Contents

1 Pragmatism: Acknowledging Authority by De-Representing 3
1.1 The Battle of the Notion of Representation
1.2 Overview and Perspective
1.3 The Modern History of Representation and the Trouble with the Realist
1.4 Classical Pragmatism and Neopragmatism

2 The Sellarsian and Quinean Toolboxes 29
2.1 Setting the Postanalytical Parameters
2.2 Radical Translation Translated and the Dogmas of Empiricism
2.3 The Myth of the Given and Psychological Nominalism
2.4 Scientism

3 Brandom’s Explication 48
3.1 Normative Pragmatics and Inferential Semantics
3.2 Perception and Action
3.3 Linguistic Rationalism versus Linguistic Romanticism
3.4 The Representational Dimension, Discursive Practice, Truth and Knowledge

4 Innocence Regained and Second Nature: Putnam and McDowell 69
4.1 Putnam’s Neorealist Turn and McDowell’s Defense of Empiricism
4.2 Natural Realism
4.3 The Machine and Rationality
4.4 Folk Vocabulary
4.5 Relativism
4.6 Infusing Perceptual Experience with Conceptual Content: McDowell

5 Triangulation and Breakfast at Irony’s: Davidson and Rorty 94
5.1 Davidson’s Post-Epistemology: Truth and Interpretation
5.2 The Third Dogma of Empiricism and Triangulation
5.3 Davidson’s Anti-Conventionalism and the Metaphor as his Gift to Rorty
5.4 Radicalizing the Linguistic Turn: Rortian Vocabularism
5.5 Persons as Incarnated Vocabularies
Bibliography

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations appear in the text:
EPM  Wilfred Sellars, Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind, 1997
PSM  Wilfred Sellars, Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man, 1962
WO  Willard van Orman Quine, Word and Object, 1960
TDE  Willard van Orman Quine, Two Dogmas of Empiricism, 1980
PMN  Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, 1998
MIT  Robert Brandom, Making It Explicit, 1994
AR  Robert Brandom, Articulating Reasons, 2000
OVS  Donald Davidson, On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme, 1984
CTK  Donald Davidson, A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge, 1990
SCT  Donald Davidson, The Structure and Content of Truth, 1990
MS  Donald Davidson, The Myth of the Subjective, 1989
PO  Donald Davidson, The Problem of Objectivity, 1995
NDE  Donald Davidson, A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs, 1986
RTH  Hilary Putnam, Reason, Truth and History, 1997
TC  Hilary Putnam, The Threefold Cord, 1999
MW  John McDowell, Mind and World, 1996

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Pragmatism: Acknowledging Authority by De-Representing

1.1 The Battle of the Notion of Representation

The notion of representation is at the center of a cultural conflict engaging practitioners ranging from literary critics to computer scientists. The clusters of problems entailed underneath the heading are by many considered the philosophical problems *par excellence* because a satisfactory account of the representational dimension of linguistic practice will have to answer or exorcize questions in fields spanning from theory of perception to the classical theoretical triad of linguistic meaning, truth and reference. In short, what is at stake from the perspective of the traditional metaphysician, are the rational constraints on linguistic interaction provided by the world itself, while theorists who reject the traditional constraints, whether provided by a correspondence theory of truth, a theory of perception, or otherwise, will have to offer alternative constraints on our linguistic locutions that do not pay tribute to epistemic realist intuitions. When the neopragmatic anti-representationalists point out that the notion of representation is the unscientific Trojan horse of modern science, creating a non-naturalistic gap between representations and what they purport to denote, they initiate the exorcism of the representational ghost and offer a welcome opportunity to reclaim and re-acknowledge the authority and responsibility that is characteristic of linguistic interlocutors caught up in inferential webs. The memetic soldiers in the representationalistic castle slaughter the rational constraints that have characterized epistemological modernism and, consequently, set the stage for a post-epistemological modernism, in which the theory of knowledge no longer is plagued by what is considered by many as the defining Cartesian problems of modernity, namely skepticism in general and skepticism about other minds in particular. The reason for this is that the neopragmatists dismiss the picture of the subject as standing outside the world it experiences, imposing organizing schemes on uninterpreted sense data.¹

Our account of the representational dimension of linguistic discourse is intimately connected to what kind of society we want, what manner we want to talk, what self-image we want to convey, and what status we want to ascribe to our common sensical locutions, i.e. whether we want to preserve or occasion change. Neopragmatists like Robert Brandom, Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty put creativity and innovation at the heart of language use by developing the linguistic turn away from conceiving of the relationship between the linguistic and the nonlinguistic
realm in terms of representation and towards an instrumental naturalist-historicist understanding of our linguistic resources. Such an understanding is instrumental because it acknowledges purpose-dependence, naturalist because it allows no mediating entities between the world and us, and historicist because it allows no fixed meanings. The neopragmatic radicalization of the linguistic turn signals increased sensitivity towards the particularia of subjects and situations of interpretation because, balancing between transcendentalism and scientism, we are neither allowed to pre-fix nor to reduce our conceptual resources, but rather encouraged to persistently negotiate about the propositional content of our linguistic locutions. In the end, the neopragmatist says, we are the ones who must defend the meaning of our locutions. The success of the project depends on whether neopragmatism is able to account for its basic concepts in its own terms, and perhaps more significantly whether it, as it promises, can provide the alternative constraints on linguistic usage that can finally retire foundational perceptual constraints as those suggested in classical epistemology and more recently by Hilary Putnam and John McDowell.

In this essay, we will tentatively go beyond the distinctions, drawn by Rorty and others, between representationalism and anti-representationalism, realism and antirealism, self-foundation and self-creation, solidarity and objectivity, and therapy and construction, drawing heavily on the resources of inferential semantics, accompanied by resources recently freed in the anti-representationalist camp. Moving beyond these distinctions is epigonic to the kind of modernism that encourages awareness not only of the anxiety of influence, but of the anxiety of being influential as well. It is accepting Brandom’s insight that “we are already inside the game of giving and asking for reasons. We inhabit a normative stance.” It also implies an awareness of the fact that while the scientific revolution changed and still dramatically changes the lives of men, we are yet to see the corresponding enlightening hermeneutic or linguistic revolution, which I believe will look very much like a general uptake in the common sensical vocabulary, what will be called folk vocabulary in 4.4, of naturalist-historicist neopragmatic semantics that proves wrong those who still think theory has to be radically separated from practice.

The issue of representation will be treated as the center of narrative gravity, which means that, along the way, we will deal with pragmatics, semantics and epistemology, and touch issues such as theories of perception and action, and notions such as truth, reference, meaning, interpretation and justification to mention a few. Roughly outlined, three alternative approaches will be assessed. The first approach is that of the representationalist or the metaphysical realist, who is the archenemy of most thinkers considered here. The representationalist or external realist, to be dubbed Metaphysicus, typically holds a version of the correspondence theory of truth and claims that there is ultimately one non-perspectival and correct description of how things are, towards which the physical sciences gradually converge. The success of our physical sciences, he says, relies on the fact that their terms actually refer and that the statements that comprise their central tenets are true or approximately true. He conceives of the space of reasons as, in Rorty’s words, “finite and structured”, and his realism, or vocabulary of settle-
ment, it will be argued, is made up of a necrotic web of beliefs that fails to naturalize and historicize language. Even though a consensus will have it that his framework has fallen in dismay, his intuitions still have a powerful grip on our thinking, and continue to appear every time we privilege one vocabulary for another or accept our common sensical locutions at face value. I will contrast the representationalist’s vocabulary of settlement, which I will urge that we should release from its duty, with the neopragmatist’s vocabulary of objectivity.

The grand project of the anti-representationalist in the tradition of Dewey, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Quine and Sellars, represented most prominently today by Rorty and Davidson, is to usher us out of the spectatorial, empiricist and epistemological tradition. Characteristically, the anti-representationalist combines Sellars’ attack on the given with Quine’s attack on the traditional conception of structure of meaning. As Rorty puts it: “Sellars and Quine invoke the same argument, one which bears equally against the given-versus-nongiven and the necessary-versus-contingent distinctions. The crucial premise of this argument is that we understand knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief, and thus have no need to view it as accuracy of representation.” The anti-representationalists perform a radical break with the Cartesian epistemological tradition and offer a refreshing post-ontological philosophical scene, but their anti-essentialism might lead a neopragmatist such as Rorty to a too brisk dismissal of the essentialist terms. Ramberg is right when he says: “Rorty would give up nothing of importance, and indeed be placed to reclaim some useful fortifications from which to combat such tendencies [of professionalized philosophy towards decadent scholasticism], if he were less reticent than he has so far been about invoking notions like ‘rationality’ and ‘norms of reason’.” I also agree with the contention that “the best remedy for decadent philosophy is to conduct an aggressive campaign of pragmatizing reappropriation of just those terms that traditionally have been employed to express ahistoricist and essentialist conceptions of reflection,” which can be effected, I think, by developing a Rortian rationalism in Brandomian terms, that is, by closing the gap between Rorty’s linguistic romanticism and Brandom’s linguistic rationalism, without forgetting who the true enemy is. In order to do this, I will suggest a distinction between the vocabulary of settlement, which is applied in projects that pay tribute to epistemic realism, and the vocabulary of objectivity, which is applied in the neopragmatic project of achieving semantic realism, arguing that the latter is all we need and can have.

Finally, there are various attempts of steering clear of what some considers the Scylla of representationalistic foundationalism and the Charybdis of anti-foundationalism. Putnam, McDowell and Brandom are all attempting to steer a third way. While Putnam and McDowell often pay their compliments to the representationalist, attempting to recover empiricism and theories of perception, Brandom pays most of his compliments to the anti-representationalists and joins them in constituting what might be dubbed neopragmatism. It is often difficult to decide when anti-representationalism and Brandomian inferentialism conflict and when they are simply complementary stories. Throughout the essay, differences, as well as agreements, will be iden-
tified. The most significant difference, we might preliminarily note, consists in the preferred order of semantic explanation. Brandom vouches for an expressivist order that he blames the anti-representationalists for ignoring. The two different levels of the theory of expression are first an explanation of the knowing how in terms of the knowing that, or how what is explicit arises out of the implicit, and secondly, an explanation of the nature of the expression of propositional content that hinges on how implicit, content-conferring norms become explicit as rules. Neopragmatism, it will be argued, possesses an arsenal that is powerful enough to refute the allegations made against it, most notably of promoting relativism and skepticism. It defends theoretical elements and insights too important to dismiss in a race to acquire the new seriousness that neorealist as Putnam and McDowell urge us to adopt and that inevitably results in a failure to note the decisive role played by fellow language users in determining propositional content and making the case for the normative dimension of linguistic performances. A consequence of this failure is that their theory of meaning prevents us from identifying the empirical features that make correct interpretation possible because it tells us to look where nothing can be found – in the world per se. The anti-representationalists, the neorealists’ story goes, perform overkill on the representationalist. The neorealists, my story goes, can be charged with attempted overkill on the anti-representationalist. It should not be forgotten, however, that the neorealists raise a number of objections against the neopragmatist that he can profit from facing. Throughout the essay I will meet objections like those of promoting relativism, skepticism and eurocentrism, which testify about superficial, but common, readings of neopragmatic texts, as well as better-motivated charges of defatalization and of consolidating the Platonic withdrawal from the world. Irresponsible relativism, superfluous skepticism, and vulgar subjectivism, I will argue and, thereby, shift the burden of proof, are intelligible alternatives only insofar as we, like McDowell and Putnam, entertain the realist intuitions that characterize empiricism, neo-Humean philosophy and the race for contingency-transcendent universality.

Since we will be dealing with semantics, a major question will be what a theory of linguistic meaning should look like. Semantic discourse is here understood as a normative discourse trading on how linguistic locutions ought to be used or are correctly used. The traditional answers usually exploit the idea that the meaning of a sentence is determined either by a specification of the truth conditions, the verification method, or the pragmatic consequences of endorsing the claim. The preferred thinkers in this essay all share the attempt to work out a modest theory of meaning, as opposed to, for instance, Dummett’s immodest theory of meaning, which, while attacking psychologism and behaviorism, attempts to preserve empiricist epistemology. As social-theorists Brandom, Wilfrid Sellars, Davidson and Rorty come together at one crucial moment, which, according to Rorty, defines the core of both Davidson and Sellars’ theories. This moment arises when they modestly take it that anybody possesses a partly self-referential
concept of truth and commit themselves to explaining true in terms of the language that we know. Rorty’s crusade against the recognition-transcendence of immodest theories instructs him to say that truth can only name a goal if it is thought to be a fixed goal, which it of course is not. In fact, an important neopragmatic parameter is that the account for discursive success and the representational dimension can not be allowed any appeals to something recognition-transcendent that would take us outside the realm of reasons. Nevertheless, the neopragmatists might be said to share Dummett’s semantic project of providing “a theoretical representation of a practical ability”.

Since this is a learning piece, taking care of expository concerns, i.e. performing the role of the Rortian second-class critic who defends the received wisdom, is assigned the position of privilege. Only tentatively, will I attempt to be the Rortian first-class critic who recontextualizes and shows that the thinkers haven’t understood the patterns of the past or the needs of the present. This invites charges of being committed to Gadamerian explicatio, rather than applicatio, but as the field of inquiry is so rich and partly difficult to follow, it deserves explications that hopefully can help precluding dismissals of neopragmatism for the wrong reasons, a task that it is virtually impossible to execute without applicatio. When I said a little earlier that we should go beyond the distinction between therapeutic and constructive writing, what I meant was that there is a way of writing that combines the two modes. The therapeutic writing of Wittgenstein, Sellars and Rorty has given us leverage to start offering explicitly constructive accounts that are implicitly therapeutical. Such writing is beautifully exemplified by Brandom who, while drawing on the therapeutical anti-representational moral that tells us what not to talk about, exhibits a way of thinking which will later be described as the simultaneous creation and killing off into literalness of new metaphors, a task he executes by assigning the new locutions a pattern in our reasoning. My own writing is intended to be more explicitly therapeutical than Brandom’s but less so than Rorty’s, which, first, means that vocabularies will be contrasted, more specifically, the neopragmatic vocabulary will in Rortian spirit be contrasted with the neorealistic; and, secondly, arguments, in contrast to Arguments, will be offered in the Brandomian game of giving and asking for reasons.

### 1.2 Overview and Perspective

My general tactic is to employ the inferentialist vocabulary as the grid or the foil on the representationalistic locutions, while defending the Rortian self-image, partly by being as anti-scientistic as Putnam, as modest as McDowell and as relational as Davidson. Inferentialism presents new challenges to semantics, and makes possible interesting re-readings of the representationalists, as well as of the anti-representationalists - adults not to be thrown out with the bathwater. In the remainder of this chapter, I will sketch an account of the modern history of
the notion of representation, look into the trouble with the realist and introduce pragmatism, which, with its dual insistence on naturalization and historization, can help us beyond epistemic realism. The introduction of neopragmatism is intended to serve as a stack of discursive moves providing us with ammunition against neorealism later on in the essay. In chapter 2, central tenets in the philosophies of Quine and Sellars are exposed in order to show how their break with crude positivism presents a way into textualist postmodernism (e.g. Quinean conceptual relativity), but also contains building blocks for post-textualist philosophy, detectable in for instance Brandom’s *Making It Explicit*, as well as roadblocks in the avenues trafficked by neorealism. It will be suggested that the neopragmatist’s replacement of Quine’s physicalist focus on epistemology with a naturalistic focus on semantics is necessary to counter threats of reductionism and secure a plurality of descriptions-conception as well as a scientific model of science that is cleared of non-naturalistic entities. I will show how Sellars’ inferentialism, his psychological nominalism and his attack on notions of givenness constitute important dramaturgical elements in the neopragmatist narrative. The proper consequences of Sellars’ attack on the myth of the given are still to be sufficiently acknowledged outside the pragmatic tradition, allowing the representationalist spectatorial tradition to linger on, presenting us, for instance, with the mind-body problem, which might be a real problem, but, nevertheless, a waste of energy to attempt to solve, instead of creating new vocabularies and better ways of talking. Feeling a pain, in a better vocabulary, such as Sellars’, is not to know a pain. Anti-pragmatists often try to drive a wedge between the neopragmatist and his closest ancestors, that is, Quine and Sellars, in order to deny him access to the required passwords for a vocabularist enterprise. My concern is to point out that if the anti-pragmatists take the narrativist turn seriously, they will give up on the attempt to nail the correct and representative world story and realize that we have to start taking responsibility ourselves for the kind of material content we want our linguistic locutions to convey, which means that we have to tell each other different stories that identify features that can prove themselves to be salient to our concerns without fearing that they might lack the referential back-up. After all, it is our purposes that need fulfillment, rather than the world that need depicting.

In chapter 3, I will assess the conceptual framework of inferentialism. The inferentialist philosophy of Robert Brandom shows how it is possible to combine the major tenets of anti-representationalism with a reinstatement of at least some representationalistic locutions without falling into realism and without letting the representational locutions play the role of semantic primitives. An inferentialist acknowledges that the representational dimension of semantic content has to be understood as derived from a normative pragmatic base that accords significance. Brandom is championing the Socratic reflection of explicating the implicit commitments so that we can assess their consequences by examination and justification. We will see how he underlines the way claims play the dual role of being a justifier and standing in need of justification, and the significance in practical reasoning of the fact that we are inhabiting a normative
stance. According to Brandom, “the defining characteristic of discursive practice is the production and consumption of propositional contents to be understood in terms of inferential articulation because propositions are what can serve and stand in need of reasons”. We will see that his account of truth, rather than accounting for propositional content, has the objective of accounting for the representational dimension of discourse. Once the task of telling the skeptic to get lost is completed and worries about conceptual relativism belong in a closed chapter, we are facing challenges, such as identifying error and establishing constraints other than those of foundational import on our conceptual resources. Brandom’s rationalist-expressivist theoretical machinery possesses superior conceptual resources for dealing with the new agenda in the post-ontological, post-epistemological and Rortian literary culture. In this chapter, I will also provide some reasons to prefer Brandom’s linguistic rationalism, which reappropriates the vocabulary of objectivity, rather than Rorty’s linguistic romanticism, which is most concerned with exorcizing the realistic intuitions, and urge Rorty to become a more consistent Brandonian.

Chapter 4, on the moderate realism of Putnam and McDowell, first portrays Hilary Putnam as a significant contributor to the pragmatist narrative, particularly through the anti-scientism and insistence that we have to break out of the Cartesian mentalistic tradition, but he is also portrayed as attempting to develop pragmatism in a reactionary direction by trusting his realist intuitions. Putnam seeks an *acquiescence in a picture* that I take as a resignation from the game of giving and asking for reasons. Like Brandom, he exploits the regress-stopping potential in the Wittgensteinian heritage, but unlike Brandom, whose employment of Wittgenstein secures an ever-moving normative pragmatic base, Putnam supplies the realistic intuitions with so much fuel that the heat should make us uncomfortable *in the picture*, to say the least. He interprets Aristotle, James and Wittgenstein in a manner that makes a restitution of naïve direct perceptual realism look like what can secure soundness in the ongoing human conversation, and, thus, disrespects Sellars’ devastating critique of appeals to perceptual givens and neopragmatic antioccularcentrism. Putnam’s neorealism, his position between what he calls relativism and materialism, I will try to put across, is retrograde and not sufficiently radical because it disavows the hard-won responsibility we should take for our linguistic resources, and it attempts to block the neopragmatic mechanisms for improving our ways of talking. Conceiving of method and rationality in the traditional way, like Putnam does, threatens to block progress by making some problems look unavoidable. A neopragmatist, pace Putnam, thinks that we do not possess a sufficient account of our discursive practices before even our argumentative tools are naturalized and historicized. In the second half of the chapter, John McDowell is portrayed as attempting to upgrade Quine’s empiricism to resistance of the viruses injected into his theoretical corpus by neopragmatic critique. McDowell, unlike Brandom and the anti-representationalists, believes that we need substantial rational constraints on our beliefs, which render us answerable to the world as a conversational partner. Merely causal linkage, McDowell says, “won’t do, because thoughts without intuitions would be empty”. And further: “It is not as if the fact directly forces
itself on the hearer; his rational standing with respect to it surely depends on (at least) his hearing and understanding what his informant says, and this dependence is rational, not merely causal. In order to bypass Sellars’ attack on the given, McDowell locates a second conceptual nature within the logical space of reason that purports to secure that our linguistic resources are tied to the external world. From the neopragmatic perspective, this looks very much like an ad hoc strategy committing us to a judgmental relative of sense datum intermediaries. McDowell is on the right track, however, when he insists that we need a conception of tradition as a repository from which to draw guidance in executions of novel as well as old purposes, but, pace McDowell, I will argue, we do not have to go outside the Davidsonian process of triangulation in order to have access to this repository. A similar concern is voiced by Ramberg, who urges Rorty to conceive of tradition as a normative notion that expresses some kind of unity of goal, and to drop the *logosphobia* that is fueled by his anti-essentialism, which makes possible a conception of philosophical rationality and argumentation void of methodological implications, because: “To strive to think logically is not to follow a methodological norm, it is just to think.” My suggestion, which will be developed throughout the essay, is to connect the notions of tradition, therapy and inferential articulation. The moderate realists are offended when the anti-representationalists portray them as metaphysical realists light. I will try not to do that, and, instead, contrast their vocabulary with the neopragmatist’s to see which proves to be the more fertile.

In chapter 5, on Davidson and Rorty, we will see, in an exposition that owes a lot to Rorty’s and Ramberg’s interpretations, that Davidson’s anti-conventionalist philosophy, or his inquiry into the three legs of modern man, namely the three varieties of knowledge, breaks with reificational tendencies in realism, chief among which is fixing the empirical content of our ordinary propositions. The anti-representationalists replace, as Habermas points out, the objectivity of experience with the intersubjectivity of reaching understanding. In Davidson’s case, understanding sentences is closely related to understanding truth conditions. Davidson, like Putnam of TC, targets epistemic intermediaries, but unlike Putnam who focuses on avoiding sense data, Davidson targets what he calls the myth of the subjective or “their judgmental cousins, the supposed objects of the propositional attitudes, whether thought of as propositions, tokens of propositions, representations, or fragments of ‘mentalese’”, and the idea that “these are the entities that the mind can ‘entertain’, ‘grasp’, ‘have before it’, or ‘be acquainted’ with.” Davidson’s attack on the distinction between conceptual schemes and representational content does not, as many seem to think, invite conceptual relativism beyond the perspectivism that arises from the fact that minds are many while nature is one. Refusing to accept the Kantian claim that only one conceptual scheme is possible, is not accepting a plurality of schemes. The dissolution of the scheme/content distinction, Davidson says, leaves us no objects with respect to which the problem of representation can be raised. Beliefs are true or false, he says, “but they represent nothing. It is good to be rid of representations, and with them the correspondence theory of
truth, for it is thinking there are representations that engenders thoughts of relativism”. The anti-pragmatists, who criticize neopragmatic applications of Quinean and Sellarsian insights, are also likely to deny Rorty the neopragmatic alliance with Davidson that he is after, reading Davidson as an accomplice, even though a radical one, in the project of securing answerability to the world itself and Rorty as an irresponsible rhetoric. Davidson is turning into a Wittgenstein, whom everyone wants to cite as an adherent to his or her own particular view. However, in the following it will be taken for granted that Davidson and Rorty share the anti-representationalist pursuit, differing mainly in the tools and styles they prefer for serving shared purposes. Rorty is an excellent exploiter of the potential of Davidson’s philosophy, as will become clear, for instance, in the discussion of the Rortian application of the ‘metaphor’ metaphor, which will be used in order to release some reflections on the relationship between constructive and therapeutic writing, and on the differences that set apart approaches that center on preserving our ordinary ways of talking and approaches that center on creating better purpose-fulfilling ways. While Davidson’s argumentative method appears closer to traditional philosophical method, Rorty, having drawn the consequences of Davidson’s philosophy and acknowledged the contingency of language as well as the role of new metaphors as our cultural infants, for us to cultivate if we want them to rise above the causal realm and find their place within the linguistic games, exhibits through his writing a hypersensitivity to the fact that he operates in a realm of insufficient reason. Breakfast at Irony’s, the second part of the chapter, concentrates on the Rortian agenda. In PMN, Rorty breaks free from the metaphor of the mind as medium of appearances. His demoting of the guiding realist intuitions prepares the ground for a conversationalist, literary culture in which we aspire for solidarity, rather than objectivity. I will exploit the tension between what David Hall calls the two Rortys, the inferentialist and the imaginative Rorty, in order to show that the neopragmatist possesses implicitly therapeutic inferential mechanisms that attend to tradition, which it gradually transforms by changing propositional content, as well as explicitly constructive mechanisms provided by the notion of metaphor - the tool for giving birth to new ways of talking that he receives from Davidson. The anti-representationalist, I will claim, would profit from softening his negation of the representational framework and ushering us into a period in which we can exploit the constructive potential of the vocabularist framework, a task for which Brandom might be our Virgil. True therapy might turn out to be construction.

My story is, in Rortian spirit, a story of villains and heroes as well as a story of collaboration. The heroes from limbo, chosen for guidance, are Wilfrid Sellars and W. V. Quine. The villains are McDowell and Putnam when wearing their realist robes, while the heroes are Davidson, Rorty and Brandom. The syncretism, my hope is, will pertain more to ideas than to heroes. I will not be so dramatic as to claim to be an anti-representationalist in the morning and an expressivist at
night, but I do believe that each approach possesses certain virtues that the other does not, because they are paying attention to slightly different causal patterns, one might say, and frankly spoken, I am very reluctant to pass on the possibility to employ both vocabularies when appropriate. One example would be to alternate between the notion of beliefs, which might carry some unfortunate Humean connotations, while being perfectly entrenched in the common sense vocabulary, and the notion of doxastic commitments, which is the corresponding inferentialist notion. Anyhow, both the anti-representationalist and the inferentialist should happily follow McDowell in thinking that there is “no better project for philosophy than to try to understand the place of content – of conceptual consciousness – in the world”. They certainly insist that their narratives are not told in nature’s own language.

1.3 The Modern History of Representation and the Trouble with the Realist

In this section, we will establish that theory still abounds in representational intuitions. The modern history of the notion of representation will be sketched, and the representationalist tradition will be contrasted with an alternative tradition that takes inference as its central concept. Throughout the essay, the two traditions serve as contrastive forces, and, hopefully, the reader will be convinced of the superiority of the second. One hundred years ago, realism was opposed to idealism, just as mind was opposed to reality. As a consequence of the linguistic turn, language replaced mind as what was opposed to reality. The contamination of ‘sense data’, due to critiques from J. L. Austin and Gilbert Ryle, among others, set off the linguistic turn by making philosophers stop talking about perception and start talking about experience, transforming the perception-world riddle into a language-world riddle. Rather than having to answer questions about the mind-dependency of reality, the philosophers now had to answer questions about the representational relation that persisted between the linguistic and the nonlinguistic realm, and the antirealist replaced the idealist. Michael Dummett describes the difference between realism and antirealism in these terms: “Realism I characterize as the belief that statements of the disputed class possess an objective truth-value, independently of our means of knowing it: they are true or false in virtue of a reality existing independently of us. The antirealist opposes to this the view that statements of the disputed class are to be understood only by reference to the sort of thing which we count as evidence of that class.” Pragmatism, Gilbert Harman says, “might be considered a form of antirealism. But it is probably better seen as a rejection of the distinction between realism and antirealism on the grounds that there is no sharp distinction between theoretical and practical questions”.

According to someone who acknowledges the Dummettian distinction, a representationalist is a realist, while an anti-representationalist is an antirealist. Rorty has shown, however, that the realist/antirealist distinction is preceded by the representationalist/anti-representationalist dis-
tinction, rendering both the realist as well as the antirealist caught up in the representationalistic tangle. The anti-representationalist is the first, Rorty claims, to break free of the traditional vacillation between realism and some form of idealism because he is the first to reject the picture of a radical disjunction between appearance and reality, or inner and outer. Acknowledging that applications of the disjuncts are always bound by context, he can say that he is constantly in touch with reality because using vocables “is as direct as contact with reality can get (as direct as kicking rocks, e.g.).” And: “The fallacy comes in thinking that the relationship between vocable and reality has to be piecemeal (like the relation between individual kicks and individual rocks), a matter of discrete component capacities to get in touch with discrete hunks of reality.” The anti-representationalist wants us to dispose of a cluster of concepts connected to the representationalistic paradigm. Rorty’s examples are ‘fact of the matter’ and ‘bivalence’. The representationalist agrees with the Davidsonian dictum that the mind and the brain cannot fail to hook up with the external world. The disagreement arises on the nature of the hooking, that is, whether we are rationally or causally hooked onto the world, and, further, with what significance this leaves representational locutions, such as refer, fact, and objectivity. While the neopragmatist is content with a causal connection, the representationalist is after something more.

The core of empiricist anthropology was the conception of language as the vehicle of objective, scientific knowledge, having its cognitive content fixed and determined by worldly contribution independently of the psychological state of any language user. The anti-representationalist anthropology threatens to turn empiricist psychological atomism into social atomism, unless he makes the concessions that Davidson makes, as will be elaborate in chapter 5, in his discussion of the process of triangulation, only recently fully embraced by Rorty, that effect a change in rhetoric, i.e. it takes the edge off therapeutical metaphors such as world well lost etc.. Going beyond the distinction between representationalism and anti-representationalism, does not mean that we are reinvoking truth-norms or finding a way to bypass what Sellars dubbed the myth of the given. It means reading the anti-representationalists as following the constructive inferentialist example of Brandom, and sharing his diagnosis that the domination of the representationalistic paradigm is prevailing even though popular opinion might have it otherwise, which provides us with an explicit motivation to continue contrasting the inferentialist with the representationalist approach: “It reigns not only in the whole spectrum of analytically pursued semantics, from model-theoretic, through possible worlds, directly counterfactual, and informational approaches to teleo-semantic ones, but also in structuralism inheriting the broad outlines of Saussure’s semantics, and even in those later continental thinkers whose poststructuralism is still so far mired in the representational paradigm that it can see no other alternative to understanding meaning in terms of signifiers standing for signifieds than to understand it in terms of signifiers standing for other signifiers. Even contemporary forms of pragmatism, which are explicitly motivated by the rejection of Platonist forms of the representational paradigm, have not embraced or sought to develop an expressivist alternative.”
Brandom summarizes the understanding of ourselves that he wants to succeed the psychological and social atomist understanding in these terms: “In a weak sense, any being that engages in linguistic practices, and hence applies concepts, is a rational being; in the strong sense, rational beings are not only linguistic beings but, at least potentially, also logical beings.” Agreeing with Brandom, should lead us into thinking that clothing our concerns in inferentialist, as opposed to representational, terms signals a fertile next step in the ongoing human conversation, establishing a non-Cartesian and non-empiricist point of view on topics such as subjectivity, intersubjectivity and objectivity. Brandom’s instruction to his readers that they are in no way obligated to employ his terms and conceptual framework, signals a significant change of mentality. His concern is not to show a first philosophy or a way of thinking that we are rationally instructed to embrace, but simply to show a way of thinking, among others, that can take care of pressing concerns in a better manner than the traditional theories within specific fields of inquiry, namely theoretical and practical reasoning.

According to Brandom, the two problems that arise with the traditional designational model that takes ‘representation’ as its semantic primitive, is that “it is not clear how to derive a notion of propositional contentfullness from [it], and [that] construing content in representational terms requires supplementation by a further story to get to the proper use of contentful expressions and the correct circumstances and consequences of being in contentful states”. Opposed to this model, he puts the inferential model in which “states and acts acquire content by being caught up in inferences, as premises and conclusions”. Brandom insists on treating normative intentional explanations as more fundamental than the causal ones because “talk of functional roles is already normative talk” and “attributing an intentional state is attributing a normative status”. Brandom believes that we can offer an adequate theory for the representeds, which he explains in terms of representing, and not the other way around, which is the strategy of his archenemy. Who, then, are the important contributors to the inferentialist alternative to representational semantics, and what are their major contributions? In the following, we will see that the inferentialist likes to think of Leibniz, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel and Frege as classical advocates of his framework. Later on, in the chapter on Brandom, we will see that Wittgenstein, Sellars and Davidson can be read as modern supporters who, unlike the representationalist, acknowledge the intimate connection between causation and inference that leaves each notion unable to arise on its own.

The battle between the approach that takes ‘representation’ as its basic explanatory concept and the approach that takes ‘inference’ as the basic concept, can be said to have historically originated in the conflict between Descartes, on one side, and Leibniz and Spinoza, the founders of the inferentialist tradition, on the other. While Descartes treated the notion of representation as an unexplained explainer, the other rationalists refused to ascribe it a non-derivative role, and attempted instead to derive ‘representation’ from the inferential significance of the act of representing. The empiricists inherited Descartes’ conviction about the explanatory
priority and transparency of the notion of correct representation, and, one might say, handed it
down to the logical empiricists and the general scientistic movement of the 20th century, result-
ing in, among other things, that the first philosophical problem facing freshmen at the universi-
ties is the problem of induction.\textsuperscript{35}

Kant’s perhaps most important contribution consists in his introduction of the idea that their
normative dimension characterizes our linguistic activities, thereby, making us responsible for
our actions and judgments. According to Kant, concepts have the form of rules that can be cor-
crectly or incorrectly applied. Conceiving of the language user as subject to rules, it should be
noted, is introducing a critical attitude to the rules of language, in the sense that changing the
rules can induce better vocabularies and patterns of reasoning.\textsuperscript{36} Kant, thus, gives birth to the
two logical spaces, that of reason and that of nature, and the corresponding split between justi-
ification and causation, notoriously confused by the pre-Kantian philosophers, something which
effected the representational theory of knowledge designed to suit Metaphysicus’ concerns.

While Descartes, Brandom says, offered a descriptive conception of intentionality, centering on
the properties of the mental substance, Kant offered a prescriptive account that put ‘necessity’,
taken to mean ‘according to rules’, in the place of the Cartesian ‘certainty’.\textsuperscript{37} Brandom urges us
to make a shift from the Cartesian physical/mental distinction, which still characterizes contem-
porary discussions within the philosophy of consciousness, to the Kantian normative/factual, to
be conceived of, not as a dualism, but simply as performing different roles in practical reason-
ing. Kant, however, makes a fatal mistake that prepares for the advent of empiricist anthropol-
ogy, when he opts for a regulism that treats norms as explicit rules or principles, inviting re-
gresses of rules and opening the space of possibilities for reductionist regularism that we can
recognize today in scientistic endeavors to bypass the normative dimension. What Kant should
have done, was opting for, what we can dub, neopragmatic regularism, in which norms are im-
plied in practices, as well as erasing his distinction between conceptual schemes and represen-
tational content that effected the withdrawal from the world.

Hegel’s contribution to inferentialism can hardly be exaggerated. He synthesizes Enlighten-
ment inferentialism with Romantic expressivism\textsuperscript{38} without sharing Enlightenment preference for
the vocabulary of the natural sciences as what allows us a special access to the realm of truths,
truths that are discovered and not made. Like the Romantics, Dag Østerberg says, “he puts the
natural sciences lower than the social and cultural sciences because its field of inquiry in itself is
lower, it has less spirit”.\textsuperscript{39} The neopragmatists want to win Hegel’s historicism by stripping off
the connotations of the absolute spirit: “What Hegel describes as the process of spirit gradually
becoming self-conscious of its intrinsic nature”, Rorty says, “is better described as the process
of European linguistic practices changing at a faster and faster rate”.\textsuperscript{40} Hegel, the neopragma-
tists say, showed how we can attain self-certainty with the arrival of a new vocabulary, but also
how this self-certainty lasts but a second.\textsuperscript{41} An inferentialist interprets Hegel’s two primitive se-
mantic concepts in the *Phenomenology*, mediation and determinate negation, as equivalents to his own notions of inferential articulation and material incompatibility.

Frege is also considered an important accomplice in the inferentialist project. The semantics of the early Frege of the *Begriffschrift* let the notion of inferential role found the notion of content. Two claims, then, shared conceptual content if they had the same inferential role. The later Frege makes the unfortunate and retrograde decision, which, one might say, prepares the ground for the scientistic reign of the 20th century, to assign truth the primacy in the order of explanation. According to Brandom, citing Dummett, this had preposterous consequences, chief among which were a “concentration on logical truth and its generalization, analytical truth, as the problematic notions, rather than on the notion of a statement’s being a deductive consequence of other statement”.

The significance of this shift, however, is not necessarily that it licenses the establishment of a representationalist order of explanation, as Brandom points out, since Frege, like Davidson, takes truth to be primitive, not to be accounted for by recourse to a prior notion of reference. It can, however, be interpreted as a shift away from semantic expressivism and a preparation for the appearance of the representationalist/anti-representationalist dialectic. The neopragmatist, however, considers the inferentialist Frege his ancestor.

Why is it so important to be aware of dangers of the neorealistic wave, and wherein lies its implicit and explicit motivation? The following comments are intended to illuminate what I consider as the tendency to misunderstand the liberating as well as the constraining potential of neopragmatism that is inherent in attempts to restore fundamental constraints on the linguistic locutions. The neorealists explicitly draw on a Western occularcentric tradition that embodies largely unquestioned implicit methodological preferences. To start with: Sociologically speaking, the fall of the elite and the rise of pulp fiction can be said to have occasioned a struggle among scholars to regain a privileged position above the stances of the masses, a *qualified stance* that counters a subjectivism out of control. Philosophically speaking, this is part of what results in unfortunate attempts to recover the representationalistic vocabulary, a revaluation of the vocabulary of settlement and the concepts that imprisoned man for decades, such as objectivity, reference, truth, progress, what McDowell calls the vocabulary of objectivity, and what Habermas thinks is “bursting every provinciality asunder,” and a corresponding devaluation of the anti-representationalistic theoretic currency, such as contingency, intersubjectivity, irony etc., or, in other words, away from the conversational criteria of inquiry and discursive practice. As the story goes here, we are entitled to the vocabulary of objectivity, in fact we depend on it, but not in the sense that it is the vocabulary of settlement that bursts provinciality asunder, directing our attention away from the task of learning and improving our provincial and conversational criteria and towards securing conceptual resources by providing foundational constraints. The appeals to some form of omniscient gaze that provides us with judgmental intermediaries
between the world and us are what the neopragmatist considers a dangerous non-naturalistic residue.

The neorealist reaction must be understood as responding to the postmodern mannerism, accompanying the democratic surplus and incorporations of pluralist attitudes, which is characterized by relativistic attitudes and refusals of opinion. The initial three approaches to the notion of representation reflect different diagnoses of the present situation, different criteria of what characterizes a qualified stance and result in different remedies. While the neorealists typically think that neopragmatic conversational criteria is insufficient and strengthens the negative trend, the neopragmatists typically think that the neorealist intuitions are exactly what prevent each linguistic interlocutor from acknowledging his responsibility as a linguistic game player. The French affair, however, provides a strong incentive to thinkers of analytical leanings, neopragmatists and neorealists alike, to articulate constructive accounts that reflect these diagnoses in order to combat the possible downsides of the post-philosophical community that Jacques Bouveresse warns us about from France: “We have some experience of what happens when rhetoric, the power of words, and the cult of personality prevails over reason, logic and the rules of argumentation.”

The neorealists are backed by a forceful tradition. The visual metaphors have long held Western philosophy in their grip. Already Plato attempted to model knowledge on vision as something forcing the inevitable truth of a proposition on us. And Aristotle developed, as Heidegger pointed out, Plato’s idea into the notion of truth as accuracy of representation. The metaphors of occularcentrism could first with Frege be changed into the metaphors of grasping (sense). In this essay, Putnam and McDowell are interpreted as modern advocates of the occularcentric tradition, while Brandom and the anti-representationalists break free, following the example of Frege and Heidegger. As Dewey points out, the spectator theory of knowledge, according to which the knower is merely passively related to the things known, abounds epistemology, as it does when the 20th century-positivists develop a theory of empirical meaning that deservedly became and should continue to be a target of criticism. Crudely, the logical positivist theory of meaning centred around the contention that “(linguistic) means (nonlinguistic)”, and functioned as a recipe for the one-to-one correlation between word and object that is the chimera of the world story despised by the hermeneutically oriented. One of the reasons that we are drawn to this account, as Sellars tells us, is the fact that grammar misleads us when we should conceive of ‘means’ as functioning very much like the copula. Quine and Sellars both, as will be attended to in the next chapter, initiated massive attacks on this positivist orthodoxy.

An implicit motivation, which is an important source of the trouble with the realist, perhaps resulting from the inability to get a grip on discourse unless it takes place in nature’s own language, is that he is unable to leave behind his intuition that philosophical questions are mandatory. In contrast, the postanalytical pragmatist treasures the insight that there are burdens we do not want to recognize and cultural heritage we do not want to receive, like he treasures the idea
that, because all philosophical problems are contingent, we are free to invent new ways of talking. Like Rorty and in contrast to most realists, neopragmatists in general feel dismay with the doxographic genre of historiography which assumes that philosophers are attempting to answer the same canonized eternal questions. The metaphilosophical topic of how to understand the nature of philosophical questions will occasionally be returned to because it can be exploited in order to get a grip of some interesting differences that pertain between the neopragmatists and the realists. Rorty, unlike the realists, being instructed by his therapeutical mode of inquiry, thinks that inquiring into how the problems came to be seen as a pressing concern can dissolve a great number of the philosophical problems. The mind-body problem and the accompanying problem of representation, he says, result from the "unfortunate linguistic development" of combining the faulty idea of an inner Cartesian theatre with the Lockean 'idea' idea. The essence of Rorty's PMN-story of the invention of the mind is that taken together these two ideas gave birth to epistemology as the central philosophical discipline designed to the hopeless task of building bridges between the mental and the material substances. Rorty insists, with therapy in mind, that we should drop the appearance/reality and inner/outer distinctions and, instead, constructively contrast the more and the less useful ways of thinking and talking. After Descartes, Rorty says, "the appearance-reality distinction began to slip out of focus, and was replaced by the inner-outer distinction", and the quest for, as one might put it, the transformation of the inner into the outer was initiated. In my narrative, the realist is portrayed as approving of a cluster of really bad questions and as preserving the par excellence necrotic web of beliefs of our time. Failing to acknowledge the importance of other people, he accords significance to the necrotic representational web of beliefs, with which an organism can function, but it is there and it is dead.

