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RECEIVING

Does truth exist? is it real or ideal? can there be spiritual as well as natural truths? These primordial questions are surely now superseded by the concerns of philosophy, whether Analytic or Continental. Or have these questions now begun to return?

1.1 Background to the Problem

For many recent philosophers, 'truth' has been considered primarily as an object of knowledge, and sometimes as a property of knowing. For a small number, it has been considered a property of being. We can refer to the position that truth is an object of knowledge as an 'epistemological' approach, and to the idea that it is a property of both knowing and being as an 'ontological' approach. The former is characteristic of modern philosophy; the latter, of ancient and medieval philosophy.

The transition from an ontological to an epistemological approach took place in part because of the exacerbation of traditions of scepticism reaching back to ancient Greek thought, concerning the possibility of a link between human knowledge and how things really are. This exacerbation took the form, for René Descartes, of no longer merely doubting the degree of our knowledge of reality, but of initially doubting whether we have cognitive access to the world at all.[1] Although Descartes eventually affirmed such access through his metaphysics of the spirit and of the infinite, Immanuel Kant later acceded to the original extreme scepticism in a qualified form: one knows with precision the

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[1] René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Myles Burnyeat, 'Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed', *Philosophical Review* 90 (1982), 3–40.

I

appearances of things to one, but one remains ignorant of 'things in themselves'.[2]

The 'epistemological' approach, in the wake of Descartes and Kant, is rooted in a new mode of response to scepticism which does not begin by assuming the link of mind to reality, or the ontological character of truth. Indeed, Augustine, who in some ways anticipated Cartesian introspection, never doubted such a link.[3] But modern thought begins with the isolated *cogito*, however later and variously modified, and so with the alternative certainties of (1) appearing to oneself in thought, and (2) the way other things appear to oneself through one's self-awareness.

Epistemology, however, faces two problems. The first problem is the division between rationalism and idealism, on the one hand, and empiricism, on the other. For a rationalist position, truth is linked to the structures of one's mind; for an empiricist position, truth is derived from the evidence to the mind of the senses.

The second problem of epistemology is more drastic: the tension between an emphasis on 'reason', in the broadest sense, encompassing both rationalism and empiricism, and a radical naturalism, associated (rightly or wrongly) with David Hume, which could call the nature of reason into question, if one's mind is taken to be determined by immanent, rational processes. The seventeenth-century philosopher Benedict de Spinoza can be seen to combine both rationalism and naturalism, but not without the construction of an immanentist, pantheistic metaphysical theology, to guarantee that nature and logic were both equally 'basic'.[4]

Such naturalism might suggest a return to an ontological approach to truth, but this may turn out to be at the expense of the idea of truth altogether, because it involves abandoning transcendence and the idea of a spiritual origin of reality. If spirit is just one aspect of an immanent world, as for Spinoza, might it not more plausibly be regarded as epiphenomenal to matter? In such a case, thought and truth may not be seen as realities, but rather as human illusions or flitting figments.

One can argue that twentieth-century philosophy has remained within the scope of the subjective, epistemological approach, but with many different permutations. However, there is a twist in the tale, as we shall see below. This period of philosophy sought to 'neutralise' philosophical debates between rationalism and empiricism, and between rationalism (in a broader sense) and

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[2] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as a Science*, trans Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[3] See Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[4] Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1955).

naturalism. The supposedly opposed Analytic and Continental traditions of thought sought to do this in different ways, but in both cases, one observes a turn to 'logic', rather than to the direct question of what pertains in one's mind. This turn to logic is often associated with 'anti-psychologism'.[5] The sphere of logic can be considered more 'objective', but not with the lapidary objectivity of physical things 'out there' in the world. The claim tended to be made that philosophical problems are really matters of true or false reasoning: whether of reasoning to do with the logic of sentences, in the case of the Analytic tradition, or the logical structure of the way things appear to the onlooker, in the case of phenomenology. Once this is assumed, traditional philosophical problems of a 'metaphysical' kind either (1) fade away as meaningless, or (2) prove intrinsically irresolvable, in the tradition of Kant, or (3) are resolved, one by one, but not necessarily with the ideological consistency one might have hoped.

Here one can mention Michael Dummett, an Analytic philosopher, for whom logic points to realism in some respects, and to anti-realism in other respects. If knowledge is taken to be justified true belief, and not an outright contact or collision with 'what is really the case', then one can know, according to Gottlob Frege's principle of 'bivalence'. This is the principle that a claimed meaning is either true or false, but not that there are real 'truths' which hold beyond one's modes of apprehension, that is, unless one is prepared to bring God into the equation.[6] The claim was made within twentieth-century philosophy that one can agree about how truth works in logic without having to decide whether it amounts to a matter of knowledge, or also to a matter of being; or even whether it originates from a priori structures or from sensation. In a second step, one can use *logic* of different kinds in order to adjudicate the traditional philosophical arguments between realism and idealism, or alternatively, rule them out of court, or construct a critical ontology on the strict basis of the way in which things are disclosed to one, as in the case of Martin Heidegger.[7] Such an ontology may even be seen as transcending the opposition between realism and idealism.

One can note that Analytic and Continental philosophical traditions developed alternative logical tools in order to sustain the new preference

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[5] See Martin Kusch, *Psychologism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[6] Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); *Thought and Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 78–80, 96–109.

[7] Gottlob Frege, 'On Sense and Meaning', in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed. Peter Geach and Max Black (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 56–78; Clare Ortiz Hill, *Rethinking Identity and Metaphysics: On the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

for initial neutrality, the novel, vauntedly rigorous mode of combating scepticism. Gottlob Frege has often been taken to have inaugurated the Analytic approach on the basis of a new kind of formal logic which was better able to handle modifications of an initial statement, in terms of quantifiers and relations: a 'predicate calculus'. With this instrument, he hoped to get rid of the idea that one must think of qualities in ontological terms, as mysteriously attached to substances. One can interpret this approach both as a programme of intensified nominalism and as a modification of the Kantian transcendentalist legacy.

Even if one were to insist that Frege caused a modification in an already existent British Analytic tradition, originating with G. E. Moore, the dominance of logic holds, though in a more 'Hegelian', and so post-Kantian metaphysical, rather than 'Kantian' manner. This is because Moore, and at times Russell and Wittgenstein, in his wake, sought to outwit the gap between thought and reality, by identifying the latter with propositions, while denying, against the British Idealists, their mentally subjective and holistically predetermined character. Because of this denial, in Moore's case, perhaps more radically than for Frege, the traditional ontology of qualities 'attaching' to substances is undone, in keeping with the abandoning of the primacy of a subject-predicate logic at the cognitive level. In Moore's case, however, and variously in the cases of G. F. Stout, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, Frank Ramsey and Russell, in some phases, the denial of the contrast between a 'particular' substance and a 'universal' attribute was so extreme as in effect to problematise the pertinence of the realist/nominalist contrast altogether.[8]

Edmund Husserl, however, elaborated a new form of transcendental logic, or 'phenomenology', which would deal with the objective structures of how we perceive the world, bracketing questions of how the world is in itself.[9] He took the opposite course to Frege, conservatively preserving, at the transcendental level, a categorial dualism, more so than Moore, by proposing that one can only know substances by way of their manifest qualities or 'aspects' and that one never gets to the end of an account of what these aspects are. Within Analytic philosophy, as Stephen Mulhall has pointed out, the later

[8] Fraser MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals: The Metaphysical Origins of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 24–62.

