that our propositions are rendered true by standing in the right kind of relation to the facts, it seems that truth will remain verification-transcendent with regard to many of our propositions. Is the only option available to ER then to reject the idea that sentence-meaning is to be analyzed in terms of truth conditions?

Importantly, the answer here is no. In 'Defending Commonsense Realism' Pendlebury outlines a way in which the ER theorist can retain a commitment to the idea of a fact-proposition truth-making relation while doing justice to the insights made by Dummett (Pendlebury, 1998b). The first point to note is that the truth of a great number of our sentences on the ER account will not be verification-transcendent. (Pendlebury refers to these as 'core sentences'.) The second is that the constituents and structures of these sentences occur in and are intimately related to those sentences whose truth IS verification-transcendent. (Pendlebury refers to these latter as 'non-core' sentences.) Now it is evident that according to Dummett there can be no problem with how we could come to grasp the meaning of the group of core sentences. But then in light of what has been said above it will also be possible to give an account of how we could come to grasp the meaning of the non-core

sentences. As Pendlebury argues, there are two things to which we can appeal in explaining how a speaker could come to understand the group of non-core sentences:

(i) the speaker's presumed grasp of the meanings of the constituents and structures of those sentences which also occur in core sentences, and

(ii) the speaker's grasp of the other relevant connections between the constituents and structures of the non-core sentences and those which occur in core sentences.

Pendlebury gives the following example. Consider a sentence the truth of which is very clearly verification transcendent (from our perspective now at any rate) on the ER account: 'There will be a large Eucalyptus tree on this spot at the start of the 25th century'. As Pendlebury points out, we seem to have no problem in understanding this sentence. The question is how the ER theorist can account for this fact given a commitment to the idea that sentence-meaning is a matter of truth conditions. Pendlebury's suggestion here is that we appeal to how the constituents and structure of this sentence occur in, or are suitably connected with, the core sentences that are not verification transcendent. Pendlebury gives the example in this regard of the core sentence: 'The tree in front of that orange house is a Eucalyptus'. And of course there will be many others.

Dummett's 'verificationist challenge' turns out not to pose any difficulty for the proposed ER account of truth then. That the truth of certain of our propositions is not verification transcendent is sufficient to ensure that we can give an account of how we could have come to understand the propositions whose truth value it is beyond our ability to ascertain.

I would thus conclude that the Epistemological Realist can give a satisfactory account of the relationship between language and the world. In the first place, ER is able to

acknowledge the fact that language does not stand in anything like the relation of a 'miror-image' to the world. And in the second place, ER is able to give a plausible account of truth where TR fails. To be sure, ER does have something in common with the TR picture arising from commitments (1)-(3) - like the Traditional Realist, the Epistemological Realist is committed to the idea that the world upon which our language bears is the real, mind-independent one. Where ER departs from TR is in the avoidance of any 'metaphysical fantasy'.

CONCLUSION

My aim in this Research Report has been to show that the Epistemological Realist project recently initiated by John McDowell and Hilary Putnam is a highly promising one. Against a predominantly anti-realist philosophical climate the project aims to secure a 'commonsense realism' about the world and our relationship to it, without taking this realism for granted. In particular, the project fully acknowledges that if realism is to be taken seriously again, there is much work to be done - not only in developing new theories in a range of areas, but also through clarifying what a commitment to realism does and does not entail. My concern here has been to indicate that this two-fold strategy of development and clarification is able to achieve the end of reinstating 'commonsense realism' as a philosophically respectable position.

'Commonsense realism' is a holistic view involving a combination of ontological and epistemological commitments. Simply stated, it involves a commitment to the commonsense picture that we can (and do) have knowledge of the mind-independent world, the possibility of such knowledge being in some sense secured by the access we have to the world in perception. That this commonsense view of the world has lost credibility is largely due to the widespread misconception that it cannot be unproblematically developed. The prevalence of this misconception is in part due to the fact that realism has not traditionally been satisfactorily developed in a number of areas, and in part due to misguided assumptions of what the realist must be committed to. As both Putnam and McDowell acknowledge, securing the aim of the ER project is a matter of showing that 'Traditional Realism' is not the only realism on offer.

In this Research Report I have concentrated on what I take to be the three major failings of the Traditional Realist position: its account of how perception enables empirical knowledge, its account of perception itself and its account of the

relationship between our empirical knowledge claims and the mind-independent world upon which they bear. I have attempted to show that in every case the Epistemological Realist can depart from the problematic TR conception and develop 'commonsense realism' in a perfectly satisfactory way.

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