Naturally, we cannot do justice to all forms of realism or exhaust the field of options in this essay. Daniel Dennett's stance dependent moderate realism, which exhibits real patterns; David Lewis' ontological project, which takes physics at face value; and Artur Fine's natural ontological attitude, which leave electrons and peace with the same ontological status, among other approaches, are left largely uncommented. The neopragmatist, while positively inclined towards the Quineanism of Dennett and Fine, is as skeptical towards the Quinean scientism of Lewis, as he is towards the scientifically motivated project of Jerry Fodor. By emphasizing the generic similarities between concept users and non-concept users, rather than the fact that concept users are set apart by being subjects to conceptual norms, a realist like Fodor establishes a point of view, from which we no longer have the possibility to differentiate between things with nature and things with history. I do not intend to say much about theorists, like Fodor, who attempt to build an atomistic theory of linguistic meaning, other than to point out that they fail to acknowledge that the sentence, and not the word, is the central unit of linguistic meaning because it makes moves in the language game that we can take responsibility for. Fodor and Ernest Lepore's Holism – A Shopper's Guide outlines an atomistic rival to the meaning-theoretical
throne. Atomistic theories, in contrast to holistic theories, are distinguished by their bottom-up semantic explanation that takes it for granted that semantic elements can be accounted for one by one. In a review of Brandom’s AR,49 Lepore finds it ridiculous that Brandom offers the place of honor to normativity. He also claims that Brandom cannot account for the compositionality of sentences, i.e. the way they are constructs of subsentential expressions. Lepore, the inferentialist says, is unable to appreciate that the singular terms and predicates play an indirect inferential role by their systematic contribution to sentences, which play the direct role, and that the substitutional holism makes it the case that mastery of one singular term involves mastering many. Rorty’s advice is to conceive of pragmatism as a break with the epistemological tradition, rather than as a holistic alternative to meaning-theoretic atomism.50 As far as I can see, there is no reason why it could not be both.

The idea of the world cutting itself up at its joints and presenting us with the bare facts is the dream of the metaphysical realist and the essence of a pragmatist’s nightmare. The trouble with neorealism, whether figuring as restorations of theories of perception or blithe ignorance of the separation of the spaces of nature and reason, is not only that it implies immaturity, as Rorty will have it, but also that it naively embraces our ordinary ways of talking. Professed naïveté as regards our worldly contact covers up attempts to reinstate the soundness of getting things ahistorically right, leaving vocabularist-historicist notions of contingency empty. The most severe consequence of a subscription to neorealism, however, is most likely the form of defeatism implied by disclaiming the agent’s total responsibility that neopragmatism, against popular opinion, actually secures. The right way to repudiate realist ways of talking is probably not to conceive of these ways as senseless, because anything can be imputed sense if that is what we want. Brandom, for instance, prefers to think of correspondence theories as unenlightening rather than false, encouraging us to conceive of realist ways of talking as irresponsible applications of necrotic webs of beliefs that have served their role and now should be replaced by more useful ways of talking.

The neorealist initiative is headed by old minds that never felt comfortable within the confines of textualism and young minds, trained in the analytic tradition with a scientific realist leaning, yearning for homeruns that take them safely back to base without caring much for the fruitful consequences of a play of descriptions and the metaphorical births of new vocabularies. The seriousness, it is important to note, is often fueled by confusing responsible theoretical forms and irresponsible forms of irony in everyday life, effecting a failure to appreciate how the anti-representationalists’ radical break with the epistemological project denies the skeptic and the relativist his premissory ground, while shifting focus from metaphysics and epistemology to sociology and history. The fallacy that tempts philosophers into entertaining realist intuitions starts with a diagnosis of contemporary society as lacking the proper extra-linguistic basis to secure communication by making possible agreement and getting things right, and culminates with ensuring that the external world can provide us with a foundation on which to rest. What the story
ignores, is the very fact that these epistemic realist intuitions are what makes subjectivism and conceptual relativism, on the one hand, and skepticism, on the other, look like intelligible alternatives. The disillusionment of the realist is a figment of his own theoretical parameters. These parameters also make it easy for him to portray the neopragmatist as ushering us into a relativistic conversationalist society where anything goes, but it is also a grave mistake.

The forms of neorealism that will be paid most attention to are Putnam’s *minuscular realism* and McDowell’s neo-Kantian *world realism*. Since Putnam and McDowell share the distrust of Metaphysicus with the neopragmatist, they will prove to be more fruitful as conversational partners than the vulgar representationalists or the anti-pragmatic realists which, according to Rorty, think the pragmatists brush the correspondence theory of truth aside too easily (like Dummett and Kripke) and underestimate depth (like Cavell and Nagel). Without embracing Putnam and McDowell’s forms of realism, since any form of technical realism, as Rorty says, collapses into intuitive realism, their leads will be followed on a couple of occasions in the project of assessing the essensialistic locutions. Putnam and McDowell share the neopragmatist’s fierce opposition to epistemic intermediaries between the world and us, but, focusing on avoiding perceptual givens only, in order to rescue a moderate form of representationalism, they make the mistake of establishing judgmental givens. The neopragmatist, however, is instructed by his naturalism to cut off non-naturalistic residues like judgmental intermediaries with Ockham’s razor. He acknowledges that the linguistic turn presented us with a new challenge, namely, that of preventing language from turning into another intermediary, which is what it becomes if we allow judgmental intermediaries or, like Dummett and Searle, keep a conventionalist understanding of language. We shall look closer into Putnam and McDowell’s versions of the given in chapter 4 and conventionalism in the chapter on Davidson.

Putnam and McDowell preserve an outlook with a long tradition in Western thinking. While Putnam is anxious to apply Aristotle without his metaphysical baggage, McDowell wants to do very much the same with Kant. Putnam’s naïve realistic *acquiescence in a picture*, that is, taking our common sensical locutions at face value, will be contrasted with the Rortian nominalist historicist’s awareness of the a posteriority and contingency of his insufficient reason. In chapter 4, it will be rehearsed what makes realism look bad and why empirical knowledge needs no epistemological foundation. Simultaneously, the questions will be posed whether Putnam’s perceptual natural realism or McDowell’s clever theory of second nature can provide us with reasons to recommit to epistemic realism and answerability to the world, or whether they are subjects to objections like Sellars’ critique of the given. Putnam and McDowell’s strategy is roughly to treat the myth of the given as a legend which can be bypassed by claiming that Sellars’ classical argument against foundational theories of perception is not strong enough to attack all versions of the given. It should be noted that a major drawback with their accounts is that they
cannot incorporate the neat vocabularist framework. In McDowell’s case, his objective is to assess empiricism, but the trouble with the empiricist, as Davidson points out, is this: “Empiricism like other isms, we can define pretty much as we please, but I take it to involve not only the pallid claim that all knowledge of the world comes through the agency of the senses, but also the conviction that this fact is of prime epistemological significance. The pallid idea merely recognizes the obvious causal role of the senses in mediating between objects and events in the world and our thoughts and talk about them; empiricism locates the ultimate evidence for those thoughts at this intermediate step.”

Davidson is willingly an empiricist in the pallid sense; that is, if being an empiricist means taking the senses to causally effect perceptual beliefs which have evidential roles. But the trouble with the empiricist is that he is usually after more. He wants, like McDowell, to think of the world as a conversational partner that is doing us favors. And, like McDowell, Davidson says, he “seems committed to epistemic intermediaries, the propositional contents we ‘take in’, between the world and our opinions about the world”. The realist might reply to several of the charges filed against him that what is attacked is not his own words, but rather consequences derived from his words. And he might be correct, because inferentialists, being the more serious and responsible, hold consequences as, in a certain sense, entailed in the premises themselves. Nevertheless, a pragmatist stands in debt to the realist who supplies him with upsetting statements to reject. Just as Derrida, as Rorty points out, “would have no writing to do unless there were a “metaphysics of presence” to overcome”, the pragmatist would have no writing to do unless the realist were still feverish.

1.4 Classical Pragmatism and Neopragmatism

Pragmatism, Sidney Hook says, “is the theory and practice of enlarging human freedom in a precarious and tragic world by the arts of intelligent social control”. Pragmatism is further characterized by a certain intellectual temper, as William James acknowledged when he identified differences in temper and attitude as the major distinguishing mark between the absolute idealist and the pragmatist. But, perhaps more informatively, pragmatism can be described as employing social engineering in order to promote certain interests and reach its ideal conception of culture. The pragmatist, presupposing like James that the trail of the human serpent is over all, fights the anti-essentialist’s battle for the minuscule against attempts to ground culture on employment of majuscular terms such as Truth, Beauty, and Good. He eschews reification of truth properties and reference relations, like Sellars and Davidson, by considering such attempts as grammatical mistakes, wanting to have no truck with the idea that objects possess intrinsic properties or essences that it is our job to confront and mirror linguistically. Because, as Sellars put it, “standard observers in standard conditions do not perceive essences”.

Metaphilosophical differences, mainly resulting from different exploitations of the Kantian heritage, we shall see, produce two conflicting pragmatic narratives each with its own distinct approach to the issue of representation. In chapter 1.3, I took issue with the implicit and explicit motivation of the general neorealistic movement. Here I will take issue with neorealism as if figures within the pragmatic tradition itself. I will also note some important insights of Charles Peirce, James and John Dewey that will come in handy later on, before I try to pinpoint how neopragmatism precludes forms of empiricism and realism by radically and consistently perfecting the naturalistic and historicist intuitions of classical pragmatism. The following remarks are intended to provide the reader with an initial grasp of the pragmatic tradition and its key insights.

Pragmatism is made up by a number of conflicting narratives. I have chosen two narratives to follow throughout the essay, starting respectively with the naturalistic pragmatism of Peirce and the literary pragmatism of James. The history of the pragmatic movement, from the first explications of the pragmatic tenets by Peirce, James and John Dewey to the linguistically turned neopragmatists, is characterized by a tension between an orientation towards the natural sciences and an orientation towards the arts, helping, one might say, to keep the tradition on track and securing comprehensive accounts by preventing its adherents from limiting the scope. While Cartesian mentalism is identified as a hindrance in both narratives, the measures undertaken to overcome the Cartesian framework differ. While the Peircean stays Kantian in order to save the realist intuitions, the Jamesian remains Hegelian, denying that it is the privilege of the natural sciences to describe determinate reality. According to the neopragmatist, Peirce and James both fail to question the Kantian split of value spheres. The Kantian system, as David Hall points out, “was a system in which the disciplines of science, morality and art were institutionalized and organized in a manner that played one against the other in such a way as to set up “the contest of the faculties” which has since plagued modern culture”. Setting up the tripartite structure is inviting the modernist dialectic of reductionism and anti-reductionism. While Peirce sides with Kant in assigning priority to the natural sciences, carving a role for the professionalized philosopher as holding the transcendental structure together, James sides with Hegel in preferring the arts, but they both ensure that the Kantian structure prevails. Dewey was the first to overcome the division of faculties by conceiving of language as a tool for different purposes. A modern Jamesian, like Rorty, has accepted Dewey’s moral. Modern Peirceans, on the other hand, as we will see in chapter 4, have failed to take notice of the critique, allowing the largely unquestioned division to linger on and make their neorealistic intuitions look good.

The pragmatic movement was founded as an anti-metaphysical and anti-epistemological reaction to what it considered the decadence of school philosophy. The first transitional period is embodied by Peirce, who, while being a convinced epistemic realist, wants to break free from traditional metaphysics. His pragmatic maxim claims that “if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept could imply, one will have therein a complete definition of the concept, and there is nothing more in it”, and
amounts to that “almost every proposition of ontological metaphysics […] is gibberish”. Peirce says, is an observational science that generally shares its method with the other sciences. His scholastic realism claims that there are natural kinds and laws that underlie what we observe and exist independently of our cognitive contribution. Modern Peirceans, like Haack and Putnam (to some extent and at least in temper), neopragmatists claim, are pragmatists in the sense that they partake in the project of dismounting epistemology as first philosophy, but they are, as we will get back to, unable to follow up on the linguistic turn because they are paying too much attention to realist intuitions. In 1898, William James invented what Richard Bernstein calls the founding narrative of pragmatism. After having acknowledged Peirce as the founding father of pragmatism, James writes: “Beliefs, in short, are really rules for action; and the whole function of thinking is but one step in the production of habits of action […] Thus to develop a thought’s meaning we need only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce; that conduct is for us its sole significance […] To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what effects of a conceivably practical kind the object may involve – what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we prepare. Our conception of these effects, then, is for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as the conception has positive significance at all.” Beliefs, thus, in the pragmatic narrative, are habits of action, rather than representations. What is true in pragmatism, as Rorty says, “is that what you talk about depends not on what is real but on what it pays you to talk about. What is true in realism is that most of what you talk about you get right.”

The post-epistemological, anti-conventionalistic, anti-essentialistic and anti-representationalistic character of neopragmatism is not only the offspring of a negative therapeutic project, but exhibits a fruitful and constructive alternative to foundational realism. As mentioned earlier, pragmatism is characterized by its profound awareness of how social engineering and memetic manipulation can improve society. Let us have a look at the kind of society that neopragmatism prepares for and note a tension that illustrates how the neopragmatist is well equipped to serve as a generator of change and a consolidator of new practices, before listing some central ingredients in the neopragmatic narrative. The neopragmatist, as Rorty says, wants to usher us into a Deweyan ideal society in which “culture is no longer dominated by the ideal of objective cognition but by that of aesthetic enhancement”, that is, a narrativist society in which primacy is assigned to “imagination over the argumentative intellect, and to genius over professionalism”, and where “metaphysicians [are conceived] as footnotes to poets”. This Rortian literary culture, in which the focus is on increasing solidarity and diminishing cruelty, is characterized by a tension between its attraction to inferentialism, signaled by content assignment on the basis of conceptual role, and its attraction to imagination, signaled by the creative role that is given to metaphors. Rorty sometimes puts too much emphasis on the latter, while diminishing the impor-
tance of the former. In other words, he sometimes underestimates the inferentialist character of his own writing and puts too much emphasis on the importance of creating new metaphors, something which implicitly might carry the advice to the younger generation of aiming at eccentricism and "something - nobody knows what", a possible social-theoretical analogue of the recognition-transcendence in the vocabulary of settlement, instead of aiming at developing argumentative skills and knowledge of the tradition. Two different readings of Hans Blumenberg’s distinction between self-assertion and self-foundation, which has become integrated in the neopragmatic narrative, can serve to underline this tension. On the neopragmatic reading, the former implicates the creation and expression of personal beliefs, and signals the acknowledgment of each interlocutor's responsibility to offer reasons for these beliefs, whereas the latter concerns the grounding of one’s self upon transcendental principles. The neopragmatist is a proponent of self-assertion and despises self-foundation. Anti-pragmatists often exploit the distinction in order to mock what they consider as extreme subjectivism. The self-creator, they say, is unable to improve and get things right because he is the author of his own criteria. In a certain sense, he is the author, and if we ignore the constraints that Rorty signals acceptance of, namely the constraints provided by triangulation and inferentialism, plenty of comments in his writing support such an understanding. But his acceptance of the constraints is impossible to ignore. My suggestion is that self-assertions should be encouraged as means for taking responsibility for our common conceptual resources, but at the same time, mechanisms ensuring that the assertions are domesticated have to be in place. Once we are freed from the representational paradigm, we need the imagination to provide us with new metaphors to apply in social engineering, but in order to apply the metaphors, we need to assign them an inferential location in a pattern of beliefs. If we succeed in such a task, the tension can serve us as it has served Brandom. We will return to this theme in chapter 5 in the discussion of metaphors.

What other moves distinguish the neopragmatist from his representational opponent? In contrast to the representationalist, the neopragmatist offers an account of truth that does not appeal to ‘reference’. ‘Reference’ drops out, as Davidson says, because it plays no essential role in explaining the relation between language and reality. The correspondence relations cannot be tested independently, as Putnam says, since a notion of reference is internal to our general view of the world or our conceptual scheme. A key pragmatic move, Rorty says, is substituting objectivity-as-intersubjectivity for objectivity-as-accurate representation. Davidson’s rendering of language as unhypostatized and unconventional relieves it of the status as an epistemic intermediary, or as a Rortian ghost between the lines, and makes the case for a naturalistic account of language. A central dramaturgical element in the neopragmatic narrative is the sidestepping of relativistic and skeptical positions, i.e. not answering the relativist or the skeptic directly but rather presenting an account, in which they are refused the traditional realist premisory ground that they need in order to draw their relativistic or skeptical conclusions.
What separates the neopragmatist from the classical pragmatist? The most obvious difference consists in the former’s rejection of the latter’s empiricism. More specifically, Davidson’s attack on the third dogma of empiricism, the distinction between conceptual scheme and representational content, wiped out the traces of empiricism, which were still inherent in classical pragmatism. Furthermore, the linguistic turn made conceivable a non-reductive physicalism, in which any event can be described in physical as well as psychological terms, leaving us free to choose the vocabulary that will prove itself salient to our concerns. Davidson’s monism is a form of Spinozism that is accompanied by two modes of apprehension, namely, explanation and prediction. Davidson states three premises for anomalous monism: “There are causal relations between events described as physical and events described as mental; there are no strict laws relating events under physical descriptions with events under mental descriptions; and, if two events are related as cause and effect, there is a strict law covering the case.” The post-ontological potential in Davidson’s monism consists in its denial of the traditional ontological dualism of mental and physical, as well as the denial that this leaves us with the physical as the only ontological category. This leaves no ground for Allen Dunn’s claim that “the mental, for Davidson, is a conceptual rather than an ontological category like the physical”, because ontology, as Davidson and the other neopragmatists say, is in conflict with naturalism. Another important point of departure results from the fact that the neopragmatist wants to be beyond the Kantian value spheres that haunted the classical pragmatists like it haunts most philosophers today. This means going beyond the vacillation between reductionism and anti-reductionism. Contemporary critics of neopragmatism ignore the fact that the neopragmatists, as will be returned to, are beyond the Kantian spheres, which function as an unquestioned parameter in their own philosophy. They are, thus, like Susan Haack, led to exhibit the presumed shortcomings of the Rortian self-asserter in contrast to the Peircean rational scientific inquirer, ignoring that the self-asserter is designed to stay historically grounded and overcome the ahistorical division of faculties.

What, then, becomes the role of the philosopher if it is not that of the classical rational scientific inquirer? Wilfred Sellars, Jay Rosenberg says, conceived of the philosopher as a reflective generalist, whose project was a piece with the modernist project of accounting for an enchanted rational agent, “at home among meanings and values”, in a disenchanted natural world. His metaphilosophy aims to fuse our manifest self-conceptions with the scientific explanatory image in a synoptic vision. Philosophy, Sellars says, or perhaps more accurately epistemology, “is properly conceived as the pure theory of empirically meaningful languages”. Rorty lacks Sellars’ ambition because he is skeptical towards any attempt to carve out a role for a professionalized philosopher, as Kant did when he put philosophy on the path to science or super-science putting outside space inside inner space. The neopragmatist urges us to cast the philosopher as the historicized mediator between past and future ways of talking and thinking, and as acknowledging the responsibility to set the stage for a conversationalist culture in which the
focus is on generating new and better ways of talking, and the self-founding temptations to accept our present vocabularies at face value are rejected. Such a conception of philosophy and the philosopher’s role increases the awareness of the fact that there are ways of thinking and old ideas which threaten to block the roads of inquiry. But choosing the neopragmatic conception is, of course, not saying that we should not treasure the ways of thinking that we have benefited from in the past; it is merely a warning that holding our time in thought demands different measures and different tools at different times. Philosophy, as Rorty says, “cannot possibly end until social and cultural change ends […] In free societies, there will always be a need for [philosopher’s] services, for such societies never stop changing, and hence never stop making other vocabularies obsolete”.76

A claim made by Habermas illustrates how neorealists want to separate themselves from the neopragmatic historicist awareness of context-dependence. The context-dependence of all our claims, resulting from what Habermas describes as the primacy of the intersubjectivity of shared beliefs over confrontation with reality,77 makes the neopragmatist approve of the first part but strongly disapprove of the second part of Habermas’ claim that “what we hold to be true has to be defendable on the basis of good reasons, not merely in a different context but in all possible contexts, that is, at any time and against anybody”. Habermas, thus, as Rorty points out, sides with the village champion who claims to be able to defend his claims against any objector at any time.78 The neopragmatist, in contrast, prefers modesty. Like Putnam, Habermas wants to issue a license to return to a naïve conception of the world “because acting subjects have to cope with ‘the’ world, they cannot avoid being realists in the context of their lifeworld”.79 The disagreement with the pragmatist at this point arises on the nature of realism. While Habermas and Putnam embrace epistemic realism with its regulative ideals of rationality, the pragmatist urges us be content with semantic realism, with a conception of reason as naturalized and internal to the linguistic paradigm, which preserves the notion of contingency as a gesture towards fellow language users and coming generations.

The realists, as noted in 1.3, generally disclaim the interlocutors’ responsibility for propositional content by assigning the content ascribing task to the world itself, something which can be illustrated by their attraction to atomistic theories of meaning. The pragmatists, in contrast, acknowledge the responsibility of agents, and consequently focus on the judgment and the act of judging. Following Kant and Frege, the pragmatist assigns priority to the propositional, taking the judgment to be the fundamental unit of cognition or awareness. He follows Quine, though, when he conceives of meanings, not in terms of entities as urged by Frege, but in terms of locations in the web of beliefs. Brandom and Sellars develop this insight into the further insight that “sentences are the only expressions whose utterances make a move in the language game”.80 Rorty, Brandom and Davidson all emphasize the importance of establishing a relational view of the conceptual that acknowledges how the conceptual is accounted for jointly by language and thinking. As Davidson puts it: “a creature cannot have thoughts unless it is an interpreter of the
speech of another.” Consequently, neither the mental nor the linguistic is entitled to any form of conceptual priority, and an account of language and mind is bound to rise together.

A neopragmatist also emphasizes the role of communication in assigning content to interlocutors. Society provides, Davidson says, “the element of objectivity, the awareness of the possibility of being wrong […] and the determination of the relevant public stimuli which constitute the subject matter of perceptual beliefs”. According to Brandom, the pragmatic order of concept explanation privileges the explanation of how linguistic usage confers conceptual content to expressions. This order of explanation contrasts with the Platonic order of representational semantics, in which usage is explained in terms of prior content. In other words, the pragmatist attempts to explain content, such as what is believed, asserted or judged, in terms of the act of believing, asserting or judging. The traditional model, in contrast, is mentalistic in stressing the mind as the author of conceptual usage, and, consequently, downgrades the linguistic models of intentionality that first get a boost in the 20th century with Wittgenstein, Quine, Sellars and Dummett. Reversing the order of semantic explanation, might be Brandom’s key-stroke, and due to the crucial role that he thereby assigns to the act rather than the content, his semantics deserves to be called a pragmatic turn.

Brandom holds against the anti-representationalists that they haven’t explored the expressivist alternative to classical representationalism. His methodological pragmatism can be expressed in the dictum: Semantics stands in need of a pragmatic base. The essence of expressivism, as opposed to representationalism which conceived of the mind as a mirror and whose grand project was transforming the inner into the outer, is its persistence on trading in the inner-outer axis for making what is implicit explicit, or conceiving of knowing how in terms of knowing that. The former must be made into that-clauses in order to be made intelligible and subjected to ordinary assessments. In place of the metaphor of the mind as a mirror, Brandom puts the romanticists’ metaphor of the mind as a lamp, which signals how making and finding is inevitably linked together. The metaphor of a lamp signals that successful communication is not a matter of accurate representation, but rather a matter of having the right attitude towards the beliefs of oneself and others, as well as towards the space of the discursive options. Linguistic action is, nevertheless, as Davidson says, “frustrated if its intended audience does not grasp the producer’s intended meaning and force”.

If language is understood as a tool rather than as representation, how the tool is employed becomes a matter of great importance. Among the pragmatists, there is an important divide between those who prefer conceptual parsimony, like Quine and Davidson, and those who allow “the hundred flowers [to] bloom” in their writing, most significantly Rorty and James. The neo-pragmatic turn is a turn towards greater emphasis on style, which in turn reveals the importance of making other vocabularies look bad, because, as Rorty says, some vocabularies are better
tools because they enable us to cope, not because they get things right in the substantial sense. The pragmatist, characteristically, offers examples rather than principles, and prefers, in contrast to the realist, spontaneity to receptivity while he, as Gilbert Harman points out, stresses practical features such as “simplicity, ease of use, and conservatism, for example - in deciding what to believe about any subject”.

The perhaps most characteristic features of the neopragmatic radicalization of the linguistic turn are the thoroughgoing naturalization and historization of reason. Pragmatism sways between allowing the natural sciences to serve as model for rationality and charging the scientifically minded, in Allen Hance’s words, for forgetting that “naturalism is a habit of thought that forgets that physical nature, as understood by the natural sciences, is not the primary datum of consciousness; it forgets that the world intended in the scientific attitude cannot be inhabited, but only focused on temporarily”. Neopragmatic naturalism, however, does not commit this reductive fallacy. Rorty defines naturalism as “the claim that there is no occupant of space-time that is not linked in a single web of causal relations to all other occupants and that any explanation of the behavior of any such spatiotemporal object must consist in placing that object within that single web”. The neopragmatic naturalist is an anti-essentialist who sees “no breaks in the hierarchy of increasingly complex adjustments to novel stimulation”. In Dewey between Hegel and Darwin, Rorty tells us that Dewey told us that we should see “Darwin as showing us how to naturalize Hegel – how to have a Herderian historicism without Kantian idealism, how to hold on to a Hegelian narrative of progress while dispensing with the claim that the real is the rational”.

The temporalization of meaning is what, as noted earlier, leads neopragmatic philosophers to exorcize infertile approaches by offering genealogies of philosophical problems where others have thought the problems unavoidable and mandatory to solve. We are facing no necessary, only contingent questions.

The pragmatist is not only, as mentioned, beyond empiricism. He is also beyond transcendentalism with its ranking of truths. The Kantian noumenal world is well lost on the pragmatic account as a useless posit, mistakenly presenting us with the conceivability of a manual to engrave in ourselves. Nietzsche and James set off pragmatism when telling us that we could achieve our goals by changing our ways of talking. Pragmatism is, as Rorty says, the successful and natural development of romanticism. He employs against transcendental philosophy his own version of the Jamesian “a difference has to make a difference to practice before it is worth discussing”, namely, “you can only work for what you can recognize”. For a psychological nominalist, the transcendental is characterized exactly by its recognition transcendence, and “as long as we try to project from the relative and conditioned to the absolute and unconditioned”, as Rorty says, “we shall keep the pendulum swinging between dogmatism and skepticism”. A pragmatist, then, considers transcendentalism to be an impossible attempt to steer or put constraints on our insufficient reason. Like Habermas, Rorty thinks of reason as communicative, i.e. linguistified and socialized, but, pace both Habermas and Putnam, he also thinks it can be natu-
ralized, and herein lies his pragmatic critique of reason. He does not think ‘rationality’ can be stretched as far as Habermas and Putnam do. Neither do I, but, like Brandom, I believe we can stretch it a little further within the Davidsonian triangle than Rorty does while still flying in the face of the reason that is not naturalized. A vocabularist is a compatibilist who believes that our different concerns can be taken care of in different vocabularies that discern different patterns. The vocabularist account of the logical spaces of reason and nature is intended to become persuasive first in 5.4 on vocabularism. Rather than talking of different logical spaces, we should talk of different vocabularies. Vocabularism, it will be argued, stills the ontological urge and takes us into a post-ontological culture while preserving the epistemological externalist outlook by relying on causal contact with the world. When our species are extinct, as Rorty says, “human nature’s total message” will not be a set of propositions, but a set of vocabularies - the more, and the more various, the better.

The neopragmatist assigns a certain priority to the normative vocabulary against naturalistic theories and naturalized epistemology that ignore the need to appeal to norms when accounting for conceptual content. Rorty is reluctant to go along with this priority, but he acknowledges the fact that “a normative vocabulary is presupposed by any descriptive vocabulary – not because of any inferential relations between sentences in one vocabulary and those in the other, but pragmatically. We could not deploy the descriptive vocabulary unless we could deploy the normative one, just as we could not employ a screwdriver if we did not have hands.” Bill Martin calls Davidson’s anomalous monism an ethical-political principle, signifying the anomaly of the human psychology in nature. Without this anomaly, Martin says, there is no human being. Embracing the metaphor of vocabularies, is likewise an embracement of a principle of inclusion - a principle of how to behave in a culture in which vocabularies and opinions as well as the material content of linguistic locutions differ.

The Sellarsian and Quinean Toolboxes

2.1 Setting the Postanalytical Parameters

W. V. Quine and Wilfrid Sellars are central in setting the standards and the parameters for approaches to the issue of representation as it figures today among philosophers of a pragmatic bend. In this chapter, I will try to identify the tools that the neopragmatist inherits from Quine and Sellars, as well as the tools he considers useless. I will show that Brandom, Davidson and Rorty all stand in considerable debt to Quine and Sellars, and that to understand Putnam and
McDowell's criticism of anti-representationalism and neopragmatism is partly to understand their misgivings with the neopragmatic applications of Quinean and Sellarsian tools. In the neopragmatic narrative, Quine and Sellars serve as the figures that have made possible the semantic framework that finally puts our epistemic neuroses to ease, whereas they, as will be deepened in 2.4, to a certain degree suffer from the neuroses themselves. As a preliminary sketch, we can note that a pragmatist mining in the Quinean mountains is anxious to assess or win his holism and his deconstruction of the analytic/synthetic distinction, as well as to modify his naturalism, while, pace Metaphysicus and other anti-pragmatists, dismissing his empiricism and scientism, which is signaled by his application of the scheme/content distinction and the deliverance of our thinking to the tribunal of experience. When Davidson collapses Quine’s distinction between observation and theory, a version of the third dogma of empiricism, he gives us the means to find Rortian solidarity more desirable than representational objectivity.

The tools that are passed on from the Sellarsian heritage are first and foremost the insight, which will be elaborated in 3.1, that all linguistic locutions, even observation reports, stand in need of inferential articulation; the attack on the myth of the given; and the separation of the logical spaces of reason and nature. The scientistic residues like the picture theory and the account of the scientific and manifest images, the neopragmatist says, should be stored away in the memetic museum. Sellars initiated the inferentialist turn with a naturalized Hegelianism which, in contrast to Quine’s naturalized epistemology that turn focus away from justification of knowledge to descriptions of knowledge acquisitions while accepting the best of science at face value without justification, claims that all our knowledge stands in need of inferential articulation and justification. A modern Sellarsian like Brandom urges us to concentrate on attributions of knowledge rather than knowledge per se. Brandom also, unlike the anti-representationalists, exploits Sellarsian pragmatics because expressivism starts prior to anti-representationalism that starts in the midst of things. In this section, I will exhibit parts of Quine’s epistemology and contrast it with Davidsonian semantics in order to establish that Quine is unable to radicalize his own critique of empiricism and leave epistemology behind - a task that he saves for the neopragmatist.

The theoretical corpus of Quine, on which we will concentrate first, must in tutto, like McDowell's, be considered as an attempt to save empiricism. The goal of Quine’s new empiricism, as Roger Gibson points out, is to provide an account of how we construct (but not deduce) our theory of the world, given the evidence of our senses only. What is left as the main task of epistemology is to account for the relation between observation and theory, or “the meager input and the torrential output”, which is a task he attempts to accomplish within the general framework of behavioristic empirical psychology. Quine’s semantics can be characterized
along two axes, namely the behavioral and the naturalistic, which, along with his holism, make up the main reasons why he is generally considered as an accomplice in the pragmatic project.

In contrast to the anti-representationalists, Quine feels obliged to present an epistemology. His naturalized epistemology is designed to replace foundational epistemology and turn the relevant questions from being questions about justifications of knowledge to questions about acquisitions of knowledge. He turns the crumbling Cartesian first person approach into a third person matter, but is still committed to the Cartesian project in his theory of the nature of knowledge, leaving us, one might say, without justification and at the mercy of the best of science and common sense. His theory of meaning is based on behavioral data, i.e. on overt behavior of speakers in publicly recognizable circumstances, and, like the neopragmatists, he directly opposes the strategies of assigning meaning on the basis of reference or some mentalistic idea. Quine also, like Frege and the neopragmatists, considers sentences as the primary semantic unit, but he thinks of some sentences only, namely, sentences carrying cognitive meaning or the assertive sentences that are his vehicles of truth. Let us have a look at these vehicles.

To start with, Quine classifies sentences as repeatable universals and not as events, and he distinguishes between occasion sentences and standing sentences. The occasion sentences are prompted by some present stimulus, like ‘this girl has a warrant out for her arrest’ is prompted by the stimulus of the girl. The standing sentences, in contrast, do not depend on the presence of the queried stimulus to be asssented to or denied, like ‘Jonatan sings only songs that won’t hurt the children’s ears’. The eternal sentences are a subclass of the standing sentences with permanently fixed truth values, and observation sentences are a subclass of the occasion sentences with the central feature of sharing occasions that are intersubjectively observable, and, thereby, liable to general assent or dissent from reliable speakers.

What special role does Quine assign to the observation sentences? Our answer to this question will suggest that Quine, by putting perceptual constraints on reason, is committed to non-naturalistic intermediaries between the causal and the normative order and still entertains the realistic intuitions. The early definition of the observation sentence helped Quine to get as close to the observational end of language as possible without invoking the notion of evidence, classifying a sentence as observational “insofar as its truth value, on any occasion, would be agreed to by just about any member of the speech community witnessing the occasion”. He adds that the last clause, “witnessing the occasion”, might be better taken care of by “being subject to similar patterns of nerve firings.” However, Quine soon found the definition dissatisfying as it stood because, like Davidson, he found the appeal to speakers belonging to the same speech community unfortunate since it assumed that this is a clear notion before any account of meaning is offered. More recently, he has offered a new definition of observation sentences: “If querying the sentence elicits assent from a given speaker on one occasion, it will elicit assent likewise on another occasion when the same total set of receptors is triggered [...] This and this only is what qualifies sentences as observation sentences.” The observation sentences be-
come for Quine the intersubjective shareable factor that brute sensations or the environing situation cannot provide: “No matter that sensations are private, and no matter that men may take radically different views of the environing situation; the observation sentence serves nicely to pick out what witnesses can agree on.” But the observational sentences also become foundational and privileged in the sense that they provide evidential support and meaning for other sentences, and, thus, make the case for his naturalistic and behavioristic conception of language. The discussion of observation sentences will be left for now but we will get back to it in chapter 3 in order to see how empirical content, pace Quine and according to the inferentialist, enters the observation sentences and is transferred to other sentences, but, nevertheless, does not in itself suffice to make the sentences intelligible in the order of understanding.

The neopragmatist wants to replace Quine’s proximal theory of meaning and evidence with the distal theory. Quine has alternated between locating the sensory stimulus at the sensory receptors and at the objects and events that can be conceived of as the shared causes, but generally he has been opting for the proximal theory, as opposed to Davidson’s externalist distal theory, which takes interpretation as depending “on the external objects and events salient to both speaker and interpreter”. What reasons does the neopragmatist have for preferring the distal theory? First, the distal theory benefits from avoiding the problems involved when, on the proximal account, totally different objects or events occasion sameness of stimulus for different speakers, and, thus, presents us with the possibility of getting the world radically wrong. Secondly, Quine’s “stimulus” becomes the epistemic intermediary that the neopragmatists want no truck with. Davidson, as Rorty puts it, “has no use of Locke’s and Hume’s specifically psychic terrain, intermediate between physiology and linguistic formulated beliefs.” In short, the difference between the two approaches can be described as a difference between a theory of meaning that centers on the notion of evidence and a theory that centers on the notion of truth.

Quine’s behaviorism, hinging on the notion of stimulus meaning, is designed to close the gap between the web of beliefs and physicalism. Stimulus meaning is the meaning of a sentence s for a particular speaker p at a given time t; behaviorally definable in terms of affirmative and negative stimulus meaning. Whereas the stimulus meaning of non-observational occasion sentences is hinging on collateral information that makes it unlikely that different speakers possess cognitively equivalent stimulus meaning for sentences such as ‘he is a bachelor’, observational occasion sentences are generally defined by cognitively equivalent stimulus meaning. Quine has recently shown some discomfort with the notion of stimulus meaning, and he now prefers what he conceives of as the more neutral terms of triggering of nerve endings. The controversy with the distal theory, nevertheless, remains in place, highlighting the different ambitions of two projects. While Quine still has epistemological ambitions, Davidson has entered a post-epistemological semantic phase, where the only attainable realism is semantic.
While the neopragmatist for semantic reasons thinks that language learning might be better accounted for outside the philosophical language game, Quine explains it for purposes of naturalizing epistemology, with the help of the notions of analogic synthesis and ostension, but while explaining language learning, Quine not only signals his epistemological orientation but also foreshadows Davidsonian triangulation. Let us have a look at his explanation. While ostensive learning fully accounts for the learning of the merely responsive observation sentences and observation terms, Quine says, it cannot account for the full-fledged terms that require reference. The analogic synthesis takes us to the heart of the Quinean linguistic matter. The irreducible leaps of analogy acknowledge simultaneous learning of interrelated linguistic elements. The contextual learning of these various particles, Quine says, “goes on simultaneously, we may suppose, so that they are gradually adjusted to one another and a coherent pattern of usage is evolved matching that of society. The child scrambles up an intellectual chimney, supporting himself against each side by pressure against the others.”

To a logical positivist, the description of the Quinean child equals a description of a child Santa who gives away the goods of classical empiricism, but to a pragmatist the description promises the coming of a wonderful and triangulated rooftop vista. The language learning that transcends ostension and makes the sentences of the referential language more than mere subjects to brute observational confirmation, explains Quine’s holism and instructs us on how he can get his underdetermination of theory by observation off the ground. As noted, our accounts of language learning might be better off in a different vocabulary than in the vocabulary in which philosophical inquiry normally is pursued.

Pursuing the Quinean task further, a neopragmatist says, might be scientism in the form of conceptions of vocabularies. Davidson’s semantics presupposes language mastery on behalf of the language users, but this mastery, he says, does not arise in blocks. He discourages, for instance, the idea that the child fully masters a part of the language. The more ways we can represent what the child says, Davidson says, “the less information the child’s utterances convey. When the ways become as constrained as they are with accomplished speakers, the child is an accomplished speaker.” Davidson intends his holism to function as a logical constraint, acknowledging that interpretation should preserve logical relations between sentences, rather than aim at perfect understanding, in the sense, which Fodor seems to be after, in which speakers share meaning when controlling exactly the same linguistic resources.

Let us have a brief look at how the inheritors of an anti-scientistic bend exploit this compartment of Quine’s toolbox. In WO, Quine describes observation sentences as wearing their meanings on their sleeves, but his inheritors generally rip them off their sleeves and abandon his theory of meaning. Michael Dummett notes that utterances have many functions besides that of registering the speaker’s assent or dissent from a sentence: “They will be identified by their ‘role in the language-game’; but it is tendentious to maintain that this role can always be characterized in terms of stimulus-meaning.” Utterances also, as Davidson says, have their agents and times, being an event that is also an intentional action. Since the neopragmatist,
pace Quine, is after a semantic account without epistemological underpinnings, he opts for truth or proprieties of inference, rather than reference, as the semantic primitive. But what important insights does the neopragmatist, then, inherit from the Quinean semantic toolbox? The public facet of Quine’s theory of sentence meanings is one insight that reappears in a central position in neopragmatic semantics. Another insight shows when he insists that sentences are about external entities in a fallible manner and not about sense data in an infallible manner. Quine, thus, breaks with the logical positivist orthodoxy and clears the ground for semantic triangulation of the Davidsonian-Brandomian kind.

2.2 Radical Translation Translated and the Dogmas of Empiricism

Quine’s radical translation model is designed to take care of epistemological concerns. The neopragmatists translate the model to take care of their own particular concerns. Davidson has, as will be seen in 5.1, transformed the model to deal with radical interpretation and semantics, while Brandom, as will be seen in 3.1, urges us to focus on practical interpretation or deontic scorekeeping in pragmatics. In the first half of this section, we will inquire into the nature of translation and see how the radical translation model results in indeterminacies that engender the conceptual relativism that the neopragmatists are anxious to combat. In the second half, we will, among other things, see how Quine erased the first two dogmas of empiricism and how Davidson, deconstructing Quine, erased the third. Subsequently, we will counter McDowell’s charges that Davidson is committed to a fourth dogma. However, let us start with the radical translation model. What was Quine’s goal when he invented it? Since his aim was to develop a naturalized epistemology, he sought a factual and not an idealized account of linguistic communication. Radical translation, or the examination of translation where no previous translation manual is at hand, thus, begins at home. After attempting to establish preliminary translations in shared stimulus situations, for example translating ‘Gavagai’ as ‘rabbit’ when a rabbit jumps by, Quine’s fictitious linguist needs to decide on the expressions for assent and dissent in the queried language. Then, he inductively settles on the translation of the observation sentences and concludes that approximate sameness of stimulus meaning is present. Translation beyond observation sentences hinges on analytical hypotheses, as the translator seeks equations between the words and phrases of the home language and the foreign language. The method of analytical hypotheses, Quine says, “is a way of catapulting oneself into the jungle language by the momentum of the home language”, but it also signals that the indeterminacies set in. How does he describe the indeterminacies? The thesis of indeterminacy of translation is stated as follows: “Manuals for translating one language into another can be set up in divergent ways, all compatible with the totality of speech dispositions, yet incompatible with one another.” And the point of the indeterminacy of intension “is not that we cannot be sure whether the analytical
hypotheses is right, but that there is even, as was in the case of ‘Gavagai’, an objective matter to be right or wrong about”. The inscrutability of reference arises because ostension and conditioning cannot tell us how we slice up the world, which leave us unable to tell whether ‘Gavagai’ equates with ‘rabbit’, ‘rabbit stage’ or ‘undetached rabbit parts’. The indeterminacy thesis amounts to the fact, Quine says, that analytical hypotheses settle meaning and reference relative to comprehensive translation manuals only. There are, however, mutually contradicting alternative manuals and no way of telling which one is determinately correct. So how is translation constrained?

The two constraints that Quine puts on a translation manual are the constraint of assent and the constraint of a principle of charity: The observation sentences should be translated into sentences that we assent or dissent to in similar circumstances, and sentences should not be translated into sentences that make no sense. Davidson and Føllesdal have both voiced misgivings with the first constraint that focus on stimulus and response, which they consider as forsaking the public nature of language. Nevertheless, Quine is behavioristically scrapping the museum myth of meaning, or the idea of fixed meanings or propositions, and replacing it with what Føllesdal has dubbed “the thesis of man made meaning,” which roughly amounts to that linguistic meaning is comprised of the total evidence which determines that meaning for a language user. Part of what encouraged admission of propositions, Quine says, “was a wish for eternal truth-value vehicles independent of particular languages”. The neopragmatist is happy to see the museum myth and the idea of ahistorically true propositions go and make his own naturalist-historicist conception of meaning conceivable, but he is not equally happy with the thesis of man made meaning, which suggests subjectivism and relativism. In 5.3, we will see that Davidson, through the process of triangulation, offers constraints that block subjectivism and conceptual relativism.