[9] Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian, introduction by G. Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973); *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorian Cairns (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1999); Christian Delacampagne, *A History of Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, trans. M. B. Devoise (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 12–60.

Wittgenstein took an approach to 'aspects' that is closer to phenomenology than to Frege.[10]

In both cases, one observes a break with nineteenth-century idealism; truth is not something *constituted by the structures of subjective mind*. Questions of 'truth' came to hover in a kind of middle domain which gestured towards the ontological but did not desert the primary ground of the epistemological. It is for this reason that Quentin Meillassoux has described this compromise as 'correlationist': there is no pure idealism, because one's thoughts are supposed to 'correlate' with reality insofar as it is 'given' to one.[11] But how is this possible, one might ask, metaphysically speaking, and how does this relate to the naturalistic assumptions of physical science?

Here, one notes that the earliest phases of Analytic thought sought to circumvent such issues in ways that anticipate the demands for a purer realism in the twenty-first century, as we shall see later in this book.

Somewhat akin to the early Husserl and his precursors, Moore considered, against empiricism, that an analysis of the structure of one's awareness shows that it intends external realities, beginning with sensory awareness.[12] Partly for this reason, it can be immediately identified with propositional structures, built up from atomic conceptual units, and no issue of correlation would seem to arise. Moreover, because human thought is radically turned outwards and is open to a presumed empirical contingency, any projection of an a priori Kantian distinction of subject and predicate upon the world as the difference of substance and attribute is disallowed.[13]

For Moore, as for others, this was taken to be a consequence of the embrace of a more relational and fluid logic, after Frege and Peirce. It was assumed that the earlier dualist ontology was the consequence of the projection upon reality of an Aristotelian logic of subject and predicate, now outdated. One could suggest that this is turned historically back to front: because it remained ontological in compass, pertaining to how reality exists inside one's thoughts, Aristotelian logic favoured a structure that seemed to mirror everyday reality, though it was clear that there was a shifting penumbra of 'topical' argumentation, which some pre-Fregean attempts sought to systematise; for example, in the diverse cases of later medieval theories of

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[10] Stephen Mulhall, *On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[11] Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2009).

[12] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 24–42.

[13] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 43–86; G. E. Moore, 'The Nature of Judgement', *Mind* 8 (1899), 176–93.

presuppositions, and the work of Ramon Lull, Petrus Ramus and G. W. Leibniz. In these instances, as for Frege, the assumption that the fluid regions of dialectics can be systematised into a *mathesis* which will hold the key to reality perforce involves the unspoken assumption that ontology should follow upon logic, rather than vice versa. It is also attended by the explicit 'anti-psychologistic' assumption that logic is not about the way things are within conscious thinking, doubly begging the question of the truth of the earlier modes of realist philosophies. The prime ontological pertinence of the new relational logic is rendered conceivable by the more directly metaphysical explorations of A. N. Whitehead, arguing for the categorial primacy of event, process and relating in the realm of real, beyond logical calculus. At both the logical and the ontological levels, the question of which scheme gains sway, the static or the fluid, remains perhaps both open and undecidable.

But whichever may pertain here, Moore and his successors recognised three problems arising from their philosophical outlook, which later caused him to modify his position. First, in general, the identification of realities 'out there' with thoughts 'in here' seems to repeat the Idealist flouting of common sense. It would seem to disallow the Kantian truth, against Leibniz, that real things may be otherwise identical but distinguished by their spatial and temporal location. Secondly, if reality consists in propositions, what prevents false propositions from being as real as true ones? What prevents 'Desdemona loves Cassio', to cite Russell's example, from being as true as 'Cassio loves Desdemona', if truth is given in the holistic coherence of the three terms of a proposition?[14] Even though Moore, as for Wittgenstein later, and somewhat in his wake, wished to reduce analysis to tautology, rendering logical variation an empirical matter, this seemed to be threatened by his identification of reality with the 'one category' of the proposition. In the third place, as Wittgenstein contended against Russell, though in relation to a different theory, a refusal to allow an ultimate distinction between subject and predicate, substance and property, runs the risk of rendering nonsense-phrases and nonsense-sentences valid, in such a way that 'a wall blank' is supposed to make as much sense as a 'blank wall', or 'the wilts rose' as much as 'the rose wilts'.[15]

Moore and Russell later moved to a representationalist, more epistemological and correlationist position. In order to safeguard the difference between things and thoughts, truths and falsities, sense and nonsense, Moore began to

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[14] Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* [1912] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 124–37.
[15] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 43–182.

re-admit a categorial dualism of substance and predicate, and to insist on their difference from the category of relation. Faced with F. H. Bradley's problems of attachment and resulting regress – *if a is in attachment A, or relation R, to b, then what relates or attaches a and b to A or R*, etc., and so on – he resorted to a more Platonic response, in conscious imitation of Plato's own defence of participation against the 'third man' argument. Universal predicates are of a different and quasi-eternal mode of 'being' from ordinary existent things, and can be immediately identified with them, disallowing aporetic regress. In this way, in his second phase, Moore allowed a 'vertical' derivation of relative temporal consistency, in such a manner that seemed to appeal to transcendence in order to avoid either an immanentist monism or an adventitious immanent variety. Later, Alfred North Whitehead arguably fused elements of Moore's first and second phases, by seeking a greater ontological balance of fixity and alteration, and an invocation of Platonically eternal, rather than sustained, immanent Aristotelian substantive continuity, so as to account for temporal consistencies.[16]

With similar motivations, Russell shifted from an ontology of propositions to one of varying 'facts' to which one's judgements or 'understandings', to avoid psychologism, and not one's propositions, correspond in varying relations, making no absolute semantic distinction between thing and concept. A common-sense view of the referring character of one's ordinary expressions was rescued and yet qualified through his doctrine of propositions as 'incomplete symbols' in need of endless analytic qualification in order to be rendered representationally adequate.[17]

Russell was aware of the problems with this new stance, which have preoccupied philosophy up to the present day.[18] First, it seems that no referring proposition of the understanding will ever be complete, for to be so it must be self-referring, and this perforce engenders paradox, as with the well-known instance of the Cretan liar.[19] Secondly, knowledge as correspondence is a binary relation which nonetheless implies the operation of a ternary perspective in order to ensure that it holds good, and yet which the immediate and binary perspective withholds: how does one check that one is really looking through a window except by looking through it again, and

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[16] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 107–28. One can note the persistence of a Platonic lineage in Cambridge from the post-Reformation onwards.

[17] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 63–86; Bertrand Russell, 'On Denoting', *Mind*, New Series 14 (1905), 479–93.

[18] For the discussion of Russell below, see MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 153–82.