If we improve our understanding of the indeterminacy thesis by having a second look with Harman, we can see how Brandom uses a strategy that is reminiscent of Quine’s, even though he strongly disapproves of the scheme-relativity that Quine ends up with. The thesis of indeterminacy amounts to, Harman says, “that, among the objectively best schemes for translating sentences of another language into one’s own, we can expect to find a sentence of the other language that is translated into a sentence S of our language by one such scheme and a sentence T of our language by another such scheme, although we suppose that S is true if and only if T is not true”. Harman distinguishes between an immanent and a transcendent notion of meaning. Quine, he takes it, scraps objective meaning (t), while keeping objective meaning (i). What makes the indeterminacies pressing for Quine is that their scopes do not limit themselves to cases of radical translation, but includes all cases of language learning and communication. In order to count the absurdities this might engender, Quine states the thesis of ontological relativity: “Reference is nonsense except relative to a coordinate system,” and, thereby, opts for a generalization of the inscrutability of reference because if reference is relative, so is
ontology. But when the whole theory becomes the unit of meaning, shared meaning becomes hard to obtain. A claim might differ in meaning for a Christian and an Atheist because they do not share collateral commitments. Quine therefore shifted his attention to reference to let the aboutness relation secure that different interlocutors at least are talking about the same thing. Brandom intends to do very much the same thing, I believe, when he lets the mastery of the de re specifications of doxastic content, which can be assessed in order to determine the truth value, rather than the de dicto specifications, safeguard communicative success. The difference between de dicto and de re ascriptions lies in that while the first attributes a belief in a dictum, the second attributes a belief about a thing. However, following Davidson, Brandom disagrees with Quine’s ideas that “terms and reference are local to our conceptual scheme” and that “the very notion of term” is “provincial to our culture,” which engender conceptual relativity. According to Brandom, “reference comes in two flavors: word-world, or extra-linguistic reference and word-word intralinguistic or anaphoric reference instanced by pronouns,” but, being an expressivist rather than a representationalist, he wants the case for the first to be made in terms of the second, and not the other way around as is normally done.

What reasons does Quine have for the indeterminacy thesis? As Gibson points out, it draws support from his holism. The Peircean form of verificationism and the Duhem-Quine thesis jointly make the case for the indeterminacy: “If we recognize with Peirce that the meaning of a sentence turns purely on what would count as evidence for its truth, and if we recognize with Duhem that theoretical sentences have their evidence not as single sentences but only as larger blocks of theory, then the indeterminacy of translation of theoretical sentences is the natural conclusion.” Quine’s verificationism, however, is not of the logical positivist brand that tracks protocol sentences to be conclusively verified or falsified on single occasions; rather, it amounts to letting stimulus meaning of observation sentences, instead of fixed meaning, comprise the evidential base, and turning the whole theory into the unit of meaning. The thesis receives further support from the doctrine of underdetermination, which acknowledges that the same set of observations can constitute evidence for competing physical theories. As physical theory, translation is underdetermined and possesses empirical slack. The thesis of indeterminacy, however, is not identical with the doctrine of underdetermination since it requires further premises of scientific realism and naturalism. In the absence of first philosophy, Quine says, the crucial difference between physical theory and translation manuals amounts to the fact that while up-to-date physical theory claims to inform us determinately of the truths of nature, translation manuals, lacking the possibility to appeal to the notion of correctness, cannot make such a claim. The sentences within Quine’s scientific theory, it should be noted, are standing sentences, not the conditioned and occasional observation sentences. How does Davidson apply Quine’s indeterminacy thesis? As we will get back to in 5.1, he reduces the scope. First, by invoking the principle of charity, the indeterminacy of truth is rendered less threatening. Second, much in the same manner, the indeterminacy of logical form is put under constraints by employing Tarski’s
theory of truth as the core of the translation manual or theory of meaning, leaving only reference inscrutable.\footnote{128}

The neopragmatists want to throw Quine’s scientistic bias on behalf of physical theory out of his toolbox. Davidson accepts the central role that Quine ascribes to observation sentences in theory formation, but refuses to accept them as epistemological intermediaries, and, as we will see in 5.1, another important divergence arises when Davidson replaces Quine’s radical translator with his own radical interpreter. Several commentators have shown discomfort with Davidson’s broader notion of interpretation, which they say threatens to monopolize communication and leave the common background almost empty.\footnote{129} However, as we will see in 5.3, there is room for a normative notion of tradition within the Davidsonian triangle. And Davidson is right, as Quine says, “in tackling interpretation in general rather than translation in particular, concerned as he is with semantics, or the theory of linguistic communication. My own thought experiment of radical translation had a narrower purpose: I was challenging the notion of propositions as meanings of sentences. Indeterminacy of translation meant failure of sentence synonymy to qualify as an equivalence relation, hence failure of individuation of propositions; and there is no entity without individuation, without identity”.\footnote{130}

Rorty has expressed concerns that Davidson, as a result of his embracement of the distinction between indeterminacy and underdetermination, might inherit Quine’s commitment to physicalist ontology. Rorty’s worry can be said to correspond with McDowell’s worry that Davidson adheres to the fourth dogma of empiricism, which will be discussed in the next section. But let us first see whether there are reasons to worry, or whether Davidson is as consistently post-ontological as neopragmatists like to think. Ramberg puts the difference between underdetermination and the indeterminacy this way: “Underdetermination obtains between alternative descriptions of the world in physical terms – it is a logico-epistemic predicament, an expression of the fact that there will always be more than one way of accounting for any body of observations, no matter how large […] Indeterminacy, by contrast, characterizes the relation between alternative descriptions framed in a vocabulary which is so constituted that undecidabilities will remain even where a scheme of physical description is settled.”\footnote{131} For Rorty, Ramberg says, the persisting employment of the distinction entails a commitment to Quine’s ontological preference. But Davidson’s point in keeping the distinction, he continues, is that a choice of physical theory does not settle agency-description.\footnote{132} In other words, different theories might take care of intra-vocabulary concerns in the same satisfactory fashion (corresponding to the thesis of underdetermination) while different vocabularies are not reducible to each other (corresponding to the thesis of indeterminacy as well as the thesis of the irreducibility of the intentional). Once we, like Davidson, have made a post-ontological turn, we no longer have to answer to intuitions that tell us that tenets of a certain vocabulary comprise the relevant facts. Rorty, thus, should have no
reason to worry. Indeterminacy, as Davidson says, “is nothing more than the flip side of invariance. Indeterminacy occurs whenever a vocabulary is rich enough to describe a phenomenon in more than one way”.\textsuperscript{133} Davidson, we might say, translates Quine’s epistemological concerns into neopragmatic semantic concerns, developing a semantic realism that offers a cure to what Michael Hymers calls our epistemic neuroses.\textsuperscript{134}

For a neopragmatist, Quine’s rejection of the two dogmas of empiricism and Davidson’s rejection of the third signify the dismissal of the empiricist way of thinking and with it the representational anthropology. What are the ill-founded dogmas that Quine rejects in TDE, and how are they rejected? The first dogma, Quine says, is “a belief in some fundamental cleavage between truths which are \textit{analytic}, or grounded in meanings independently of matters of fact, and truths which are \textit{synthetic}, or grounded in fact. The other dogma is \textit{reductionism}, the belief that each meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct upon terms which refer to immediate experience”.\textsuperscript{135} Quine’s attack on the second dogma can be said to correspond to Sellars’ attack on the myth of the given that we will get a grip on in 2.4. The first dogma is attacked, first, by showing that the analytic/synthetic distinction is not clearly drawn, and, then, by showing that it does not have to be drawn. What the dissolution of the distinction amounts to, is that we can no longer rely on a privileged class of sentences, whose truth is guaranteed in virtue of their meaning. There is no longer any distinction between necessary and contingent truths. What about the second dogma? Radical reductionism, or the second dogma, is rejected on the grounds that no one has ever succeeded in finding a language consisting of statements about immediate experiences. A more moderate form of reductionism “survives in the supposition that each statement, taken in isolation from its fellows, can admit of confirmation and infirmation at all”.\textsuperscript{136} This as an outright false supposition, Quine says, which is detectable in the verificationist theory of meaning when it distinguishes a factual, extra-linguistic component from a linguistic component in the truth of the statements. His own holistic counterproposal is that “our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body”.\textsuperscript{137} Holism, then, becomes what ultimately kills the verificationist theory of meaning.

Erasing the line between the analytic and the synthetic, Davidson says in CTK, “saved philosophy of language as a serious subject by showing how it could be pursued without what there cannot be: determinate meanings”.\textsuperscript{138} While Dummett believes this turns philosophy of language into first philosophy, Davidson, preparing for Rorty’s contingent stance, is content to note that it should stop us from classifying some sentences as privileged or foundational. In 5.2, we will see how Davidson delivers the fatal blow for empiricism by dissolving the third dogma, or the distinction between conceptual schemes and representational content that is inherent in Quine’s theories. Quine still aims at sufficient reason and answerability to the world because, as he says, “immediate experience will not, of itself, cohere as an autonomous domain”.
ences to physical things, he says, “are largely what holds it together”. The quest for sufficient reason is also the reason why McDowell, following in Quine’s footsteps, makes us liable to lose non-referring singular terms - they are not items in our rational conversation with reality.

While Rorty worries about whether Davidson is still committed to physicalist ontology, McDowell goes a step further and claims that Davidson’s monism qualifies as the fourth dogma of empiricism. McDowell accepts two of Davidson’s premises for monism, namely the anomalism of the mental and the principle of causal interaction. What he finds questionable is the principle of the nomological character of causality, which embodies a Humean conception of causality. Since singular causal relations cannot be given in experience, McDowell takes Davidson to say with Hume, they cannot be anything else but a kind of generality, and this leaves us with a version of the untenable dualism of organizing system and what is organized. In *Laws and Cause*, however, Davidson, formulating the cause-law thesis, proves McDowell wrong. Let us see how. The causal powers of physical objects are, he says, “essential to determining what sorts of objects they are by defining what sorts of changes they undergo while remaining the same object and what sorts of changes constitute their beginnings or ends. Our concept of a physical object is the concept of an object whose changes are governed by law”. The quasi-aprioristic cause-law thesis, Ramberg says, shapes our conception of the physical much like the principle of charity shapes the mental: “We couldn’t fail to discover general relations by which we understand the changes we perceive in the physical objects about us, because we are by nature disposed to count as changes and as persistent subjects of such changes whatever will yield general patterns allowing us to predict our environment.” And the connection with scheme/content dualism is, as Davidson says, irrelevant because, preferring to talk about how excitations of our senses might cause us to believe that an event has caused another, he has neither claimed that singular causal relations are given nor not given in experience.

In *TDE*, Quine shows that since the content of a claim must determine its consequents and depend on the further premises of collateral commitments, the determination of the significance of any commitment rests on the determination of the contents of the totality of the relevant commitments. Sellars utilizes this insight to form a notion of material inference whose correctness involves the conceptual contents of its premises as well as its conclusion: Oslo is a larger city than Bergen → Bergen is a smaller city than Oslo. Explicit claims, thus, pace the orthodoxy of scientistic formalist logic, carry with them implicit inferential consequences. And conceptual content, “which is determined by the rules of the Understanding”, is, for Sellars, closely connected to the material inference. “The familiar notion that the form of a concept is determined by ‘logical rules’ while the content is ‘derived from experience’”, Sellars says, “embodies a radical misinterpretation of the manner in which the ‘manifold of sense’ contributes to the shaping of the conceptual apparatus ‘applied’ to the manifold in the process of cognition”. Material correctness, thus, is prior to formal validity. This goes well along with the neopragmatic antireification, our tendencies to hold others responsible for doxastic commitment that they
have never explicitly, only implicitly, committed themselves to, and provides us with some rea-
sons to prefer the misological, rhetorical approach to inquiry, rather than worshipping scientific
method. In Begriffschrift, Frege conceives of the logical vocabulary as expressing or making ex-
plicit inferences whose implicit goodness is vouchsafed by the contents of the non-logical con-
cepts. Refusing to acknowledge the material correctness, in addition to the formal validity, of an
inference, would amount to what Brandom calls intellectualism, Platonism or regulism. In Sel-
larsian spirit, Brandom exploits the relation between commitments and entitlements to enhance
our grip on the material notion of incompatibility, leaving two claims incompatible, and introduc-
ing disharmony into the set of commitments, when a commitment to one claim precludes the en-
titlement to the other. This brings us over to the Sellarsian toolbox!

2.4 The Myth of the Given and Psychological Nominalism

In Naturalism and Ontology, Wilfrid Sellars describes his original distrust of pragmatism as
stemming from the intuition that it was all method and no results. Reading Dewey, however,
convinced him otherwise. Moving away from a conception of an antecedent reality, Sellars, like
Rorty, found in Dewey an accomplice in the project of centering on the role of communal inter-
subjectivity. Dewey’s world of experience is, Sellars says, “very much akin to what I have called
the Manifest Image of man-in-the-world, which properly understood, is the gateway to Scientific
Realism”. I would argue, Sellars says, “that Pragmatism, with its stress on language (or the
conceptual) as an instrument, has had hold of a most important insight […] if the pragmatist’s
claim is reformulated as the thesis that the language we use has a much more intimate connec-
tion with conduct than we have yet suggested, and that this connection is intrinsic to its struc-
ture as language, rather than a ‘use’ to which it ‘happens’ to be put, then Pragmatism assumes
its proper stature as a revolutionary step in Western Philosophy”.148

Sellars’ attack on the myth of the given equips neopragmatists with a non-representational
anthropology as well as with an argumentative arsenal against the neorealists, who are attempt-
ing to reinstate our answerability to the world. However, following up on Sellars’ attack, will per-
suade us to avoid his metaphors of manifest and scientific image as well as Dewey’s notion of
experience. In this section, we will have a look at Sellars’ devastating critique of the idea of the
given, or the idea that our linguistic resources are rationally constrained through perception, as
well as sketch his own account of linguistic representation to see that it locates Sellars firmly
within the scientistic epistemological tradition, while inspiring Brandom to take it outside.

What motivates the attack on the given? Sellars recognizes an irreducibly normative charac-
ter in the epistemic discourse: “The essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state
as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state: we are
placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says.”149
This is the line of reasoning that Brandom and Rorty find so attractive; Brandom employs it in the inferential semantics, and Rorty in the conversational project of assuring solidarity. For Sellars, the senses per se cannot grasp facts. The non-inferential linguistic locutions, he says, stand in need of inferential articulation, something that precludes the possibility of treating knowledge of empirical facts as immediate and foundational. To get an initial idea of what we are up against in our treatment of the two spaces of reason and nature, we have to mark Sellars’ words when he says: “The idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder – even ‘in principle’ – into non-epistemic facts, whether phenomenal or behavioral, public or private, with no matter how lavish a sprinkling of subjunctives and hypotheticals is, I believe, a radical mistake – a mistake of a piece with the so-called ‘naturalistic fallacy’ in ethics.”

The given is usually held by its proponents to be indubitable, infallible and incorrigible, referring to such entities as sense contents, material objects, universals, propositions. Sellars’ critique of the given consists in identifying a confusion between having non-epistemic sense impressions and having non-inferential knowledge of propositions referring to appearances. While the non-epistemic is immune from error, and therefore a non-qualifier for providing a foundation, the non-inferential is fallible. Kant’s famous claim that “intuitions without concepts are blind” can plausibly be identified as a predecessor of Sellars’ critique. In his correspondence with Harman, Sellars writes the following: “To embrace the myth is to treat ‘thought entry transitions’ as though they were a special case of inferences, those in which the premises are given rather than merely thought to be the case. My view, on the contrary, is that ‘observations’ are themselves thoughts; they are thought-tokens which are correct responses to the objects which caused them. I deny that there is any such thing as an awareness that-p which isn’t a thinking that-p.” I mentioned earlier that it is crucial for the neorealists to bypass the attack on the given. According to William Robinson, the myth is a legend, that is, it is neither existent nor non-existent. There is an analysis of the given, he says, “which does not involve an epistemic component”. In chapter 4, we will see that both McDowell and Putnam follow Robinson, but I will take the short road with the approach, i.e. I will concede that if we are imaginative enough, we can surely find a way to bypass the myth, but if our objective is to step out of the occularcentric tradition, and if we, like the neopragmatists, have a superior way of talking, a revival of the given is a retrograde step.

As we have seen, Sellars rejects the representationalist’s account of linguistic representation, in which our conceptual resources are infused with perceptual content, but what is his own positive account? Wittgenstein’s theory of picturing, Sellars says, can supply us with a way to solve the puzzle of linguistic representation. Picturing on the Wittgensteinian account is a relation between facts as statements and worldly facts, or in Sellarsian terms “between facts about linguistic expressions, on the one hand, and facts about nonlinguistic objects, on the other”. Rather than conceiving of the picturing relation as what holds them together, the inferentialist, Sellars says, is entitled to hold that, since nonlinguistic facts in one sense are linguistic entities,
an inference from ‘that-p is true’ to ‘p’ is what holds them together. But the heart of the matter is
not the inference between the facts, but, rather, the picturing that holds between linguistic and
nonlinguistic objects, or natural linguistic objects, in the natural order. The core of picturing, Sel-
lars says, rather than bridging the gap between the linguistic and the nonlinguistic realms, is
translation. In his correspondence with Harman, he puts it this way: “The schema for picturing
is not (Statement) pictures (fact) but rather (Object) pictures (object).” And, the formal terms,
Sellars says in a Tractarian slogan, do not represent. His philosophical inferentialist-naturalism
takes the formal concepts such as meaning and truth as the fundamental concepts in the pure
theory of empirically meaningful languages, giving us a (regulative) ideal language, which is at-
tributed a complete group of formation and transformation rules. Sellars reacts against Rudolf
Carnap’s lack of ability to identify the normativity of the rulishness of rules, just as we shall see
Brandom reacts against modern reductionist conceptions: “To say that ‘means’ is a formal term
in such a language is to say that ‘means’ or ‘designates’ is one of the bones of the skeleton of
the language, enabling it to contain a logic of implication. Meaning in this sense is no more to be
found in the world than is a referent for ‘or’.” A representation, according to Sellars, is any-
thing that can be said to be ‘of’ or ‘about’ something or ‘mean’ something, and a language, as
Jeffrey Sicha points out, is for Sellars “a system (or structure) of representation one of the main
elements of which are those representations called ‘rules’”. The items in Sellars’ picture are
not spatio-temporally located since the picture consists of sentences as types rather than to-
kens, but when tokened by a method of projection, they are isomorphic to the nonlinguistic spa-
tio-temporal items in the world. What misgivings does a neopragmatist have with Sellars’ ac-
count? Let us note three important ones. First, Sellars claims scientistically, the neopragmatist
says, that “our empirical language can only be understood as an incoherent and fragmentary
schema of an ideally coherent language.” Secondly, as Rorty points out, we cannot draw a
line between an object and our picture of that object. And, thirdly, the metaphor of picture sig-
nals an adherence to the occularcentric tradition that Sellars himself wants to be beyond. Bran-
dom, however, as we will get back to in the next chapter, is impressed with Sellars’ expressivist
idea that a representation is anything that can be said to be ‘of’ or ‘about’ something or ‘mean’ something,

Brandom, Rorty and Davidson, following Sellars, all embrace psychological nominalism, a posi-
tion that puts restrictions on what extra-vocabulary impingements to allow as constraining our
conceptual resources. My comments in this section are intended to clarify and motivate the fact
that a neopragmatist allows causal impingements only. According to Sellars’ classical doctrine
“all awareness of sorts, resemblances, facts, etc, in short, all awareness of abstract entities –
indeed, all awareness even of particulars – is a linguistic affair”. This awareness is a sapient or
classificatory awareness of something as something. Psychological nominalism can be under-
stood as an attempt to separate justification and causation through adopting meaning holism, as expressed by Davidson in these terms: "Only a belief can support a belief" and "the meaning of a sentence is given by assigning the sentence a semantic location in the pattern of sentences that comprise the language." As Rorty says, it is "just holism applied to the relation between language and thought. One will be able to defend the claim that there are intrinsic, non-relational features of objects only if one can claim that knowledge of those features is not the same as knowledge of how to use the words one employs to describe those features". The doctrine, he says in PMN, has to be understood as a remark about the difference between facts and rules, exposing how we fall under epistemic rules when we have entered a community where the game governed by these rules are played, resulting in a linguistic behaviorism that is not frustrated by the parameters set by logical positivistic epistemology.

The nominalism is a version of linguistic idealism that is beyond the traditional alternation between idealism and realism because it possesses the conceptual resources to avoid thinking of what is real and true in terms of belief-transcendence or -independence. For Sellars, the possession of a concept equals mastery of the use of a word, which leads him to hold that the mastery of a language is a prerequisite of conscious experience. Therefore, "the primary connotation of "psychological nominalism" is the denial that there is any awareness of logical space prior to, or independent of the acquisition of a language." Sellars has undoubtedly adopted the doctrine from Kant who held that there could be no apprehension without comprehension, or that awareness must involve conceptual classification. It should be noted that one of the problems of atomistic theories of meaning is that they can account for responsive classification but lack the resources to account for conceptual classification. The psychological nominalism arises with the insight that there is no need for intermediaries between the physical thrust upon our sense organs and our judgments. In Sellars’ words it entails, correlative to his ontological linguistic nominalism and consistent with his naturalism, “the denial of the claim, characteristic of the realist tradition, that a “perception” or “awareness” of abstract entities is the root mental ingredient of mental acts and dispositions.” The intentionality of thought, Sellars claims, has to be accounted for in terms of the forms and functions of natural linguistic items, or according to verbal behaviorism, in which “thinking ‘that-p,’ where this means ‘having the thought occur to one that-p’, has as its primary sense [an event of] saying ‘p’; and a secondary sense in which it stands for a short term proximate propensity [dispositional] to say ‘p’.”

The thesis of psychological nominalism receives support from the anti-essentialist’s claim that there is no intrinsic character of any object to be grasped. Rorty, for instance, takes objects to be centers of descriptive gravity, very much like selves. Objects, he says, “change as our descriptions of them change. That is to say, their center of descriptive gravity shifts as inquiry proceeds.” Brandom would add that objects are given to us by the use of singular terms, and that judgments expressing the recurring object-recognition function as substitution licenses. Brandom has his own version of the psychological nominalist doctrine, namely that the application of
concepts is a linguistic affair meaning that all the different varieties of conceptual contentfullness derive substitutionally from the propositional, and that the applier must be a player of the linguistic game of giving and asking for reasons.\textsuperscript{167} Being in the space of giving and asking for reasons involves dealing with a certain sort of authority, recognizing the authority of claims. Both Rorty and Brandom, correctly I believe, think that we should get rid of sense impressions and all other putative forms of mental content that is not a judgment. A psychological nominalist rules out the possibility that we can appeal to nonlinguistic knowledge when reasoning or conducting an argument.

2.5 Scientism

As mentioned in chapter 1, the epistemic realists are haunted by scientism, which renders them unable to appreciate our ordinary purposes. The neopragmatists find both Quine and Sellars guilty of the charges of scientism, even though they are far from embracing its most vulgar form, i.e., the view that science presents us with the world from the view from nowhere. Nevertheless, as a result of the fact that they are still prisoners of the bias and cultural chauvinism of the epistemological tradition on behalf of the physicalist’s vocabulary, alternative vocabularies, employing intensional and intentional idioms, receive derivative authority only. Sellars’ picture theory, his scientific realism and distinction between the scientific and manifest images, and Quine’s theories of meaning, perception, translation and empiricism all signal commitments to the scientism of the epistemological tradition. In Rorty’s words, what happened after Descartes was that “science, rather than living, became philosophy’s subject, and epistemology its center.”\textsuperscript{168} One of the assets of neopragmatism is precisely that it counters the epistemological tradition and puts responsibility where it belongs - with living agents: In a rationalized and historicized society rational input or constraints cannot be received from the world per se. In chapter 4, Putnam will teach us to be hypersensitive towards scientistic perspectives, but let us now look closer into Quine and Sellars’ forms of scientism, before we look at some contemporary forms.

The basic scientistic idea that Quine and Sellars adhere to is the idea that the natural-scientific vocabulary is in some sense privileged and lends derivative authority only to other vocabularies. In order to transfer authority from vocabularies that depict “determinate reality” to, what they consider as, the less determinate vocabularies, Quine and Sellars both strive for a unity, but in a somewhat different manner. Quine aims at the unity of science, which he claims to be a consequence of the theses of physicalism and of extensionality. The first thesis reacts to the phenomenalist claim that statements of physical objects are analyzable into sense data language and logico-mathematical auxiliaries, and roughly claims that reality can be stated in terms of objective physical-state predicates. The second thesis consists in the claim that the scientific language will be extensional. Taken together, the two theses block intentional and in-
tensional idioms from entering our scientific theory. And, whereas Frege conceived of his notational language as an improvement of an inherently flawed natural language, Quine, as Davidson points out, expands this claim making the canonical notations provide us not only with a better science, but also with the road taking us into metaphysics. Like David Lewis, Quine thinks the vocabulary of physics gives us determinate reality. He is too impressed with the vocabulary of science to notice that our different vocabularies take care of different concerns.

What sort of unity does Sellars aspire for? He sets forth to blend the manifest and the scientific image into one stereoscopic view. In PSM, Sellars ascribes primacy to the scientific image and urges us to infuse elements of it into our manifest image. While the manifest image or the image of man-in-the-world is a construct designed to bracket the experienced world into objects of philosophical reflection, the scientific image or the theoretical image is conceived of as deriving from the fruits of postulational theory construction. The pair, we might say, very roughly corresponds with what we now call the psychological and the physical vocabulary. Sellars is far from relegated the content of the manifest image to the memetic scrap heap like some eliminative materialists persuasively argue that we should. He is also far from accepting its soundness at face value as Putnam does when he embraces naïve direct realism and consequently joins the rank of the Platonists. But he does portray the manifest image from the perspective of the scientific image as a rival image resting in an “inadequate’ but pragmatically useful likeness of a reality which first finds its adequate (in principle) likeness in the scientific image”. The project of merging the two images is extremely central in Sellars’ philosophy, as it has become for many contemporary reductionists, since he considers a presentation of a unified vision of man-in-the-world to be the aim of philosophy. In contrast, the vocabularists do not find it attractive to present such a unified vision because they have abandoned the radical disjunction of manifest/scientific and the corollary distinction of appearance/reality as heritage of the specific representationalistic Weltbild that they aim to destroy and replace with the vocabularist framework, which allow merely trivial expressivist notions of appearance and reality. As Rorty points out, “‘phenomenal’ can no longer be given a sense, once Kantian ‘intuitions’ drop out”. The vocabularists, thus, are reluctant to reemploy Sellars’ notion of experience, but eager to assent to his claim “the transition from pre-conceptual patterns of behavior to conceptual thinking was a holistic one, a jump to a level of awareness which is irreducibly new, a jump which was the coming into being of man”. They are also eager to follow Dennett when he says, “if one wants to predict and explain the “actual, empirical” behavior of believers, one must similarly cease talking of belief, and descend to the design stance or physical stance for one’s account”. The correct choice of stance is paramount to acquiring the relevant information that one is seeking, but this does not signify that the physical stance supplies us with determinate reality, in contrast to an indeterminate reality provided for by the intentional stance. They are equally determinate. If we follow Brandom when he trades in the inner/outer metaphors for the expressivist metaphors of making what is implicit explicit, we would want to say rather than to
prove something and care more about fulfilling the right purposes than founding conceptual resources in determinate reality.

In PMN, Rorty echoes Sellars when he claims that our folk psychological vocabulary might function as a placeholder for more up-to-date neurological vocabulary. The problem with this scientistic idea is that it is difficult to see how the new categories could possibly do the same work as our present categories. As McDowell puts it: “Rorty never looks critically at the basically materialistic claim that the Antipodean [or neurological] language would involve no ‘loss of power’.” If a neurological vocabulary appeared, and if we possessed the cognitive capacity to master it, which is not at all certain, it is clear that it would be something else; therefore, we should put the placeholder idea on the shelf carrying the memes of science fiction without conceding to the younger Rorty that “we have just been reporting neurons when we thought that we were reporting raw feels. It was just a happenstance of our cultural development that we got stuck so long with placeholders”. Since PMN, however, Rorty has won the conceptual resources of vocabularism to overcome the apparent necessity of primacy assignments. He can, therefore, transcend the appearance/reality distinction that instructs Sellars when dealing with the manifest objects, and distance himself from the physicalism of PMN, which consisted in conceiving of science, like Sellars, as the measure of all things.

Scientism is not only characterized by privileging the natural-scientific vocabulary, but also by its obsession with the scientific method. But Weberian Entzauberung or disenchantment of nature, characterized by means-to-end rationality, does not promise something grand like the ultimate scientific method. At least, pragmatists do not think so. As Rorty says: “If one takes the core of pragmatism to be its attempt to replace the notion of true beliefs as representations of “the nature of things” and instead to think of them as successful rules for actions, then it becomes easy to recommend an experimental, fallibilist attitude, but hard to isolate a “method” that will embody this attitude.” Analytical philosophy was, as Rorty insists in a battery of passages, obsessed with science and scientific method, and consequently prolonged our infantilism by accepting answerability to the world itself. The scientific method became more than simply obeying provincial conventions in different sciences. It became what put inquiry on the road to what Bernard Williams calls the absolute conception of the world. Like ‘rationality’, Rorty says, ‘method’ was designed to “signify more than epistemic good manners”, namely, “describe the way in which the mind is naturally fitted to learn Nature’s own language”. Within pragmatism, the naturalistic Peircean (e.g. Putnam and Haack), the scientistic cousin of the literary Jamesian, threatens to leap into purpose-transcendence by disobeying the historicist impulse in pragmatism and insisting on the prevalence of philosophical method. He is also likely to partake in the general scientific consensus that truth is some sort of epistemic norm or goal, following Quine in ascribing truth a doctrinal transcendence, i.e. conceiving of it as the goal of sci-
ence and, in Kantian terms, the ideal of pure reason. The neopragmatist counters such a claim, as Davidson does, by saying that since truth is neither a value nor an object, the pursuit of truth is nothing but an empty enterprise. Truth, Davidson says, is a “concept attributed to entities which have a propositional content.” Putnam, in contrast, signals his adherence to epistemic realism by conceiving of truth as idealized rational acceptability and by rejecting the idea that rational acceptability is to be constituted by an appeal to the notion of an ideal community, making it hard to see how he can avoid the appeal to the Peircean notion of “the community of inquirers at the ideal end of inquiry.” Haack distinguishes in Peircean spirit between pseudo-inquiry and the real thing. The genuine inquirer, as opposed to the sham inquirer who only tries to “make the case for some proposition determined in advance,” wants to find the truth of some question. She demonizes the philosophers writing in literary spirit, whom she takes to mutate truth. But the Jamesian has no use for such a distinction because he is content with distinguishing between giving good and bad reasons. Haack’s Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate is commendable for exhibiting the very realist intuitions that a neopragmatism wants to exorcize.

Epistemic realism, thus, is likely to be accompanied by scientism. Finally, let us note that the scientistic instruction to privilege the natural-scientific vocabulary produces a special form of category mistake, namely that of mixing vocabularies, or ignoring the fact that different vocabularies suit different concerns. This is not to say that entries from one vocabulary to another necessarily diminish explanatory or executive capacity, because often quite the contrary is the case, or that vocabularies should be kept pure. Notably, Davidson’s coupling of meaning and truth, as we will get back to in 5.3, secures the possibility of inter-translatability. It is rather to say that very often such mixing produces pseudo-problems, like when mind-talk and brain-talk are mixed, and the piece of the vocabulary with the “weakest” claim on picturing determinate reality, most often the intentional vocabularies, is implicitly underrated. Interestingly enough, Putnam makes a related mistake when he instead of implicitly underrating our ordinary ways of talking, overrates it. Rorty’s post-ontological embracement of the idea of different vocabularies as different tools help us get over the idea of an ontological hierarchy where certain vocabularies can claim a privileged access to picturing reality. Other important strategies that often signal a scientistic orientation, to be elaborated respectively in chapter 3 and chapter 5, is opting for the representational order of semantic explanation and subscribing to a conventionalist conception of language.
3

Brandom’s Explication

3.1 Normative Pragmatics and Inferential Semantics

Robert Brandom fulfills the Rortian dream of giving birth to a new vocabulary. Jürgen Habermas describes *Making It Explicit* as a landmark in theoretical philosophy comparable to Rawls’ work in practical philosophy. Brandom’s detailed and often mind-blowing vistas and insights have a momentum that can make Rortians visualize the contours of a life of philosophy after the death of Philosophy. MIT is an attempt to solve or sidestep a number of problems that are directly connected to the previously reigning representationalistic paradigm by exploiting the expressivist order of semantic explanation within the new framework of *inferentialism*, in which, pace McDowell, it is taken for granted that empiricism is flawed. While Quine often plays down the social side of language to the advantage of the naturalistic side, Brandom, as we will see, never loses sociality out of sight. He lists Kant, Frege, Wittgenstein and Sellars as important collaborators in the inferentialist project, that is, the Kant who took the judgment to be the central linguistic unit and distinguished between the normative and the factual; the Frege who centered on inference before he centered on truth and invited last century representationalism and scientific empiricism, and who distinguished between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, departing from the Cartesian stress on the dimension of knowledge and successful representation, and arriving at an account that privilege understanding and purported representation; the Wittgenstein who claimed that explicit norms presupposed norms that are implicit in practice; and the Sellars who, as we have seen, advocated psychological nominalism and told us that propositional content is not determined by perceptual constraints. We should also enroll the anti-representationalists as important collaborators in the inferentialist project, that is, the Davidson who advocates triangulation and semantic realism, and the Rorty who advocates solidarity and vocabularism. I take it that if we combine the resources from Brandom’s inferentialism and Davidson’s truth conditional semantics; and from Rortian therapy and Brandomian construction by creating what we can dub neopragmatic vocabularism, we get an excellent opportunity to exorcize the epistemic realist intuitions once and for all. Let us get an initial grasp of the inferentialist tenets.

Brandom’s explication is an explication of what is implicit in the doings of the agent. When we give the implicit a linguistic form, we enter the game of giving and asking for reasons, and make logic the organ of semantic self-consciousness that lays out the practical attitudes that confer the expressible conceptual content. Characteristically, Brandom opens his book by
saying that his work "aims to set criteria of adequacy for a theory of discursive practice, motivate the approach adopted, work the model out in detail, and apply it. The idea is to show what kind of understanding and explanatory power one gets from talking this way, rather than to argue that one is somehow rationally obliged to talk this way." Since he is beyond the vocabulary of settlement, telling us that finding and making, and self-creation and self-foundation, are inextricably bound up together, he is able to combine the therapeutic and constructive modes. While McDowell and Putnam still fight to preserve the realist intuitions, Brandom is beyond realism in the company of Rorty and Davidson, presenting a unified vision of language and mind that is beyond the need of rational constraints from the external world. What makes his recovery of the representationalistic locutions less troublesome than the neorealist's, is precisely that he resists empiricism and treasures the prospects of a literary culture that values vocabularies according to their fertility, urging us to leave behind the eristic culture that values dispute by means of philosophical arguments and method.

What motivation does Brandom have for the normative pragmatics, and how does the scorekeeping practices ensure an exchange of doxastic commitments and entitlements? Brandom finds in the Wittgensteinian aftermath a theoretical quietism, which effects an unfortunate division between semantic and pragmatic theorizing that can be bridged by a theory of meaning employing normative vocabulary. The insight that motivates the normative pragmatics, is that "the practices that confer propositional and other sorts of conceptual content implicitly contain norms concerning how it is correct to use expressions, under what circumstances it is appropriate to perform various speech acts, and what the appropriate consequences of such performances are". Contentfulness, then, is ineliminably normative pragmatic. The linguistic norms, instituted by social-practical activity, can be understood both in terms of their deontic form and the social statuses that the practical attitudes of the agents institute. The deontic scorekeeping practices expose themselves in the pragmatics, or the theory of linguistic usage, in attributions and acknowledgements of the deontic statuses of entitlements and commitments. The linguistic practitioners treat each other as possessing various commitments and entitlements by keeping score on the deontic statuses they attribute to others and undertake themselves. These commitments and entitlements can be inherited. While the inheritance of commitments is a commitment-preserving inferential relation, the inheritance of entitlements is an entitlement-preserving inferential relation, and in communication, the content of commitments can be transferred from one scorekeeper to another.

How does the inferentialist account of discursive practice arise, and in what way does this account differ from that of the representationalist? The move from pragmatics to semantics is undertaken when the necessary structure of the social practices is identified to function as the building blocks of the discursive practice of production and consumption of propositional con-
tents. Propositions are, Brandom says, “what can serve as premises and conclusions of inferences, that is, can serve as and stand in need of reasons”. Our practices of giving and asking for reasons are consequently what the inferentialist wants to put in the place of the representationalistic mirroring. The inferentialist account of our discursive practices, then, arises from the combination of normative pragmatics and inferential semantics. While the representationalist owes an account of the nature of representational content and the character of the speaker’s grasp of such content, the inferentialist, who acquires his semantic primitives in the pragmatics, is challenged to explain the referential or representational dimension in terms of the inferential and social dimension.

When we explored Sellars’ toolbox in 2.3, we briefly noted that inferentialism might be his most important contribution to the neopragmatic narrative. What characterizes inferentialism? Brandom exploits the Sellarsian heritage and exhibits ancestry that turns it into a tradition with adherents as well as opponents. We remember from 1.3 that while Renè Descartes formed the imagery of mirroring or representing, setting the stage for epistemic and semantic dualisms, an alternative tradition was formed by Spinoza and Leibniz, who attempted to account for the representings in terms of their inferential significance. Sellars turns to this tradition because he is after an account of conceptual content in terms of inferential articulation to replace the myth of the given. His guiding intuition is that “what [is] needed [is] a functional theory of concepts which [will] make their role in reasoning, rather than supposed origin in experience, their primary feature”. This involves entering the normative realm of commitments, entitlements, endorsements and justifications or the space of reasons where sentences have significance for persons.

In 2.1, we noted that Quine assigned a special role to the observation sentences. The inferentialist agrees that we should lend them a certain priority in justifying empirical claims. Why, then, does he have misgivings with Quine’s account? The reason is that, as Sellars shows in EPM, we cannot have observational knowledge without inference, and, as Brandom points out, the practical significance that is characteristic of claims to observational knowledge, “is best understood in terms of the role they play in the default-and-challenge structure of entitlement”. Within this structure, the non-inferential observational reports can, nevertheless, function as regress-stoppers or unjustified justifiers. In Sellars’ words, “noninferential knowledge of facts […] constitutes the ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims - particular and general - about the world”. In fact, Sellars goes a long way towards accepting two of the central tenets of foundationalism, namely that an observational report is arrived at non-inferentially and can constitute an ultimate court of appeal. What he objects to, is the hierarchy of understanding that lends the observational beliefs the privilege of not presupposing any other beliefs. An inferentialist avoids assigning priority, like Quine does, to observation reports in the order of understanding. Doing so would be ignoring the fact that observational knowledge depends on its inferential connections to be made intelligible. What makes “Gavagai” a report of a rabbit, rather than, for instance, a rabbit tail, is the inferential role of Gavagai. When Sellars demonstrates that even
non-inferential reports stand in need of inferential articulation, he provides the shoulder upon which Brandom can climb when he develops his full-fledged inferentialism: “Sellars’ suggestion is that the key element missing from the parrot and the measuring instrument - the difference between merely responsive classification and conceptual classification - is their mastery of the practices of giving and asking for reasons, in which their responses can play a role as justifying beliefs and claims. To grasp or understand a concept is, according to Sellars, to have practical mastery over the inferences it is involved in - to know, in the practical sense of being able to distinguish, what follows from the applicability of a concept, and what it follows from. […] What makes a classification deserve to be called conceptual classification is its inferential role.”

And, as Brandom points out, this implies holism about concepts, i.e. in order to have a concept, one must have many. Invoking the notion of inferential role is embracing a form of triangulation, a point of agreement with Davidson and Rorty, acknowledging that the conceptual role is determined by the intersections in the information network or, in what Brandom and Sellars call the “reliable differential responsive dispositions” that is causally keyed to things.

What is the outcome of choosing the inferentialist approach? The comprehensiveness of Brandom’s model makes the case not only for propositional content. Intentional content as well as perception and action, as will become clear in 3.2, are accounted for through generalizations of the normative pragmatic base. Brandom summarizes the main consequences of choosing the inferential, rather than the representational framework, in the following terms: “In the theoretical place usually occupied by the notion of intentional states, the pragmatics presented here elaborates a conception of normative statuses; in the place usually occupied by the notion of intentional interpretation, it puts deontic scorekeeping – that is, the social practices of attributing and acknowledging commitments and entitlements, which implicitly institute those statuses. The theoretical work typically done by semantic assessments according to correctness of representation and satisfaction of truth conditions is done by assessments of proprieties of inference.” Propositional content, then, is to be understood in terms of the practices of giving and asking for reasons. But content, Brandom says, is exhausted neither by the circumstances, nor the consequences of application. How, then, can we determine content? Brandom extends the following Dummettian model for linguistic expressions to account for intentional states and attitudes as well: “Learning to use a statement of a given form involves, then, learning two things: the conditions under which one is justified in making the statement; and what constitutes acceptance of it, i.e., the consequences of accepting it.” In Brandom’s words, “the link between pragmatic significance and inferential content is supplied by the fact that asserting a sentence is (among other things) implicitly undertaking a commitment to the correctness of the material inference from its circumstances to its consequences of application”. By distinguishing the circumstances from the consequences of application, Brandom thinks that we can offer an inferentialist account of observation reports, as well as avoid the mistake of the verificationists, assertibilists and reliabilists of treating the circumstances as exclusively determining content, or the corre-
sponding classical pragmatist mistake of taking the consequences of application as exhausting propositional content. Parrots, thermometers and photocells reliably discriminate circumstances while being ignorant of the consequences of application.