[19] A. R. Anderson, 'St Paul's Epistle to Titus', in *The Paradox of the Liar*, ed. R. L. Martin (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Co., 1970), 1–11.

how can one overtake this regress of looking through the window and draw it to a close. Thirdly, there is the question of which ontological units anchor correspondence? In order to escape the aforementioned problems of holistic confusion of sense with nonsense, truth with falsity, Russell was inclined towards an epistemological atomism. For example, purely mediating external relations 'between' things – *the R between a and b* – must be reduced to non-reversible definite occurrences, and attached properties as in *aR* and *Rb*, and 'permutational' phrases such as '*b depends on a*', when it might be the other way around, to 'non-permutational' ones, such as '*a is similar to b*'. Yet Russell was also aware that the reduction of relation to predicate and to irreversibility raised the spectre of Idealist purely 'internal' relations, and of a denial of genuine interactions, tending to engender either a windowless monadology or a monism, given that the persisting relational character of predicative attachment seems to give rise to Bradley's regress. The only way out of this awkwardness seems to be to say that the infinite is all, in reality, an unrelated whole.[20] Equally, he was aware that the same reduction tended to remove the apparently real reversibility of symmetrical relations, as well as the causal directionality and unilateral character of asymmetrical relations, as in '*a causes b*' but not vice versa, or '*a precedes b*' and '*a is greater than b*'.

In order to be released from this tangle, Russell embraced a more Fregean perspective which enabled him to combine an atomised ontology with a recognition of more holistic senses, directions and relations, at the level of sense rather than of reference. This was allied with his view that by allowing that a proposition was of another 'type' to a thing, one could supposedly avert recursive paradox, through a policing of language which would remove one's quotidian confused tendency to speak about concepts as though they were fully-fledged ontological realities with attendant density and weight.

By way of this embrace, Russell bequeathed an Analytic legacy which sustained a logicist version of Kantian dualism: universal senses analytically pick out and organise synthesised empirical particulars. This version remains confined within the problematic of correlation.

Russell remained somewhat drawn back to the original Analytic pro-gramme of a minimised transcendental commitment, and an empiricised logic, linked with an open-ended categorisation and not to be divorced from the process of scientific discovery. For this reason, and in order to take account of the problems with respect to truth to which this programme,

[20] Guido Bonino, 'Relations in British Idealism', and Federico Perelda, 'Russell and the Question of Relations', in *Relations: Ontology and Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Daniele Bertini and Damiano Migliorini (Verona: Mimesis International, 2018), 27–39, 41–57.

as we have seen, could give rise, he started to formulate what would become the 'picture theory' articulated by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.[21]

In that work, reality is presented as composed of facts, of 'all that is the case', and not of propositions. However, at the same time, propositions are also facts, and the core of the 'hieroglyphic' theory of knowledge as picturing is that some realities may be deployed adequately to picture other realities.[22] The problems of propositional ontology and of representational epistemology are thereby supposedly dispatched. Because some facts, at a particular instance and on a particular occasion, picture and other facts do not, a common-sense view of the difference between being and thinking is salvaged. Since a falsity is a possibility entertained within picturing reality, but not exemplified within pictured reality, falsity is not ontologically validated. Because a thought is structurally isomorphic with the thought-about, there is no problem of representation, or binary-triadic *aporia*: facts are not bare 'things' and they do not exit 'logical space'.[23] Similarly, the thought-about half of reality will disconfirm that Desdemona loves Cassio. And because the Fregean contrast of thing and concept, reference and sense has now been sidestepped, Wittgenstein is no longer committed to an empiricistic ontology of pure atoms or isolated particulars. Rather, analysis must terminate in 'simples', as it will otherwise go on indefinitely, and there will be no truth-claims or ascertained truth at all. But he is committed to denying an a priori predetermination of what these simples consist in, as well as the dualistic contrast of subject and predicate. All sorts of primary and irreducible things, attachments, relations and asymmetrical directions merely wait to be discovered. Nonsense is ruled out, not because the places of subject and predicate cannot be reversed; they can, because wisdom can be the subject of Socrates, as well as vice versa, as Ramsey showed.[24] Rather, it is because all knowledge is knowledge of how things occur in this world, including the 'simple' patterns of their general occurrence.

However, there were good reasons for Wittgenstein to abandon the dazzlingly simplified philosophy of the *Tractatus*. He had not escaped all of Russell's dilemmas. First, if logic is empirical, then ultimately simple things must be logically independent of one another. If this is not the case,

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[21] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 183–88.

[22] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 188–202; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), 4.106.

[23] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 1.13.

[24] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 203–33.

as Wittgenstein, though not Ramsey,[25] came to suspect – in the case of colour-phenomena, for example – Hegelian and other shadows lurk, concerning the inherent logic and meaningfulness of reality itself, if one is to avoid Kantian or Fregean transcendentalism, with their possibly sceptical upshots. The Bradleian problem of relation may also return to view, if one is no longer content with the *Tractatus* account of things as directly linked by unmediated chains. The question of how things hold together and are causally connected is here arguably sidestepped.

The factual reality of propositions, moreover, does not overcome the problem of a duality between representing and other facts. Unless one has an ontological theory of a mediating factor of *eidos* or form between the two, one must either deny the duality, after early Moore, or Wittgenstein's 'showing' of the identity of the picture must still run up against the problem of how to check the reliability of a binary relation. If a thought or a sentence *were* merely a hieroglyph, one would be able to do away with it, just as one can look directly at a house, rather than a picture of a house. Yet to see a house, one has need of the idea of a house, in order to pick it out from the array of other things, or identify it as a house, as for Frege with his 'context principle',[26] and so the two cannot be compared in an independent fashion. In such a way, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* had not quite escaped dogmatic correlationism, and it is not clear that his later transcendentalist-pragmatism escaped from it either. Rather, in order to allow that thoughts are 'out there' in the world, and yet to escape the correlationist problematic, one would have to go in Whitehead's direction of allowing that factual realities are actively and responsively 'prehending', and that one's own thinking, in continuity with them, is more a matter of conscious reception, interaction and creative response than of passive picturing.[27]

1.2 Analytic Philosophers on Truth

Despite the complexity of its origins, and its initially more realist and metaphysical leanings, as I have summarised in the foregoing, a great deal of Analytic philosophy, from the late 1920s onwards, came to be dominated by the Fregean recension.

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[25] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 203–333; F. P. Ramsey, 'Universals', *Mind* 34 (1925), 401–17.
[26] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 144; Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, trans. J. L. Austin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1950).
[27] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 219–80.

Gottlob Frege made a logical distinction between sense, on the one hand, and reference, on the other. This distinction allowed him to distinguish between words which point 'truly' to the real, and words which merely offer meanings, which have to do with one's contingent natural and cultural relationship with reality. In general, for Frege, though less so for the sometimes more Kantian Russell,[28] meanings refer ultimately to truths, which gave his logicism a somewhat realist bias.[29]

The logical positivism of the Vienna (inner) Circle, including Moritz Schlick, Philipp Frank, Rudolf Carnap and Felix Kaufman, sought to reinforce this bias in an empiricist manner, adding 'positivism' to Frege's 'logicism'. Accordingly, it was argued that true references point back to discrete sense impressions.[30] However, and in accordance with this view, there were for this group two sorts of truths: synthetic truths, based on combining facts, and analytic truths which are strictly logical and a priori. When one applies the latter to the former, there is a firm distinction to be made between the 'scheme' (after Kant) which one deploys in doing so and the empirical 'content' of the information itself. This information offers one 'facts', and in no sense 'values', which are mere expressions of emotion. Truth is entirely factual. The aim of the logical positivists was to make philosophy itself scientific, by fusing strict logic with strict evidence.

During what Graham Priest calls its 'optimistic phase', analysis played variations on this Vienna Circle theme. However, in its later 'pessimistic' phase, this broke down, and even the implications of Frege's work became harder to disinter.[31]

With regard to these developments, W. V. O. Quine later identified and called into question 'two dogmas of empiricism'.[32] First, he argued that there is no clear distinction between analysis and synthesis, because the former is a matter of synonymity. 'All bachelors are unmarried' is not free from the empirical, because it is true by virtue of a cultural convention. In such a way, he put pressure on the Fregean recension, but he also implicitly called into question much of the earlier British Analytic origins, which, while they had, in their most radical mode, reduced understanding to empirical synthesis, had

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[28] MacBride, *On the Genealogy of Universals*, 161.

[29] Frege, 'On Sense and Meaning'.

[30] Delacampagne, *A History of Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 98–112; J. J. Alberto Coffa, *The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap: To the Vienna Station* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[31] Graham Priest, 'Where Is Philosophy at the Start of the Twenty-First Century?', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 103, 1 (2003), 85–96.

[32] W. V. O. Quine, 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', in *From a Logical Point of View: Nine Logico-Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 20–46, especially 31.

not allowed for the vagaries of analysis, nor for the ways in which a varying and ultimately ungrounded process of rational classification interferes with any vauntedly realist observation. American pragmatism, as well as echoes of Idealism, both American and British, started to take their revenge.

Quine's insight can be seen as paralleled by Saul Kripke's view that even apparently 'analytic' meanings are caused by social imposition, especially with regard to naming. However, synthetic a posteriori truths can also exhibit apparent absolute necessity. Kripke argued that 'the morning star is the evening star' or 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' are true in all possible worlds because of the coincidence of both senses with the unique thing directly indicated by a naming term: in this case 'Venus'.[33] He dubbed every proper name a 'rigid designator' because identity is never a matter of contingency, and even empirical identity is in consequence unvarying.[34] Thus 'no one other than Nixon might have been Nixon', and 'although the man [Nixon] might not have been President, it is not the case that he might not have been Nixon, though he might not have been *called* "Nixon"'.[35] It follows that in terms of the logic of naming, one cannot readily separate the unavoidable grammatical needs of one's cultural usage from the fundamental way in which reality is manifest to one.

Quine also questioned, in the second place, the logically positivist 'reductionist' view that one can track back all knowledge claims to isolated observations. In this way, also, he questioned the more empirical aspect of the Fregean legacy, as well as the quest to ground truth in irreducible plural singulars, however complexly and non-nominalistically these were understood, which had driven the Analytic enterprise against Idealist monism from the beginning. However, Quine was not free from this defining enterprise, because he problematically considered there to be fundamental 'observation sentences' which 'bear their meanings on their sleeves' and are linked to basic 'surface irritations' of the body. These are supposed to anchor the whole process of one's reasoning to natural reality. Yet it is not clear, on Quine's own account of things, why this is the case. For if these statements already bear meaning, and so have already entered into a cascading network of mutual imputation, they can surely not be taken as foundational.[36]

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[33] '[T]here may be possible worlds in which two different planets would have been seen in just those positions in the evening and morning. However, at least one of them, and maybe both, would not have been Hesperus and then that would not have been a situation in which Hesperus was not Phosphorus.' Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 109.

[34] Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 3–15.

[35] Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 48–49.

[36] W. V. O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1960), 42–45.

This deconstruction of the basic procedure of analysis coalesced conveniently with Wilfrid Sellars's denunciation of 'the myth of the given'. He made a similar point: there is no given content which has not already been cognitively worked over.[37] In consequence, language and ideas do not touch reality, except holistically and obscurely. The possibility of 'true reference' – in an empirical, never mind a realist sense – was becoming remote. This hit home against the Analytic legacy, because, even if the given were refused in its a priori mode, as by early Moore and early Wittgenstein, Stout and Ramsey, and even if the ontologically given were not viewed in terms of empirical atoms of information, it remains the case that they sought, after long analysis, a solid and unquestionable rock of reality, 'there' before us, however variegated and intricate it may have been.

A third problem of Analytic ambition was identified by Quine's pupil, Donald Davidson, in his rejection of what he called 'the third dogma of empiricism', the scheme/content duality. This had ambivalent consequences for Quine's idea of 'radical translation'. While, for Quine, one can never be sure of the right translation of a totally unknown language, one can in turn never assert, according to Davidson, though articulating in a different way Quine's inconsistent allowing of basic raw contact with physical reality, that one inhabits a different incommensurable worldview from its speakers.[38] In fact, because there is no schematic 'screen' interposed between oneself and the content of one's understanding, one must assume that this content is fundamentally the same for all human beings who share the same biological circumstances.

These considerations about radical translation plausibly imply both that one has no access to a nature before culture and that there are no cultures definable outside a shared nature. Given the triple eroding of the shared would-be logical foundations of both empiricism and rationalism, a certain recourse to naturalism was coming into view on the part of Quine, Davidson and others. If, for Davidson, 'reference' is no longer indispensable in order to ground truth, and 'sense' can do the work all on its own, this is not taken to favour either spiritualism or idealism, but rather a sufficiency of pragmatic–behavioural norms which are so extreme that they

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[37] Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[38] Quine, *Word and Object*, 45–46, 72–79; Donald Davidson, 'Radical Interpretation' and 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 125–39, 183–98.

can be taken as compatible with many different 'theories of truth' or of reference.[39] Such theories are now a kind of unnecessary speculative luxury.

Yet in this regard it could be alleged that Davidson collapsed scheme and content together by privileging the latter over the former in an unwarranted fashion, even though content has been reconceived by him as a kind of immediate contact of meaning with reality, guaranteed by the cascading coherence of all human meanings as ultimately determined by natural and adaptive causal processes. If content and sense are inseparable, a reductive dismissal of basic cultural differences is as unacceptable as any absolute relativism. Rather, as Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor argue, the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of an endlessly unfinished hermeneutic 'fusion of horizons' seems more appropriate: we may posit a shared human nature, but we only have access to it through an intercultural process of debate and mutual critique.[40] Different human beings and different human cultures are not hermetically sealed against one another, confined within schematic 'interiors', but neither are they immediately within the same shared 'outdoors', as if this were given without symbolic or corporeally ritual processes of mediation.

In the various ways that we have so far seen, three dogmas of empiricism had been brought into question, even though the ambivalent implications of this questioning were not always confronted. A further questioning concerned the denial, on the part of Alasdair MacIntyre and others, of what one might call the fourth dogma: namely, the assumption that one has access to facts which have not in some way been evaluated.[41] If there are no un- or pre-evaluated facts, all knowledge has an ethical dimension, whether the virtues involved in knowing are taken to be specifically 'intellectual virtues' or not. For evaluation, by its very nature, is not a discrete faculty or stage of apprehension: to raise the question of the value and idiom of enquiry is to raise the question of how attempts to know the truth stand in relation to other valued areas of human existence and their specific procedures. A university, for example, might have its own code of practice in relation to its commitments to research, but questions as to the value of a university in itself, and of its research priorities, concern society at large and its wider goals of collective human flourishing.