A suggestion made by Gilbert Harman can help us describe the relationship between inferential semantics and Davidson’s truth conditional semantics. Do they get in each other’s way? Harman outlines three different levels of linguistic meaning, namely, 1) meaning as conceptual role; 2) meaning as communicated thought; and 3) meaning connected to the speech act performed. Like Harman, Quine, Carnap and Sellars, Brandom takes level 1-theories to be basic, and holds that later levels presuppose the earlier ones. Grice and Davidson, with his formal semantics, Harman says, are level 2-theorists, while Austin and Searle are examples of level 3-theorists. In 5.2, we will see that Davidson’s theory of triangulation provides us with reasons to interpret him as a level 1-theorist. Brandom’s approach is ingenious in combining the three levels to offer an account that succeeds in meeting the traditional objections to conceptual role semantics, namely the charge of ignoring the social aspect of language and of not being able to account for what Harman calls intersubjective objectivity, which first can be established if one takes communication to involve more people. Acknowledging the pragmatic priority of sentences, Brandom agrees with Davidson, as well as with McDowell, that: “If, with Davidson, one takes the semantic interpretation of linguistic expressions to be an aspect of the intentional interpretation of behavior – assigning truth conditions to sentences according to the beliefs they express, and assigning truth conditions to beliefs and desires so as to make possible the explanation and prediction of behavior as largely rational for one who has beliefs and desires with those contents – then one ought to follow him as well in taking the only constraint on an assignment of denotations to subsentential expressions to be that it makes the truth conditions come out right. That is, one ought not to take there to be some independent notion of primitive denotation for such expressions that constrains or even determines the assignment of truth conditions.”

Brandomian conceptual-role semantics is prior to, but as far as I can see, does not get in the way of the Davidsonian truth conditional semantics, which tells a lot about meaning, but not the whole story. Saying with Davidson, “all thought has propositional content, the kind of content that is paradigmatically expressed by sentences,” and “propositions are characterized by their truth conditions; we cannot have a thought without understanding that its propositional content may be true or false”, is not precluding a conception of propositional content in terms of inferential role. Meaning, as Harman says, “is a matter of role because meaning is a matter of the thought expressed; and a thought is defined by its role in a psychological system that includes not only the effect of sensory stimulation and inference but also the impact on the environment of this system via action.”
What is the significance of the deontic scorekeeping model? The model is intended to reflect how linguistic practitioners keep track of commitments and entitlements. Any speech act or move in the language game alters the deontic score. The social practice becomes a linguistic practice when agents adopt the deontic scorekeeping stance towards each other. Treating a performance as an assertion, Brandom says, “is to treat it as the undertaking or acknowledging of a certain kind of commitment – what will be called a ‘doxastic’ or ‘assertional’ commitment”.

And such commitments are a kind of deontic status, formed by a practical attitude, that we would expect to be accompanied by the relevant entitlement. Brandom’s commitment to the pragmatic base lies bare in his claim that “the notion of normative status, and of the significance of performances that alter normative status, is in turn to be understood in terms of the practical deontic attitude of taking or treating someone as committed or entitled”. The attribution of entitlement or commitment can be understood as consisting in the disposition to impose sanctions. For Brandom, the significance of a performance or the force of an utterance is the alteration that it effects in the deontic score, which, we might say, is a Jamesian “difference that matters”.

When reviewing AR Ernest Lepore asks, “what is all this stuff about normativity?” One way to answer the question, would be citing the three interpretive levels on which norms set in. On the first level, Brandom reconstrues the discursive in terms of normative deontic statuses; on the second level, he locates the deontic attitudes; while the third level is characterized by the focus on attributions of deontic attitudes. Like Kant and McDowell, Brandom believes that conceptually structured activity is characterized by its normative character, that concepts have the form of rules, and that the understanding is the faculty of grasping those rules, or the faculty of judging. The correctness of inferences and judgments is not a natural but a normative notion. So what is opted for is not Descartes’ descriptive, naturalistic conception of intentionality, drawing on the notion of ‘certainty’, but the Kantian prescriptive conception focusing on ‘necessity’, or ‘accordance with a rule’.

How does the inferentialist steer between the regulistic regress of rules and the reductive regularism? We act by natural necessity according to rules as natural being, the inferentialist says, and by rational necessity according to our conception of rules, or according to our acknowledgment of our understanding of the rules. The authority of the norms, he says, is derivative from their acknowledgment. Like Wittgenstein and Sellars, pace Kantian regulism about norms that holds that a performance is rendered correct or not by its relation to an explicit rule, Brandom signals a commitment to pragmatism by treating the norms explicit in the form of rules as presupposing norms implicit in practice. The reason for this is that in order to face the threat of regress of rules (rules for applying rules etc.), we need to rely on a pragmatic base: The Rylean knowing that is hinging on the knowing how. In Wittgenstein’s words: “There is a way of grasping a rule which is not an interpretation, but which is exhibited in what we call
‘obeying a rule’ and ‘going against it’ in actual cases.” The obeying of rules is a practice. In addition to steering clear of regulism at the risk of losing the ‘implicitness’, we have to steer clear of regularism, or the conception of norms as regularities, at the risk of losing ‘norms’. Brandom does accept a regularity theory, but not the simple one that conflates “what is” and “what ought” to be done, and acting “according to a rule” and acting “according to a conception of a rule”. What does he suggest? His suggestion is to explain that we take performances as correct or incorrect in terms of positive or negative sanctions, or reinforcements. Assessing normative attitudes as dispositions to apply sanctions does not imply the reductive fallacy, committed by atomistic theories of linguistic meaning, of reducing the normative to the non-normative, because it does not take us outside the normative dimension.

Is the inferentialist capable of securing the objectivity of conceptual norms? While, for instance, Crispin Wright thinks that it must be surrendered, Brandom and McDowell disagree. We see how to keep it, Brandom says, when we focus on the “distinction of social perspective between acknowledging (and thereby undertaking) a commitment oneself and attributing a commitment to another, which makes it possible to understand the objectivity of conceptual norms that consists in maintaining the distinction between the normative statuses they incorporate and the normative attitudes even of the whole community.” The objectivity of concepts is made possible, Brandom says, by an account of the expressive force of representational locutions such as ‘of’, ‘about’ and ‘represent’. In the discussion of the representational dimension of discursive practice in 3.4, we will see that the objectivity and objective norms are secured in the logical space of reasons by a specification of the necessary inferential structure for the practice of social scorekeeping.

### 3.2 Perception and Action

In the last section, we saw that Brandom accounted for propositional content through a generalization of the normative pragmatic base. In this section, we shall see that he does the same with perception and action. Let us start with sketching a model that Brandom inherits from Sellars. When accounting for meaning in terms of functional classification, Sellars distinguishes between three different kinds of moves that we can make in the language game. In addition to the intra-linguistic moves, Sellars says, we also make language entry moves and language exit moves. While the entry moves are conceptually contentful in virtue of their inferential articulation and empirically contentful in virtue of their non-inferential elicitation, the exit moves, by acknowledging practical commitments (or intending), produce non-linguistic performances. Here it should be noted that an account that conceives of observation in terms of language entry transitions and action in terms of language exit transitions embeds observation and action in a prior theory of inference that precludes the objections raised against the epistemological bridges
of the representationalist frameworks. Our conceptual resources are formed by the inferential relations that pertain with acknowledgment of commitments that originate in language entry transitions, or perception, and that effect language exit transitions, or intentional action. What sorts of commitments is he talking about? Brandom conceives of two species of discursive commitments. While the first is cognitive and corresponds to the intentional state of believing, the second is practical and corresponds to intending. The aim, he says, “is to provide a broadly Kantian account of the will as a rational faculty. By exploiting the analogy between discursive entry transitions in perception and discursive exit transitions in action, the rational will be understood as no more philosophically mysterious than our capacity to notice barns our red things. A scorekeeping account can pick out performances (largely non-linguistic ones) as intentional (under some specification) and hence as actions (under any specification) insofar as they are expressions of deontic attitudes – acknowledgments of a certain kind of commitment.”

The three ideas that jointly make the case for the rational will, are the ideas that practical commitments can be modeled on doxastic commitments; that beliefs function as premises and intentions as conclusions in practical reasoning; and that actions can be comprehended as discursive exit transitions, just as perception can be comprehended as discursive entry transitions. Like Sellars, Brandom thinks volition is an intention whose time has come. Let us have a look at Quine’s account of perception before we get back to the inferentialist story.

In chapter 2, we noted that Quine’s naturalized epistemology is designed to account for knowledge acquisition rather than knowledge per se. How does Quine account for perception? It is dispositional, Quine says, as the details of its neurophysiology is still lacking. The notion of disposition makes it, on his story, possible to refer to mechanisms that we not yet fully understand without presupposing anything about the physical structure, while waiting for science to work out the details. Quine insists that perception must be understood as opposed to reception. Whereas reception involves receiving stimulations of the nerve endings, perception involves the subject’s awareness. His naturalism accounts for the innate standard of perceptual similarity, and the persistence of the disposition makes it important for our survival and also behaviorally detectable. The traces that are essential to learning, i.e. the establishing of habits, is left by episodic perception. What is preserved of an episode in the traces is not a complete copy of the episode itself, but rather recognizable salient features that jointly with our innate traces help enhance our discriminatory abilities. Pleasurable traces cause the individual to track similarity in later episodes. The problem with this theory is not only that, like many other physicalist theories, it is science fiction, as Putnam presumably would say. The real problem, as McDowell notes, is that Quine, never leaving the space of nature, fails to bring awareness within the confines of the space of reasons. As we will see in 4.6, the central notion in McDowell’s neo-empiricism, namely, second nature, is explicitly tailored to let perceptual awareness enter the normatively
governed order of understanding. Let us see how Brandom’s account of perception, as well as action, in contrast to Quine’s, incorporates the Sellarsian insight that all awareness is a linguistic affair.

Practical commitments, Brandom says, like cognitive commitments, are essentially inferentially articulated, and the content of the commitment to act is the making-true of a claim, just as the content of the cognitive commitment is the taking-true of a claim. An asymmetry between the two species of commitments arises since I authorize you to take-true what I take to be true, while I do not authorize you to make-true what I seek to make-true. Observation, Brandom says, “requires reliable responsive dispositions to acquire acknowledged commitments, while action requires reliable responsive dispositions to fulfill acknowledged commitments”. While in perception we take some propositional content to be true, in action we make it true. The Brandomian actions differ from the mere behavior that cannot be made intelligible by eliciting the intentional content in that “reasons can be given for them; they can appear as the conclusions of practical inferences”. In practical inferences, we give reasons for actions and employ doxastic commitments as premises. The deontic score determines what is the proper action since it tells what we are permitted or obliged to do. The scorekeeping is doubly perspectival since it is performed both by and for each interlocutor. For Brandom, taking intentions to be a kind of judgment is taking them to be a kind of commitment. Irrational actions, Brandom says, are actions with a practical commitment that the agent is not entitled to by a good practical inference. In Davidsonian terms, actions are performances that are intentional under some description, while being an action is, in the form of a slogan, an extensional property of an event while being intentional is an intensional property of an event. The inferentialist, however, replaces the representationalist-sounding ‘intentional states’ with the inferentialist-sounding ‘normative statuses’, which have content “in virtue of which they are essentially liable to evaluations of ‘the force of the better reason’”. Brandom inherits from Wittgenstein the view that intentional states and acts have an essentially normative pragmatic significance: “A particular intention may or may not settle how one will act, but its content determines how it is appropriate to act, according to the intention - namely by making-true that content.” The inferentialist, pace Quine, has the resources to locate the account of perception and action within the space of reasons.

How is intentionality accounted for in inferentialist terms? Let us have a brief look at Dennett and Davidson’s theories to see that the inferentialist generally considers himself as an accomplice in their projects. To start with, they both acknowledge the normative dimension of intentionality by taking the category of rationality to be essential in intentional explanation. Dennett holds that intentionality ought to be understood as ascriptions of intentionality, and his ‘stance’ stance secures that there is no gap between being an intentional system and being treated as
one. Possessing intentionality, as Rorty says, “doesn’t mean more than ‘suitable to described anthropomorphically, as if it were a language-user’".  As Brandom points out, Dennett’s substantive rationality assumption, or the assumption that agents generally do what they ought to do, provides a bridge “that connects the normative significance of intentional attribution with the actual dispositions of the subject of such attributions”. For Dennett, adopting the intentional stance does not enhance descriptive accuracy, but provides us rather with a predictive utility function. Brandom conceives of his own approach, like Dennett’s, as an account of the stance of attributing original intentionality, as opposed to simple, interpretable or derivate intentionality.  His theory of intentionality mimics Davidson’s in being relational, i.e. showing what it is about the contents of intentional states that can be explained only by appealing to the relation between such states and specifically linguistic performances, which Davidson argues for in the following two steps: 1) “Someone cannot have a belief unless he understands the possibility of being mistaken, and this requires grasping the contrast between truth and error – true belief and false belief; and 2) a grasp of this contrast “can emerge only in the context of interpretation, which alone forces us to the idea of an objective, public truth”. The pragmatic significances, which signal that we are dealing with a linguistic view, rather than a view that ascribes explanatory priority to rational agency, are what confer objective representational propositional contents. Brandom’s and Davidson’s semantic externalism, which is a perspectival externalism and what Brandom calls ‘tactile Fregeanism’, consists in the interpretive strategy of ascribing original intentionality, and, moreover, in stating that we grasp facts and the concepts that articulate them through practice, while the grasp stops short of transparency and leaves us fallible as regards grasping how things are.

The inferentialist theory of practical reasoning, as we have seen, coincides with the core of Davidson’s theory, but it also reacts against what it considers to be inherent empiricist traces. What are these traces, and how does the inferentialist avoid them? The first empiricist trace that the inferentialist identifies in Davidson’s theory of action, is the assumption that the norms governing rational action and practical reasoning are instrumental and owe their authority to the states of preferences and desires. The inferentialist, in contrast, prefers to characterize rational agency in terms of endorsements and commitments, from which preferences and desires receive a provincial form of authority. It is doubtful, I think, that Davidson would agree. Another empiricist trace is visible in Actions, Reasons, and Causes when Davidson conflates “acting intentionally” and “acting for reasons”. For Brandom, this is conflating the deontic statuses of a practical commitment and the entitlement to such a commitment. What advantages does the inferentialist model possess beyond the fact that it retires empiricism? Brandom claims that the deontic scorekeeping model profits from acknowledging intendings as full-fledged intentional states and can account for cases where intentions are not followed by action, in contrast to Davidson’s original theory, in which talk about beliefs and desires is preferred. Davidson does not, if we share Brandom’s parameters, fully appreciate the way intentions carry implicit
commitments, and the reason why is that he lacks the resources of the social deontic scorekeeping account.

What significance does the replacement of the representationalist with the expressivist order of semantic explanation have for the propositional attitudes? Most significantly, ‘beliefs’ as well as ‘intentions’ become ambiguous in scorekeeping terms, referring sometimes to a deontic status and sometimes to a deontic attitude, i.e. to the doxastic or the practical commitment, or to the acknowledgments of such commitments.239 This gives us a neat tool that can help us explain the intuition that reasons can be causes. Beliefs and intentions can function as causes when taken in their attitudinal sense when the acknowledgment of a practical commitment reliably causes a performance. Reasons can, consequently, be causes “because deontic scorekeeping attitudes can play both normative and causal roles”.240 The deontic statuses enter the causal order through the deontic attitudes, which are interrelated by the causal process of inferring. Brandom’s commitment to assigning a fundamental expressive role to the normative vocabulary is exposed by the following thesis: “Normative vocabulary (including expressions of preference) makes explicit the endorsement (attributed or acknowledged) of material proprieties of practical reasoning. Normative vocabulary plays the same expressive role on the practical side that conditionals do on the theoretical side.”241 This is perfectly compatible with the Sellarsian insight, “having sensations is having causes of judgments, not reasons for judgments. Or better, in view of the ambiguities of ‘having a reason,’ having sensations is not knowing premises from which one draws inferences”.242 No observational meanings, then, are immune to criticism and revision because “there is no ‘skyhook’ of given meanings to serve as a fulcrum of moving the world of ideas.”243

3.3 Linguistic Rationalism versus Linguistic Romanticism

As I noted in chapter 1, Rorty might benefit from closing the gap between his own linguistic romanticism and Brandom’s linguistic rationalism. My opinion is that Rorty would gain some ground that could help him exorcize the realist intuitions if he reappropriated some essensialistic locutions and the vocabulary of objectivity, that is, for instance, such locutions as ‘facts’, ‘concepts’ and ‘reference’. Rorty and Brandom both agree that we should leave the representationalistic vocabulary of settlement, but they disagree when it comes to the vocabulary of objectivity. For years, Rorty has conflated the two vocabularies, taking both to pay tributes to the realist intuitions. He has only recently become more amiable to the vocabulary of objectivity, which might prove useful in the battle against more moderate forms of realism, such as neorealism. In 3.4, we will see how linguistic rationalism is able to account for the representational dimension without getting stuck in the representationalist tangle. In this section, we will exploit the premisory ground in chapter 1, where we distinguished between therapeutic and constructive modes of in-
quiry, to urge Rorty to shift his therapeutic insistence on anti-representationalism to a more constructive mode, because, as we noted, the best form for therapy might be construction, i.e. showing how we can get along perfectly without the necrotic web of beliefs. Then, we will start the reappropriation by challenging the anti-representationalist to accept the inferentialist account of facts. Let us first try to get a grip on the characteristics of linguistic romanticism.

The central thesis of romanticism is that “what is important for human life is not what propositions we believe but what vocabulary we use”. It, thus, offers support to the pragmatist’s claim that contrasting vocabularies is far more important than listing the pros and cons of a thesis. Romanticism, further, “accepts Kant’s point that objectivity is conformity to rule, but changes the emphasis, so that objectivity becomes mere conformity to rule, merely going along with the crowd, merely consensus”. Rorty is reluctant to say that meaning is use. Providing a theory of meaning is for him connected to the project of establishing first philosophy. But, like Wittgenstein, he thinks “meaning is to be explained in terms of what is taken as justifying an utterance”, and he shares his scepticism towards constructions of systems as well as the therapeutic emphasis on dissolving pseudo-problems. The rationalist has no problem with romanticism before it claims that theories of meaning signal an attraction to first philosophy, and before it shows scepticism towards construction. As we remember from 3.1, Brandom counters Wittgenstein’s quietism with offering a normative pragmatics. How does Rorty’s therapeutic spirit show? Most significantly, it shows in his anti-representationalistic deconstruction of the epistemological tradition that tells us to get rid of the epistemic realist intuitions that hold us captive and answerable to the world. Rorty himself reads the great philosophers as telling us what not to discuss, i.e. reading Hegel, for instance, as telling us to stop treating the space of nature as the special realm of truth, and as weaning Kant from das ding-an-sich. The spirit also shows in the therapeutic impulse that Rorty has inherited from Sellars: “Imagine how a term like ‘refers to’ or ‘is about’ came to be used, and you will thereby know all you need to know about how reference, aboutness and intentionality came into the world.” What is the problem with Rorty’s therapeutic mode of inquiry? My suggestion is that there is not a problem unless therapy gets in the way of construction, as it sometimes does in anti-representationalism. Critics file the charge against Rorty that were once filed against Kierkegaard for his inner negation of Hegel. They accuse Rorty of sharing the parameters of the metaphysical realist when he inner negates him. Habermas, for instance, interprets Rortian context-relativity (to a given audience) as the negative metaphysical flipside of the logocentrical coin. Context-relativity, however, pace Habermas, is not mainly the outcome of a negation of metaphysical realism. As we will rehearse in 4.4, it is the natural outcome of semantic realism and its acknowledgment of our situated historicity. The critics do have a point, however, but the point is not, as they argue, that Rorty is trapped in the dialectic with the representationalist. He does have the conceptual resources to offer an account that makes no reference to representationalism. I am talking about the resources that put alternative constraints on our linguistic locutions, namely causation and infer-
ence. The critics should rather be understood as pointing out that Rorty’s therapeutical writing often gets in the way for the constructive mode of inquiry. The reason for this might be that Rorty is simply too eager to exorcize the harmful way of thinking that is still embraced by the critics. Perhaps we can understand Brandom as performing the sort of therapy that Rorty prefers, namely the one that tells us what not to discuss, and doing so simply by not discussing it, by being constructive?

What is linguistic rationalism? First, let us note some discrepancies between Brandom and Rorty’s writing. While Rorty is a therapeutic Wittgensteinian that urges us to avoid pseudo-problems, Brandom, constructing upon a normative pragmatic base, is a constructive Wittgensteinian. While Rorty spends a lot of time creating, and urging us to create, new metaphors, Brandom both creates new metaphors and kills them off into literalness, putting more emphasis than Rorty on the importance of assigning the metaphors a location in the inferential web, and, thus, making it possible to release the tension, which we mentioned in chapter 1 and will return to in chapter 5, between the attraction to imagination and to inference. While Rorty is anxious to retire the essensialistic locutions, Brandom exemplifies how traditional essensialistic locutions can be reappropriated and put to new use by being assigned a new conceptual role that relieves them of their necrotic content. How, then, can linguistic rationalism be described? In short, it is characterized by the idea that performances count as assertions only insofar they appear in the social game of giving and asking for reasons. No such game can be recognized without acknowledging the normative statuses of commitments and entitlements. Objectivity is achieved when the propositional contents contributed to the normative statuses that show the normative significance of a speech act, transcend the attitudes of the linguistic players. And the rational relations are put to the fore when we acknowledge that endorsing a claim is taking responsibility for it and involves consequential commitments to its inferential consequences, as well as the inferential antecedents that produced the content of the assertion in the first place. Absent such consequential commitments, Brandom says, “the game lacks the rational structure required for us to understand its moves as the making of contentful assertions.” A claim is licensed when we give the reasons for it that entitles us to hold it. All that is required in order to establish a notion of objective propositional content, which in fact can be done in any linguistic community, Brandom says, “is that the commitments and entitlements they associate with ordinary empirical claims such as ‘The swatch is red’ generate incompatibilities for these claims that differ suitably from those associated with any claims about who is committed to, entitled to, or in position to assert anything.”

In chapter 1, I foreshadowed that we were going beyond the distinctions of representationalism and anti-representationalism, self-foundation and self-creation, solidarity and objectivity, and therapy and construction. These distinctions as well as the rhetorical move of dissolving distinctions are familiar to all readers of Rorty, and also what Rorty would expect all good Rortians to deconstruct. My intention was to signal that by dropping these distinctions, we could re-
lease the constructive potential of inferentialism. Linguistic rationalism tells us that, to use a phrase of Putnam, what are separated in the distinctions actually *interpenetrate*. When Rorty thought he was being therapeutic and exorcizing a way of talking, he was actually releasing constructive potential.

In this section, I will urge Rorty to accept Brandom’s account of facts. Rorty holds that Davidson has shown that ‘true’ is unanalyzable, and that in doing so he also showed that we had to get rid of ‘facts’. If we look closer at the conceptual content of Davidson’s ‘facts’, we see that they differ in important ways from Brandom’s. Brandom denies that his notion of ‘facts’ functions as the interface that Rorty and Davidson take it to be: “Facts, like other claims, are conceptually articulated by their inferential and incompatibility relations to other claims. It is a feature of the conceptual articulation of claims, and hence of facts, that they are about particular objects.”

And: “These noninferential dispositions (the locus of our empirical receptivity) accordingly do not constitute the interface between what is conceptually articulated and what is not, but merely one of the necessary conditions for a conceptually articulated world – the world consisting of everything that is the case, all the facts, and the objects they are about.” Why should we single out facts as the privileged group of claims, one might ask, when all claims stand in need for the better reason? Because facts, we should echo Brandom in saying, are simply true, as opposed to false, claims. Whereas Rorty rejects the notion of facts as something that makes our claims true, Brandom wants to keep facts as true claims “in the sense of what is claimed, not in the sense of claimings.” What does this mean? On Brandom’s account, we are able to say that there were true claimables (which is his equivalent to facts), but no true claimings, before there were vocabularies. “One cannot change the nonlinguistic facts,” Brandom says, “in the unloaded sense, by changing linguistic ones.” In order to account for the move from claimables to claimings, a tribute to the distinction that Sellars draws between -ing and -ed locutions, Brandom develops epistemological reliablism, which we will discuss in 3.4. What consequences does Brandom’s account have for the epitomized “only a belief can justify a belief”? None. The reason why is that, being a true psychological nominalist, he does not take us outside the normative realm. In our social practices, Brandom says, we endorse facts when we attribute knowledge. Facts, he says, are “standing in normative relations of justification to our claimings as well as in causal relations of triggering them. Indeed we can see them as standing in the normative relations precisely because and insofar as they stand in the causal relations”.

Rorty might profit from following Brandom’s suggestion to make the most out of the extra-vocabular causal relation that already does the work for him when he rejects the representationalist. Denying Brandom his use of ‘facts’, would be merely word policing. We might have good reasons, as Rorty does when he claims that the employment of the traditional representationalistic vocabulary prolongs our immaturity, but appealing to arguments that purport to render ‘facts’ as inter-
mediaries simply does not work against Brandom since he can appeal to the expressivist re-
sources, claiming that the epistemic entitlement that facts lend us can be couched in terms of
discursive commitments and entitlements. Our claims, then, might answer normatively to the
facts as well as being causally conditioned by them, and making claims can, thus, be under-
stood as representing how things are without crossing over from the conceptual to the non-
conceptual realm. If one considers the representationalist/inferentialist distinction as more in-
formative, precise and adequate for our present purposes than the rationalist/empiricist distinc-
tion, one will consider the anti-representationalists as, to some extent, still caught in the repre-
sentationalist tangle. It should, however, as I have noted before and will stress in the remainder
of the essay, be possible to persuade the anti-representationalists to develop their remarks on
inference to accommodate a conceptual role semantics.

3.4 The Representational Dimension, Discursive Practice, Truth and Knowledge

The representationalists, as noted in 1.3, account for representation in terms of designation,
that is, they take ‘representation’ as the semantic primitive. As we remember, the problems that
are connected to this approach are, first, that it is doubtful that propositional contentfullness can
be derived from the primitive, and, secondly, that we need a larger theoretical machinery if we
want to account for the correct use of contentful expressions and the correct circumstances and
consequences of being in contentful states. In this section, we will inquire into how the inferen-
tialist reappropriates the representational dimension and makes us answerable to the facts. The
rest of the chapter is devoted to the task of reappropriating the representationalist locutions,
which is a task that the linguistic rationalist wants to look attractive for the linguistic romanticist,
and which involves not only accounting for the representational dimension, but for discursive
success, truth and knowledge as well. The reappropriation is successfully executed only if it
promotes the theoretical slack that is so highly treasured by the anti-reificational neopragmatist,
while making our purposes easier attainable and communication run smoother.

To start with, how does Brandom suggest that we can explain the representational dimen-
sion? Brandom picks the primitive material proprieties of inferences as his unexplained explain-
ers.258 In contrast to, for instance, Dummett, he conceives of the formal proprieties of inferences
in terms of material ones as well as representational content in terms of inferential content. As
he says: “A semantically adequate notion of correct inference must generate an acceptable no-
tion of conceptual content. But such a notion must fund the idea of objective truth conditions
and so of objectively correct inferences. Such proprieties of judgment and inference outrun ac-
tual attitudes of taking and treating judgments and inferences as correct. They are determined
by how things actually are, independently of how they are taken to be. Our cognitive attitudes
must ultimately answer to these attitude-transcendent facts.”259
The contentfullness of object-representing is, thus, explained in terms of the propositional contentfullness, which, in turn is accounted for by the joint account of material-circumstantial and the pragmatic-consequential proprieties of inference, that we sketched in 3.1. Brandom’s account of the representational dimension of conceptual content depends on the interactive, social relation that pertains between the inferential semantics and the normative pragmatics. Conceptual contents can be genuinely shared, Brandom says, “but their perspectival nature means that doing so is mastering the coordinated system of scorekeeping perspectives, not passing something nonperspectival from hand to hand”. Any scorekeeping perspective presupposes the distinction between what is subjectively held true and what is objectively true. Maintaining this distinction is, as Davidson argues, “essential to the existence of an interpersonal system of communication”.

How, then, does Brandom account for ‘reference’ without appealing to the designational model? The choice of the lamp, rather than the mirror, renders his representational dimension quite different than Metaphysicus’. In short, ‘reference’. or the representational dimension, is accounted for in terms of the prior inferential dimension. It is hopeless, as Brandom says, to pursue the representational explanatory strategy by modeling representation on designation because of its mistaken assumptions that the relation between singular terms and the objects being picked out is antecedently inteligible and can be extended to apply to the category of sentences. Why do we need a representational dimension at all? The reason that he cites is that whatever is propositionally contentful “does necessarily have such a representational aspect; nothing that did not would be recognizable as expressing a proposition”. In order to explicate the representational relations, he exploits the expressivist resources: ‘Of’, ‘about’, and ‘represents’. Brandom says, “make representational relations explicit in virtue by the way they figure in de re ascriptions of propositional attitudes”. And, the distinction between de dicto ascriptions, which attribute belief in a dictum, and de re ascriptions, which attribute belief about some thing or res, is exploited to make the de re ascriptions the fundamental representational locutions which explicate propositional content, while also offering two different kinds of intentional explanation. Davidson, in contrast, does not accept this distinction and operates with de dicto beliefs only. A de re ascription, Brandom says, shows the objective representational content of a belief: “Lars believes of Oslo that it is the Tigercity” when read as “Lars represents Oslo as the Tigercity”. This account, which explains the disagreement with Wright in 3.1, Brandom says, “makes possible an explanation of the objectivity of concepts. It takes the form of a specification of the particular sort of inferential structure social scorekeeping practices must have in order to constitute objective norms, according to which the correctness of an application of a concept answers to the facts about the object to which it is applied, such that everyone may be wrong about it”.

The representational dimension of propositional content, Brandom says, “is a reflection of the essential role played in their specifically inferential articulation by differences of social perspective - that is, differences between the points of view of those who undertake a commitment and
Is Brandom recovering the metaphysical realist’s finite and structured space of reason? I don’t think so. As he puts it: “Taking something as a representation must not be parsed in terms of the adoption of explicitly contentful attitudes or intentional states such as beliefs.” The role that is played by “the correctness of representation” (according to the representationalists) and “the satisfaction of truth conditions” (according to Davidson and McDowell) is in linguistic rationalism played by “the proprieties of inference”. Consequently, the framework fits the Rortian inferrer better than it fits the Cartesian representer or the Davidsonian antirepresenter.

What marks discursive success on the inferentialist account? The linguistic rationalist is not satisfied unless our attitudes are transcended and answerability to the objects is achieved. The answerability to the objects and the world itself is, as we have noted and will put under scrutiny in 4.6, McDowell’s hobbyhorse. As noted in the last section and pace McDowell, Brandom does not want the representational relationship to be parsed in terms of a relationship between our intentional states and the world. How, then, is discursive success secured? As usual, Brandom exploits the expressivist resources. By adopting a representational stance towards our communication and action, he says, the implicit practical attitudes are expressed explicitly as the representational locutions are employed. Brandom’s masterstroke is the way the representational dimension is taken care of by social-inferential mechanisms. He offers a three-tiered semantic structure that centers on the theoretical idioms of inference, substitution and anaphora. Anaphora, Brandom says, “secures not only coreference but token repeatability across the different repertoires of commitments that correspond to different interlocutors.” The salient features of ‘true’ and ‘refer’ is their expressive, rather than explanatory, function and the fact that “they are anaphoric proform-forming operators; the paradigmatic use of ‘true’ is to construct a special kind of prosentence, while the paradigmatic use of ‘refers’ is to construct a special kind of pronoun.” Like Michael Hymers, Brandom will not assign an explanatory role to locutions such as truth, reference and knowledge. Instead, he lets expressivism find expressions in the claims that there is no use in asking what a proposition is without asking what it is for a sentence to express a proposition, or a proposition to be true or a representation to be successful without asking what it is to express one – what purporting to represent consists in - complemented by an account of the grasping of the representational purport or the representing as a representing. In other words: “Practical representational uptake of representings - treating objects, states, or performances as purporting to be correct representation of objects and facts - consists in taking them to be takings: taking them to express attitudes concerning what there is and how things are.” And further: “Such uptake incorporates an implicit distinction between representational attitude (how things are taken to be by what is treated as a representation) and representational status (how things actually are, which determine success or correctness of that at-
The concepts of attitude and status, therefore, receive a force that is released in forming the crucial distinction between representational purport and success that allows the representational status to transcend the particular attitudes we might have. In chapter 1, it was mentioned that an account of discursive success and the representational dimension, as Rorty insists, should not be allowed to appeal to something recognition-transcendence that takes us outside the order of the understanding. Is this what Brandom is doing when he says that we have to transcend our particular attitudes? No, and the reason why is that the attitude-transcendent, in contrast to the recognition-transcendent, is up for a grasp, that is, it can be regimented and explicated.

How, then, is propositional content conferred onto states, attitudes and performances? There are three dimensions, Brandom says, that are crucial to inferential articulation and interact in the conferral. The first is the dimension of the deontic statuses of commitments and entitlements that can be inherited; the second is constituted by the distinction between concomitant and communicative inheritance of deontic statuses, which conveys the difference between intra- and interpersonal uses of the claim as a premise; and in the third dimension discursive authority is connected to responsibility in a way that make assertions endorsements. “Doxastic commitments without entitlement,” Brandom says, “lack authority.” Any assertion carries consequential commitments because moves in a language game do not take place in a vacuum. Asserting, for instance, “the girl is limping”, carries the further commitment to, for instance, “the girl has hurt herself”. Assertions are the way of expressing beliefs, or doxastic commitments, that connects claimings and believings, the connection that Dummett describes in the following terms: “judgment […] is the interiorization of the external act of assertion”. The central position that Brandom saves for assertion, is illustrated by the fact that even inferring cannot be understood without recourse to asserting. In fact, assertion and inferring are inextricably linked together. The Brandomian performers authorize further assertions and undertake themselves a certain responsibility while asserting. Discursive practice in Brandom’s hands does not leave the hands clean. Since all concepts, even purely theoretical concepts, stand in inferential relationships to concepts that are employed non-inferentially in reporting observations, the inherited empirical content functions as a constraint in any inference in which it might take part. This, however, is another way of saying that the anti-representationalistic causal constraints will do.

While an account of truth usually is employed to account for propositional content, Brandom’s faces the broader challenge of accounting for the representational dimension of discourse and intentionality. What does Brandom have to say about truth? On the pragmatist account, he says, truth is not an attitude independent property. Rather, as a consequence of the five theses that he isolates as the crucial classical pragmatist tenets about truth, the pragmatist understands calling something true primarily as a doing and not as a saying. The five theses are:
“First is the performative, antidescriptive strategy, emphasizing the act of calling something true rather than the descriptive content one thereby associates with what is called true. Next is an account of that act as the personal taking up of a certain sort of normative stance or attitude. Taking some claim to be true is endorsing it or committing oneself to it. Third is a particular understanding of that stance or attitude. Endorsing a claim is understood as adopting it as a guide to action, where this in turn is understood in terms of the role the endorsed claim plays in practical inference, both in first-person deliberation and in third-person appraisal. Fourth, and least important, is the view that an advantage of understanding the appropriateness or correctness of adopting an attitude of endorsement in terms of its role in guiding action consists in the possibility for some sort of not merely subjective measure of that appropriateness, namely, the success of the action it leads to. This is the only strand of the argument acknowledged or embraced by stereotypical pragmatism. Finally, and it will be argued, most significantly, the theory claims that once one has understood acts of taking-true according to this four-part model, one has understood all there is to understand about truth.”

The pragmatist approach takes ‘true’ to be a force-indicating, rather than a sense-expressing locution. The true expresses, rather than explains. The attitude of taking-true, Brandom says, “is just that of acknowledging an assertional commitment”. This leaves him with a theory of asserting as a theory of taking-true, which “can be exploited in according to two different orders of explanation: moving from a prior notion of truth to an understanding of asserting (or judging) as taking, treating or putting forward as true, or moving from a notion of asserting to a notion of truth as what one is taking, treating, or putting forward a claim as. The latter line of thought [which is Brandom’s] accords ‘true’ an expressive role, in permitting us to say something about assertion, rather than an explanatory role, as something that can be understood in advance of understanding assertion and used to advance such an understanding.”

Brandom fears that taking-true is understood solely as an attribution, without an undertaking of status. The pragmatist understands taking-true as adopting a normative stance towards a claim or a belief: “One is expressing or establishing one’s own relation to a claim, in taking it to be true, rather than recognizing some independent property the claim already had.” The most interesting features of the classical pragmatist story, Brandom says, is “its dual commitment to a normative account of claiming and believing that does not lean on a supposedly explanatory antecedent notion of truth, and the suggestion that truth can then be understood phenomenalistically, in terms of features of these independently characterized takings-true.” The facts about what is true, then, “supervene on the facts about taking-true, i.e., on the action-guiding role of beliefs”. Taking-true is licensing a claim to be treated as a sound premise for an inference. Truth, then, is what is preserved in good inferences. Brandom keeps the distinction between ‘having’ and ‘seeming to have’ in place. Facts about having physical properties, for instance, are taken to supervene on the facts about seeming to have such properties. His supervenience phenomenalism is weaker and broader than classical subjective phenomenalism, but, neverthe-
less, neopragmatists say, it has to be careful not to end up with the Dummettian recognition-transcendence that can be conceived of as signaling a withdrawal from the world.

Brandom, pace the anti-representationalists, thinks epistemology can be saved as a serious subject of inquiry. Why is that? The reason why is that he thinks that we can avoid the representationalistic connotations of “the theory of knowledge” by exploiting the conceptual resources of expressivism. A theory of knowledge, then, is thought to work to secure a reliable exchange of information between communicators, and we can imagine, like Brandom does, such a theory that does not depend on the notion, attacked by Rorty, of an assemblage of representations. Getting rid of the skeptic (because he depends on epistemic realist intuitions) and eschewing naturalized epistemology (because it never takes us into the order of the understanding) do not preclude the theory of knowledge. What is knowledge? According to the linguistic rationalist, it is a complex hybrid deontic status since it involves the deontic statuses of commitment and entitlement, and the deontic attitudes of attributing and undertaking deontic statuses. An attribution of knowledge is an attribution of a commitment, and “in taking someone to be a knower, one attributes a commitment, attributes entitlement to that commitment, and acknowledges commitment to the same content oneself”. This broadly phenomenalistic approach to knowledge is dependent on the corresponding phenomenalism about truth, drawing attention away from knowledge per se, while focusing on the attribution of knowledge. The requirement that corresponds to the truth condition on knowledge, involves the adoption of a normative stance towards a claim, rather than attributing a special property to it. This condition, Brandom says, is central to understanding truth talk, which is made intelligible by the difference in social perspective that pertains between attributing a normative status to another and undertaking the status oneself.

The Peircean naturalist, as it was noted in 2.5, conceives of truth as idealized rational acceptability, and explains rational acceptability by appealing to the notion of the community of inquirers at the ideal end of inquiry. Knowledge, then, becomes an external regulative ideal and something outside of reach. On the neopragmatic account, in contrast, knowledge is as familiar as something can get. Knowledge, as Brandom says, is crystallized as the “ideal that is projected by the very possibility of saying anything at all,” and our aspiration to, search for and estimation, not only of knowledge, but of truth, as well, is inherent in the normative structure of our linguistic practice. Because it can be accommodated within the neopragmatic triangular structure, this conception of knowledge does not look anything like the target of the anti-representationalistic attack on epistemic ideals. As mentioned in 3.3 and according to Brandom, facts are true claims: “Phenomenalistically to call something a fact is to take it to be true. ‘Claims’ here has the semantic sense of what is claimed, rather than the pragmatic sense of claiming it – a matter of content, not of force or deontic attitude.” The world, then, the neo-
pragmatist is allowed to say, is Wittgensteinian in being everything that is the case, or the sum of all facts. Which claims, then, are we entitled to hold and in what process are the entitlements put at risk? The claims that we are entitled to hold are simply the ones that possess a positive justificatory status. The process of winning and losing entitlements, or a positive justificatory status, takes place within, what Brandom has dubbed, the structure of default and challenge, in which prima facie entitlements and ways of criticizing and undermining them is combined. This process, Brandom says, is “a dynamic process of acquisition and loss of entitlement by various commitments on the part of various interlocutors [...] and of withholding such claims and attributions.”

How does the inferentialist face traditional epistemology? Like all neopragmatists, he wants to be a post-epistemologist if that means being beyond the classical idea of knowledge as an assemblage of representations. But being a linguistic rationalist, he also wants to reappropriate, or rationally reconstruct, one might say, whatever classical locutions might be helpful for our present concerns, a task that is executed by assigning the locutions a different conceptual role. The traditional Justified True Belief-model of knowledge, thus, looks like this when clothed in inferentialist terms: 1) The scorekeeper must attribute an inferentially articulated, hence propositionally contentful, commitment; 2) the scorekeeper must attribute entitlement to that commitment; 3) the scorekeeper must undertake the same propositional commitment attributed to the candidate knower. Brandom, therefore, for instance, avoids classical epistemology’s ignorance of deferential entitling or how testimony can occasion authority. His epistemological project is characterized by his adherence to the sound insight of traditional epistemological reliabilism, namely that the correctness of a belief is effected by a reliable belief-forming mechanism, as well as by his vehement opposition to its scientistic struggle to explain normative statuses reductively in naturalistic terms. How are these characteristics implanted? Brandom’s general strategy is to assess the reliability theory by complementing the regularity theory with the social scorekeeping account, which, by appealing to our practical deontic attitudes, can offer an account of correct application of concepts. He, thus, inverts the traditional order of explanation and urges us to understand reliability in terms of the goodness of inferences, rather than the other way around. Even observational reports, Brandom says, stand in need of inferential articulation. Knowledge, then, can be attributed in cases when the believer is reliable, which might be due to training, even though a believer cannot justify his beliefs. As a result, something that makes reliabilism a form of epistemological externalism, ascriptions of knowledge can lean on considerations unbeknownst to the knower himself.

To wrap it up: Is Brandom’s reliabilism compatible with the anti-representationalistic post-epistemology? Yes, I think it is. Brandom, like Davidson, eschews accounts of knowledge in terms of a progression from the subjective to the objective and wants to see epistemology externalized. As will become clear in 5.2, knowledge, as Davidson says, emerges holistically and is interpersonal from the start, so the first person point of view cannot determine the content
of mental states because the content is partly determined by social interaction. In 3.3 and 3.4, we have seen how the essensialistic locutions can be recovered from the clammy hands of Metaphysicus. Hopefully, the linguistic romanticist can be convinced that conceptual role change as the order of semantic explanation change. Propositional content, after all, is determined by its inferential articulation, which is definitely not monopolized by the representationalist. The romanticist, thus, should be happy to assess the rationalist in determining the content of the representationalistic locutions. Are there any better ways to exorcize the representationalistic anthropology?