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[39] Donald Davidson, 'Reality Without Reference', in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, 215–25.

[40] Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor, *Retrieving Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 102–30.

[41] Alasdair Macintyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

These developments, taken together, suggest that individuals have no 'foundational' or unmediated access to the appearances of reality, and yet, that they do not occupy an impermeable interior citadel of reason, unaffected by their interactions with things and people without. There is no immediacy, but neither is there a clearly defined boundary within which one 'represents' circumstances to which one is indifferent, in the manner of a detached observer who is glancing at the landscape through a train-carriage window, zooming to her own destination, but with no time to develop a relationship or particular affinity with what she sees through the window.[42] Rather, everything has always already been mediated, and one has no unsifted access to the exquisitely pure poles of either exteriority or interiority.

This field of mediation, of the 'between' which one primarily occupies, is not one of either sensory indicators, nor of an a priori rational adjudication or command, but rather concerns, variously, one's bodily negotiation of the environment through which one first understands how to survive, and then how to survive more skilfully and more amenably, and so satisfyingly and with an attendant aesthetic measure. There is no moment when one's specifically human knowledge of the world precedes or exceeds one's symbolic or linguistic reading of that world. In the course of this reading, 'fact' and 'classification of fact' are inextricably mingled, in such a way that no such reading is undertaken in extrinsic isolation. Rather, it is articulated by the social and ritual organisation of bodily movements and linguistic conventions, which in turn do not exist apart from continuously fluctuating individual human usage and extension.[43]

One thinks, therefore, not in the manner of isolated looking-glasses becoming conscious in private chambers, but with and as part of the surface of the world, which is of a piece with one's bodily continuity with one's environment, specifically inflected by human significations. In addition, one thinks within and alongside one's communities and their constitutive attempts to 'represent' the cascade of cosmic reality, as much through practice as in theory – without which attempts, social norms could not be generated.[44] Both communities and individuals, it seems, receive and represent reality not in the raw, but in symbolically filtered terms, as a matter of primary access. Everything has already been 'taken as' something, in terms of both usage and of 'useless' significance. Tool and instrumentality here enjoy no priority over sign and 'decorative' superfluity or adornment, since from

[42] Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, 1–54.
[43] Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, 71–101.
[44] Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), 27–75.

the beginning, human beings have been artists and contemplatives, as well as hunter-gatherers, pragmatic achievers and technologists.

In this way, one knows reality, as Charles Taylor has suggested, by expressing it creatively, even if one continuously comes to reflect further upon one's expressions. One never ceases to refine them in terms of their perceived intrinsic excellence, and of an ever-renewed encounter with the real, whose depths always lie beyond one, since one cannot possibly encounter those depths in any unmediated or unexpressed condition. In consequence, the question of the 'realism' of human attitudes and claims has now become a more tortuous question concerning the continuity or otherwise of cultural expressions with the natural world, and even of both with a more ultimate reality which transcends them.[45]

In terms of the Analytic philosophical tradition, it was Ludwig Wittgenstein who articulated in his later work this triple realisation of the ineluctable mediation of truth through one's physical condition, language and community. One does not escape 'language games', which are never private, and are rooted in 'forms of life' which concern modifications of one's temporal embodiment and vitality.[46] Equivalent insights were expressed (though with greater concern for the shaping of a new sort of ontology) by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, within the phenomenological tradition.

In this way, positivism, in the sense of a dogmatic empiricism, was somewhat deleted from the Analytic legacy. However, logicism tended at times to be 'pragmatised': reference tended no longer to be a matter of pointing to truths 'out there', independent from one, but rather, of making 'justified assertions', in part at least according to a set of conventions. The tests of truth became a matter of social consensus and pragmatic success, or a combination of both. W. V. O. Quine and Donald Davidson, followed by Hilary Putnam, Robert Brandom and Richard Rorty, began to drift back from empiricism towards the earlier American pragmatism of C. S. Peirce, William James and John Dewey.[47] However, they kept close to the idea that science delivers the truth, quite independently from metaphysical issues, and in this sense, they remained loyal to a kind of positivism, as Pascal Engel indeed says of Richard

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[45] Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), and Chapter 3 below.

[46] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978); *On Certainty* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984).

[47] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

Rorty.[48] This is especially true of Quine, who returned to the classic positivist view, as for August Comte and John Stuart Mill, namely, that mathematical and logical truths are empirically and naturalistically grounded.[49]

After Quine and Rorty, Arthur Fine intensified this radicalised non-empiricist 'positivism' when he suggested that the test of 'success' remained too realist, by virtue of a sort of future postponement, and that all one needs is common sense, middle-range everyday realism – 'the ordinary ontological attitude' – which science itself preserves.[50] He argued that science is in this respect not revisionary. By contrast, however, Wilfrid Sellars, unlike Wittgenstein, had claimed that ordinary language is itself a kind of metaphysical theory: e.g. that there are intending selves, that there is love, personality and so forth.[51] And, in turn, Quine promoted a new ontology by arguing that only mathematical entities are real, because this is what science works with.

It is by no means clear that the three questionings of empiricist foundationalism led to a break with naturalism. Indeed, in some ways, as we have seen in the case of Davidson, the questionings were construed as leading to the opposite conclusion, that philosophy has little to add to the discourse of science. The holistic work of thought, since it rests on no foundations and contributes nothing that is unambiguously its own, must be presumed to be a derivative of natural processes. This bias is held, though the demonstration of the indiscernibility of any boundary between empirical input and rationally processing output, between synthesis and analysis, content and scheme, or fact and evaluation, might equally be thought to favour the second, more 'spiritualist', pole of these dichotomies rather than the first, naturalist pole. Michael Dummett is rare in seeming to favour the first, spiritual pole, by developing a new mode of idealism. Yet if the dichotomies themselves have been shown to be problematic, then what is now needed is a mode of realism which can take account of the intertwined natural and spiritual aspects of being.

Nonetheless, in consequence of both anti-foundationalism and its somewhat naturalistic dominant recensions, even the Fregean 'neutrality'

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[48] 'Main Statement by Pascal Engel', Richard Rorty and Pascal Engel, *What's the Use of Truth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 1–30.

[49] W. V. O. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 69–113; 'Things and Their Place in Theories', in *Theories and Things* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 1–23.

[50] Arthur Fine, *The Shaky Game: Einstein, Realism and the Quantum Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997).

[51] Wilfrid Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man' [1962], in *Science, Perception and Reality* (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Co., 1991), 7–43.

concerning ontology was starting to erode. And other new pressures had been exerted on Frege's legacy, even while working within it. Frege himself, as well as Frank Ramsey, A. J. Ayer and Quine had long since initiated a family of theories involving variously but similarly the 'redundancy', 'disquotation' or 'deflation' of truth statements.[52] For such theories, claims that phrases 'truly' correspond reduce to mere statements that such and such *is the case*, this being in effect another way of saying that metaphysical questions about a supposed solemn mystery named 'truth' need deflating in favour of considering the conditions of 'warranted assertibility'.