4

Innocence regained and Second Nature: Putnam and McDowell

4.1 Putnam's Neorealist Turn and McDowell's Defense of Empiricism

In the previous chapter, it was argued that the inferentialist is enabled to reflect the representational dimension of discourse by exploiting the expressive resources that is made available in the normative pragmatics. In the next chapter, it will be argued that the semantic realism of the anti-representationalist, constituted within the boundaries of Davidson’s triangle, amounts to pretty much the same thing. Neither approach, however, in contrast to neorealism, pays tribute to epistemic realism. In chapter 1, we noted a series of problems with neorealism. Let us briefly rehearse some of the problems that the neorealist has to face, and that in my opinion should convince him to leave epistemic realism behind. The neorealist might signal modesty as in the quote from Baudelaire in a couple of paragraphs, but note that Baudelaire writes “I arrogantly resigned myself to modesty”. The trouble with the realist, in short, is that he arrogantly wants a settlement that “bursts provinciality asunder”. His instruments for achieving the settlement, in contrast to the naturalized and historicized instruments of the vocabularist, are the instruments that characterize traditional philosophical method. In other words, the neorealist embraces a reified conception of method and rationality. In chapter 5, it will become clear that one of the assets of the neopragmatist, pace the neorealist, is that his vocabularistic radicalization of the linguistic turn, consisting in the historization and naturalization of reason, not only renders persons as incarnated vocabularies, but also de-reifies the discursive tools. More trouble with the neorealist arises from the fact that he, as noted in 1.3 and due to his epistemic realism, consolidates the Platonic withdrawal from the world, which makes scepticism and relativism conceivable in the first place.
Even more trouble arises if we accept this Sellarsian argument: In PSM, Sellars entertains an insight that has become common coin within neopragmatism: "There is [...] a sound score to the idea that while reality is the 'cause' of the human conceptual thinking which represents it, this causal role cannot be equated with a conditioning of the individual by his environment in a way which could in principle occur without the mediation of the family and the community. The Robinson Crusoe conception of the world as generating conceptual thinking directly in the individual is too simple a model." The Robinson Crusoe conception, the neopragmatist says, is what McDowell and Putnam, despite their protests, are advocating. The reason for this is that they, like Habermas, suppose that "reaching understanding cannot function unless the participants refer to a single objective world, thereby stabilizing the intersubjectively shared public space with which everything that is merely subjective can be contrasted", and that contextualism rests on a faulty construction of our life forms. They are, thus, going outside the boundaries of reason to inject something extra-rational into conceptual content, which, consequently, diminishes their ability to identify the relevant particularia in the on-going processes in the intersubjectively shared public space.

Putnam calls for a second naïveté. What does this mean? In short, he is attempting to escape the whole issue of representation to gain the natural realism of the common man, which will be discussed in 4.2, and in order to succeed, he offers a theory of perception. Putnam, thus, affirms the realist/antirealist parameters, and follows Habermas in saying, "a license is issued for return to the attitude of actors who are involved in dealing with the world more naively [...] 'our' world can merge once more with 'the' world". In the light of the insurmountable problems that such attempts have to face, how can he succeed? My concern in this chapter, is to point out that he cannot. James Conant describes Putnam's recent turn from advocating systematical accounts to articulating dissatisfaction with current analytical orthodoxy as a Baudelairean turn, portrayed by these words of Baudelaire: "I have tried more than once to lock myself inside a system, so as to be able to pontificate as I liked. But a system is a kind of damnation that condemns us to a perpetual backsliding; we are always having to invent another, and this form of fatigue is a cruel punishment. And every time, my system was beautiful, big, spacious, convenient, tidy and polished above all; at least so it seemed to me. And every time, some spontaneous unexpected product of universal vitality would come and give the lie to my puerile and old-fashioned wisdom [...] Under the threat of being constantly humiliated by another conversion I took a big decision. To escape from the horror of these philosophical apostasies, I arrogantly resigned myself to modesty; I became content to feel; I came back and sought sanctuary in impeccable naïveté. I humbly beg pardon of academics of every kind [...] for only there has my philosophical conscience found rest."

The reasons why this long paragraph was cited, was not only to underline the significant change that has taken place in the writings of Putnam, who was once one of the staunchest physicalists, but also to point to the crucial difference that pertains between seeing this as a
sound and liberating development and seeing it as defeatism. Complemented with his new readings of Aristotle and Wittgenstein, which will be assessed in 4.3, Putnam’s Baudelairean turn signals a resignation from the game of giving and asking for reasons. Accepting common sense locutions at face value, deprives him of access to the therapeutical-constructive resources of neopragmatism, characterized, as we remember from chapter 1 and will get back to in chapter 5, by inferential articulation and metaphor. What did Putnam’s former internal realism look like? It can be broken into two major parts: First, a picture of what truth comes down to, a picture that he has now rejected; and secondly, the idea that it is senseless to think of the world as dividing itself into objects independently of our use of language, an idea that he still defends. On that picture, Putnam says, “a statement is true just in case a competent speaker fully acquainted with the use of the words would be fully rationally warranted in using those words to make the assertion in question, provided she or he were in sufficient good epistemic position”. Even though this picture, which links ‘truth’ to ‘the use of words’, ‘rational acceptability’ and ‘of sufficiently good epistemic conditions’, is rejected, Putnam still thinks that our understanding of truth is connected to our understanding of the three notions. While McDowell, as we will see in 4.6, tries to steer between what he calls coherentism and bald naturalism, Putnam now tries to steer between what he calls relativism and materialism. If we translate their Scyllas and Charybdises, what we get is roughly representationalism and anti-representationalism.

How does Putnam’s pragmatism differ from the anti-representationalists’ neopragmatism? In short, as noted in 1.4 and in contrast to the neopragmatists, Putnam is a naturalistic Peircean. His pragmatism also differs from that of the neopragmatists’ in descending from Carnap and Reichenbach, rather than from Quine and Sellars. Consequently, as will become clear in 4.2, his avoidance of the given is of another character than that of the neo-Sellarsian’s. What he finds most valuable in pragmatism is the appeal to the primacy of practice. He wants to pay tribute to our everyday realism, or, to quote Wittgenstein, the “picture which is at the root of all our thinking”, without having to appeal to Realism. Putnam, neopragmatists say, is overreacting to what he sees the idealist Rortian self-creator by becoming a self-founder, that is, his acquiescence in a picture shows a reactionary contrast to Rorty’s willingness to explode pictures and invite us into better pictures that turn us into better versions of ourselves. As mentioned above, Putnam wants to avoid relativism and materialism, and first and foremost, as we will see in 4.2 and 4.3, he does this by promoting acquiescence and anti-scientism. The neopragmatists might profit from following Putnam’s advice to distance themselves from relativism, as will be discussed in 4.5, and urged by the linguistic rationalist, by showing up more explicitly the constraints that they put on linguistic discourse and locutions. They agree, of course, with Putnam that relativism and scientism are to be avoided, as become evident in their semantic realism and vocabularism, which target conceptual relativism and the idea of privileged vocabularies, but they disagree about how to counter it and where and why relativism and scientism thrive.
Putnam’s anti-scientism is commendable, the neopragmatists say, but Putnam is, nevertheless, unwillingly a prisoner of the very intuitions that he wants to fight.

Like Quine’s philosophy, John McDowell’s philosophy can be described as a heroic and, some might say, due to the impossibility of the task, tragic attempt to rescue and reorient empiricism. As the empiricism of the Vienna Circle, what Quine called radical empiricism, for familiar reasons fell short of reaching its goals of deducing truths from a basis of sensory evidence and defining those truths in terms of observational and logico-mathematical auxiliaries, Quine set forth to save an account of how we construct our theory of the world given sensory input and evidence. The two cardinal tenets of empiricism that Quine still adhered to were, 1) scientific evidence is sensory evidence; and 2) the meaning of words rests on sensory evidence, a remain which neopragmatists claim Davidson erased in OVS. McDowell, drawing on resources from Davidson, Strawson, Evans, Sellars, Brandom and Rorty, as well as from Kant and Gadamer, attempts in *Mind and World* to re-erect the empiricist tenets by offering a minimal empiricism, according to which our thinking is delivered a verdict from the tribunal of experience. We confront the world, McDowell says, by way of sensible intuition. The normativity, or the notion of correctness that characterizes the directedness of the mental state, McDowell says in contrast to Brandom, consists in the answerability to the world itself. In other words, McDowell, pace Quine, aims to exploit the notion of experience as a tribunal within the order of justification. Like Brandom, he thinks that the representationalistic locutions still can be put to good use, but, unlike Brandom, he offers them a central and explanatory role. And, like Rorty, he is an anti-reductionist and an epistemological therapist, but, unlike Rorty, he shows great faith in argumentative philosophical reason. McDowell does not conceive of persons as incarnated vocabularies with a content ascribing role, and this, the neopragmatist says, is fatal for the success of his project. If we follow Harman and Sellars, as Brandom does, in thinking that meaning in terms of conceptual role is more fundamental than meaning in terms of communicated thought, we would think “to pick up language by [the last] handle is to run the risk of getting things upside down. For even more basic is the role of language as that in which we think.”

To foreshadow, this is roughly McDowell’s argument in MW: 1) The logical space of reasons is, following Sellars, sui generis; 2) the very idea of experience is, following Sellars and Davidson, the idea of something natural; 3) empirical thinking is, pace Sellars and Davidson, answerable to experience; 4) natural-scientific intelligibility must be distinguished from the intelligibility acquired in the logical space of reasons; 5) the idea of experience belongs in both spaces because the dichotomy of the spaces is not the dichotomy of the natural and the normative; 6) the idea of nature is not the idea of instantiations of concepts that belong in the logical space; 7) it is a mistake to identify the space adjoining the logical space of reasons as the space of nature because doing so is forgetting that second nature is part of nature; 8) the space should rather be
identified as the realm of law; \(^{302}\) and 9) second nature is acquired in part by being initiated into conceptual capacities, whose interrelations belong in the logical space of reasons. McDowell’s approach will be assessed in 4.6, but now we will have a look at Putnam’s natural realism.

### 4.2 Natural Realism

In TC, Hilary Putnam claims that the idea of our sensory experiences as intermediaries between the world and us, which allow causal contact only, prevents us from claiming cognitive contact with the world. Putnam, acknowledging the affinity to the realism of James, baptizes the predecessor of internal realism “natural realism.” In this section we will inquire into natural realism and Putnam’s motivation for it, as well as to raise some neopragmatic critique. To start with, the natural realists, in Putnam’s sense, “hold that the objects of (normal ‘veridical’) perception are ‘external’ things, and, more generally, aspects of ‘external’ reality”. \(^{303}\) In order to find a third way between early realism and Dummettian idealism, Putnam says, this third way has to undercut the antinomy of realism, namely between the fact that reference is left largely undetermined by what happens within our sphere of cognition and the fact that the world somehow interprets the words for us. \(^{304}\)

Internal realism, as he now sees it, still retained the troublesome notion of an interface between the internal and the external, even though it managed to avoid idealism by its world-involving notion of sufficiently good epistemic circumstances in the truth account. Putnam opts for the natural naïve realism of the common man. However, real acquiescence is first arrived at, Putnam says, when naïve realism also covers the conception of conception. When we hear a sentence in a language we understand, he claims, “we do not associate a sense with a sign design; we perceive the sense in the sign design. Sentences that I think, and even sentences that I hear or read, simply do refer to whatever they are about – not because the ‘marks and noises’ that I see and hear [...] intrinsically have the meanings they have but because the sentence in use is not just a bunch of ‘marks and noises’”. \(^{305}\) Putnam’s alternative to representation as interface and anti-representational coherentism is to distinguish carefully between the activity of representation, in which he thinks we constantly engage, and the notion of a representation as an interface between the knower and the known. \(^{306}\)

What occasioned Putnam’s turn? His advocacy of the second naïveté results from a new understanding of the Wittgensteinian slogan \textit{meaning is use}. According to Putnam, we can distinguish between a scientistic and a Wittgensteinian purport of the slogan. Whereas the scientistic alternative is that the use of language “can be described in terms of dispositions to respond to ‘mental representations’, the better alternative is understanding the slogan to amount to ‘understanding is having the abilities that one exercises when and in using language’”. \(^{307}\) Putnam’s former acceptance of the scientistic version, he confesses, made him think that talking about
use was talking about the functional organization of the brain and a specification of the environment. On that picture, the mind and the brain were exactly the reified intermediaries that Putnam now believes prevent us from developing a sound realism. In chapter 2, it was noted that Sellars’ critique of realism applies equally well to neorealism. We are already acquainted with the attack on the given, but what other reasons did he find to debunk the realist? In *Being and Being Known*, Sellars identifies an error common to Cartesianism and 20th century radical empiricism, namely, the idea that intellectual acts differ not in their intrinsic character as acts, but by virtue of being directly related to different relata.\(^{308}\) In other words, they are both committed to the idea that intellectual acts differ only extrinsically. Last century realists rejected the Cartesian contents that were constructed to mediate between the intellect and the external world, and believed that this entitled them to hold some form of direct realism. Putnam is doing the same in his latest book. However, as Sellars points out, we are not forced into realism before we hold that all intellectual acts are intrinsically alike regardless of what they are about, and do we have any reasons to believe so? Sellars’ critique of last century realists strengthens the neopragmatic bulwark that makes neorealism look bad. In 4.6, we will add the Sellarsian critique of Everett Hall’s intentional realism to the bulwark, namely, that a language of self-awareness demands the presence of logical expressions as well as principles of inference.

Does Putnam commit the fallacy, described by Sellars, of inferring from one domain to the other? Can he be said to arrive with veridical perception, or does he fall for the myth of the given? If so, is that a problem for him? To answer these question, we have to inquire into Putnam’s preferred attack on the myth of the given, which is Reichenbach’s critique of the theories of C. I. Lewis.\(^{309}\) Both Sellars and Reichenbach claim that we perceive things and not our own phenomenal experience and reject the idea that these things are subjective and perceived by the subject only. The most significant difference between their attacks lies in the gap that Sellars sets up between the logical space of reason and the logical space of nature. This gap is what makes Sellars hold that only a sentence can function as a reason for another sentence, and Davidson claim that token events can be reasons under one description and causes under another. According to Putnam, the merit of Reichenbach’s critique of the given is that it does not force us to establish the seemingly unbridgeable gulf between the spaces. In other words, he joins McDowell in claiming that the strict dualism of the spaces is an important source of the extreme positions on the issue of representation. Both McDowell and Putnam follow Robinson in thinking that there are ways to bypass the myth of the given. My contention is that of course there are. Only the range of fantasy limits the number of ways the given can bypassed. What we should ask ourselves, is not whether the given can be bypassed but whether it is a task worth undertaking.
Putnam identifies two main problems for traditional realism. The first problem is its naïveté concerning meaning, the other the supposition that there is a determined totality of objects, which can be classified, and a determined totality of properties. According to Putnam, the traditional realist is right when he acknowledges reality’s independence from our descriptions, but he loses James’ insight that a description is never merely a copy. Representation on the classical account, Putnam says, inevitably became an analogue to impressions and causally, not cognitively, linked to environmental objects. McDowell and Putnam both claim that the supposition responsible for this is that of an epistemic interface or intermediary between our cognitive capacities and the external world. The trouble that Putnam identifies with his functionalist theory consists in that seeing language as something inside the head makes it mysterious how linguistic entities can refer to something outside of the head. Language, thus, may trick us into believing that there is an iron curtain between the knowing mind and the world. As will become clear in 5.2 and as Davidson points out, it does not follow from the fact that meanings are partly identified by relations to objects that are external to the head that meanings aren’t in the head. Such a claim, the neopragmatist says, would be inconsistent with naturalism. However, Putnam’s Verlegenheit on behalf of philosophy amounts to the fact that we cannot understand how language and thought links to the world without mentioning perception. This evocation of occulcentrism is what Rorty, correctly in my opinion, so strongly disapproves of.

In order to understand Putnam’s motivation, let us rehearse his main problem with classical foundationalism. The foundationalists claimed, as we remember, that sense data are what can stop the regresses by being non-inferentially known. Sense datum theories, thus, posit an intermediary or interface between man and world that prevents the natural realist account from being conceivable. Such theories, Putnam says, have fed on a purported identity with functional brain states, similarities between veridical and non-veridical experience and arguments from perceptual relativity. Disposing of sense datum talk, then, offers us “acquiescence in a plurality of conceptual resources, of different and not mutually reducible vocabularies coupled with a return not to dualism but to the ‘natural realism of the common man’”.

Putnam’s acquiescence in a plurality is a mark of pragmatism that goes all the way back to James, who came to consider the problem of the one and the many as one of the most pregnant philosophical problems. Saying that you are a monist or a pluralist, James said, insisting that pragmatism “must obviously range herself upon the pluralistic side”, is saying a lot about the rest of your opinions. Why, then, does Putnam’s acquiescence in a plurality have an un-pragmatic ring to it? In contrast to Brandom, who in Rorty’s words, “carries through on Sellars’ criticism of ‘the myth of the given’ by showing how the notion of ‘accurate representation of objective reality’ can be constructed out of material provided by our grasp of the notion of ‘making correct inferential connections between assertions’”, Putnam, I think, is still in the grip of the one world-one scheme picture. His Peircean pragmatism forbids him to embrace Dewey’s instrumental pragmatism that, as noted in 1.4, helps us to get rid of the Kantian division of facul-
ties by conceiving of language as tool rather than representation. Thus, Putnam’s naïveté, allows the notion of representation to enter through the rear entrance from outside the game of giving and asking for reasons, precluded from being naturalized and historicized Brandom-style.

4.3 The Machine and Rationality

As the story goes, the Cartesian ghost has been exorcized from the Rylean machine, but the machine prevails. A powerful intuition tells Metaphysicus that the machine can be given a complete description in purely physical terms, without invoking intentional terms that are not already non-intentionally accounted for. This is correct qua machine in a physicalist vocabulary, but, as a vocabularist would say, we have other purposes and other vocabularies as well. Why does Putnam think that Metaphysicus is hopelessly wrong? To use a neat example: In TC, Putnam imagines William James’ automatic sweetheart, which is “indistinguishable from a spiritually animated maiden”, but “lacking all mental properties”.

Putnam says, because the point of view of reason makes the naturalization of the intentional, and, thus, the conceivable of something spiritually animated without mental properties, impossible. Our normative assessment of correctness is, he says, the very factor that such accounts leave out. Putnam, then, renders the concept of truth a normative notion, identifying “being true” with “being verified to a sufficient degree to warrant acceptance under sufficiently good epistemic conditions.”

Putnam’s disagreement with the neopragmatist arises over the notion of normative assessment of correctness, which Putnam, as noted in 4.2, ascribes a worldly epistemic contribution through the notion of sufficiently good epistemic conditions. We are not yet finished with the spiritually animated maiden. To be honest, I think I could have fallen in love with the automatic sweetheart because, like Sellars and unlike Nagel, I do not think there is any depth or mental properties missing when she is virtually indistinguishable from a human being. Like Dennett, I think that, for all we know, our best friends can be zombies, we have no ways of telling since the external behavior equals that of normal persons. But when I fall in love with her, I would not fall in love with a machine, but with a spiritually animated maiden, i.e. I would employ the vocabulary of agency.

From 2.4, we remember that the neopragmatists were anxious to throw the scientific tools out of the Quinean and Sellarsian toolboxes. In this section, we will first see that Putnam shares the neopragmatist’s Hegelian discontent with the cultural chauvinism of the epistemological tradition on behalf of the physicalist’s vocabulary. Then, we will note that he, in contrast to the neopragmatists, whose account of rationality will be surveyed, shares some of the epistemological parameters himself, which shows, for instance, in his readings of Aristotle and Wittgenstein. In his last books, Putnam has been crusading to overthrow the scientific dogma that science offers us a non-perspectival description of the world and to block what might be called the
reductionist highway. During the fifties and the sixties, this was exactly the position he defended along with its corollaries, such as the idea of a unified science modeled on physics, which supposedly could provide us with the best metaphysics. The search for what Bernard Williams calls *the absolute conception of the world* can be detected as motivating a number of realist approaches, spanning from Fodor’s thesis of innateness to different versions of the correspondence theory of truth. However, such reductionistic reports all risk missing out on the structural character of the higher-level sciences.

Metaphysical realism, Putnam says, has survived as a central tenet within the natural sciences. How does this show? Let us assess his critique of how representationalism is accommodated, first, within the natural sciences, and, then, within philosophy. Putnam criticizes the guiding intuition of artificial intelligence, namely, that it is possible to simulate intelligence, by confronting the idea of man as a machine and the idea that *intelligence* is conceivable independently of the rest of human nature. A similar treatment is given to the notion in cognitive science that the brain is in some sense representing external patterns when processing data. In order to account for the meaning of representation, philosophers often cite the causal connection between a word and its object as what determines reference and establishes a representational relation. However, as Putnam points out, “one cannot simply say that the word ‘cat’ refers to cats because the word is causally connected to cats, for the word ‘cat’, or rather my way of using the word ‘cat’, is causally connected to many things”. A causal theory of reference, then, is rendered empty by the initial and unsurpassable problem of causal overdetermination. As the heir of the classical description theory, the causal theory carried pretensions of explaining how words refer to objects in terms of causal connections and once promised the physicalist a semantic theory that was sensitive to the needs for a theory with a predictive force that follows from lawlike relationship between the representation and what is represented. Physicalism of this sort, Putnam says, is the par excellence accepted form of metaphysical realism of our time. These anti-scientistic comments of Putnam are reasonable. The problems set in first when Putnam attempts to block, not only the reductionist highway, but also the roads frequented by his fellow pragmatists. In 4.5, we will survey why these roadblocks simply don’t stop the neopragmatists. For now, it is sufficient to note that Putnam does not seem to acknowledge the radicalism of the neopragmatic break with the epistemological tradition.

It was noted a little earlier, that Putnam, in contrast to the neopragmatists, is after an account of the notion of normative assessment of correctness, in which our particular attitudes are transcended by the cognitive contribution from the world. He uses the same realist tack when it comes to the notion of rationality, that is, the neopragmatists say, he tries to perform an impossible transaction with the extra-linguistic. We cannot, Putnam says, “appeal to public norms to decide what is and is not rationally argued and justified in philosophy”. Well, that depends on
what we mean by public norms. It often seems as if Putnam believes the neopragmatists treat public norms as fads. In order to see how this belief rests on a faulty construction, let us see how Brandom and Davidson suggest accounting for ‘rationality’. In the rest of the essay, it will be stressed that the neopragmatists possess the resources, as we have already seen that Brandom does, to constrain our linguistic resources with the vocabulary of objectivity, while, nevertheless, rendering rationality a purely intra-linguistic notion and avoiding to flirt with the vocabulary of settlement, as Putnam does when he advocates acquiescence. To start with Brandom: Being rational, he says, is mastering the scorekeeping practices, or possessing the know how in the game of giving and asking for reasons, and not to be reduced to neither to logical nor instrumental competence. The Brandomian normative fine structure of rationality presents itself when we recognize the normative statuses of entitlements and commitments that allow us to discern incompatibilities (which arise when two claims are incompatible in the sense that commitment to one precludes entitlement to the other), commitment-preserving (taking the place of deductive inferences) and entitlement-preserving inferences (taking the place of inductive inferences). Brandom separates sentience, which is our capacity to be aware in the sense of being animalistically awake, from sapience, which can be assessed either through attributions of propositional attitudes as constitutive reasons for behavior or through the concept of truth. Sellars offers a related account: An organism, Sellars says, “which ‘knew the laws of nature’ might be able to move around in the world, but it could not move around in the light of its knowledge […] unless it used a language relating to conduct, which tied in with its assertions and inferences relating to matters of facts”.

What about Davidson? In *Rational Animals*, Davidson treats rationality as a social trait by connecting it to the possession of propositional attitudes. The propositional attitudes, Davidson says, “provide an interesting criterion of rationality because they come only as a matched set. Obviously a rich pattern of beliefs, desires, and intentions suffices for rationality; yet it may seem far too stringent to make this a necessary condition. But in fact the stringency lies in the nature of the propositional attitudes, since to have one is to have a large complement”. Davidson does not claim that we cannot think what we cannot say, or that a thought is dependent on a sentence that expresses it. What he does say, is that a creature cannot have a thought unless it has a language, and, considering ‘thought’ to apply to all propositional attitudes including beliefs, he argues that in order to have a belief, it is necessary to have the concept of belief, which means to have the concept of objective truth. Command of the contrast between what is believed and what is the case, Davidson says, is shown by linguistic communication: “To understand the speech of another, I must be able to think of the same things she does; I must share her world. I don’t have to agree with her in all matters, but in order to disagree we must entertain the same propositions, with the same subject matter, and the same concept of truth. Communication depends on each communicator having, and correctly thinking that the other has, the concept of a shared world, an intersubjective world. But the concept of an inter-
subjective world is the concept of an objective world, a world about which each communicator can have beliefs.\textsuperscript{325}

Davidson prepares the ground for Brandomian communication as the social production and consumption of reasons. Davidson’s argument profits from facing the threat of incommensurability, but it is fortunately not strong enough to counter-intuitively block the possibility that sentences, due to different background beliefs, may have different inferential significance to different interlocutors. The paradigm of communication as joint possession of some common thing, as Brandom says, is relinquished in favor of “a paradigm of communication as a kind of cooperation in practice. What is shared by speaker and audience is not a content-as-function but a scorekeeping practice”.\textsuperscript{326} The neopragmatist, thus, is fully capable of presenting an account of rationality from within our linguistic practices without casting the world as \textit{deus ex machina}.

In 4.6, we will see how McDowell exploits the Kantian scheme in order to achieve his acquiescence. Now, we will see how Putnam, to neopragmatic dismay, exploits the Aristotelian and the Wittgensteinian heritage. Aristotle appears to have conceived of sensations in terms of judgments. In a series of essays, Putnam, partly with Martha Nussbaum, attempts to show how an Aristotelian approach can give us the \textit{philosophy of mind that we want}, which provides us with a conception of nature, in which there is room for mental abilities. The deep split between body and mind, Putnam says, is a consequence of recent developments within the empiricist tradition, most notoriously Hume’s identification of the mind with a collection of images and ideas, which led to the distinctions between the physical and the mental, and the intentional and the non-intentional. On Putnam’s neo-Aristotelian account, following McDowell, “the mind is neither a material nor an immaterial organ but a system of capacities”.\textsuperscript{327} The neopragnatist, in contrast, prefers to say that the mind and the brain each have their own vocabulary, in which they receive their particular inferential articulation. What they share is salience to the same causal pattern. Which misgivings does Putnam have with Davidson’s anomalous monism? Putnam follows Quine\textsuperscript{328} in thinking of Davidson’s criterion for token identity between mental and physical events, that two events are the same if they have the same causes and the same effects, as viciously circular.\textsuperscript{329} The reason that he gives is that it is practically impossible to identify for instance, “the experience of rain” with a physical counterpart based on Davidson’s criteria. However, this is not what Davidson is after. As Davidson replies to Quine, events and objects are not distinguished by spatiotemporal areas, but of our sorting, predicates and basic grammar.\textsuperscript{330}

Putnam, anxious to offer metaphysical realignment, asks whether abandoning the identity theory commits us to a dualism, and answers: “Not at all. The way out of the dilemma I would like to propose requires an appreciation of how sensory experiences are not passive affectations of an object called ‘a mind’ but (for the most part) experiences of aspects of the world by a living being. Mind talk is not talk about an immaterial part of us but rather a way of describing
the exercise of certain abilities we possess, abilities that supervene upon the activities of our brains and upon all transactions with the environment but that do not have to be reductively explained using the vocabulary of physics and biology, or even the vocabulary of computer science. The metaphysical realignment that I propose involves acquiescence in a plurality of conceptual resources, of different and not mutually reducible vocabularies (an acquiescence that is inevitable in practice, whatever our monist fantasies) coupled with a return not to dualism but to the ‘natural realism’ of the common man.

Putnam’s reading of Wittgenstein turns Quine, Davidson and Rorty into skeptics, whose skepticism is understood as an expression of a disappointment with our reach of knowledge. While Putnam urges us to feel at ease within the limits acknowledged by the Tractarian “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”, he raises doubts about readings that invoke the notion of the unsayable, which tell us that there is something we cannot say. Such readings, Putnam says, make us disillusioned by the limits on knowledge that are set by the contingency of the historicist and on thought by logical structure. Rather than facing Putnam’s charge directly, the vocabularist wants to shift the burden of proof. It is the neorealist’s arrogant modesty, the vocabularist says, that allows skepticism to linger on.

Following Putnam’s comments on the lectures on religious belief serves to highlight some problems with the moral that he extracts from his readings of Wittgenstein. Is Putnam inviting skepticism regarding the possibility of shared understanding? What Wittgenstein is saying in the lectures is essentially this: A religious man and an atheist can talk past each other. A non-believer cannot understand what the believer asserts when he says that he believes in the Last Judgment. This neither signifies the incommensurability of religious and ordinary empirical language, Putnam says, nor that the religious man uses language non-literally or non-cognitively, while the atheist uses language literally or cognitively. Wittgenstein says: “What we call believing in Judgment Day or not believing in Judgment Day – The expression of belief may play an absolutely minor role,” and further: “Reasons look entirely different from normal reasons in the religious case.” Putnam takes him to say, “religious discourse can be understood in any depth only by understanding the form of life to which it belongs”. Here we are at the heart of Putnam’s opting for a pictorial background that we cannot evade, where it becomes evident to the neopragmatist that Putnam threatens to render it utterly mysterious how communication is possible. People have thousands of beliefs, ranging from “Manchester will beat Liverpool in the league this year” to the more credible “the sun will shine tomorrow”, which potentially separate their forms of life from their fellow language users’ forms of life. What Putnam and Wittgenstein present, the neopragmatist says, is an account where people always end up talking past each other. This is virtually impossible in linguistic rationalism, in which the dilemma is avoided because, as noted in the section on rationality, “what is shared by speaker and audience is not a content-as-function but a scorekeeping practice”. Propositional content, then, might differ, but
the constraints that are set by the scorekeeping practice limit the differences, and leave all content, in principle, inheritable.

Putnam might protest and claim that some beliefs, like religious beliefs, are more central than others. However, it does not improve the case if the pictorial theory, according to which we can happily be in the grip of weighty pictures that lie at the root of our thinking, offers a centered web of beliefs. Rorty has given us good reasons why we should prefer thinking of webs of beliefs as centerless, and Brandom has shown how all beliefs alike depend on their inferential articulation. By embracing the metaphor of a picture, the neopragmatist says, Putnam sides with Descartes rather than with Rorty and Davidson, who urges us to think of beliefs in terms of adaptations to the environment. Rather than talking of different forms of life, the neopragmatists say, we should say that beliefs might have different propositional content for different interlocutors. Clearly, there is a trivial metaphorical sense in which our forms of life generate pictures that hold us in their grip, but when the sense becomes foundational, as it seems to become in Putnam’s case, we might be embracing a mysticism that is tailored to suit our realist intuitions. Putnam might protest again and insist that the trivial metaphorical sense is all that he is after, but this would only confirm the neopragmatist’s suspicion, raised in 4.1, that Putnam is resigning from the game of giving and asking for reasons. To return to our initial question: Does Putnam invite skepticism? Yes, he does. His Peircean exorcism of the epistemological intuitions is not radical enough, as becomes clear in his readings of Wittgenstein, and he lacks the constraining machinery of inferentialist semantics and semantic realism.

4.4 Folk Vocabulary

Putnam insists that the failure of taking proper notice of the good picture that keeps us captured, is what renders contemporary analytical philosophy unweighty and metaphysical in both its materialist and relativist garments. The neopragmatist, in contrast, considers Putnam’s picture as belied with foundationalist metaphysics. In this section, I intend to exploit the notion of folk vocabulary, not to be confused with the vocabulary of folk psychology, whose constitutive point, according to Ramberg, is to show up agency, in order to get an initial grip of what the common sense language that Putnam wants us to trust amounts to, and show why we profit from opting for the linguistic rationalist’s rather than the neorealist’s conception. To start with: What is folk vocabulary? The folk vocabulary, a neopragmatist says, is regimented by a representationalistic understanding of locutions like representation, reference, correspondence, truth, objectivity, fact, value etc., and it is, in contrast to the contingent language of the neopragmatist, characterized by being taken for granted, which give us roughly this picture: The linguistic locutions refer to reality; a representational relationship pertains between words and objects, and sentences and what is the case, leaving the subject troubled by skepticism and alienated from
the object. In other words, the folk vocabulary fits perfectly the metaphysical realist’s conception of the world as consisting of a fixed totality of mind-independent entities, which stands in need of the true description that natural-scientific progress will provide us. It is the vocabulary of sufficient reason. The lesson that is learned through a century of philosophy of language is that there are grave mistakes inherent in this picture.

What is the trouble with the metaphysical realignment that neorealists like Putnam and Habermas say they can offer? Putnam, embracing the picture that lies at the root of our thinking, and Habermas, telling Rorty that he has to carry the burden of proof himself for his unwillingness to leave the common sense language as it is, both naïvely with potentially horrific consequences assume that folk vocabulary is pure of foundational and metaphysical import. They are, thus, left inexcusably defensive when it comes to changing and improving our ordinary ways of talking. Putnam is not doing us a favor by “recovering our ordinary ways of talking”, the neopragmatist says, because, in attempting to do so, he rejects the neopragmatic framework that is explicitly designed to improve these ways of talking. Rorty’s diagnosis of Co-nant’s self-image fits Putnam’s as well: “Conant seems to want a world in which no philosopher ever recommends any change in our linguistic habits. Philosophers should, he seems to think, ‘devote themselves to the task of reclaiming our present vocabulary’. “337 The neopragmatist, in contrast, as noted in 1.4, casts the philosopher as the historicized mediator between past and future ways of talking and thinking. Paradoxically, Habermas and Putnam seem inevitably wedded to leaving truth, due to their epistemic conception, outside of reach for the common man in ordinary situations, only to be found in discussions of the learned. The neopragmatist describes this as an elitistic underrating of our ordinary ways of talking because only a metaphysical or elitistic urge can persuade us to assign priority to non-ordinary purposes. As Rorty and Berkeley put it, we should “describe with the learned when in their company, and with ordinary people when in theirs”,338 while avoiding to think of truth as privilegedly accessed by the learned.

Putnam’s Wittgensteinian motivation, which can be neatly illustrated by his Baudelairean turn, is to relieve the philosopher of the theorist’s hat, a hat that allegedly creates a lot of pseudo-problems. Why does the vocabularist believe that this is a bad idea when he, as noted in 3.3, after all shares Putnam’s sensitivity towards pseudo-problems? The reason for this is that he believes Putnam is overly positive when it comes to the prospects of separating theory from practice and folk vocabulary from other vocabularies. To use a phrase of Putnam’s: Don’t they interpenetrate? Anyway, it is hard to get a grip of the one without getting a grip of the other. Putnam, thus, the neopragmatist says, ignores translatability and underestimates the trickle-down effect in both directions. Theory is a healthy corrective that educates ordinary ways of talking, and vice versa. If we leave the epistemic realistic intuitions behind, nothing tempts us into doing metaphysics, and, if we acknowledge the contingency of language, nothing should stop us from wanting theory to relentlessly improve our ordinary ways, as it in fact does, in order to leave a door open in the potential cage of folk vocabulary. This is neither to say with Feyera-
bend and Sellars that “the framework of common sense is radically false (i.e., there really are no such things as the physical objects and the processes of the common sense framework)”, nor to say with Sellars and Nagel that it is methodologically indispensable. The only way to cleanse the common sense language from metaphysical purport, the vocabularist says pace the neorealists, is to do such things as to avoid cants and develop a contingent stance. Putnam’s acquiescence does no such thing; in fact, his quasi-Kantian strategy of fixing the common sensical conceptual resources consolidates rather than eases the metaphysical urge.

To rehearse: What separates the anti-representationalists from the neorealists, or the Jamesians from the Peirceans? Davidson and Rorty tells us that we are only causally connected to external reality, that coherentism is more virtuous than foundationalism and that progress is characterized by the development of more useful metaphors, according to our own lights, rather than more truthful depictions, in accord with inner recollection of the Platonic forms. A crucial difference between the naturalistic Peircean and the literary Jamesian pragmatists might lie in the diagnoses of contemporary society’s actual needs. Phenomena that provoke realistic response, as we remember from chapter 1, range from the privatization of the public discourse through extreme forms of liberalism to annoying journalistic insistence on subjective opinions, which, unfortunately, often is mistakenly connected to the Rortian self-creator, who Rorty intends to be a theoretical foil rather than a journalist. While the unification driven Peircean thinks we need protection against thinking that is not substantially constrained by the world, the Jamesian literary theorist, having abandoned searches for unity and sufficient reason, believes his opponent is heading for skeptical disillusionment because he is still committed to the dualism between the world and us. The Peircean, the Jamesian says, lacks the fantasy to see how conversationalist criteria along with causal connections provide us with all the constraints that we need, as well as all the constraints we can have.

The issue of contextualism can serve to illustrate the gap between neopragmatism and neorealism in a little more detail. Contextualism, the neopragmatist says, carries into discourse the important insight of situated historicity. Habermas, in contrast, takes contextualism to designate a problem that is internal to the linguistic paradigm, just as skepticism is internal to the mentalistic paradigm, saying that the problem occurs only when we think that reason is embodied in linguistic practices. Habermas, thus, the neopragmatist says, turns necessity into non-virtue. In the hands of the realist, for instance in Quine’s declaration of reference as relative to a conceptual scheme and Putnam’s employment of the picture metaphor, contextualism turns nasty and functions as a cover-up for ahistorical pretensions. As Davidson claims, Rorty says, “the only sort of philosopher who would take seriously the idea that truth is relative to a context, and particularly to a choice between human communities, is one who thinks that he or she can contrast ‘being in touch with a human community’ with ‘being in touch with the reality’. But Davidson’s
point about there being no language without triangulation means that you cannot have any lan-
guage, or any beliefs, without being in touch with both a human community and non-human re-
ality, which leaves agreement and truth inextricably bound together. As long as context-
dependence is not taken for granted, then, we have to trade on the important insight of linguistic
romanticism and insist on describing the harmful consequences of the crusade for context-
independence, while, as Rorty urges us to, stopping to contrast the context-dependent with the
universal. As long as, for instance, Habermas continues to employ the thick terms of univers-
sality and rationality, which turn reason into a regulative idea, the disappointment with particu-
laria and privacy will be fueled.

4.5 Relativism

Putnam, as noted in 1.2 and 4.1, conceives of relativism as the just as threatening flip side of
the materialist coin. While the metaphysical realist perceives himself as capable to step out of
his own skin, an anti-representational relativist like Rorty, Putnam says, does the opposite mis-
take of perceiving himself as having to stay within the confines of his skin, and, thereby, disal-
 lows us the naïveté we possessed before philosophical perplexity refused us the common sens-
sical notions that our beliefs can be justified by appeals to the world, and that language repre-
sents the world. Rorty, well aware of that he will face charges of relativism, describes his strat-
 egy in these terms: “In short, my strategy for escaping the self-referential difficulties into which
‘the Relativist’ keeps getting himself is to move everything over from epistemology and meta-
physics into cultural politics, from claims to knowledge and appeals to self-evidence to sugges-
tions about what we should try.”

What exactly is relativism? According to Putnam, it is what arises if we cannot appeal to “the
fact of the matter”. A neopragmatist, in contrast, thinks that it is what we get if we choose to
conceive of language in terms of representations rather than in terms of tools, and if we keep
contrasting scheme and content, a distinction that Davidson has erased, as we will see in 5.2.
Rorty takes the notion of the world, with its correlative notion of conceptual frameworks, adored
by the skeptics and the realists, to be nothing but the noumenal. As noted in 2.2, the neoprag-
matist wants to get rid of Quine’s conceptual relativism and his idea of man made meaning.
Conceptual relativism, he says, is nothing beyond the perspectivism that arises because minds
are many while nature is one. If the anti-representationalist, as I have urged, embrace linguistic
rationalism, they will become anxious to complement their exorcism of the representationalistic
“fact of the matter” by reappropriating the essensialistic locutions and showing up the con-
straints they put on the linguistic locutions, that is, a. o., causation and inference. Brandom, for
instance, as noted in 3.3, reappropriates the notion of facts as true claims “in the sense of what
is claimed, not in the sense of claimings”, which signal that we cannot change nonlinguistic
facts by changing linguistic ones. If we contrast Putnam’s critique of relativism with Rorty’s, we will be able to see that the relativist poses a far greater threat to Putnam, who still acknowledges the parameters of the realism/antirealism paradigm.

To start with: What important tenets do Putnam and Rorty share? In *Hilary Putnam and the Relativist Menace*, Rorty identifies a pragmatic core that he shares with Putnam: 1) Realism is an impossible attempt to view the world from Nowhere; 2) some views of the world are better than others; 3) what Quine called ‘the indeterminacy of translation’ should rather be viewed as the ‘interest relativity of translation’; 4) the heart of pragmatism is its insistence on the agent’s point of view without diminishing these views by opposing them to *the ways things really are*; 5) the notion of an absolute conception of the world is incoherent. Let us see whether Rorty can face the charges of relativism that Putnam files against him. Putnam, as we noted, blames Rorty for thinking that he is confined to stay within his own skin. In 5.5, we will see a related concern being raised by Jon Hellesnes, who blames Rorty for defatalization. Rorty, Putnam says, “has moved from his physicalism to an extreme linguistic idealism which teeters on the edge of solipsism”.

The accusation follows from a discontent with the way Rorty actively employs and urges us to employ redescriptions to occasion change, in Ramberg’s words, in order to bring “salience to different causal patterns in the world, patterns with which we engage”.

How can Rorty face the charges? First, he can note that language, pace Putnam, is the tool with which we have the opportunity to make a causal difference by modifying our own dispositions, and, one might add, improve our beliefs. Secondly, he can emphasize that the constraining potential of the neopragmatic resources does not leave us in idealism. Putnam seems to forget that Rorty is not only a linguistic idealist, but also a naturalist and a Davidsonian triangulator who acknowledges large parts of the Brandomian inferential semantics. Putnam’s charges depend on a reluctance to settle with a causal account of the hook-up of language and mind, as well as on his Peircean pragmatism that leaps into treating truth as ideal rational acceptability to the community at the end of the ideal inquiry. Rorty, in contrast, tells us that epistemic norms are exclusively intra-vocabulary, while causal relations are the only extra-vocabulary relation we can have. His misgivings with Putnam set in when Putnam starts exercising his Peircean intuitions and talking about the apparently ahistorical nature of human life, in other words, making sense of the bellied versions of notions such as representation, fact of the matter, and idealized rational acceptability.