An irony haunts these claims. They are primarily driven by a Fregean concern rigorously to distinguish object-statements from concept-statements, and so meaning from reference, or connotation from denotation. Thus, Alfred Tarski's 'T-schema', deployed to give an inductive and onto-logically neutral definition of truth, was in part motivated by a concern to avoid those logically problematic instances already considered by Frege in which one seems forced to speak of concepts as though they were objects by referring to them objectively and so recursively.[53] As Graham Priest puts the problem: 'consider the claim that all concept-words denote concepts, i.e. for every concept word, there is a concept that it denotes'. However, '[w]hatever satisfies "is a concept" is an object. Hence this is false'.[54] But for Tarski, a conceptual claim to truth, such as '*la neve è bianca*', in Italian, can supposedly be removed from any recursive confusion of thing and concept if it is strictly construed as a statement in an 'object language' which can be explicated, not through a referential consideration of the concept itself, but rather, though somewhat tautologically, by a phrase in a 'meta-language' (for

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[52] Gottlob Frege, 'On Concept and Object' [1892], in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed. Peter Geach and Max Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), 42–55; 'The Thought: A Logical Inquiry', *Mind* 65, 259 (July, 1956), 289–311; F. P. Ramsey, 'Facts and Propositions', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 7 (1927), 153–70; A. J. Ayer, 'The Criterion of Truth', *Analysis* 3 (1935), 28–32; W. V. O. Quine, *Philosophy of Logic* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970); Donald Davidson, 'The Structure and Content of Truth', *The Journal of Philosophy* 87, 6 (1990), 279–326. But since Davidson favoured sense without reference, rather than reference without sense (see above), his account of truth hovers between a coherentist holism, on the one hand, and deflationism, on the other. See Matthew McGrath, *Between Deflationism and Correspondence* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000).

[53] Alfred Tarski, 'The Concept of Truth in Formalised Languages', in *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics: Papers from 1923–1938*, trans. J. H. Woodger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 152–278.

[54] Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 200, and 98–201.

the sake of conceptual clarity, designated in a different tongue), declaring that the Italian phrase is true '*if* and *only if* snow is white'. It is not by implication true because whiteness is of the very essence of snow, in such a way that the Italian statement would 'express' the snowness of snow and thereby partake *as* a concept of the very objectivity of the snow. Inversely, for this supposedly deluded perspective, it would also be implied that real snow as such holds in itself a meaningful truth of whiteness.[55]

For Tarski, through the refusal of such supposedly archaic delusions, a minimally logical mode of realism, of the type that we have been considering, was sustained, within a Fregean tradition. His T-schema transcendentally sustains a pure and immediate correlation of a thought with an object, in such a way that the latter's simple presence renders the former true, somewhat on the model of the 'one to one' atomistic theory of truth put forward by the first-phase Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.[56]

However, Quine construed Tarski's 'convention' in 'disquotational' rather than 'correspondence' terms, in such a way that the Italian phrase in the object language simply vanishes, like vapour rising from the snow's icy density. In this way, the Fregean concern to distinguish concept from object itself leads to a disappearance of the concept, and so, albeit asymmetrically, of the distinction itself. Here one finds irony at work.

And cannot this asymmetry logically be reversed, to imply not a naturalist realism but a thoroughgoing idealism? Along complementary lines to the debates concerning disquotation, the separability of truth from meaning and its priority over meaning were also questioned by Michael Dummett. For him, meaning could not be referred to truth, because saying that something 'is the case' is equivalent to making sense.[57] This removes any 'surplus' or remainder for sense, over what one usually takes to be reference, and yet this can also paradoxically imply that sense is everything. It is in this context that one can situate Dummett's minority-report drift towards idealism, at least in relation to aspects of truth: if any claims that something is the case are now levelled flat, only the natural-cultural conventions about assertibility provide any distinction between truth and falsehood. It would seem that Dummett, a devout Roman Catholic, avoided relativism by reworking a Berkeleyan argument for God's existence: one's human points of view are not arbitrary because they are grounded in an all-encompassing divine perspective.[58]

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55 Tarski, 'The Concept of Truth in Formalised Languages'.
56 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.
57 Dummett, *Thought and Reality*, 29–72.
58 Dummett, *Thought and Reality*, 96–109.

One could read Dummett as exerting pressure on the distinction between sense and reference. Indeed, Saul Kripke had already made a similar point, against Frege's mode of this distinction. Frege is accused of obscuring the point that nothing makes sense unless it states what is the case, while one cannot refer to anything that is meaningless. An extreme instance of this truth is that the use of names is not really grounded in any set of empirical descriptions.[59] Hence, the border between sense and reference is blurred: revisions of one's meanings involve changes in how one envisages reality, while new discoveries or observations of a radical kind involve shifts in one's conceptual repertoire. So, for Kripke, in contradiction of Frege and Russell, to invoke an individual is immediately to predicate existence of that individual as a first and not a second-order concept. Moses, whether or not he really existed, is 'rigidly designated', as the man who happened to be the individual who led the Israelites out of Egypt.[60]

Kripke's influential idea of a proper name as a 'rigid designator' seems somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, it anchors sense to reference, because one may have the 'same thing' in all possible worlds: in all possible worlds in which Nixon might exist, 'Richard Nixon' refers to the same person. On the other hand, 'a name' is culturally imposed and therefore involves an 'empty' sense in order to be able to refer. One way out of this more relativistic implication would be to insist that names are never usable without a loose and fluctuating 'cluster of descriptive associations'. But Kripke refused this recourse. Rather, he resorted to a variant of what Hilary Putnam – for a different but related set of reasons – referred to as 'semantic externalism'.[61] There are meanings out there in the world, and not just inside one's head. Beyond the question of pure proper names, other naming terms, involving some degree of description, such as the name 'Venus' for the star, can involve, as we have already seen, predications of pure identity which are nonetheless empirically grounded: as in 'Hesperus is Phosphorus'. Kripke argued that the same thing was true of saying 'that light is a stream of photons, that water is H_2O, that lightning is an electrical discharge and that gold is the element with the atomic number 39'.[62] Against Kant, Kripke considered that the statement 'gold is a yellow metal' was similarly an a posteriori statement, and not a matter of a priori definition, and yet nonetheless analytic in its import.[63] This can sound as if he was tending in the direction of a recovery of

[59] Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 53–60.
[60] Saul Kripke, *Reference and Existence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 35.
[61] Hilary Putnam, 'The Meaning of "Meaning"', *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 7 (1975), 131–93.
[62] Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 116.
[63] Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 117.

eidos, by locating meaning and so truth out there in reality. But one could argue that it is rather the case that he was endowing limited empirical discoveries with a universal logical significance based on a process of consistent recognition.

This constitutes another example of a naturalistic rendering of the breakdown of empiricism: the collapse of the analytic/synthetic boundary is taken to allow there to be analytic truths out there in reality. In turn, this has proven to be an invitation, for David Lewis and others, to re-empiricise holism in terms of a metaphysics of possible worlds.[64] If things only vary in concert, and if fact and significance hold together, then one can conceive of such totalities as so many alternative universes, instantiating different overall logical patterns or com-possibilities. The salve against anarchy here is the continuity of essences in the sense of rigid designations across all these worlds.