In *Pragmatism*, Putnam takes Kant to be the first to understand that to describe the world is not simply to copy it. Kant’s mistake, however, Putnam says, is inferring from this important insight to the bad idea that our descriptions are not really about the world as it is, which leads him to fix our conceptual resources once and for all. According to Putnam, Rorty retains the Kantian mistake by saying that we cannot describe reality as it is in itself, even though, his reading of Wittgenstein should have convinced him that the negation of a pseudo-proposition is a pseudo-proposition, and that we should not want to utter neither of them. This raises the question of
how to face the metaphysical realist. Putnam stresses that his own critique of metaphysical real-
ism consists in questioning its intelligibility and not its veridicality. And if he succeeds, he claims,
the anti-representational opposite is not up for a grasp. Admittedly, Rorty’s early writing, as
noted in for instance 1.3 and 3.3, might have put too much emphasis on the therapeutical nega-
tion of representationalism, an emphasis that the linguistic rationalist wants him to drop and that
he, to a certain extent, has dropped. It does not mean, however, that anti-representationalism is
merely a negation of representationalism because, as we remember, the anti-representationalist
simply does not stay within the confines that Putnam sets up. Why is that? The causal con-
straints, the naturalism and the dissolution of the inner/outer axis preclude the possibility that he
can be the disappointed metaphysical realist that Putnam portrays, who shares Metaphysicus’
craving for a transcendental guarantee.

How, then, does Rorty want the metaphysical realist to be confronted? Obviously, he has
changed his ways from the early writings that drew Putnamesque heat, employing terms like
relative inutility instead: “I should not have spoken of ‘unreal’ or ‘confused’ philosophical distinc-
tions, but rather of distinctions whose employment has proved to lead nowhere, proved to be
more trouble than they were worth. For pragmatists like Putnam and me, the question should
always be ‘What use it?’ rather than ‘Is it confused?’ Criticism of other philosopher’s distinctions
and problematics should charge relative inutility, rather than ‘meaninglessness’ or ‘illusion’ or
‘incoherence’.”

The metaphysical realist vocabulary, then, the neopragmatist says, is best
treated as a useless way of talking and to be avoided even when speaking with the vulgar. To
elaborate the point a little further, we can quote Rorty’s response to Frank Farrell’s Put-
namesque critique: “I think that Farrell is right to criticize that paper [The World Well Lost], and
various other papers of mine, for suggesting that the only alternatives are a radical subjectivism
in which the self projects schemes out upon a featureless reality (what Putnam has satirized as
‘the cookie cutter view’) on the one hand, and an unknowable noumenon on the other […] But
The World Well Lost was written twenty-three years ago. Lately I have been trying to mark out a
position that does not take sides between subject and object, mind and world, but that instead
tries to erase the contrast between them. I have, so to speak, been trying to lose both us and
the world. Whereas Farrell reads me as trying to glorify us at the expense of the world, and
hopes to rectify the balance with a ‘modest realism’, I want to stop using the us/world contrast,
and thus to get rid of the realism-antirealism issue.”

Let us note a serious problem with Putnam’s reception of Rorty. What the problem roughly
amounts to is this: Putnam does not fully appreciate the therapeutic and misologic character of
Rorty’s work; therefore, he treats him as offering arguments in the classical sense that they both
think is outdated. In other words, he fails to grasp that the neopragmatist does not stop short of
historicizing and naturalizing the argumentative tools. Arguments are, Rorty says, characterized
by the desire to harmonize pre-existing intuitions. Interesting philosophy, he continues, linking
philosophical progress to increase in imagination, “is rarely an examination of the pros and cons
of a thesis. Usually it is, implicitly or explicitly, a contest between an entrenched vocabulary which has become a nuisance and a half-formed vocabulary which vaguely promises great things.\(^{351}\) The philosopher’s role, thus, as we remember from 1.4, becomes that of the mediator between past and future ways of talking. Rorty should, nevertheless, be described as conducting reasoning when reasoning is understood with Harman as “distinguished from argument, which is more like an explanation. Reasoning is adding and deleting beliefs”.\(^{352}\) To wrap up the discussion: The neopragmatist happily follows Putnam’s lead and avoids claiming that we cannot describe the world as it is, but at the same time he notes that Putnam might still be so impressed with Kant’s point that he, as was noted in 4.4, fixes our conceptual resources and gives the relativist the leeway that he needs. In 4.6, we will see whether McDowell can offer us better reasons than Putnam for reintroducing rational constraints on our beliefs by allowing impact from something given.

4.6 Infusing Perceptual Experience with Conceptual Content: McDowell

McDowell’s strategy of infusing perceptual experience with conceptual structure looks very much like Putnam’s. And, like Putnam, he would claim that “elements of what we call ‘language’ or ‘mind’ penetrate so deeply into what we call ‘reality’ that the very project of representing ourselves as being ‘mappers’ of something ‘language-independent’ is fatally compromised from the start. Like Relativism, Realism is an impossible attempt to view the world from Nowhere”.\(^{353}\) What is the core of McDowell’s project? McDowell, as we have noted, wants to reorient empiricism by recontextualizing Kant. His development of the occularcentric tradition is characterized by the attempts to reinstate the tribunal of experience and conceive of the world as a conversational partner. By identifying a second conceptual nature within the space of reasons, he avoids the strict dualism of the spaces that he believes is the source of extreme positions such as coherentism and bald naturalism. In this section, McDowell’s neorealism will be contrasted with neopragmatism, that is, his criticism of neopragmatism will be criticized through an assessment of his recontextualization of Kant, treatment of the spaces, construal of Davidson and conception of tradition. The success of my arguments, in short, depends, not only on exhibiting the neopragmatic “exorcist” view of realism, but also on whether I succeed in showing that McDowell is misconstruing the neopragmatist, in most cases Davidson, and whether I can show up neopragmatic resources that serve our purposes better than McDowell’s, a task that will not be fully executed before in chapter 5.

Let us first get a better grip on what McDowell is after. To start with, how does he recontextualize Kant? McDowell blames Kant, like he blames the modern naturalist, for forgetting our conceptual second nature when Kant conceives of nature as the realm of law, devoid of meaning.\(^{354}\) Kant is, therefore, McDowell says, left unable to accommodate rational constraints on
empirical thinking from the reality that it aims to be about. In MW, McDowell equips Kant with a second nature naturalism, which purports to render the conceptually structured perceptual experience as different than beliefs, and, thus, as not breaking with the psychological nominalist insight that only a belief can justify another belief. What does his conception of the logical spaces look like? McDowell, like Sellars, separates the logical space of reasons from the logical space of nature by letting the first space be the natural scientific realm of law, and the second be constituted by normative relations. In contrast to the bald naturalist who simply rejects the dichotomy, McDowell relies on it to get his project off the ground and readmit some central Kantian notions. The real problem, McDowell says, if we cannot conceive of experience in terms of impressions, is how to accommodate rational constraints on our beliefs and raise a tribunal of experience. Sellars and Davidson, he says, both disqualify experience from constituting a tribunal by relegating “experience” to the logical space of nature. How does McDowell suggest solving the puzzle? The attack on the myth of the given, he proposes, following Robinson, does not explain away the plausibility of the empiricist picture because Sellars’ attack on the given and Davidson’s attack on the distinction between schemes and representational content, which he thinks is better described as the dualism between scheme and given, do not exhaust the field of options.

What objections do the neopragmatists raise against McDowell’s project? In short, they want to echo Sellars’ dismissal of notions of thinking based on quasi-perceptual models to dismiss McDowell’s occularcentric employment of the perceptual model of knowledge, that is, they want to prevent McDowell from claiming that our seeing do not stop short of fact. Furthermore, the neopragmatists hold it against him that his vocabulary of objectivity is the epistemic realist’s vocabulary of settlement. McDowell, they say, might avoid perceptual intermediaries, but he is, nevertheless, committed to a judgmental intermediary in the form of “second nature”. His most severe shortcoming, however, is his failure to realize that human consensus is more than merely the result of a popular vote. Human consensus, the neopragmatists say, like anything else has to be historicized and naturalized, which means that appeals to contingency alone is not sufficient, the vocabulary of objectivity must also be invoked. Neopragmatic answerability to our way of living, thus, pace McDowell, means treating persons, as we will get back to in 5.5, as incarnated vocabularies, for whom normative notions like tradition become important.

In a perceptive essay in Truth and Progress, Rorty contrasts McDowell’s ‘answerability to the world’ with Brandom’s ‘answerability to each other’. This neat distinction might betray both McDowell and Brandom, however, because the slogans conceal a considerable complexity, which in Brandom’s case involves his construction of a representational dimension in inferentialist terms, which means that the notion of each other has to be understood as incarnated vo-
cabularies, and in McDowell’s case a moderate realism that is far more sensitive to the challenges of neopragmatic critique than traditional realism ever was. Nevertheless, Rorty’s distinction might serve to illustrate what was observed in 4.1, namely, that Sellars’ critique of the Robinson Crusoe conception of representation, according to which the world generates conceptual thinking directly in the individual, applies to Putnam and McDowell. The model, Sellars says, is simply too simple and ignores the importance of the mediation of other persons.

How does McDowell presume to achieve answerability to the world? First, the Kantian distinction between the faculties of receptivity and activity, he says, has to remain in place to perform the traditional role of creating the divide between the world and us that is necessary to form the further distinctions of appearance and reality, and holding things to be right and getting things right. McDowell, thus, metaphorically separates inner and outer sense, although reality is, “not to be pictured as outside an outer boundary that encloses the conceptual sphere”, because “the constraint come from outside thinking, but not outside what is thinkable.” Secondly, we need a notion of second nature, as what we acquire partly by being initiated into conceptual capacities, which entitles us to accommodate “impressions” without undermining empiricism. While Brandom employs Leonardo da Vinci’s metaphor of second nature in the sense of finding as constrained making, McDowell likes to think about it as what marks the naturalism of the Aristotelian rational animal, when ‘understanding’ is modeled on ‘phronesis’ in line with Wittgensteinian naturalized Platonism. Second nature, he says pace the neopragmatists, is not dictated to one’s nature from the outside. It is a formed state of practical reason. The concept of nature can be enriched, McDowell says, because the natural sciences, while correctly dehumanizing first nature, should not be allowed to monopolize the notion.

How does the neopragmatist respond to McDowell’s effort to rescue empiricism with, what can be described as, an explanatory distinction between appearance and reality, and the concept of second nature? In short, he rejects “second nature” as a non-naturalistic judgmental intermediary, which is in the way of a consistent naturalism and, along with the appearance/reality distinction, commits McDowell to the necrotic vocabulary of settlement. This settlement, we remember, is what we get if the world is conceived of as a conversational partner and experience as openness to the world. What affinities, then, can be identified between second nature realism and the Rortian project of naturalizing reason? One of the affinities shows when McDowell claims “exercises of spontaneity belong to our way of actualizing ourselves as animals”, and underlines that this can help reconciling reason and nature without blurring the contrast between the two spaces. Another affinity shows when he says that “meaning is not a mysterious gift from outside nature.”

Like the pragmatists, McDowell is anxious to reject metaphysical realism. He contrasts his thicker concept of nature, which includes second nature, with the psychologically atomistic neo-Humean scientific naturalism that pictures nature from the view from nowhere. Nevertheless, he is dangerously close to patting Metaphysicus’ back when he claims that an acceptable world-
picture consists "of articulable, conceptually structured representations. Their acceptability re-
sides in their knowably mirroring the world; that is, representing it as it is." In other words, "we
have to suppose that the world has an intelligible structure, matching the structure in the space
of logos possessed by accurate representation of it." The neopragmatist, of course, rejects
this as flirtation with the vocabulary of settlement. McDowell, however, interprets attacks on the
vocabulary of settlement as drawing attention away from the more important task of attacking
the conception of the world as withdrawn. When Rorty develops the Deweyan narrative of
maturity, which we noted in 1.4 and will elaborate in 5.4, McDowell says, he is implicitly an ac-
complice in the modern epistemological withdrawal from the world that was initiated with Des-
cartes and the British empiricists. His unwillingness to identify the withdrawal as our major
threat, McDowell says, keeps Rorty from realizing the importance of Kant: "Kant precisely aims
to combat the threat of a withdrawal on the part of the world we aspire to know. Kant under-
mines the idea that appearance screens us off from knowable reality; he offers instead a way of
thinking in which [...] appearance just is the reality we aspire to know." Rorty and the neoprag-
matists, in contrast, think Kant was the one who consolidated the withdrawal by alienating sub-
jectivity from the noumenal order, allowing us to be empirical realists merely as regards our ap-
pearances, while idealists about the world of nature.

Introductorily, it was noted that McDowell, like Putnam, thinks that a strict separation of the logi-
cal spaces results in extreme positions on the issue of representation. In order to counter this
separation, he, therefore, as noted a couple of paragraphs back, invents second nature. How
does McDowell deal with Sellars’ attack on the myth of the given that we remember from 2.3?
First, it should be noted that the given survives in McDowell’s neo-empiricism, as it survived in
Quine’s, allowing a justificatory relation to persist between sensations and beliefs. McDowell
depends on that the scope of the myth is restricted, or that it is simply a legend, as professed by
Robinson. His technique is, first, to blame his opponents, in this case Davidson, for not exhaust-
 ing the fields of options, and, secondly, to exorcize the intuition that made Sellars’ attack on the
given seem like the right thing to do. Rejecting the given, McDowell says, can seem like intoler-
ably “retaining a role for spontaneity but refusing to acknowledge any role for receptivity”. We
should “understand what Kant calls ‘intuition’ – experiential intake – not as a bare getting of an
extra-conceptual Given, but as a kind of occurrence or state that already has conceptual con-
tent”. McDowell, thus, urges us to reject the terms that present the problem that Sellars re-
sponds to, and blames Davidson for not acknowledging a deeper motivation for the myth than
skepticism regarding the credentials for our beliefs, leaving us with what he considers as the in-
tolerable oscillation between coherentism and appeals to the given. While the first pitfall,
McDowell says, disposes our thoughts for a disconnection with reality, the second implies ap-
peals to bare presences. If spontaneity is not subject to rational constraints from the outside,
“we cannot make intelligible to ourselves how exercises of spontaneity can represent the world at all”.\textsuperscript{374} “The idea of the given, McDowell says, is the idea that the space of reasons, the space of justifications or warrants, extends more widely than the conceptual sphere. The extra extent of the space of reasons, then, is supposed to allow it to incorporate non-conceptual impacts from outside the realm of thought”.\textsuperscript{375}

What is McDowell’s motive for bypassing Sellars’ attack on the given? We have already taken notice of his wish to face the threat of withdrawal. McDowell fears that if we reject the given, we cannot accommodate external constraints on thoughts and judgments. His crucial step involves forming a notion of givenness that does not extend the space of reasons beyond the conceptual sphere.\textsuperscript{376} When our experiences already have been infused with conceptual content, McDowell says, there is no need to worry about leaving out the external constraints that connects us to the world. In Kantian terms, our experience is passive, but draws into operation capacities that genuinely belong to spontaneity, or the \textit{understanding}.\textsuperscript{377} Why are the neopragmatists reluctant to go along with this?

To note a couple of reasons: Sellars’ critique of Everett Hall’s intentional realism, as mentioned in 4.2, applies equally well to Putnam’s naïve realism and McDowell’s second nature realism. “While I wholeheartedly agree with the fundamental thesis of Hall’s intentional realism”, Sellars says, “the thesis that perceivings are to be regarded as tokens of inner or mental sentences,\textsuperscript{378} I doubt that the language to which these sentences belong can do the job required of it unless it contains the fundamental logical apparatus found in conventional language”.\textsuperscript{379} A language of self-awareness, Sellars says, demands the presence of logical expressions as well as principles of inference. It is no secret that the neopragmatist is dissatisfied with McDowell’s extension of the conceptual sphere, a main reason for this is that it is inconsistent with his own new framework of vocabularism that he is anxious to try out in full scale. The neopragmatist is as interested as McDowell in making sure that we are not paralyzed by the gap between the spaces, and his preferred tools to preclude the paralyzation are the tools of vocabularism. In other words, the neopragmatist’s radicalization of the linguistic turn, which will be elaborated in 5.4, involves turning focus away from the relationship between the spaces to the relationship between different vocabularies, which are governed by different internal criteria, but, nevertheless, in a certain sense can be ascribed inter-translatability.

The success of the neopragmatic critique of neorealism, as noted earlier, is not secured by exorcizing the realist intuition alone. The neopragmatist also has to show up alternative constraints on the linguistic locutions. In chapter 3, it was elaborated how the expressivistic resources of Brandom could provide such constraints, and chapter 5 will hopefully give us reasons to say the same about the anti-representationalistic resources. In the remainder of this chapter, however, I will assess McDowell’s critique of Davidson to see why McDowell has the
coordinates of *Scylla* wrong, and, thus, is threatened by the cliffs as he attempts to steer between coherentism and bald naturalism. The reason for this is that McDowell seriously misconstrues what Davidsonian triangulation amounts because Davidson is interpreted as placing “the world outside a boundary around the system we have supposedly come to understand” and leaving concepts without empirical substance. It is correct that Davidson’s claim that “only a belief can support another belief” rules out experiential reasons for holding a belief, or denies experience a justificatory role, but, as we will see, this does not mean that Davidson leaves our concepts without empirical content.

McDowell believes that in “leaving out any rational constraints from outside the sphere of thought” Davidson invites a reappearance of the given. Why does he think that? Davidson, he says, does not understand the deeper motivations behind the myth of the given apart from finding credentials for one’s beliefs, namely the rational constraints from the outside; therefore, he fails to make intelligible how exercises of spontaneity can represent the world at all. But Davidson has, successfully I think, provided reasons for why this portrait of him is false. It is simply not the case that Davidson leaves us without constraints. He has recently and repeatedly tried to correct the impression of a lack of constraint that many critics observed in CTK. In the introduction to Volume 3 of his collected essays, Davidson writes: “What I would most like to correct is the impression that I think experience and perception play no role in our beliefs about the world […] I was so eager to get across the […] idea that epistemic intermediaries between the world and our beliefs are a mistake that I made it sound to many readers as though I were repudiating all serious commerce between mind and world. In truth my thesis then as now is that the connection is causal and, in the case of perception, direct. To perceive that it is snowing is, under appropriate circumstances, to be caused (in the right way) by one’s senses to believe that it is snowing by the actually falling snow. Sensations no doubt play their role, but that role is not that of providing evidence for the belief.”

If we change some more coordinates, McDowell might be convinced that Davidson is not Scylla. The Davidsonian interpreter enters the space of reasons with a sense of its layout, but they enter it too late, McDowell says, to constitute a concept of objectivity through a process of triangulation. Because, if subjectivity is already in place, he says, so is objectivity. McDowell’s argument, however, a neopragmatist would say, could easily be turned against himself simply by claiming that no extra-triangular subjectivity or objectivity could possibly be in place because triangulation is the process through which subjectivity and objectivity are constituted. McDowell conceives of the world of nature as internal to the space of logos, and, since it is a world, “the natural world is not constitutively independent of the structure of subjectivity. It is a mistake to conceive objectivity in terms of complete independence from subjectivity.” While having no problem with last comment, the neopragmatist blames McDowell for taking seriously the idea of minds being totally out of touch with the rest of reality. Triangulation, in contrast, makes this practically impossible, while still offering a model that account for what can go wrong.
In 2.2, Davidson was defended against McDowell’s attack on monism, or what McDowell considers as the fourth dogma of empiricism. McDowell blames Davidson for physicalism as regards causal relations. This physicalism, he says, reflects a scientistic hijacking of the concept of causality, according to which the concept is taken to have its primary role in articulating the partial worldview that is characteristic of the physical sciences, so that all other causal thinking needs to be based on causal relations characterizable in physical terms. In short, what was said in 2.2, was that the scheme/content distinction and physicalism do not apply because Davidson neither claimed that singular causal relations are given, nor not given in experience. McDowell’s attack should be interpreted as integral in his deeper project of working against the deformation that is characterized by the interiorization of the space of reasons, or the withdrawal of it from the external world, which inevitably, he says, denies reason its critical function. A neopragmatist, in contrast, thinks that it is the realist’s direct appeals to the external world, that is, claims like “when the subjects take in facts, it must be considered as a favor from the world”, that poses the real threat to reason.

McDowell, as we have noted, blames the neopragmatists for not acknowledging the true normative role of the notion of tradition. The feature of a natural language that really matters, McDowell says, is that it serves, “as a repository of tradition, a store of historically accumulated wisdom about what is a reason for what. The tradition is subject to reflective modification by each generation that inherits it. Indeed a standing obligation to engage in critical reflection is itself part of the inheritance. But if an individual human being is to realize her potential of taking her place in that succession, which is the same thing as acquiring a mind, the capacity to think and act intentionally, at all, the first thing that needs to happen is for her to be initiated into a tradition as it stands.”

McDowell is right. Putting creativity at the heart of language should not preclude a notion of tradition as what we are initiated into. The neopragmatists will profit from offering an account of tradition, but not because it is, as McDowell seems to think, an explanatory notion. McDowell, the neopragmatist says, treats ‘tradition’ as if it were a tertia or a version of ‘conceptual scheme’. What I suggest instead, as noted in 1.4, is that ‘tradition’ can serve the intra-vocabulary normative role of telling that there is some doxastic content that we should assign a conceptual role or articulate inferentially. Since the neopragmatic framework is naturalized and historicized, this is not merely a matter of copying conventional content. Articulation is inevitably a therapeutical transformation. The notion of tradition, thus, can offer us no such thing as Putnamesque acquiescence in a picture. All it can offer are challenges to understand and improve.

McDowell’s attraction to the acquiescence in a picture shows when he blames Davidson for forgetting or implicitly denying that a shared language might matter for the constitution of the subjects of understanding or, as contended by Humboldt and Gadamer, that languages are
McDowell’s dissatisfaction is fueled by Davidson’s anti-conventionalism that claims that sharing a language is insufficient for communication. In 5.3, we will continue to argue that Davidson can accommodate Gadamer’s claim, “language maintains a kind of independent life vis-à-vis the individual member of a linguistic community; and as he grows into it, it introduces him into a particular orientation and relationship to the world as well”, within his triangle when understood in its anti-conventional sense. In this chapter, we have been given several reasons to consider the realist’s intuitions as exorcized. In the next chapter, we will be given strong reasons to replace them with neopragmatic intuitions.

5

Triangulation and Breakfast at Irony’s: Davidson and Rorty

5.1 Davidson beyond Epistemology: Truth and Interpretation

As noted in chapter 1, the success of the neopragmatic project is dependent on whether it is able to account for its basic concepts in its own terms and provide alternative constraints on linguistic usage that retire perceptual constraints. In chapter 3, Brandom was portrayed as fulfilling these criteria. In this chapter, the claim is that the anti-representationalists share Brandom’s success if they declare the representationalist as defeated, the anti-representational campaign as victorious and continue to develop their linguistic rationalist potential. In other words, the anti-representationalists should replace the negative therapy of romanticism with the constructive therapy of rationalism, which “holds our time in thought” and equips us with artillery that is sensitive to the new enemy, namely, the neorealist. Linguistic rationalism is what was announced would take us beyond the distinctions between representationalism/anti-representationalism, realism/antirealism, self-foundation/self-creation, solidarity/objectivity, and therapy/construction.

How has the anti-representationalist been described so far? To recapitulate: The anti-representationalist transforms Quine’s epistemology into semantics by relieving him of his empiricism. Quine’s proximal theory of linguistic meaning is replaced with Davidson’s distal theory, which signals the epistemological externalism that he shares with Brandom. This externalism is characterized by, pace the neorealists, the acceptance of causal constraints only, which makes it possible to bypass the demand for extra-vocabularistic rational constraints that invite the skeptic and the relativist. Accepting Sellars’ doctrine of psychological nominalism, the anti-representationalist believes that the only rational constraints our linguistic resources can possess are intra-vocabularistic givens. Both Davidson and Rorty have been accused of physicalism, but they are only, it has been argued, guilty of naturalism, which is what you would want to
defend if you are a consistent Darwinian who wants to close the gap between the spaces of nature and reason by naturalizing reason. The naturalism instructs the anti-representationalist to block not only perceptual intermediaries, but also judgmental intermediaries as they appear in neorealism when the linguistic turn poses ‘language’ as the opposite of ‘the world’. The anti-representationalist is also hypersensitive to the fact that we are historically situated. Like Dewey, he drops the Kantian division of faculties, and is, thus, enabled to temporalize meaning. The naturalism and historicism together make confrontation impossible, and tell that we should opt for the metaphor of lamp, acknowledging that finding and making is inextricably bound together, rather than the metaphor of mirror. Meaning, thus, is to be determined by social role, when ‘social role’ is understood as incorporating causal and inferential constraints.

The first half of this chapter is devoted to Davidson’s philosophy. After having properly introduced Rorty as his co-worker, the rest of 5.1 will inquire into the motivation for anti-representationalism, the special role that Davidson saves for ‘truth’ and ‘interpretation’, and what happens with subjectivity or first person authority when the myth of the subjective, or the idea that thoughts require mental objects, is attacked. Notably, any charge of lenient treatment of ‘truth’ is put to shame. No theory casts ‘truth’ in a more significant role than anti-representationalism, which saves for it the part as the semantic primitive. And, “knowing our own mind is knowing the minds of others” is a Davidsonian echo of the Sellarsian break with the mentalistic Cartesian approach.\footnote{In 5.2, we will assess the much announced attack on the idea of a conceptual scheme that organizes representational content and the process of triangulation that shows up the constraints that the anti-representationalists want to put on our linguistic resources and the heart of the structuralist semantic realism. The attack on the scheme/content distinction finally retires empiricism as well as any substantial distinction between language and world, and is instrumental in getting rid of epistemic intermediaries or ghosts between the lines. But, as Brandom can tell the anti-representationalists, the notion of concepts can be reappropriated, just as we in 3.3 saw that the notion of facts can be, because it is not necessarily an intermediary. In 5.3, we will put to rest McDowell’s worries that the anti-representationalist cannot accommodate a notion of shared language or tradition within the confines of anti-conventionalism, which will be described with the help of the contrastive force of Dummett’s immodest conventionalism. The notion of metaphor will be presented as Davidson’s gift to Rorty, making it possible to occasion social change by shifting vocabularies. The two sections that wrap up the essay concern Rorty’s radicalization of the linguistic turn and the notion of persons as incarnated vocabularies. These sections offer an opportunity to say something more about what motivates Rorty’s project, and also to see that he can be enlisted as an accomplice in the linguistic rationalist pursuit. Vocabularism, my claim is, enables Rorty to develop therapeutical linguistic romanticism in this constructive direction. Before we return to the Davidsonian agenda, let us have a brief look at Rorty’s anti-representationalism. As we have seen, there is a gap between those who still think that perceptual metaphors are useful
because they supply us with necessary rational constraints provided for by the world and those who thinks that the rational constraints can be provided for by our conversations. Once conversation replaces confrontation, Rorty tells us, “the notion of the mind as Mirror of Nature can be discarded”. The world is out there, he says, but our descriptions of the world are not, and he “doesn’t care about whether or not a good tool or good move is also a representation of ‘the way the world, and the mind is’”. Common sensically, saying that the world is out there is simply to acknowledge that something plays a causal game independently of human mental states and our linguistic abilities. Representation, Rorty says, cannot take part in an evolutionary story; it is a difference that makes no difference, bound to collapse into a question of utility. Rorty is often falsely accused of being an idealist. This is not the case beyond the fact that he is a psychological nominalist, at least not in the sense of being a skeptic towards the range of our knowledge. Like Davidson, he emphasizes the causal relations that we are standing in.

One might plausibly argue, as McDowell in fact does, that anti-representationalism is overkill. If we refrain from this overkill, McDowell says, “there is room for a project of making the process of initiation into the space of reason intelligible”. But it is tempting to interpret Rorty as possessing such a high level of awareness of the inner workings of the Hegelian dialectic that he is constantly anticipating the next moves of his realist opponents. In other words, he intends anti-representationalism to perform such a massive and devastating attack on the traditional representational intuitions that they never return, while he is perfectly aware of the fact that anti-representationalism is likely to be superseded by a way of thinking that is beyond the representationalist/anti-representationalist distinction. If this is the case, what he wants to ensure is that the successor paradigm does not entail retrograde empiricism, as McDowell wants, but the conversationalist way of thinking, as Brandom wants, that emphasizes the social nature of linguistic practices. In short, Rorty, along with his hero Davidson, might provide a shoulder upon which to climb.

Any reader of the anti-representationalists will notice how they are separated by differences in style and mode of inquiry. While Rorty is anxious to “let hundred flowers bloom”, Davidson’s writing is more concise and systematic. One of the ways the systematic character of Davidson’s theoretical corpus shows is that it allows works in different areas to support each other mutually. Davidson’s approach shows how the norms of Bayesian decision theory, logic and semantics comprise the norms of rationality that govern our actual patterns of speech and thought. His unified theory of action and meaning is brought to attention by the indeterminacies of meaning and translation, telling us that the interpretation of speech and action arise jointly, accompanied by attributions of beliefs and desires. The indeterminacy is rendered harmless, in the sense of limiting the conceivable alternative theories, when the two different types of beliefs are made consistent with each other. The systematic character of his philosophy differs, however, from traditional system philosophy in not implying closure. His theories, constituted by a series of attempts to avoid the reification of meaning and reference, are, rather, explicitly designed to pro-
mote the theoretical slack and openness that defy attempts on closure and end of discussions. This is the reason why Rorty can be so amiable to his approach.

To start with: What motivates Davidson's anti-representationalism? In short, his subscription is connected to the dismissal of facts as entities that can be represented by utterances or beliefs. Nothing of the following adds, as he points out in OVS, anything intelligible to the simple concept of being true: fitting the totality of experience, fitting the facts, or being true to the facts. What ancestry can the anti-representationalist present? He likes to think of Wittgenstein and Sellars as predecessors, i.e. not the early Wittgenstein with the picture theory, but the later Wittgenstein who opts for causal constraints only and would follow Sellars in saying that “the extra-linguistic domain consists of objects, not facts”. The reason for this is that, as Davidson says, “to put it bluntly, propositional form belongs only in the linguistic and conceptual order”, and correspondence theories fail to provide the entities to which truth vehicles can be said to correspond. If this is right, he says, “and I am convinced it is, we ought also to question the popular assumption that sentences, or their spoken tokens, or sentence-like entities or configurations in our brains, can properly be called ‘representations’, since there is nothing for them to represent. If we give up facts as entities that make sentences true, we ought to give up representations at the same time, for the legitimacy of each depends on the legitimacy of the other”. If the world is not there for us to copy, does this imply that it is simply something of our own making? The answer is no, and the reason for this is that “what determines the contents of our thoughts and utterances is not confined to what is within the skin. Our thoughts neither create the world nor simply picture it; they are tied to their external sources from the beginning, those sources being the community and the environment we know we jointly occupy”. And the very idea of thought, as McDowell puts it, “presupposes a notion of objectivity that we can gloss in terms of a distinction between being right and seeming right”.

Let us get an initial idea of what Davidson thinks semantics should look like before we enter his theory of truth and interpretation. Semantics, Davidson says, cannot be developed on the building-block model, on descriptions of referential relations, or theories in general that attempt to assign content to sentences based on non-semantic evidence. From the Quinean toolbox, he has extracted the holistic insight that no account of meaning can be offered in terms of the word-world relationship; neither can a theory of interpretation be supported by an account of reference. Atomistic theories of meaning, as noted in 1.3, simply do not take notice of the fact that linguistic labor primarily is executed by the sentences, whose meaning is determined by the difference between the falsity and the veridicality of the sentence. To see how mental attributes like having a concept, grasping propositions, forming judgments and commanding the concept of truth stand or fall together, Davidson says, is acknowledging the holism of the mental. Meaning, then, as Quine says, has to be thought of in terms of location in a web of beliefs.
Davidson wants to identify what it is for words and sentences to mean what they do. Rather than actively seeking a theory of truth, he employs Tarskian-style theories of truth in order to provide us with a theory of meaning. This strategy carries the obvious advantage of avoiding having to tell us when and how the actual truth conditions present themselves. The problems that he has to confront center around how such theories of truth can yield interpretation, what requirements we should put on the theory in order for it to be empirically testable, and how the theory of truth can be made to fit the natural languages.

Why is Davidson's realism semantic? For Davidson, truth is what closes the gap between linguistic and nonlinguistic concepts and what makes it possible to replace epistemic realism with empirical-semantic realism. When Davidson said that coherence yields correspondence, he intended the correspondence relation to be expressed through the notion of 'satisfaction', which equips us with a theory that is testable in other than its own terms, but rather than providing us with a basis for translation, the satisfaction-relation is a consequence of translation. The crucial point about 'satisfaction', Davidson says, is that it gives us the means to determine the truth conditions for sentences, by telling us that knowing the truth of a sentence in a given language is entailed in knowing a theory of truth for that language. The truth value, on the other hand, can only be determined by noting how the sentence coheres with the other sentences in the holistic web. His realism, then, is semantic in that it tells us that most of our beliefs about the world must be true, rather than epistemological in opening the gap between our beliefs and the way things really are.

Why is the realism empirical? The empirical character of Davidsonian semantics appears in the theory of interpretation. Interpretability, Davidson says, is precisely the social factor that renders our utterances irreducibly social, and radical interpretation is involved in all understanding of speech. Davidson's rationalization, rather than description of actual interpretive practice of the field linguist, of interpretation sets in when he equips the Quinean radical translator with the tool of T-sentences that is relativized to time and place. As Ramberg has suggested, the T-sentences might look like this: (T) ‘Gavaga’ is true-in-L when uttered by x at time t if only if there is a rabbit in the vicinity of x at t. As the interpreter forms more and more hypotheses on the basis of the speaker's employment of the same sentences in the presence of recurring features, he discerns patterns that can form the basis of a structural account of L and, consequently, be empirically tested. Davidson's version of convention T, which leaves out Tarski's concept of translation, tells us that: “A theory of truth will be materially adequate, that is, will correctly determine the extension of the truth-predicate, provided it entails, for each sentence s of the object language, a theorem of the form ‘s’ is true if and only if p’ where ‘s’ is replaced by the description of s and ‘p’ is replaced by a sentence that is true if and only if s is.”

Truth is a semantic primitive, and, thus, not fit to be an explanatory notion. However, Davidson thinks that there are more things to say about truth than Rorty seems, or at least seemed, to think: Truth, he says, “is not a property of sentences; it is a relation between sentences,
speakers and dates. To view it thus is not to turn away from language to speechless eternal entities like propositions, statements, and assertions, but to relate the language with the occasions of truth in a way that invites the construction of a theory.\textsuperscript{411} Truth, he says about ten years later, is the most central concept "since having any concept requires that we know what it would be for that concept to apply to something – to apply truly, of course."\textsuperscript{412}

What special role does Davidson save for the principle of charity? In short, the principle of charity is a methodological principle, a Hegelian principle of recognition, which provides constraints on the interpretation of the thoughts of others. It is not a heuristic device but rather a condition of the possibility for interpretation taking place at all, or an inesciable normative background, telling us that on our interpretation of the judgment of others, these judgments must come out as mostly true. Thus speaking, the principle of charity must be understood as a principle of rational accommodation, equipping us, among other things, with the ability to detect the patterns that truth makes. As McDowell points out, it can also be interpreted as a version of the Gadamerian ‘fusion of horizons’. Interpretation turns normative because, in order to understand through the attribution of propositional attitudes, our "own standards of rationality necessarily enter the process of interpretation".\textsuperscript{413} Why is an account of language dependent upon "a largely correct, shared, view of how things are", Davidson asks, and answers: “First consider why those who can understand one another’s speech must share a view of the world, whether or not that view is correct. The reason is that we damage the intelligibility of our readings of the utterances of others when our method of reading puts others into what we take to be broad error. We can make sense of differences all right, but only against a background of shared belief.”\textsuperscript{414}

Davidson’s truth account equips us with the ability to explain our infinite semantic capacities through exercises of finite resources. And the empirical adequacy of such a theory is put to test any time the biconditional is checked for veridicality. In SCT, Davidson specifies the nature of the present task: “What Tarski has done for us is show in detail how to describe the kind of pattern truth must make, whether in language or in thought. What we need to do now is to say how to identify the presence of such a pattern or structure in the behavior of people.”\textsuperscript{415} He refuses to go along with the two common alternatives, namely turning truth into an epistemic notion (Putnam),\textsuperscript{416} which he considers as a form of subjectivism, and embracing epistemic realism by attempting to convince us of the evidence-transcendent nature of truth (Dummett). What is the trouble with theories of truth that are trapped in the realist/antirealist distinction? In short, they invite skepticism. The skeptic is still allowed to dine at the table in realist/antirealist homes. While the realist, due to the skeptical challenge, makes truth inaccessible, the antirealist, rejecting its objectivity, makes it too epistemic. The problem with the epistemic theory of truth, Davidson says, is that “either the conditions of warranted assertibility are made so strong that they include truth itself, in which case the account is circular, or circularity is avoided by making the conditions explicit, and then it becomes clear that a fully warranted assertion may be false.”\textsuperscript{417}
The neopragmatist, it has been stressed, refuses the skeptic any leeway. One of the reasons that we have noted for this is that he dissolves the appearance/reality distinction. Another reason why global skepticism of the senses is impossible, Davidson says, is the fact that “we must, in the plainest and methodologically most basic cases, take the objects of a belief to be the causes of that belief. And what we, as interpreters, must take them to be is what they in fact are. Communication begins where causes converge: your utterance means what mine does if belief in its truth is systematically caused by the same events and objects.” Our beliefs, then, are not measured against truth conceived of as normative, epistemic criteria. The notion of holding true indicates that truth enters the stage only in the process of interpretation, because “our basic methodology for interpreting the words of others necessarily makes it the case that most of the time the simplest sentences which speakers hold true are true. It is not the speaker who must perform the impossible feat of comparing his belief with reality; it is the interpreter who must take into account the causal interaction between world and speaker in order to find out what the speaker means, and hence what he believes.” Davidson’s argument in CTK has two parts: “First [he urges] that a correct understanding of the speech, beliefs, desires, intentions and other propositional attitudes of a person leads to the conclusion that most of a person’s beliefs must be true, and so there is a legitimate presumption that any one of the, if it coheres with most of the rest, is true. Then [he goes] on to claim that anyone with thoughts who wonders whether he has reasons to suppose he is generally right about the nature of his environment must know what a belief is, and how in general beliefs are to be detected and interpreted. These being perfectly general facts we cannot fail to use when we communicate with others, there is a pretty strong sense in which we can be said to know that there is a presumption in favor of the overall truthfulness of anyone’s beliefs, including our own.” The subject, then, is constantly open for revision and endless possibilities, while truth remains the constitutive limitation.

Davidson, as noted, rejects Putnam and Dummett’s accounts of truth. ‘Truth’, he says, is inextricably bound up with ‘belief’ and ‘meaning’. His holistic theory of meaning can be spelled out this way: “Frege said that only in the context of a sentence does a word have meaning; in the same vein he might have added that only in the context of the language does a sentence and (therefore a word) have meaning.” Holism is, in other words, a logical constraint that acknowledges the rational patterns that make agency intelligible. Holism, externalism and the normative feature of the mental, Davidson says, stand or fall together: “There can be no serious science of the mental. I believe the normative, holistic, and externalist elements in psychological concepts cannot be eliminated without radically changing the subject.” A holist, in contrast to an atomist, is not looking for actual entities in order to make one thought identical to another. His emphasis is rather on what constitutes an acceptable interpretation. When saying that two interlocutors entertain the same thought, it suffices to think of them as being in states of mind that are similar enough to make them capable of interpret the other.
The designational model, as mentioned in 1.3, took 'representation' or 'reference' as its semantic primitive, and Quine, ensuring that we are at least talking about the same thing, made reference relative to conceptual scheme. The neopragmatist, in contrast, considers a theory of reference, as Ramberg points out, superfluous because knowledge of the extension of the truth-predicate already equips us with the means to test our hypotheses about the causal relation between words and objects and events. In *Reality without Reference*, Davidson says, “if the name ‘Kilimanjaro’ refers to Kilimanjaro, then no doubt there is some relation between English (or Swahili) speaker, the word and the mountain. But it is inconceivable that one should be able to explain the relation without first explaining the role of the word in sentences; and if this is so, there is no chance of explaining reference directly in nonlinguistic terms”. Davidson says, Rorty says, that we should maximize coherence and truth, and let reference fall out as it may.

How does Brandom’s account of interpretation contrast with Davidson’s? Brandomian interpretation of a community as producing and consuming reasons depends on the actual presence of a structure of inheritance of entitlements to undertaken and attributed commitments. This structure results from the interaction of the intercontent, intrapersonal consequential inheritance of entitlement, and the intracontent, interpersonal testimonial inheritance of entitlement. The deontic scorekeeping, which is Brandom’s preferred concept of interpretation, is thought of as a form of implicit, practical interpretation, which avoids problems such as Wittgenstein’s regress of rules problem that arise for models that thinks of interpretation in terms of explicit hypothesis formation. This Wittgensteinian theme, rehearsed by Dummett in his controversy with Davidson on the nature of human understanding, embodies the claim that interpretation, in order to avoid conceptual regress, must start in a belief or an activity that is not itself an interpretation. Brandom’s practical interpretation is responding to this impetus, while, of course, being an interpretation of a sort, i.e. implicit rather than explicit. As believers, hinging on perception, we take-true, and as agents, hinging on action, we make-true. The common explanatory target of the two possible roads to sapience, namely through the concept of truth and through inference, is the contents that are distinguished by their propositional form. A possible advantage of Brandom’s account is that he might link the concepts of truth and inference in a more satisfactory manner than Davidson. Since he can combine the two roads to sapience, Brandom pursues the stronger tack of insisting that “the truths of claims and the correct use of concepts answer to how things objectively – rather than subjectively or intersubjectively – are taken to be.” Davidson, in contrast, takes truth as the primitive and builds objectivity out of intersubjectivity. The distinction between sentences being held true and being in fact true is, Davidson says, “essential to the existence of an interpersonal system of communication, and when in individual cases there is a difference, it must be counted as error. Since the attitude of holding true is the same whether the sentence is true or not, it corresponds directly to belief. The concept of belief thus
stands ready to take up the slack between objective truth and the held true, and we come to understand it in just this connection.”

What happens to first person authority when Davidson attacks the myth of the subjective or the idea that thoughts require mental objects? The answer to the question will exhibit how pragmatism saves the authority of subjectivity by steering between transcendentalism and relativism. To start with: According to Habermas, first person authority was sustained by the three myths of classical epistemology, namely the myth of the given, the myth of thought as representation, and the myth of truth as certainty, all of which, as seen earlier, have received devastating critique. How, then, can first person authority be defended? There is an unavoidable presumption, Davidson says, “built into the nature of interpretation - that the speaker usually knows what he means. So there is a presumption that if he knows that he holds a sentence true, he knows what he believes”. Accepting the presumption, however, is neither defending Kantian transcendentalism, nor relativistically conceiving of reason as embedded in the subject. As Ramberg points out: “The interpretivist strategy undermines the reification of mental content and of subjecthood. At the same time, the strategy also frees the notion of reason from the transcendental aspirations in which it has been embedded, and makes a notion of reason available for a pragmatized conception of philosophy.” How does first person authority show? It is exhibited, Davidson says, by the propositional attitudes. But even though we have special authority as regards our own beliefs, desires, pride etc., this does not mean that we are infallible or incorrigible. To account for the asymmetry between the self-ascriber and the interpreter, or the fact that first person claims have a different sort of authority than second or third person claims, we must first recognize that we do not know our own minds like we know another’s because thinking is prior to speaking and acting.

Are meanings outside the head? Since Putnam’s “twin earth”-example, the general consensus has been that “meanings just ain’t in the head”, a claim that threatens to leave us in limbo as regards the access to our own propositional attitudes. As noted in 4.2, Putnam is recently led by what he considers to be a missing account of how language and thought links to the world to form a theory of perception. But there are, Davidson says, two largely unquestioned assumptions. The first is, “if a thought is identified by a relation to something outside the head, it isn’t wholly in the head”, and the second is, “if a thought isn’t wholly in the head, it can’t be ‘grasped’ by the mind in the way required by first person authority”. It simply does not follow, Davidson says, from the fact that meanings are partly identified by relations to objects that are external to the head, that meanings aren’t in the head. Keeping the weaker form of externalism, notably, offers some support to token-token identity theories. When explaining privileged access, Davidson’s point is quite simple: “Having an attitude is not having an entity before the mind; for compelling psychological and epistemological reasons we should deny that there are objects of the
mind." And: “The explanation comes with the realization that what a person’s words mean depends in the most basic cases on the kinds of objects and events that have caused the person to hold the words to be applicable; similarly for what the person’s thoughts are about.”

Portraying reason either as embedded in the subject, or as outside the subject, thus, is misconstruing the matter. Knowing our own mind, as Davidson says, is knowing the minds of others.

To elaborate the initial question about what happens to first person authority when the myth of the subjective is rejected: First person authority, Davidson says, “the social character of language, and the external determinants of thought and meaning go naturally together, once we give up the myth of the subjective, the idea that thoughts require mental objects.” Thoughts, he says, “are private in the obvious but important sense in which property can be private, that is belong to one person. And knowledge of thoughts is asymmetrical, in that the person who has a thought generally knows he has it in a way in which others cannot. But this is all there is to the subjective. So far from constituting a preserve so insulated that it is a problem how it can yield knowledge of an outside world or be known to others, thought is necessarily part of a common public world. Not only can others learn what we think by noting the causal dependencies that give our thoughts their content, but the very possibility of thought demands shared standards of truth and objectivity.”

Truth and objectivity, then, constitute what we can call the norms of consistency.

To wrap it up: In MS, Davidson makes five interrelated points, which quite neatly summarize the constraints that neopragmatists wants to put on conceptions of the content of minds. First, the social and historical context in which states of mind like hopes, beliefs and desires are acquired is partly what identifies them. Secondly, this does not signify, as McDowell has claimed for some time and as Putnam has recently been convinced of, that the states are not physical states. The third point is that the causal relations between states of minds and external objects and events are essential to the possibility of communication, making minds accessible to one another. Fourthly, a naturalized theory of knowledge leaves no room for epistemic intermediaries and, consequently, no room in which to maneuver for the skeptic. Finally, dispensing with ghostly entities such as objects of thought is dispensing with a certain cluster of problems, namely those that plagued the representationalist.

5.2 The Third Dogma of Empiricism and Triangulation

As noted in 2.2, empiricism received its final stab when Davidson attacked the third dogma or the Kantian distinction of conceptual schemes/representational content. In this section, we will see what happens when we are relieved of our epistemic neuroses, that is, we will assess the significance of the break with the epistemological tradition and the alternative constraints that arrive in the process of triangulation as the semantic replacement of epistemological founda-
tional constraints. But let us start with the third dogma. What is the idea of conceptual schemes? Conceptual schemes, we are told, Davidson says, “are ways of organizing experience; they are systems of categories that give form to the data of sensation; they are points of view from which individuals, cultures, or periods survey the passing scene”. The idea of conceptual schemes is accompanied by the idea of conceptual relativism. Conceptual relativism, Davidson continues, “is a heady and exotic doctrine, or would be if we could make good sense of it”. But we simply don’t hold our sentences to be true relative to a scheme; we just hold them to be true. Claims to have described or spotted different conceptual schemes, Davidson says, imply the translatability that it explicitly denies. We cannot live in different conceptual worlds, “since there is at most one world”, and, we might add, at most one text, which we share but interpret differently. As Rorty points out, ‘our epistemic situation’ and ‘our self-understanding’, are in Davidson’s eyes, versions of ‘conceptual scheme’. The same applies to the notions of tradition and history, in their McDowellian senses, as well as to the conceptual relativistic notion of paradigm.

In CTK and OVS, Davidson turns Quine onto himself, showing how Quine’s own artillery, acquired when taking “meaning” away from the particular sentences, wipes out the empiricist traces in his philosophy. For Quine, observation sentences had the privileged status of grounding our knowledge in experience, thus, reposing the opposites of language and the world again. This givenness allowed him to let our sensations justify our beliefs, as Davidson tells him he cannot, because “only beliefs can justify beliefs”. Davidson agrees when Quine claims that “there is every reason to inquire into the sensory or stimulatory background of ordinary talk of physical things”, and “the mistake comes only in seeking an implicit sub-basement of conceptualization, or of language”. The first insight is echoed in the causal leg of triangulation, and the second in psychological nominalism and the passing theory of language. What, then, is the core of Davidson’s misgiving with Quine? Davidson’s critique consists in saying that the apparently vicious conceptual relativism in Quine’s discovery that truth is relative to a conceptual scheme is nothing but the familiar fact that the truth of a sentence is relative to (among other things) the language to which it belongs.

McDowell, in contrast to the neopragmatists, denies that Davidson’s attack of the third dogma is decisive for empiricism. Why is that? Scheme/content dualism is, McDowell says, “incoherent, because it combines the conviction that world views are rationally answerable to experience - the core thesis of empiricism - with a conception of experience that makes it incapable of passing verdicts, because it removes the deliverances of senses from the domain of the conceptual”. But empiricism, he claims, survives Davidson’s attack because it is kept together by content, rather than the entitlement which is attacked. Rejecting empiricism is, McDowell says, depriving oneself “of the right to immunity to anxiety over the non-emptiness of thoughts”. Why does Davidson consider McDowell wrong? In *Reply to John McDowell*, Davidson rehearses the two objections he filed to the attempt to base empirical knowledge on
non-propositional experience: First, it cannot be done, and, secondly, it would inevitably lead to skepticism. The rational support of our beliefs, whether perceptual beliefs or not, is, Davidson underlines, provided by the coherence with other beliefs and not by some extra-linguistic realm. But there must be a friction, Davidson says, “between the world and our thoughts if our thoughts are to have any content at all, and I find this friction right here, in the external causes of our perceptual beliefs”. The disagreement with McDowell arises, Davidson says, when McDowell says that what is caused is not a belief, but rather a propositional attitude, for which we have no words, that we can choose whether or not to transform into a belief. What I have been driving at, in this essay, is to point out that even if we grant to McDowell that empiricism can be rescued, the myth of the given bypassed and skepticism trivialized, the empiricist’s web of beliefs, in contrast to the neopragmatist’s, is necrotically pertaining to yesterday’s concern. My instrument for making this claim good is the linguistic romanticist’s instrument of contrasting vocabularies; in this case, neorealism and neopragmatism are contrasted and evaluated according to fertility.

Brandom’s linguistic rationalism, as noted, instructs him to reappropriate essensialistic locutions that anti-representationalism has retired. In 3.3, we saw how he reappropriated ‘facts’. Now, we will see how he does the same with ‘concepts’. When Davidson talks of ‘concepts’ as committing us to a picture in which it plays the role of epistemological intermediary, Brandom agrees in the sense that he is an accomplice in the project of debunking the Kantian dualism of scheme and content. But he insists that there is another way of understanding ‘concept’. According to Kant, Brandom says, concepts contrast with intuitions in three ways: First, as form to matter; secondly, as general to particular; and, thirdly, as spontaneity to receptivity. But these distinctions, Brandom continues, are independent of each other and cannot amount to splitting the faculty of judgment into a conceptual and a non-conceptual segment because judgments are conceptual all the way down. So when Brandom talks of concepts, it is in the sense of inferential roles that implies that “the particular content of a given concept is […] the content of an inferential commitment: roughly the commitment to the propriety of the inference from any of the appropriate circumstances of application of that concept to any of the appropriate consequences of application of the concept”. But Davidson does not entirely debunk ‘concept’. How does he apply the concept of concept? In PO, Davidson reserves the notion of concept for cases where it is possible to make mistakes, in contrast to approaches that construe “having a concept” as “having the ability to discriminate items having a certain property”. To apply a concept, Davidson says, “is to make a judgment, to classify or characterize an object or event or situation in a certain way, and this requires application of the concept of truth since it is always possible to classify or characterize something wrongly. To have a concept, in the sense I am giving this word, is, then, to be able to entertain propositional contents: a creature has a concept only if it is able to employ that concept in the context of a judgment.”
The core of neopragmatic semantic realism is wonderfully expressed through the metaphor of triangulation. As foreshadowed, this metaphor gives us the constraints on the linguistic resources that the neopragmatist wants to replace perceptual constraints. How can it be described? What are the constraints? Triangulation is Davidson’s term for the persisting three-way relationship between two speakers and the common world that is a condition for all linguistic usage. The apexes of the triangle correspond to three varieties of knowledge: Knowledge about one’s own consciousness, knowledge about the consciousness of others and knowledge about a shared world. The triangle constitutes an undividable unit, in which the varieties of knowledge arise together, and in which the possibility of assigning atomical theoretical priority either to introspection (the Cartesian tradition that invites skepticism), causality (inviting scientism, as, for example, in the causal theory of reference, or in the theory of natural kinds), or sociality (inviting unrefined behaviorism) is blocked. Each of two people finds, Davidson says, “certain behavior of the other salient, and each finds the observed behavior of the other to be correlated with events and objects he finds salient in the world. This much can take place without developed thought, but it is the necessary basis for thought and for language learning. For until the triangle is completed connecting two creatures and each creature with common objects in the world there can be no answer to the question whether a creature, in discriminating between stimuli at the sensory surfaces or somewhere further out, or further in. It takes two to triangulate”.

The metaphor of triangulation, in short, tells us that human subjectivity itself is not sufficient to account for the propositional attitudes and the conceptual folk psychological arsenal consisting of entities such as beliefs, wishes, hopes, etc.. In what we can interpret as Davidson’s version of the private language argument, he demonstrates that the propositional attitudes can only originate in communication with fellow language users in a shared world. Davidsonian triangulation, notably, makes it impossible to separate the worldly contribution from our own contribution to the process of forming judgments, and issues a license to talk about language impregnated reality: “The only way of knowing that the second apex of the triangle – the second creature or person – is reacting to the same object as oneself is to know that the other person has the same object in mind. But then the second person must also know that the first person constitutes an apex of the same triangle another apex of which the second person occupies. For two people to know of each other that they are so related, that their thoughts are so related, requires that they are in communication. Each of them must speak to the other and be understood by the other. They don’t [...] have to mean the same thing by the same words, but they must each be an interpreter of the other.”

Understanding, as Davidson says, can never be final. It is “always a matter not only of interpretation but of translation, since we can never assume we mean the same thing by our words that our partners in discussion mean. What is created in dialogue is not a common language but understanding: each partner comes to understand the other.” Our concepts are formed in communication, and communication requires triangulation. Both the skeptic, who
doubts the possibility of objective knowledge of the external world, as well as the relativist lose
his premisory ground when Davidson shows the inconceivability of the transcendental “outer” as
a standard. Rendering truth as intersubjective does not imply that it is relativistic because we
are triangulating beings. How, then, can the relationship between causation and inference be
described? Causation and inference, Davidson says, must be considered together because
none of the corners of the triangle can be considered independently of the others. Brandom’s in-
ferentialism is an excellent example of how causation and inference arise together. The twofold
externalism inherent in Davidson’s triangle, namely the causal role of reason within psychology
and the role that the history of each individual’s language learning and mastery plays in deter-
mining the meaning of words and the content of concepts, signals the neopragmatic attraction
towards naturalism and historicism.

Quine can be identified as a plausible predecessor of the triangulator. Quine, as Føllesdal
says, \(^{460}\) spells out triangulation when he says that “the learner has now not only to learn the
word phonetically, by hearing it from another speaker; he also has to see the object; and in ad-
dition to this, in order to capture the relevance of the object to the word, he has to see that the
speaker also sees the object”. \(^{461}\) But whereas Quine, as noted in 2.1, wants to locate stimula-
tion at the neural input in order to individuate and reify objects, Davidson thinks it is sufficient to
appeal to shared causes. Triangulation, as Rorty says, helps us explain why fact-stating and
communicating cannot be separated, \(^{462}\) and triangulation ushers us into a conversationalist,
non-confrontationalist society in which the triangulating stance prevents us from claiming, on the
one hand, that we make the world by imposing intelligible order on the space of nature, and, on
the other hand, that we find nature in a certain prefixed order that we just have to copy or learn,
leaving us with the Brandomian notion of finding as constrained making. The inescapability of
triangulating, as Rorty says, is the inescapability of norms. \(^{463}\)

5.3 Davidson’s Anti-Conventionalism and the Metaphor as his Gift to Rorty

In this section, what I have in mind is to sketch the neopragmatic naturalistic conception of lan-
guage that is promised as the predecessor of the representationalistic conception, according to
which, to put it bluntly, language represents the world. I also have in mind to show that this con-
ception does not preclude the fact that ‘tradition’ might serve a normative role, even though, it is
not the regulative role that McDowell saves for it, as well as to make good the claim in 1.4 that
with instrumental pragmatism in place, the metaphor can serve as a tool for constructing new
vocabularies. While my discussion of triangulation in 5.2 supports the claim that the neopragma-
tist has the resources to therapeutically constrain linguistic locutions, in the sense that our pur-
poses are reflected when content is assigned, the discussion of metaphors is intended to show
that the metaphor is what constructively provides the new material, which in turn is cultivated in
the process of triangulation. This division of labor signals how the distinction between therapy
and construction, due to interpenetration, becomes superfluous or at least too rigid, and how the neopragnmatist is far better equipped than the neorealist to face the challenges posed by rapid changes of linguistic behavior.

Let us start with inquiring into anti-conventionalism. In NDE, Davidson cashes out the insights from *Inquiry* and presents his antilingualistic dictum through a series of remarks of anti-conventionalist character. He replaces the traditional non-naturalistic conception of language as a conventional tool, whose employment is mastered after having learned common usage, with the suggestion that a person’s ability to interpret or speak to another person consists in “the ability that permits him to construct a correct, that is, convergent, passing theory for speech transactions with that person”.464 Saying there is no such thing as a language, as Davidson does, is extending the anti-reificational Nietzsche-Foucault axis, according to which there is neither such a thing as God nor man. What exactly is the trouble with conventionalism? In short, conventionalism assumes that there is a regulative notion of shared language in place in advance. According to the neopragnmatist, this notion is a tertia that is in the way for their project of naturalizing and historicizing language. In 1.3, it was indicated that conventionalism might be a form of, or at least tightly connected to, scientism. Why is that? In short, scientism and conventionalism share the realist idea that there is a *common core* and a privileged way of talking. In Harman’s words, conventionalism runs into unsurpassable problems: “Even if conventional assignments of truth and falsity determine meaning, it does not follow that a statement assigned truth is true by virtue of convention. It does not even follow that the statement is true. For the relevant notion of convention cannot be distinguished from the notion of postulation.”465 Talk of shared standards is not talk of frozen entities. The only serious attempts to defend a notion such as analyticity, Harman says, appeal to the notion of convention in order to safeguard a word’s meaning. Davidson confronts conventionalism when he confronts the idea of an interpreting machine: “There is no learnable common core of consistent behavior, no shared grammar or rules, no portable interpreting machine set out to grind the meaning of an arbitrary utterance.”466

How does Davidson confront the orthodox conception of language? There is no such thing as a language, he says, “not if a language is anything like what many philosophers have supposed. There is therefore no such thing to be learned, mastered, or born with. We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases. And we should try again to say how convention in any important sense is involved in language; or, as I think, we should give up the attempt to illuminate how we communicate by appeal to conventions.”467 As I suggested earlier and soon will get back to, what McDowell is after is a substantial link between convention and language. Davidson, in contrast, for the purpose of naturalization, distinguishes between a prior theory and a passing theory of language: “For the hearer, the prior theory expresses how he is prepared in advance to interpret an utterance of the speaker, while the passing theory is how he *does* interpret the utterance. For the
speaker, the prior theory is what he believes the interpreter prior theory to be, while his passing theory is the theory he intends the interpreter to use."

While mastery of words in a dictionary and the basic rules of grammar, or the framework theory, might be part of what accounts for language mastery, it is not sufficient in order to account for what enables us to interpret an utterance. It must be kept in mind that framework theories tend to differ among different interlocutors. In order for communication to succeed and language to be mastered, it is simply the passing theory that must be shared by conversational partners since the interpreter actually employs this theory and the speaker wants the interpreter to do so. As Davidson puts it, “in principle communication does not demand that any two people speak the same language. What must be shared is the interpreter’s and the speaker’s understanding of the speaker’s words.”.468 Nothing in the actual communicative situation corresponds with what the communitarian refers to as linguistic competence. Our linguistic ability, Davidson claims, consists in repeated agreements on passing theories. Linguistic conventions, then, may facilitate understanding, but cannot be the foundation for that understanding.

At this point, it might be useful to see how Davidson’s anti-conventionalism contrasts with Michael Dummett’s conventionalism. NDE provoked an intense discussion with perhaps Dummett as Davidson’s harshest critic. Dummett and Davidson agree that we all speak different idiolects of the same language. But while Dummett immodestly thinks the significance of this claim is that conventions are what ultimately determine linguistic meaning, Davidson modestly, due to his occasional theory of linguistic meaning, which focus on the occasional utterances, and the radical interpretation model of communication, dismisses the idea that communication presupposes convention.469 The reason for this, as remarked earlier, is that Davidson’s order of semantic explanation makes him vouch for the explanation of interpretation, rather than language mastery.470 The core of Dummett’s view is that the concept of language is normative and indispensable to a theory of linguistic behavior. As language users, Dummett says, “we hold ourselves responsible to patterns of meaning that make up our ordinary, pre-theoretical notion of what a language is”.471 Davidson’s theory of linguistic meaning, he complains, is up in the air unless he can connect truth conditions with linguistic practice. But Davidson’s account, in contrast to Dummett’s, as well as to Brandom’s, is in a trivial sense explicitly designed to be up in the air, or starting in the midst of things. While Davidson can accommodate the spirit of the Dummettian core of normativity, “as hovering over the process of triangulation”, he lacks the normative pragmatic base that characterizes, for instance, Brandom’s expressivism. This should come as no surprise since what Davidson is after is an internal relation between truth and understanding.

Dummett also thinks that Davidson’s commitment to holism gives him problems as to how language can be learnt because it seems to him that it carries the further commitment of understanding the whole of language at one go, which ultimately prevents him from being able to give a full blooded account of linguistic understanding. Davidson uses the right tack, however, when
he claims that we simply don’t have the language to deal with the not yet full-blooded language mastery of the infant, and it is also doubtful, if we naturalize language, that we can ever have it. As Rorty says, “it makes perfectly good sense to ask how we got from the relative mindlessness of the monkey to the full-fledged mindedness of the human […] if they are construed as straightforward causal questions”, and, one might add, to be answered by the natural sciences, rather than the cultural. Dummett is dissatisfied with the Davidsonian theory of meaning since it leaves out talk of ‘content’ and ‘sense’, but, as Rorty draws our attention to, Dummett’s ‘sense’ is exactly the tertium quid or interface that Davidson wants us to drop. According to Dummett, someone could know the truth conditions that the interpreter produces in the T-sentences without grasping the content of the disquoted right-hand side. But Davidson would reply, Rorty says, “that no single T-sentence – no single ‘neutral snowbound triviality’ – will tell you what it is to understand any of the words occurring on the left-hand sides, but that the whole body of such sentences tells you all there is to know about this”.

In 4.6, we saw that McDowell blames Davidson for ignoring that tradition and shared language constitute human subjectivity, and it was urged that the anti-representationalist should make room for a normative but non-explanatory notion of tradition within the confines of semantic realism. Ruling out that appeals to shared language is sufficient to account for linguistic competence, is not ruling out that notions of tradition or shared language can serve us in a normative intra-vocabulary role. Davidson’s aim with triangulation, as Malpas points out, has been to, “provide an account of the possibility of understanding in a holistic structure that encompasses individual, society, and environment”. If understanding is grounded, as Gadamer grounds it, Malpas says, “by reference to history, and as history itself refers us back to the process of understanding, then so it would seem that exactly what is in question, namely the possibility of understanding, must already have been presupposed”. And this is of course exactly what happens in Davidsonian triangulation. Is it possible then, pace McDowell, to equip Davidson with a notion of a shared language in the Gadamerian sense? I think it is, but this notion of history or tradition is already contained within the triangular structure and outside danger of becoming the reified interface that McDowell’s notion might become. It should be noted, however, that this is not saying that conversation presupposes shared language. Another way of carving an intra-triangular role for the notion of tradition, would be exploiting Brandom’s linguistic rationalistic theoretical machinery. This would make it possible to say that we inherit entitlements to doxastic claims from the tradition as well as from other persons. The game of giving and asking for reasons, then, as noted in 1.2, can be conceived of as ruled by implicit therapeutic inferential mechanisms attending to the tradition, which is gradually transformed as propositional content is developed. The notion of tradition, thus, is honored because changes in propositional content have to be motivated.

What reason does Davidson have for ignoring communicative psychology and epistemology? Paradoxically, his main reason is Cartesian. The transcendental character of his rational
reconstruction of linguistic understanding, what Thomas Nagel calls *Davidson's new cogito*, is Cartesian, "in depending on the impossibility of doubting that one is thinking the thoughts one thinks one is thinking", while anti-Cartesian in refusing the "egocentric predicament" because there is, "no place in the mind for [Descartes] to retreat to from the objective external world". Davidson's a priori argument is, Nagel says, needed because the empirical reasons for particular beliefs are not by themselves sufficient. The person's language and psychological attitudes, then, as Ramberg says with Quine, Davidson and Dennett, “have their identities fixed with the theories generated by an ideal interpreter of that person”. It is only after a belief has content, says Davidson, that it can be doubted.

As worked out in more detail in 5.1, Davidson’s conception of language is characterized by the coupling of truth and meaning. How does this conception preclude the notion of untranslatable languages and offer support to the thesis of inter-translatability? This thesis is roughly the idea that there is, at least, a possibility for translation between different vocabularies. ‘Vocabularies’, then, should be conceived of in the Rortian sense that will become familiar in 5.4. In OVS, Davidson, like Putnam, understands incommensurability as intranslatability. Davidson’s argument is designed to show that the notion of untranslatable languages is unintelligible since it entails a notion of meaning that is significantly decoupled from truth, and, further, because our assignment of theoretical priority to interpretation, rather than mastery of conventional linguistic structures, precludes the division into separate languages with intrinsic characteristics.

Davidson’s truth conditional semantics and Brandom’s inferential semantics offer two alternative ways to deal with the problem. Incommensurability, or breakdowns in linguistic conventions, can be assessed either through the Davidsonian notion of interpretation, or by exploiting the Brandomian insight that thought and talk are what gives us a perspectival grip on a non-perspectival world: We might not agree on what is shared, but we share a capacity to overcome the disagreements through deontic scorekeeping, even though, different perspectives make it the case that linguistic practitioners never can possess exactly the same doxastic or practical commitments.

It was noted, for instance, in 1.2, that the metaphor is the cultural infant that is instrumental in achieving new and better purposes, and that the ‘metaphor’ metaphor signals how the neopractagmatist, in contrast to the neorealist, who has a traditional conception of philosophical method and rationality, manages to naturalize and historicize even his argumentative tools, which, as we remarked in the introduction, is a necessary feat of any theory that purports to offer a satisfying account of our linguistic resources. Why have I called the metaphor Davidson’s gift to Rorty? In short, it is because new metaphors help us to attain new life in new ways of talking. In other words, they are crucial for Rorty in his project of achieving solidarity by improving our present conditions. How does the metaphorical machinery work? The core idea is quite
simple: When a new metaphor is born, it lacks a place or a location in the language game, and when it dies it becomes literal and enlarges the logical space by taking part in the truth conditional game.

The neopragmatists intend the metaphor of ‘metaphor’ to help us get over the idea of language as a medium of representation. Scientific revolutions should, as Mary Hesse and Rorty say, be considered as metaphoric redescriptions of nature, rather than as essentialist progression towards an omniscient description of intrinsic nature. As noted earlier, there is a tension between Rorty’s attraction to the imaginative, which is signaled by his advocacy of literary culture, vocabulary shifts and strong poetry, and an attraction to the inferential, which is signaled by his agreement with Wittgenstein, Davidson and Brandom that grasping content is simply grasping the inferential relationships between the sentences of a language. My suggestion has been that Rorty can relieve the tension by embracing linguistic rationalism, in which therapy becomes construction, and vice versa. Brandom’s writing, then, is exemplary because he gives life to new metaphors, as well as kills them off into literalness by assigning them a role in the web of beliefs. The creator of new metaphors, Rorty says, is the strong poet, who, as a consequence of his meaningless talk, offers us the possibility to reweave our webs of beliefs. The assets of his creation, however, can only be compared to other linguistic entities, not to presumed extra-linguistic facts. The functional role of new metaphors differ from that of the dead metaphors, giving them the special causal role of giving birth to new vocabularies, new meaning and new behavior. Metaphors, rather than expressing knowledge by carrying cognitive content, induce knowledge. Nothing in existence prior to the metaphor’s occurrence, Rorty says, “is sufficient to understand the metaphorical use”. One way to realign the roles of imagination and inference would be to urge the strong poet not only to fear being a replica under influence by other thinkers but to fear influencing others as well. Both kinds of influence, the inferentialist says, are inevitable. The Bloomian strong misreading rooted in creativity and spurred by Oedipal patricide can, thus, be balanced by rationalist-historicist matricide. Changes and exchanges of ways of talking do not merely occur with the appearance of new metaphors, but also through the ongoing semantic evolution of language. The inferentialist provides us, I think, with the best account of how this can be the case, teaching us about the transference mechanisms of doxastic content, which were described in chapter 3.

We can afford treating the scientist, who finds, along with the strong poet, who makes, as heroes of humanity. Rorty certainly agrees that finding and making are so inextricably bound up together that it is naïve to conceive of the strong poet as simply making and the scientist as simply finding. Overemphasizing the uniqueness of the creator of metaphors might put him on the flipside of the coin which portrays the Marcusian one-dimensional man; whereas talk of genius might be misleading and unfortunate because the Rortian genius is a pure animal, moaning out something that does not fit into previously existing webs of beliefs. Just as solidarity is meaningless without objectivity, the imagination is meaningless without inference.
5.4 Radicalizing the Linguistic Turn: Rortian Vocabularism

Rorty's crusade aims to overthrow a series of interconnected representational dogmas. Rorty hit the spotlight in 1980 with the release of the groundbreaking and therapeutical Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature with its deconstruction of the analytic tradition and the distinctive claim, “the picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror.” Deconstruction is in postanalytical terms simply making what was previously implicit explicit or introducing know how to the realm of reasons. Throughout the essay, Rortian ideas have been used as largely paradigmatic of neopragmatic critique of representationalism. In the remainder, we will look closer into the unity of his approach and see how his radicalization of the linguistic turn, which can be characterized by the construction of vocabularism and the notion of persons as incarnated vocabularies, turns him into a Brandomian linguistic rationalist. We will get back to the issue of vocabularism after important Rortian themes such as the narrative of maturity, irony, truth and ethnocentrism have been surveyed, and to the incarnated vocabularies in 5.5.

What is Rorty’s narrative of maturation? In short, it is a Deweyan narrative, according to which we come to maturity only as we get over the abasement before the non-human Other, whether it is before the divine or the external world. We stand answerable only to each other, Rorty says, and should crave, not for objectivity, but for solidarity and human consensus. This means that it is not sufficient to release God from his duties as the guarantor of civilization, we also have to stop talking as if external reality or things in themselves, what Rorty sees as the secular counterpart to the divine, can tell us how things really are. The neopragmatist, in contrast to the neorealist, does not expect the world to tell us what is the case. Epistemology, in general, and the theory of knowledge, in particular, Rorty says, are products of tendencies to think of knowledge as an assemblage of representations, and ourselves as having to answer to the world - tendencies which Quine’s attack on necessity and Sellars’ attack on the given helped us overcome. Rorty’s radicalization of the linguistic turn makes him a linguistic behaviorist, who, like Davidson, believes a linguistic theory of meaning results from empirical research into linguistic behavior and, pace Quine, wants to naturalize reason rather than epistemology. The naturalization of reason signifies that talking about know how blurs the distinction between the human and the non-human, while talking about knowing that or the propositional is talking about what is particularly human, but, nevertheless, continuous with the spider’s weaving. His main opponent, as we remember, is the metaphysical realist who embraces such non-naturalistic theories as the correspondence theory of truth, empiricism, and scientism. Rorty considers Metaphysicus as in lack of good enough reasons and loathes his version of scientism, which diminishes the importance of humanistic discourse by promising reductions of its terms to solid currency in foolproof referential situations. Pace the representationalist, Rorty shifts focus from what there is to what we can make and embraces the threefold contingency -
the contingency of language, selfhood and community. Rorty’s embracement of the a posteriori is an application of Davidson’s break with language as a medium of representation and the disposal of the essensialistic idea of a self or a reality with intrinsic natures.

Accusing Rorty of claiming to be the last philosopher, like some commentators do, is ignoring the fact that he has simply adjusted himself to our times and is reflecting the special needs of contemporary society. Perhaps better than anyone, he understands the need for categories to cope with ethnocentric provinciality, Heideggerian Geworfenheit and the anti-solidarity that is carried by categories of universality and settlement. The Peirceans, as we remember from 1.4, urges us to become rational scientific inquirers. What alternative self-conception does a Jamesian like Rorty want us to embrace? Rorty’s preferred character is the liberal ironist, who loathes cruelty and faces the contingency of his own beliefs and desires, in other words, “someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist to have abandoned the idea that those central beliefs and desires refer back to something beyond the reach of time and chance”. The ironist is as comfortable with the conception of the self as the dialogical center of narrative gravity as he is uncomfortable with Metaphysicus’ biblical insistence on “letting a yes be a yes, and a no a no” that renders everything in between of the evil. Like Robert Musil’s Mann ohne Eigenschaften, Rorty’s ironist avoids cants and treats irony and rhetoric as the never-ending work with oneself - as the paradoxical conjugation of ‘p’ and ‘not-p’, and not the simple negation of responsible values. Being ironic is simply acknowledging that we do not possess a final and preferred vocabulary and must constantly describe by redescribing and be on the lookout for better vocabularies. Irony is also perhaps our best tool for acknowledging other persons by letting their voice be heard and not merely interpreted according to a ready-made manual or a “portable interpreting machine”. Rhetoric, as Gerald Bruns says, “is a way of improvising moments of order in the absence of a standing order of things”. It is, he continues, “the work of phronesis in contrast to the episteme of science and the techne of rational-choice theories of strategic calculation”. Rhetoric is, thus, a mode of responsibility rather than a pure mode of knowledge. As Blumenberg says, the axiom of all rhetoric “is the principle of insufficient reason”. The rhetorician or Rortian ironist should be contrasted with the epistemic realist who is not willing to abandon the search for a principle of sufficient reason. Rorty’s social crusade against decadent versions of philosophy that aim for sufficient reason and that, above all, treasure philosophical method and the practice of making things fit logically without a shred of vocabularistic doubt, shows his profound awareness of how atrocities can be performed in the name of logical consistency and his preference for convenience rather than clarity, which he believes is nothing but familiarity. As Ramberg says, Haack, Putnam and McDowell demonize Rorty because of his choice of instruments, that is, they think he is bidding farewell to philosophy, but they might themselves be under the spell of philosophical method, clinging to substantive methodological constraints provided by the notions of rationality and argument.
How does Rorty account for truth? The cautionary use of truth, Rorty says, is what we get when we contrast justification with truth. What we do is contrasting less informed with better-informed audiences, or the past with the future, and the only ideal presupposed by discourse, Rorty says, “is that of being able to justify our beliefs to a competent audience.” Truth, he says, “is too sublime to be either recognized or aimed at. Justification is merely beautiful, but it is recognizable and therefore capable of being systematically aimed at.” Rorty accepts three uses of truth. He commends Sellars and Brandom for taking the principal and first use of ‘true’ to be endorsement and not description. The second is the cautionary use that we find in remarks noting that a belief might be justified, but not true. Traditional pragmatism was charged with relativism because it ignored the cautionary use. And the third is the metalinguistic disquotational use. Rorty, following Davidson, claims that we cannot offer a theory of truth because truth is a primitive. Davidson, contrasting Rorty’s truth account with Dewey’s, has some misgivings with Rorty’s. As he notes in SCT, Dewey drew two consequences of the fact that truth is intimately connected with the existence of thinking creatures: That access to truth is not a special prerogative of philosophy and that truth must be connected with human interest. Unlike Rorty, Davidson notes, Dewey, like himself, found a lot to say about truth in the sense of what works. Davidson’s comments can serve to underline a development that has taken place in Rorty’s thinking. Having softened his insistence on anti-representationalism, he now has no problems agreeing with Davidson’s words. We should see Rorty as balancing between scientism and transcendentalism, between neo-Humean scientism that stop conversation by reverting to the claim “that is just how things are” and neo-Kantian transcendentalism that stop conversation with accusations of performative self-contradictions, thinking of truth with Nietzsche as a mobile army of metaphors, and of inquiry as motivated by fear of regression rather than by the hope of reaching the ideal or universality.

What are Rorty’s reasons for advocating ethnocentrism? When Habermas aims at transcending local standards of validity, Rorty cannot understand what ‘transcending’ could possibly mean in this context, or why it should be necessary to understand empirical assertions as universal validity claims and not as provincial claims. The reason for this is that, in Deweyan terms, “the local is the ultimate universal, and as near an absolute as exists.” The liberal ironist, pace Habermas, accepts the conditions of insufficient reason because, “one consequence of antirepresentationalism is the recognition that no description of how things are from a God’s-eye point of view, no skyhook provided by some contemporary or yet-to-be developed science, is going to free us from the contingency of having been acculturated as we were.” Rorty’s ethnocentrism is not the eurocentrism that some of his critics claim it to be, but simply an acknowledgement of our historicity. Ethnocentrism, as Barry Allen points out, is of course awful when it is not, as Rorty urges, combined with liberalism whose ethnos put openness to others central in our self-image and injects doubts in us about our own tradition.
A lot of energy has been invested in motivating what I take to be the major outcome of the neo-pragmatic radicalization of the linguistic turn, namely, the recently developed vocabularist framework, which secures autonomy within each language game without precluding translatability. Contextualism, historicism, psychological nominalism, naturalism, anti-conventionalism, inferentialism, semantic realism etc. all add up to vocabularism. What exactly is vocabularism, and wherein lies its constructive potential? In short, vocabularism is the natural development of instrumental pragmatism, which conceives of vocabularies as instruments or tools for specific purposes. These vocabularies range from the vocabularies of physics, biology and sociology to the vocabularies of bingo players and Lutheran Protestants, and are individuated according to the purposes they serve. Vocabularism is what is foreshadowed as neorealistic acquiescence’s neopragmatic progressive alternative, which can ease our epistemic neuroses by exercising inferential therapeutical mechanisms for intra-vocabulary revisions, as well as the tool of metaphors to give birth to unimagined vocabularies. Pace Putnam, who wants to settle with our currently best descriptions or “reclaim our present vocabulary”, neopragmatism encourages us to actively seek alternative and better ways of phrasing our matters. By preserving Darwinian naturalism and Hegelian historicism, vocabularism helps us to overcome foundational reification. The notion of vocabularies performs the conceptual tasks previously undertaken by ‘structures of meanings’ and ‘structures of beliefs’, which Quine described as the positivists’ overdescription of conceptual change. Rather than talking about the coupled changes of meanings and beliefs, Rorty says, we should talk about inter- and intra-vocabulary change. We can analyze meanings, he says, until we are blue in the face, but these analyses are always directional and reductive or descriptions of specific forms of life, telling us no more than that a particular language game is being played.

Our vocabularies might be transient, or fulfill our purposes in a given period of time and then be traded in for a better vocabulary, or they might be more stable, for instance, because they are multipurpose vocabularies. How do locutions or techniques transfer between vocabularies? Notably, there is no radical demarcation that separates one vocabulary from another. If something has proved fertile within one vocabulary, it might be given a try in another vocabulary where it is assessed for its usefulness like any linguistic locution or technique. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile, as noted in 2.4, to be alert when locutions are transferred because they can be out of place and do more harm than good, and they can certainly and wrongly suggest a reduction to what is considered the privileged vocabulary. The headline of chapter 1, Acknowledging Authority By De-Representing, was intended to signal that once we have the linguistic rationalistic and vocabularistic framework in place, the representational dimension of linguistic practice becomes secondary to the social dimension, characterized by the game of giving and asking for reasons, when it comes to determining linguistic meaning. After all, inferential role, and not empirical content alone, is what determines propositional content. The sociological notion of structuration can be exploited to illuminate how the only way to serve our tradition is to acknowled-
edge responsibility for our linguistic resources. ‘Structuration’ catches the fact that vocabularies are there for us to employ and disappear unless we actually use them. They structure us and are structured by us, or as Brandom puts it: “To use a vocabulary is to change it.” 510 Rorty reminds us, Bouveresse says, “concepts of themselves make nothing, but are essentially the instruments we use, and that it is always we who make something of concepts”. 511

From which perspectives can our purposes be assessed? According to Brandom, there are two perspectives, which correspond to the two preferred neopragmatic modes, namely, that of the naturalist, who employs the metavocabulary of causes, and that of the historicist, who employs the metavocabulary of vocabularies. But does not vocabularism entail a departure from naturalism? The answer is no. It would have been a departure if naturalism were understood as entailing both causal and explanatory unity, but a vocabularist-naturalist demands only causal unity. Physicalism, in contrast, is immodestly after both causal and explanatory unity. Holism, as Rorty says, “takes the curse off naturalism”. 512

What separates the private from the public vocabularies? The private and public vocabularies attend, respectively, to our private and novel purposes, which arise as new ways of describing appear, and our common purposes, which are articulated when we play linguistic games with other people. While art flourishes in the private sphere, the public is for politics. 513 Rorty’s agenda is to stop us from demanding a unified theory of the private and the public, telling us that Derrida can help us in the elitistic project of enhancing private perfection without getting in the way of Rawls who can help us to construct a society based on solidarity and democracy. The private/public distinction, though, has to be treated as a distinction between tools and has, as Ramberg points out, “little to do with traditional attempts to draw lines of demarcation of this sort between a private and a public domain – to determine which aspects of our lives we do and which we do not have to answer for publically. Rorty’s distinction, rather, goes to the purposes of theoretical vocabularies. We should, Rorty urges, be “content to treat the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable”. 514

The last claim is not entirely true. The reason for this is that to be a vocabulary signifies translatability, as we remember from 5.3, as well as encompassability in metavocabularies such as the ‘vocabulary’ vocabulary and the causal vocabulary. Pace Rorty, we can benefit from treating vocabularies as commensurable. 515 At this point, I would like to urge the linguistic rationalist to press the private/public distinction further, and cash in on the vocabularist replacement of the positivist talk of the coupled change of meanings and beliefs. The linguistic rationalist, my suggestion is, should stop talking about logical spaces and start talking about vocabularies. He could do this by saying that the role of ‘the logical space of reason’ is better performed by ‘the public vocabulary’, and that the role of ‘the logical space of causes’ is better performed by ‘the private vocabulary’. Translatability, then, becomes what can bridge the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the spaces that forced Putnam into acquiescence and McDowell to pose a judgmental intermediary. At the same time, the neopragmatist should adhere to Bran-
dom’s account of the spaces/vocabularies: “Every use of a vocabulary, every application of a concept in making a claim, both is answerable to norms implicit in communal practice – its public dimension, apart from which it cannot mean anything (though it can cause something) – and transforms those norms by its novelty – its private dimension, apart from which it does not formulate a belief, plan, or purpose worth expressing.”

How would Brandom describe the relationship between the causal and the normative vocabulary? Cultural products and activities become explicit as such, Brandom says, “only by the use of normative vocabulary that is in principle not reducible to the vocabulary of the natural sciences (though of course the same phenomena under other descriptions are available in that vocabulary). Indeed, the deployment of the vocabulary of the natural sciences (like that of any other vocabulary) is itself a cultural phenomenon, something that becomes intelligible only within the conceptual horizon provided by the Geisteswissenschaften”. The realms of fact and norm, Brandom says, “mutually include one another: fact-stating talk is explained in normative terms, and normative facts emerge as one kind of fact among others”. While norms in the sense of normative statuses are not objects in the causal order, normative attitudes or our acknowledgments of commitments are. Why, then, does Davidson, as Ramberg points out, “still express the distinctiveness of agency by suggesting that a switch from predicates of agency to those of the natural sciences represents a change in subject, while movements from the latter to the predicates of physics do not”? The reason for this is that the normative plays a distinctive role in structuring the vocabulary, telling us, for instance, what is the relevant information. But there is a unity in Davidson’s dualism, Ramberg says: “For the diverse patterns tracked by our vocabularies are all causal patterns, and this as Davidson says, “is what holds together our picture of the universe, a picture which would otherwise disintegrate into a diptych of the mental and the physical.””