However, no realism of essences is apparent for Kripke's conception, beyond sophisticated tautology: indeed, if there *is* water in another world, it will be composed as H_2O, and yet all one's experience must lead one to assume that it will possess all the same surface characteristics of flow, tendency to evaporate, etc., which renders the question of what is 'essential' and 'basic' to water more problematic – as science increasingly recognises. Were these surface characteristics to remain the same in some instances, yet be shown here to coincide with a different atomic structure, then nothing requires one, as Kripke alleged, to say that this is only 'fool's water', on analogy with 'fool's gold'; one could equally decide on other adopted criteria under which 'water' could be expressed by different atomic underpinnings.[65] It is, after all, the surface of water that matters far more to one than the invisible depths, especially if a variation of those depths were to prove practically and phenomenologically irrelevant.[66]

Indeed, if water possesses no greater essence or importance to reality than the chemical composition that it is consistently found to instantiate, then it is no salve against cognitive anarchy. 'Water' is not first of all that which can be identified as H_2O, but rather the thing whose 'sameness' has been guaranteed by complex common and symbolic observation and use throughout the ages. In a recent age, it has been shown to have such and such an atomic composition. This composition is, then, a synthetically empirical, and not analytic truth: a certain analytic breakdown, both in reality and for human understanding, remains constant. Given that claimed physical laws are only the regularities of the universe, one cannot know that

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[64] David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).
[65] Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 125ff.
[66] Ivan Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness* (London: Marion Boyars, 2005).

water would occur elsewhere, that it would be essential to the support of life, nor that a different and unknown atomic composition could not give rise to the same watery effect. Thus the consistent analysis of water is relative to its contingency from a metaphysical perspective. It is not a reliable fluid anchor.

By locating a rational analysis in nature, it can seem as though Kripke was uniquely favouring the second, more spiritual column of the old polarities, and yet all he did was confer upon a truth that is analytic only relative to one's perceptions and experimental action the status of a regularity of the real. As if by an opposite *chiasmus*, were synthesis more favoured within its new fusion with analysis, one could rather come to understand even one's 'analyses' of logical patterns not as reductions to the consistent combinations of isolated components, but as the synthetic discovery of new emergent meanings which reside through their combining. A 'triangle' may be instanced as such an entity, or a mandala or a concept such as 'play'.

In such a light, 'water' would hold an essential truth if one's imaginative synthesis of all that water means to human beings, both practically and symbolically, were taken to be part of its eternal, formal, and as it were, 'intended' reality.[67] In this way, one would not become 'detached' from water. By contrast, if one comes to know water scientifically, as one happens to discover it, through experimentation, to be two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, one remains apart from it, seemingly hovering on the riverbank. Even such a knowing is not a dogmatic empiricism, a mode of epistemological 'representation', if one recalls that one is knowing water in terms of one mode of engagement, of how it can be manipulated, altered and reconstituted. One can suppose that this pragmatic interaction supplies one with a certain truth about water, especially since, in the course of one's experiment, water is acting upon the experimenter, as much as the experimenter upon the water. But to suppose that this provides one with the most basic truth, or the whole truth, or even a non-revisable truth, is falsely to ontologise the scientific mode of access, and to convert it into a dogmatic claim to 'represent' to oneself internally what lies indifferently and ineluctably outside one.

This reflection leads one to the question of whether realism is possible without an older realism of essences and consistent 'forms', and whether any realism can be primarily built upon modern scientific practice. It is a question to which we will return below.

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[67] Illich, *H₂O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*.

Within the tradition of the self-deconstruction of analysis, John McDowell has suggested that questioning empiricism could lead to a more radical refusal of what one might call a 'fifth dogma' of empiricism: namely, the distinction between the space of things as 'out there', and the space of meanings in one's mind.[68] An indeterminacy between the two would go beyond an empirical consistency of coinciding attributes, after Kripke, or an external causal determination or derivation of their significance, after both Kripke and Putnam. Rather, one at least toys with the notion that sense may be as much lodged within external reality as within one's head. Such a proposal might suggest a certain tip-toeing towards a retrieved sense of Aristotelian 'form' as being 'out there' as well as 'inside us'.

It also threatens to remove the idea that there may be future or even supposedly 'ordinary' circumstances by which one could test the truth of human claims. Here one can reiterate that there is a tension in the pessimistic phase of Analytic philosophy. Quine was happy with the idea that natural science reveals truth, sometimes on inconsistently empiricist grounds, as we have seen, but more fundamentally on the grounds of the pragmatist holism of thought, itself the result of natural determination, in such a way that it would be superfluous to appeal to any 'testing' of one's most amply warranted attempts at understanding. By contrast, Hilary Putnam, despite his naturalising drift with respect to meaning, resisted a fully-fledged naturalism, arguing that particular biological or cognitive functions cannot simply be 'correlated' with unvarying material arrangements. This is because they are not discrete 'internal' states, which might or might not correlate with external ones, but are instantiated complex manifestations within external processes which are irreducible to isolated items or predictable or measurable motions.[69] Again, one seems close to a notion of Aristotelian 'form' here. And if nature already contains something akin to forms, meanings and even spirits, and not simply mathematical regularities, it can be possible for statements in ordinary speech, the humanities and the religions to be 'true', as well as the deliverances of science, without necessary recourse to an abrupt 'Cartesian' dualism.

Between the Quinean horizon and Putnam's alternative, Richard Rorty was ambivalent, though he retained the pragmatic criterion, rendering him less radical than Arthur Fine. In other respects, as Simon Blackburn notes, Rorty refused linguistic dualities, including those of sense and reference, in

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[68] John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).
[69] Hilary Putnam, *The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body and World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 109–33.

favour of a shifting and sliding *scale*.[70] There are for him no fixed differences between expressions and descriptions. In consequence, 'truth' is a matter of warranted justification according to social convention and pragmatic outcome. And yet, despite this, Rorty appeared to espouse a rigid divorce between the hard truths of science and the cultural play of meanings. He may have wished to level the significance of the two domains, and yet the former is still parsed by him in more naturalistic terms – terms which are for him more those of ultimate reality. Even if one's scientific engagement is merely pragmatic, Rorty continued to privilege the greater reality of the 'working' process itself; he assumed, almost a priori, a naturalistic stance, and wished to insist that cultural commitments gain nothing through connection with ontological ones.[71]

To all this, Pascal Engel, following Bernard Williams, objected that such a position undermines the ethical imperative to truth, which is especially important if there is no distinction between fact and value.[72] Rorty replied that, if this ethical reference to truth can be given no ontological grounding, and Engel claims none, then it must operate in terms of (1) pragmatic justification, and (2) cultural play. Engel's point holds, but so equally does Rorty's: to restore ethical seriousness to the quest for wisdom, logic and epistemology are insufficient. The search must be conducted in the face of a metaphysical horizon.

One can conclude that the internal deconstruction of Analytic philosophy, including Frege's initial moves, has led to a situation where there are three emergent positions: (1) a pragmatist positivism, somewhat reducible to natural science, which, by assuming the normativity of scientific claims, does not escape metaphysical commitments (one may situate Quine and Rorty here); (2) a naturalist ontology, based on mathematics, science and formal logic (Quine again, as well as David Lewis); and (3) an emergent ontology embracing both the natural and the spiritual.