Thus, as Rorty puts it, mentally described things can have causal efficacy just like physically described things.

According to Sellars, as noted in 2.4, different stories compete for the status as the accepted story of the world. The vocabularist wants to ensure that this scientistic left hand does not prevent Sellars’ pragmatic right hand from offering a conception of languages as tools. The vocabularist does this by urging us to abandon the search for the “unified vision of man-in-the-world”, which Sellars holds as the aim of philosophy, and be content, by making a virtue out of necessity, with a plurality of vocabularies suiting different purposes. The neopragmatic vocabularistic turn deserves to be called a narrativistic turn because it encourages us to replace the grand narrative with a plurality of narratives. Everyone has the right to vocalize a diagnosis of what they consider the par excellence good and bad ideas of their own time, and forming a diagnosis is creating a narrative. Rorty wants narratives to be understood as Geistesgeschichten, defining what counts as intellectual problems. His preference of Geistesgeschichte moves, as Hall says, “historical narratives away from logos in the direction of mythos”. Rorty’s mode of historicism, he continues, “like any which maintains structural coherence, is the result of an in-
terplay of mythos, logos, and historia”. The narratives, Rorty says, tell us about the mighty dead in order to make our hopes of surpassing them concrete. Focusing on the stories or narratives we tell is intending to give order to our inevitable pluralism in a less totalitarian manner than the old overarching theories did, but this focus does not please Putnam, who is betrayed by his use of “just” in “just stories”. Rorty replies to Putnam: “Once we give up that rationality is a matter of applying ahistorical criteria (as we have to in order to deal with the fact that criteria of choice between theories and policies are as mutable as the theories and practices themselves), we have nowhere to turn except to such stories. Hegel’s historization of philosophy seems to me important precisely because Hegel grasped the emptiness of Kantians’ attempts to make ‘Reason’ the name of an ahistorical faculty, and to build ahistorical criteria into the structure of the human mind. His solution was to start replacing transcendental arguments with narratives – stories about how we hook up with our past.” Rorty’s points can be complemented by Brandom’s and Haugeland’s understanding of the Hegelian turn as replacing transcendental constitution with social constitution. He might also profit from, in line with the general cognitive trend of this essay, emphasizing how narratives are constrained by the three legs of Davidson’s triangle.

5.5 Persons as Incarnated Vocabularies

Is Rorty the neo-positivist, who, in Putnam’s words, “moves from a conclusion about the unintelligibility of metaphysical realism […] to a skepticism about the possibility of representation tout court”, and as James Conant claims, the leading skeptic in contemporary philosophy? The answer is definitely no, and the concept of incarnated vocabularies can tell us why. In this last section, it will be claimed that Rorty can have no solidarity without the vocabulary of objectivity, and that the neorealist can have no objectivity without the vocabulary of solidarity. The first claim involves acknowledging, as Rorty has recently acknowledged, “it was a mistake to locate the norms at one corner of the triangle – where my peers are – rather than seeing them as, so to speak, hovering over the whole process of triangulation.” The second claim entails that objectivity does not come as easy as the neorealist wants us to think.

What is an incarnated vocabulary? The metaphor signals how we are causally, as well as socially constituted. As I have repeatedly argued, neopragmatists, pace Putnam and Conant, can sufficiently constrain our linguistic resources while remaining consistently Hegelian and Darwinian. Like Brandom, Rorty thinks of “‘justification’ as a social phenomenon rather than a transaction between ‘knowing subject’ and ‘reality’”. And, in contrast to McDowell, he insists, “a merely causal, not rational, linkage between thinking and independent reality will do, as interpretation of the idea that empirical content requires friction against something external to thinking”. When McDowell thinks that this would leave our thoughts without intuitions empty, Rorty
says, this is because he also thinks that we need to keep a big reason/nature, law/reason dichotomy in place. The vocabulary of settlement is, Rorty says, nothing but a wishful denial of contingency, which supply us with nothing but intersubjectivity, while the rhetoric of social solidarity “romanticizes the pursuit of intersubjective, unforced agreement among larger and larger groups of interlocutors.” Rorty’s theoretical project in philosophy, as Ramberg says, or “facilitating the spread of evolutionary naturalism, is grounded in a conviction of this sort: Were we to develop a fully secularized vocabulary of self-description built around an affirmation of contingency, we would be less compelled than we presently are by ideologies of intolerance, ideologies which cause us by purporting to give us”. The social constructs, as Rorty says, are what improve society.

The core of Rorty’s epistemological behaviorism, which he shares with Dewey and Wittgenstein, is that we should describe knowledge in terms of conversation and social practice rather than in terms of metaphors of mirroring. In other words, we should eschew the recognition-transcendent and explain “rationality and epistemic authority by reference to what society lets us say, rather than the latter by the former”. Epistemic norms, the neopragmatists say, pace the neorealists, cannot be regulative ideals, but exert their authority only within the context of our social practices. Rorty takes it that the distinction between truth and justification makes no difference to our decisions about what to do. The desire for truth, he says, is better described as the desire for justification, and justification is always restrained by spatial, temporal and social conditions, leaving our reasons as reasons for particular persons at a particular time. What does Rorty mean by “our” when he appeals to the correctness according to our standards? To rule out a common misunderstanding: He certainly does not mean according to the majority in a vote. What he does mean is the standards that pertain to us as postmodernist bourgeois liberals, nominalist historicists, edifying thinkers, unfamiliar noisemakers, anti-foundationalists, liberal ironists. The nazi standards simply don’t apply to us even if we had lived in a nazi society.

Jon Hellesnes has recently voiced the concern that leaving the vocabulary of settlement implies defatalization. Rorty’s writing on self-creation is all about producing new vocabularies and narratives, Hellesnes says, and Rorty is unable to incorporate the decisive role of physical and mental training, allowing us to choose the easy way out, i.e. redescribe, every time we face something unpleasant. His attack on the Rortian self-creator misses the spot in a very instructive manner. Rorty’s modernism is not as individualistic as Hellesnes seems to think. Rorty does believe that in order to lead a meaningful life we have to carve space for the pursuit for private perfection, but this must not be confused with the vulgar egocentrism of the capitalized countries. If we had taken Francis Bacon’s concept of self-assertion, as opposed to self-founding, more seriously, Rorty says, philosophy would not have ended up with subjectivity as its great theme and
explication of the division of labor between the ahistorical faculties as its great task. Clearly, the pragmatist must be able to accommodate the intuitive distinction between what Harman describes as “reasons for belief that make the belief more likely to be true and reasons for belief that merely promise some practical benefit of belief without making the belief more likely to be true”, but conversational criteria, along with the cautionary account of truth that was surveyed in 5.4, is all we need to draw this distinction. We simply do not need extra-vocabulary constraints, as Hellesnes and other neorealists insist, because they turn out to be nothing but the conversational constraints that constrain triangulating beings. Hellesnes, then, is plain wrong and confirming a common misreading of Rorty, when he writes that the self-creator freely can invent who he is and offer idiosyncratic interpretations of the situations in which he finds himself. Hellesnes fears that we turn into persons who notoriously choose our own beliefs. A related charge is the complaint that Rorty cannot accommodate the distinction between persuasion and force. This complaint neglects Rorty’s very timely sensitivity towards pressure from our peers that can take the form of forced redescriptions, and the fact that, as he points out in Texts and Lumps: “Pragmatism views knowledge not as a relation between mind and an object, but, roughly, as the ability to get agreement by using persuasion rather than force.”

There is some truth to the claim that the anti-representationalists perform overkill when attempting to get rid of representationalistic locutions, such as ‘facts’ and ‘concepts’, on the ground that they function as epistemic intermediaries. Brandom shows how the essensualistic locutions can be reappropriated as locutions that depend for their intelligibility on the inferentialist order of semantic explanation, through which we benefit from avoiding the traditional gap between the conceptual and the non-conceptual that invites the intermediaries. This is not to disagree with Rortian metaphilosophy that allows no analysis of meaning because Brandom does not analyze meaning along the lines of traditional analytical philosophy, which is the target of the Rortian critique, and whose representational order of semantic explanation starts out with a notion of content. Brandom is simply following up what Rorty approves of when he says “grasping the meaning of an assertion is a matter of placing that assertion in a context”.

Rorty is not at all hostile to the expressivist order of explanation. He accommodates the normative pragmatic impetus of Wittgenstein’s regress-of-rules argument when he describes the philosopher’s job as making implicit practices explicit, rather than appealing to outside norms. However, due to his narrative of maturity, Rorty might put too much emphasis on certain negative points and run the risk of turning off the expressivist lamp. His disagreement with Brandom has consisted in his opposition to the vocabulary of objectivity that Brandom undergoes great pain to restore. Recently, Rorty has not been so concerned to deny that we can possess objective knowledge, that is, when objective knowledge is understood as intersubjective agreement on the beliefs that guide our actions. This could mean that Rorty is ready to benefit from acknowledging that solidarity is tightly connected to the prevalence of the vocabulary of objectivity.
Participation in Metaphysicus’ discourse of settlement, the neopragmatists say, prolongs infantilism. My intuition is simply to give up the vocabulary of settlement or what Brandom calls representationalist totalitarianism, while keeping the vocabulary of objectivity. The material content of Brandom’s ‘fact’ and ‘objectivity’ does not look anything like what the anti-representationalists commendably fear because their conceptual roles are entirely different. The neopragmatists want no truck with epistemic intermediaries, and urge us to embrace the conversationalist criteria of discursive practice, which leaves us no non-conceptual realm to confront, mirror or represent; in other words, no promised land that saves the day. Days can only be saved by the felicity of successful communication marked by the giving and taking of reasons, which is obeying the moral of Rortian critique of representationalism as described by Brandom: “Normative relations are exclusively intra-vocabulary. Extra-vocabulary relations are exclusively causal. Representation purport to be both a normative relation, supporting assessments of correctness and incorrectness, and a relation between representings within a vocabulary and representeds outside of that vocabulary.”

1 Davidson attacks the distinction between scheme and content in On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme.
2 ‘Going beyond a distinction’ signifies finding another way of phrasing the matter that can better serve our purposes. When the neopragmatist, for instance, wants to go beyond the realist/antirealist distinction, it is because he does not accept the parameters that makes drawing the distinction look like the natural thing to do. Another reason for going beyond a distinction could be that the binary oppositions actually share propositional content. If this is the case, a theorist should look for a better place to draw an informative distinction.
3 Brandom, 1998, p. 648
4 The metaphysical realist, though, is not someone like J. J. C. Smart who, while talking of himself as a m. r., seems content to conceive of the word-world relationship in terms of Davidsonian ‘satisfaction’. See Smart in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 109-120
5 This character appears in a slightly different role in Wilfrid Sellars’ Inference and Meaning.
10 McDowell has, pace Dummett, no sympathy with conceiving of psychologism, which is roughly the idea that the private significance of other people’s utterings is subject to guesswork behind the behavior, as the only alternative to behaviorism. See McDowell, 1998 (1), p. 314-343
11 I am borrowing Jonathan Bennett’s description of Davidson’s position in Critical Notice of Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation in Mind, p. 626, and extending it to apply to Brandom, Sellars and Rorty as well.
13 Dummett in What is a Theory of Meaning? (ii), p. 68-70
14 This is a version of Putnam and Baumann’s fears of throwing babies out with the bathwater.
15 Sellars, 1967, p. 15
16 Brandom, 1998, p. xiv
17 McDowell, 1996, p. 68
19 McDowell emphasizes in MW the importance of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s notions of tradition and history and elaborates the notions more recently in an essay in his honor.
20 Ramberg, Rorty and the Instruments of Philosophy, p. 17-18
21 Habermas in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 37
22 Davidson, 1987, p. 454
23 Davidson, 1989, p. 165-166
24 McDowell, 1998 (1), p. 106
25 This account stands in debt to Rorty in his introduction to Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth
27 Harman, 1999, p. 93
29 Rorty, 1998 (2), p. 6
30 Brandom, 2000, p. 9-10
The problem of induction is dependent on the semantic order of explanation that takes ‘representation’ as its basic concept. See Brandom, 1998, p. 168, 189-190.

This is roughly the point that Jeffrey Sicha makes in his introduction to Sellars’ Pure Pragmatics and Possible Worlds.

Brandom, 1998, p. 9
The role of Hegel can unfortunately not receive the deserved treatment in this essay.
Østerberg’s preface in Hegel, 1999, p.16; my translation from Norwegian

Dummett, 1995, p. 433
Habermas in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 6
Jacques Bouveresse in Brandom, ed., 2000, p. 140, Bouveresse makes in this essay an explicit warning, based on his experience in France, about the consequences it might have if the analytic argumentative bulwark of taking and giving reasons is trashed and original blooming rhetorics becomes the name of the game.


The mind/body problem, inferentialists say, can be given a semantic solution.

Rorty, 1998 (3), p. 87
Lepore, in http://ruccs.rutgers.edu/faculty/lepore/Antho-brandom.pdf
Rorty, 1998 (1), p. xxii
Rorty, 1998 (1), p. xix

Davidson in *Meaning, Truth and Evidence* in Barrett and Gibson (eds.), 1990, p. 68-69: Davidson modifies these claims later in his article, but not in such a significant manner that it matters here.

Davidson in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 106
Davidson in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 107

James, 2000, p. 58-73
Hall, 1994, p. 20

Bernstein in Saatkamp (ed.), 1995, p. 32
Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 374
Rorty, 1998 (4), p. 11
Rorty in Saatkamp (ed.), 1995, p. 32
Rorty is the most prominent advocate of Blumenberg’s distinction.

There is a difference, Putnam says, “a difference in what justifications of conduct make sense viewed from within our language and thought, and not from some impossible Archimedean point – between regarding other people merely as convenient intellectual devices for coping with one’s own experiences and acknowledging them” (Putnam, 1996 (2), p. 299). He wrongly accuses Rorty of embracing the methodological solipsism that is involved in the first strategy. This is no surprise and can serve as a pointer to the common failures to grasp the constraints that Rorty want to put on linguistic locutions.

Davidson, 1984, p. 225
Rorty, 1998 (4), p. 83
Davidson in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 124
Davidson, 1995 (1), p. 266
Dunn in Dassenbrock (ed.), 1993, p. 237
Sellars, 1980, p. 31
Rorty in Saatkamp (ed.), 1995, p. 198
Habermas in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 39
Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 56
Habermas in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 48
Brandom, 1998, p. 82

Davidson, 1984, p. 157: This is the main thesis of a paper that seeks to establish the interdependency of the mental and the linguistic, or thought and talk. The absence of conceptuality for either of the two such that one can be accounted for in terms of the other, directs us to attempt to form a relational theory, in which decision theory and interpretation theory grow up together. Because the attitude of holding a sentence true relates belief and interpretation, we are put in a position to correctly attribute a belief since we know that the sentence is held true and how to interpret it.

Davidson in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 194
While Quine, as Føllesdal points out, might have thought of the indeterminacy as helping us divide the made and the found (Rorty in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 588), Rorty thinks, “only people concerned to divide culture into science and non-science, the good rational part and the bad less-than-rational part, would have made a big deal out of drawing a line between the found and the made” (Rorty in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 589: In chapter 2 of WO the found/made distinction appears as the fact of the matter/no matter of fact distinction.

Davidson in Locating Literary Language (in Dasenbrock (ed.), 1993, p. 299)

Rorty, 1998 (1), p. 173. When Habermas goes transcendent, Rorty says, he offers principles, in contrast to the pragmatist who remains ethnocentric, i.e. in a context.

Martin in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 348: Accounts of intentional behavior, Davidson says, “operate in a conceptual framework removed from the direct reach of physical law by describing both cause and effect, reason and action, as aspects of a portrait of a human agent. The anomalism of the mental is thus a necessary condition for viewing action as autonomous” (Davidson, 1980, p. 225).

Gibson, 1982, p. 4

Quine, 1969, p. 83

Quine, 1960, p. 191

Davidson offers this account of the Quinean observation sentences in Meaning, Truth and Evidence in Barrett and Gibson (eds.), 1993, p. 70. Quine’s own definitions can be found in Word and Object, p.43, and Ontological Relativity, p. 86-87.

Quine, Theories and Things, p. 25

Quine, The Roots of Reference, 1974, p. 39

Davidson, 1990, p. 321

Rorty in Saatkamp (ed.), 1995, p. 9

Quine in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 74

Quine, 1960, p. 93

Davidson in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 306

Quine, 1960, p. 42

Dummett, 1995, p. 616

Davidson, 1990, p. 309

Quine, 1960, p. 68-69

Quine, 1960, p. 70

Quine, 1960, p. 27

Quine, 1960, p. 73

The constraints are, however, insufficient in determining translation.

Føllesdal in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 719-720

Føllesdal in Barrett and Gibson, 1993, p. 102

Quine, 1960, p. 246

Harman, 1999, p. 149

Harman, 1999, p. 266: Davidson is, according to Harman and due to the principle of charity, an advocate of a transcendent approach to meaning. Harman thinks that we need to combine immanent and transcendent approaches in order to achieve a satisfactory account of meaning, but he follows Grandy in thinking that the principle of charity is too crude.

Quine, Ontological Relativity, p. 48

Quine believes, Harman says (Harman, 1999, p. 134), “that the basic psychological reality consists in attitudes involving statements in one’s language along with connections among these attitudes and between these attitudes and their causes and effects (e.g. observation and speech). His opponents must agree that there are such attitudes, connections, causes and effects; but they also postulate underlying meanings, propositions, intensional objects, etc.”. This postulation, however, is incompatible with the indeterminacy of translation.

As noted by Brandom, 2000, p. 167


Brandom, 1998, p. 306

Gibson, 1982, p.79

Quine, Ontological Relativity and other essays, p. 80-81

Davidson, 1984, p. 228, The Inscrutability of Reference. In this essay Davidson goes a long way towards showing that the inscrutability of reference, the thesis that there is no way to settle what singular terms refer to, or predicates are true of, while leading to the indeterminacy of translation, precludes the possibility of ontological relativity.

An example of this critique surfaces in Gorman’s exposition of the Dummett-Davidson controversy (in Dasenbrock (ed.), 1993), which will be revisited in the chapter on Davidson.

Quine in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 76

Ramberg in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 355
Davidson, following Quine, accepts the irreducibility of the agent vocabulary into the vocabularies of the hardcore sciences. The main reason for this is the recognition of the normative elements that are inherent in cognitive contents (Davidson, 2001, p. 71). For Davidson, however, this does not signify a privileging of the natural scientific vocabulary.

Sellars, 1991, p. 5: The choice of the metaphors of imagery is not intended to deny their reality.

This claim is to be made intelligible in the chapter on Putnam.

Sellars, 1991, p. 20
Sellars, 1991, p. 19
Rorty, 1998 (1), p. 4

In *Making it Explicit* Brandom never uses ‘experience’. “It is not one of my words”, he says.

Sellars, 1991, p. 6
Dennett, 1979, p. 22
Rorty, 1998 (3), p. 81-83


Sellars’ choice of primacy is informed by what he takes to be the relevant alternatives in the wake of Descartes that he identifies as the critical moment setting the parameters. Hinging on Descartes three different alternatives present themselves: a) The manifest objects are identical with systems of imperceptible particles as the forest is identical with the number of trees; b) the manifest objects are what really exist, and the imperceptible particles are abstracta representing them; c) the manifest objects make up the realm of appearances while reality proper is constituted by systems of imperceptible particles.


When redescribing philosophy by historicizing it, Rorty cuts the ties to the professionalized conception of philosophy as guarding our transcendental constitution. At the same time he cuts the connection between the philosophical argument and rationality. As Ramberg puts it: “Philosophical rationality cannot be methodologized because it fundamentally a moral response to the essential incompleteness of our discursive efforts, the dependence of all our thinking on what others will do or not do in response to the words we offer” (Ramberg, Rorty and the Instruments of Philosophy, p. 17).
A remark like this, however, signals a strong social orientation: “Language is a social art which we all acquire on the evidence solely of other people’s overt behavior under publicly recognizable circumstances” (Quine, *Ontological Relativity in Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, p. 26).

Brandom, 1998, p. xiv: Branden owes the scorekeeping metaphor to David Lewis’ *Scorekeeping in a Language Game*. In Lewis’ paper, the keeping of conversational score is intended to draw the boundaries between permissible and impermissible actions and determine the extensions and intensions of different terms.

‘Anaphora’ is one of Branden’s key concepts that does not get the deserved attention here.


Branden, 1998, p. 222

Sellars, 1997, p. 69

Branden, 1998, p. 89

Branden, 1998, p. 430

Branden, 1998, p. xvii

Dummett, 1995, p. 453

Branden, 1998, p. 118

Harman, 1999, p. 155


Harman, 1999, p. 201: Harman is here following Stuart Hampshire. After his writings on triangulation, it is timely to ask whether Davidson should still be considered as the truth conditional semantic portrayed by Harman in 1974, or whether he might better be portrayed as some sort of Level 1-theorist, for whom inferential role is of major importance.

Branden, 1998, p. 142

Branden, 1998, p. 166

Lepore thinks that Branden might be right that content is a normative notion, but adds that truth is also a normative notion and cannot be explained in terms of inference.

Branden, 1998, p. 30

Branden, 1998, p. 20

Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 201

Branden, 1998, p. 35-36

Branden, 1998, p. 54

Branden, 1998, p. 235

Branden, 1998, p. 233

Branden, 1998, p. 233

Akrasia, or weakness of the will, is accounted for in a normative functionalist manner, as “*self-attributions* of practical commitment (which would be made explicit by statements of the form ‘I should …’) [that] do not have the causal significance of acknowledgments of practical commitments (which would be made explicit by statements of the form ‘I shall …’).”

Quine, *Roots of Reference*, La Salle: Open Court, 1974, p. 22

Branden, 1998, p. 239

Branden, 1998, p. 236

Branden, 1998, p. 8

Branden, 1998, p. xvii

Branden, 1998, p. 17


Rorty, 1998 (1), p. 200

Branden, 1998, p. 57

Branden, 1998, p. 61

Branden, 1998, p. 151

Davidson, 1984, p. 170

Branden, 1998, p. 152

Branden, 1998, p. 632

Branden, 2000, p.31

Branden, 1998, p. 254

Davidson’s original theory is presented in *Actions, Reasons, and Causes*, in which he treated acting intentionally as acting with some intention, and ignored intending. Later on, he has come to think of intending as the basic notion.

Branden, 1998, p. 256


Branden, 1998, p. 271
I will not go much into it here. Nevertheless, we should note that Brandom singles out the following four representationalistic aspects as standing in need of attention: 1) "Tarski’s discussion of truth definitions for formalized first-order languages provides a paradigm of how the use of 'true' and of 'refers' or 'denotes' ought to be understood to be related to each other"; 2) "the distinction between extensional and intensional contexts"; 3) "the use of 'of' in de re ascriptions of propositional attitudes"; and 4) "objective representational proprieties of judging and inferring (a kind of correctness)."
should give up the myth of logical positivism and offer it more positive assessments. Bach's arguments here, something that is taken care of in Putnam's article. Putnam also offers good reasons why we
at a symposium four years before the release of 1969, p. 75.

The internal/external distinction provides us with a false picture of the mind.

Just ain't in the head (McDowell, 1998 (1), p. 276). He successfully attacks the "isolationist" conception of language,
out representations and that the mind is not the organ; the mind is not in the head either (McDowell, 1998 (1), p.

McDowell says, right in his thesis at least some meanings are at least in part environmentally constituted; meanings
on Putnam's account, and at least within the philosophical confines, seems to be that any attempt to explain 'repre-
sentation' in terms of a structural isomorphism between the brain and the world, involves the hopeless notion of an
interface between the knower and the world that has haunted Western philosophy for centuries.

Another strategy for accounting for the representational dimension, which is considered in Renewing Philosophy,
is Gerald Edelman's conception of innateness, not in terms of mental representations, but in terms of the cognitive
architecture that allows for representations to form and somehow become intermediaries (Putnam, 1998, p. 25).

While keeping the different character of philosophical and scientific inquiry in mind, the problem of such an approach,
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sentation' in terms of a structural isomorphism between the brain and the world, involves the hopeless notion of an
interface between the knower and the world that has haunted Western philosophy for centuries.

An example is his appeal to "states of affairs". Putnam emphasizes that the appeal does not imply a transcendental ontology or the existence of anything like sentence-shaped objects, but rather "what anyone would mean by that phrase who was not giving it a metaphysical emphasis. The neopragmatist considers this as an attempt to make our epistemic realist intuitions look sound.

Putnam, 1999, p. 80-107

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Putnam, 1996 (2), p. 360

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Putnam, 1997, p. 111

Bramond, 2000, p. 43-44: It might be noted that since Brandom's order of explanation inverses the empiricist order that was supposed to take us from the representational content to a notion of correct inductive inference, he can quite easily deal with what is known as the problem of induction.

Putnam, 1999, p. 15

Putnam acknowledges a strong influence from John McDowell, whose essay Putnam on Mind and Meaning (McDowell, 1998, p. 275-291) inquires into the significance of Putnam's thesis that at least some meanings are partially constituted by the environment on our conception of the nature of the mind. Putnam is, McDowell says, right in his thesis at least some meanings are at least in part environmentally constituted; meanings just ain't in the head (McDowell, 1998 (1), p. 276). He successfully attacks the "isolationism" conception of language, but forgets to do the same with the mind. Putnam forgets, McDowell says, the possibility of mental representing without representations and that the mind is not the organ; the mind is not in the head either (McDowell, 1998 (1), p. 281/287). A theoretical "hook" linking thinking to the world is superfluous, McDowell says, because thinking is already hooked on "possessing referential directedness at reality" (McDowell, 1998 (1), p. 288). In TC, Putnam has accepted McDowell's critique.

It should be remembered that I have drawn a distinction between the vocabulary of objectivity, which is applied in the neopragmatic project of achieving semantic realism, and the vocabulary of settlement, which is applied in projects that pay tribute to epistemic realism. Rorty, being a linguistic rationalist, is, thus, interpreted as attacking the vocabulary of settlement and not the vocabulary of objectivity. McDowell, however, blames him for attacking, what I have called, the vocabulary of settlement.

These sentences, according to Sellars, are the sentences of conventional language.

Sellars, 1967, p. 46

McDowell, 1996, p. 17

McDowell, 1996, p. 7

McDowell construes, pace Davidson, the space of reasons as more extensive than the space of concepts in order to incorporate extra-conceptual impingements from the world (McDowell, 1996, p. 6), but once we have completed this move, McDowell says, we do not have to put it this way because ‘concepts’ now have a different significance.

McDowell, 1996, p. 13

McDowell in Saatkamp (ed.), 1995, p. 191: This comment also indicates how Rorty can be seen as developing his linguistic romanticism in the direction of linguistic rationalism.

Rorty, 1999, p. 9

Harman, 1999, p. 46


McDowell, 1996, p. 97

McDowell, 1996, p. xvi: “Where I use the Sellarsian image of the space of reasons,” McDowell says, “Davidson talks of ‘the constitutive ideal of rationality’, but the idea is clearly the same” (McDowell, 1996, p. 185).

McDowell, 1996, p. xi

McDowell, 1996, p. 29

McDowell, 1996, p. 26

McDowell, 1996, p. 28

McDowell, 1996, p. xx

Brandom, 2000, p. 8

McDowell, 1998 (2), p. 192

McDowell, 1996, s. 111

McDowell, 1996, p. 78

McDowell, 1996, p. 86

McDowell, 1996, p. 88


McDowell, 1998 (1), p. 178

McDowell, 1998 (1), p. 178

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McDowell in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 111

McDowell, 1996, p. 9

McDowell, 1996, p. 20: McDowell understands Wittgenstein’s Private Language Argument as amounting to a rejection of the given showing “that a bare presence cannot supply a justificatory input into a conceptual repertoire form outside it”.

McDowell, 1996, p. 17

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McDowell, 1996, p. 35

McDowell, 1996, p. 15

McDowell, 1996, p. 17

Davidson, 2001, p. xvi


McDowell, 1996, p. xiii

McDowell, Michael Friedman says (Friedman in *Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition: Comments on John McDowell’s Mind and World* in *The Philosophical Review* 105, 1996, p. 427-467), is more idealistic than Davidson because he is close to accepting “the traditional idealist doctrine that the world to which our thought relates is a creature of our own conceptualization”. How does McDowell respond? Friedman is wrong, McDowell says, because Kantian metaphysics is no longer in the place and the Gadamerian notion of tradition is no tertia. Gadamer gets it right, McDowell says, when he claims, “in every worldview, the existence of the world-in-itself is intended” (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 447).


McDowell, 1996, p. 126
Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 443; McDowell questions whether the I-thou sociality of Brandom and Davidson, in which a pair of subjects interprets each other, in Brandom's case keeps score of each other's deontic statuses, can be in place because it seems to leave out of the picture the "we" that shares a language. Brandom fears that the "we" would be a super-person, but that is an unnecessary fear if we hold with Gadamer that "languages are among the suprasubjective powers that dominate history" (Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 460), and with McDowell that they give a normative shape to our life-world (McDowell in Malpas, Arnswald and Kertscher (eds.), 2002, p. 190), when read in their semantic realist senses.

Sellars' break involved constraining direct self-knowledge as involving analogical concepts in the sense that "the concepts in terms of which we have what is often called 'reflexive knowledge' of our mental acts are analogical extensions of concepts pertaining to the public or intersubjective world of things and persons (Sellars, 1991, p. 48)."

Rorty, 1998, p. 170

Rorty, 1999, p. 5

Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 104


McDowell, 1998 (2), p. 283: McDowell's comment surfaces in a discussion of pain, but the point can be generalized.

Such an approach would choose head and tail, rather than head or tail.


Ramberg, 1989, p. 90-91

He also makes possible understanding how learning from texts is conceivable. As Dassenbrock points out, Davidson supplies us with a hermeneutics of difference, "an interpretive method that can understand texts different from us and understand them to be different from us" (Dassenbrock in Dassenbrock (ed.), 1993, p. 18-36). This contrasts, for instance, with the Gadamerian hermeneutics of identity of Stanley Fish. Literary theorists like Reed Way Dassenbrock and Thomas Kent apply Davidson's theories to criticize reader-response theories.

Sellars, 1996, p. 62

Davidson, 1990, p. 304

Davidson in Reply to Fallesdal in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 732

McDowell, 1998 (2), p. 185

McDowell, 1995 (2), p. 210: Davidson's holism of the mental ensures a bolster against reductive accounts and provides us with an organic story to tell about the interdependencies of our conceptual capacities and how they grow together.

I owe this sketch to Ramberg, 1989, p. 7.

Davidson, 1987, p. 449

Ramberg, 1989, p. 65

Davidson, 1984, p. 150: Since Davidson's concern is with natural languages rather than formal languages, as was the case for Tarski, he does not employ legislative notions from outside the object language such as propositions, sets, classes etc.. The infinite and unfinished character of language precludes the possibility of designing a theory of truth in the form of an explicit definition for a natural language.

Davidson, 1984, p. 43-44

Davidson, 1995 (2), p. 211


Davidson, 1984, p. 199-200: Ramberg suggests that the rationality maxim (RM), which claim "what counts as justifying the attribution of a content and an attitude towards it is to assign to that state a location in a pattern of intentional states in just such a way that the pattern as a whole minimizes the irrationality of the agent" (Ramberg, Naturalizing Idealizations, p. 8), precludes the empiricist-humanitarian view, which wants to place constraint on interpretation or attribution of content "by reference to psycho- and sociobiographies, or to physiological theories or histories".

Davidson, 1990, p. 295: Rorty's misgivings with Davidson's employment of Tarski consist in his insistence that the theory of truth rather should be described as behavior of a certain group (Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 27). He suspects that Davidson might be giving truth an explanatory role, forgetful of how every intensional concept intertwines with the other (Rorty, 1998 (4), p. 25). This quote of Davidson signals, however, that such a worry might be unnecessary.

Davidson, 1990, p. 298: I.e. the coherence theory, the pragmatic theory, Dummett and Wright's antirealism, Putnam's internal realism, and Quine when he maintains that our notion of truth is dependent on our epistemological stance.

Davidson in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 67-68

Davidson, A Coherence Theory of Truth and Meaning, p. 313

Davidson, 1984, p. 332

Davidson, A Coherence Theory of Truth and Meaning, p. 314

See Steven Cole's article in Dassenbrock (ed.), 1993, p. 59-91 for an elaboration of this theme.

Davidson, 1990

Davidson, 1984, p. 22

Davidson in The Nicod Lectures, see also Engel in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 451

Davidson, 1995 (2), p. 216

Ramberg, 1989, p. 27-28

Davidson, 1984, p. 220

Paul Horwich notes some misgivings about the Davidsonian theory of truth in his minimalist manifesto (Horwich, 1998, p. 132). The most interesting misgiving for our purposes concerns the possibility of giving a use-theoretic account of proposition that does not presuppose the concept of truth. As a prosententialist, Brandom holds that the truth predicate is a device that enables us to say, “That is true” instead of repeating the already asserted sentence, and analyses “x is true” by means of substitutional quantification into ‘(p)(x = p → p)’ (Horwich, 1998, p. 125). Brandom builds on the redundancy theory of Grover, Camp and Belnap. An outline of this theory can be found in Grover, Camp and Belnap, *A Prosentential Theory of Truth* in Philosophical Studies 27 (1975), p. 73-125.

Brandom, 1998, p. 498: The discrepancies between Davidson and Brandom’s conceptions of objectivity deserve a better account than the one I offer here.

Davidson, 1984, p. 170

Davidson acknowledges three types of authority corresponding with the subjective, the intersubjective and the objective. I can only assess the first here.

Habermas in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 35

Davidson, 2001, p. 14

Ramberg, *Naturalizing Idealizations*, p. 34

Davidson, 1987, p. 451

Davidson, 1987, p. 451

Davidson, 1987, p. 455

Davidson, 1987, p. 456

Davidson, 1987, p. 456

Davidson, 1989, p. 171

Davidson, 1989, p. 170-171

Davidson, 1984, p. 183

Davidson, 1984, p. 187


The notion of paradigm, as employed when talking about the paradigms of Aristotle, Einstein, or Newton, can be non-pragmatically understood as suggesting conceptual relativism, if we understand it as a version of a conceptual scheme in a non-naturalistic and ahistorical manner. Thus understood, it functions as a non-naturalistic cover up of the fact that different cultural codes co-exist at any given point of time, while establishing an ahistorical and non-contextualized hierarchy of narratives. Different cultural patterns understood naturally and historically, as they are urged to be understood in this essay, preclude this conventional understanding of paradigm.

Quine, 1960, p. 3

Davidson, 1984, p. 189

McDowell in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 96

McDowell in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 97

Davidson in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 106

Brandom, 1998, p. 616

Brandom, 1998, p. 618


Davidson, *Gadamer and Plato’s Philebus*, p. 431-432

Fellesdal in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 724

Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, 1969, p. 28

Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 26

Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 374

Davidson, 1986, p. 445

Harman, 1999, p. 121

Davidson, 1986, p. 445

Davidson, 1986, p. 446

Davidson, 1986, p. 438

For Dummett, in order to understand the concept of truth, one must understand that it is the goal of assertion and belief, and not only immodestly possess a method for determining when it correctly applies to a belief or a claim. McDowell, for instance, defends a modest theory of linguistic meaning. The difference between a modest and an immodest theory of linguistic meaning, such as Dummett’s, consists in the immodest theories’ pretensions of offering accounts of concepts expressed by the primitive terms of the language. Davidson’s, like McDowell’s and unlike Brandom’s, truth conditional theory of meaning starts *in medias res*, in the midst of content, and takes it that “when a theorist comes to explain and justify the claim that the notion of truth might figure essentially in the ‘core’ of a theory of meaning, he will do so by appeal to the notion of content of an assertion” (McDowell, 1998 (1), p. 89). Dummett, in contrast, thinks we need a prior account of the “core” as from the outside.

See Brandom, 1998, p. 232-233

See Gorman’s article on the Davidson/Dummett controversy in Dasenbrock (ed.), 1993, p. 201-232

Davidson, 2001, p. 95-105: It can be noted that McDowell, echoing Gadamer, claims that animals and infants have proto-subjectivity and live in an environment, not in the world (McDowell, 1996, p. 119).

Rorty, 1999, p. 15
intentional psychology and, thereby, to natural-scientific theory. I do not find this as worrisome as Ramberg because the various purposes of the differing vocabularies of the mental and the physical because we lose access to non-understanding and improve our predictions and explanations of actions if we accept the Davidsonian demarcation of historicist outlook. Rorty, like Kant and Frege, acknowledges that the interestladeness of our carving up of the mani-trivially, what counts as shared and relevant causes, and interestladeness is, further, a natural consequence of the is not what the notion entails, at least not in a way that should make us uncomfortable. Our interests determine, quite is all too easy to react instinctively on what at first sight might be taken to signal relativism and teleology. In fact, this est, as figuring in "our different vocabularies serve different interests", or "the cause is dependent on our interests". It
assumptions that desiring is so susceptible to economic manipulation, and that manipulation seems so successful in mends – namely, private freedom and public justice – are attainable in an economically motivated society given the explained in many different ways, as many as there are ways of describing the things related" (Rorty, 1998 (4), p. 88).
Instruments of Philosophy, p. 18).
Bouveresse in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 134
Rorty, 1998 (2), p. 109: Rorty has some misgivings about the Davidsonian slogan that causation, unlike explana-
tion, is not under a description, which he will rephrase as "the same causal-relationship-under-a-description can be explained in many different ways, as many as there are ways of describing the things related" (Rorty, 1998 (4), p. 88).
Hall voices a concern, "with the broadly empirical question as to whether the sort of social goals Rorty recom-
mends – namely, private freedom and public justice – are attainable in an economically motivated society given the assumptions that desiring is so susceptible to economic manipulation, and that manipulation seems so successful in affecting what most of us hold to be the privatest areas of our lives" (Hall, 1991, p. 47).
Ramberg, Rorty and the Instruments of Philosophy, p. 6
Rorty, 1998 (2), p. 167

I owe the notion of narrative of maturity to McDowell in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 109-110
Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 238


Anthony Giddens applies this term when he is concerned with the nature of institutions.

University Press, 1975, p. 108

Another of Dummett's disagreements with Davidson centers on the latter's notion of theory and parallels one of the crazes that Rorty pursues in his correspondence with Davidson. Why, Rorty asks, "should we believe that the know-how involved in coping with the potential infinity of idiots is a matter of the ability to find a passing recursive theory" (Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 75)?


What makes an exchange a part of a conversation, and not simply a sequence of remarks, as Ramberg says, "is just the teleological, or meta-teleological, unity presupposed in the idea of a living tradition" (Ramberg, Rorty and the Instruments of Philosophy, p. 18).

These comments follow up on the Jeff Malpas' suggestions.
Thomas Nagel in Davidson's New Cogito in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 196
Thomas Nagel in Davidson's New Cogito in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 200
Thomas Nagel in Davidson's New Cogito in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 203
Ramberg, Naturalizing Idealizations: Pragmatism and the Interpretivist Strategy, p. 1

Davidson in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 165
Ramberg, 1989, p. 120-123
Brandom, 1994, p. 594
Rorty, 1999, p. 16
Rorty, 1998 (2), p. 167

I owe the notion of narrative of maturity to McDowell in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 109-110
Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 238

Davidson's break parallels Dennett's doubts about "consciousness" as an intermediary, as well as Putnam, Austin and Sellars' doubts about "sense datum" as an intermediary.

Rorty, 1999, p. xv
Bruns in Malpas, Arnswald and Kertscher (eds.), 2002, p. 50
Bruns in Malpas, Arnswald, and Kertscher (eds.), 2002, p. 50
Ramberg, Rorty and the Instruments of Philosophy, p. 6

Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 9
Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 2
Davidson, 1990, p. 279-281
Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 18
Allen in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 224

A source of discontent among the non-vocabularists lies in the vocabularist use of the notion of purpose or inter-
est, as figuring in "our different vocabularies serve different interests", or "the cause is dependent on our interests". It is all too easy to react instinctively on what at first sight might be taken to signal relativism and teleology. In fact, this is not what the notion entails, at least not in a way that should make us uncomfortable. Our interests determine, quite trivially, what counts as shared and relevant causes, and interestladeness is, further, a natural consequence of the historicist outlook. Rorty, like Kant and Frege, acknowledges that the interestladeness of our carving up of the manifold precludes the possibility of "one true conception of the world", and he takes it to be the natural consequence of nominalism.

Rorty, 1998 (3), p. 89

These comments follow up on the Jeff Malpas' suggestions.

Rorty, 1998 (2), p. 109: Rorty has some misgivings about the Davidsonian slogan that causation, unlike explana-
tion, is not under a description, which he will rephrase as "the same causal-relationship-under-a-description can be explained in many different ways, as many as there are ways of describing the things related" (Rorty, 1998 (4), p. 88).

Hall voices a concern, "with the broadly empirical question as to whether the sort of social goals Rorty recom-
mends – namely, private freedom and public justice – are attainable in an economically motivated society given the assumptions that desiring is so susceptible to economic manipulation, and that manipulation seems so successful in affecting what most of us hold to be the privatest areas of our lives" (Hall, 1991, p. 47).

See Brandom in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 179

Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 33

Ramberg in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 50
Ramberg, 1999, p. xv

the folk psychological vocabulary will still be subject to substantial correction in the game of giving and asking for reasons or in the game of changing and improving content.


Rorty in Hahn (ed.), 1999, p. 592

It should go without saying that the diagnoses might be better or worse motivated.

Hall, 1994, p. 58


Hall, 1994, p. 53

Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 86

Putnam in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 89

Putnam, 1996 (2), p. 300

Conant in Putnam, 2000, p. xxxix

Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 376


McDowell, 1996, p. 68

Rorty, 1998, p. 145

McDowell in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 114: McDowell thinks that keeping the vocabulary of objectivity does not imply giving up our notion of contingency. I am taking McDowell’s vocabulary of objectivity in the sense of settlement.

Rorty, 1998 (4), p. 41

Ramberg, Rorty and the Instruments of Philosophy, p. 21-22


Brandom in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 159

Rorty in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 2

Rorty, 1991, p. 172

Harman, 1999, p. 98

Rorty, 1998 (2), p. 88

Rorty, 1998 (4), p. 253


Rorty in Saatkamp (ed.), 1995, p. 51

Brandom in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. xi

Brandom in Brandom (ed.), 2000, p. 160
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