In all these cases, it no longer seems that logic shields one from, or can decide between, metaphysical issues about truth.

1.3 Continental Philosophers on Truth

Continental discussions of truth have been dominated by one person, Martin Heidegger. He retained Husserl's phenomenological method of reduction to

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[70] Simon Blackburn, *Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Penguin, 2006), 151–68.
[71] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 315–56.
[72] Engel, *What's the Use of Truth?*, 1–31.

what is intuitively 'given' through manifestation, but removed the brackets between appearance and reality. And yet, for Heidegger, *all* that is indubitably given is 'being' itself, through its phenomenological self-disclosure. Being is in one sense 'fully' given to one's immanent human existence in time. But it is thereby given to one's whole existential situation, which is cultural and collective as well as personal, rather than to an isolated internal consciousness, as for Husserl, at least in his earlier phases. For the later Heidegger, this situation becomes a matter of one's human cosmic situatedness, rather than of human existence.[73]

Such a perspective renders truth an ontological matter: it is the Greek *aletheia*, which Heidegger translated as 'unconcealedness'.[74] By this, he meant that truth is primarily that aspect, or those aspects, of being by which it shows itself to one in comprehensible phenomena. It concerns the difficult question of the relationship between Being and beings which one has to face, and to interpret, even if most, if not all, specific readings of this circumstance inevitably obfuscate it, and substitute a consoling metaphysically ultimate single being or ontic entity for being itself, the ontological. Yet in terms of one's humanly constitutive stance, as the uniquely exposed open being or *Dasein* to Being as such, one would still appear to be dealing with a metaphysical issue. Heidegger nonetheless claimed to be 'overcoming metaphysics' because he remained committed, like his enemy Rudolf Carnap of the Vienna Circle, to the primacy of logic; but in his case, it was a commitment to the logic of phenomenology, or the description of the objectively normative structures of disclosure. For him, it is possible to give a precise account of the relationship between Being and beings, and so of truth, just as it ineluctably appears to us, and no more, in contrast to the vague 'speculations' of metaphysicians and theologians of the past. Heidegger remained, one might say, in the logical middle-space of twentieth-century philosophy, but unlike Frege and Husserl – for the most part – he claims to drag what had been the metaphysical exterior *itself* into this middle-space.

Rather as for Hegel, despite many differences, an immanent, post-Kantian logic is taken as a means by which to construct a new and objective ontology, in denial of a Kantian numinous remainder of 'things in themselves'. It is perhaps an irony that this reduction of metaphysics to ontology repeats and completes the founding gesture of modern 'onto-theology' which

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[73] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978). For the later Heidegger, see *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

[74] Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and the* Theaetetus, trans. T. Sadler (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

Heidegger claimed to be repudiating, although he mistakenly traced this back to Plato. Rather, it was the rendering of metaphysics, by the heirs of Avicenna and Duns Scotus, as exhaustively what soon came to be designated 'ontology', construed in terms of the logic of non-contradiction, which led to a flattened, univocal conception of being, within which God could be situated as one more 'being', albeit the supreme and incommensurably infinite one.[75]

Going beyond Spinoza, who had identified God with this immanentised univocal being, Heidegger dispensed with God altogether. He was originally motivated in part by a desire to set God apart from ontological philosophy, to insist upon the biblical God of revelation, and above all eschatology.[76] And yet such a discourse concerning God must remain, for Heidegger's philosophy, ineluctably particular and so *regional*. In this sense, not only did he free his purely ontological discourse from metaphysics by removing God from the very picture which had initially constituted onto-theology, which Heidegger dubiously understood as defining of metaphysics as such, but the shadow of a merely ontic God hovers over these endeavours.

Heidegger's new, fundamental ontology produced an immanentism which is a substitute for theology. It constituted a kind of neo-paganism for which a fated Being displaces the creating and disclosing deity of the Hebrew Bible. Being, which is of itself nothing, exists only in beings, but also hides itself there, as *something* in various human epochs of being, which in the manner of gnostic fallenness mis-take the ontological for something ontic.[77] So, when the truth of being is 'unconcealed', it is in order to show that all that is ever shown is nothingness, albeit a void which 'gives' all that it is not.

But such a circumstance would suggest that to know is to forget, to drown in the waters of *Lethe*, whereas one could suggest that a more literal translation of *aletheia* might be 'unforgetting'. Whereas nothing can be concealed, only *something* can be remembered. One could claim that Heidegger is trying to rule out the Platonic view of truth as recollection of what has been utterly forgotten by an etymological sleight of hand. Why should being be the

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[75] Olivier Boulnois, *Métaphysiques rebelles: Genèse et structures d'une science au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013), 261–410.

[76] Judith Wolfe, *Heidegger's Eschatology: Theological Horizons in Martin Heidegger's Early Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); *Heidegger and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

[77] Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1978), 214–65.

empty flow of time, and not a plenitude of transcendence which one can 'recall' through divine illumination?

In addition, one can suggest that Heidegger was not accurate in arguing that Plato had simply displaced *phusis*, as constantly 'emergent' truth, by *idea*, as static and eternal truth.[78] For it was *time* for Plato famously that was the 'moving image of eternity', and for Plato, the philosopher-lover who attains to recollection and anticipation of the eternal through the recollection and anticipation of temporal transitions. One can note that for Plato the eternal was not thematised as static: rather, it was itself the interplay of stable unity with unstable difference, the One and the Two, or Dyad.[79]

The Platonic solution was not countenanced by Heidegger, because for him, in phenomenological fashion, Being is 'given' to one's awareness, with its unknowability reduced to a sublime emptiness. However, after the work of Jacques Derrida, this seems questionable. Derrida was, in effect, the Sellars or Quine of phenomenology, calling into question what one might see as the Continental version of the myth of the given. He showed that there are no apprehensions or meanings purely given to us, free from the play of signs and their endlessly open interpretability.[80]

Derrida, nonetheless, presented this play of signs in Heideggerean terms, as the play of concealment and unconcealment of the *nihil*. It is as if, after Rorty, he regarded this open play, which substitutes for the given, as *itself* the unquestionable anarchic given, remaining within the post-Kantian terms of phenomenology. That there is no truth, only its perpetual ironic postponement in the play of signs, becomes *itself* the absolute truth. Later, in the wake of Emmanuel Levinas, Derrida went on to ethicise this postponement as the call of the absent Other, but perhaps this was in vain, if a henological gloss upon the void, supposedly appealing to the Good as the One beyond Being, does nothing to a-void it.

But how is this conclusion – within such open play – decidable? Within but against this play must arise the possibility that such play is a mask of a natural, physical process. Alternatively, there is the possibility that this play points to an infinite but inaccessible signified, to a plenitude of the Good, One or Being. In other words, if there is no given, but only the play of signs, then one cannot be *dogmatic* about the truth of being. Derrida's perpetual

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[78] Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*.

[79] Hans Joachim Kramer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, trans. John R. Catan (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990); Jean-Louis Chrétien, *L'Inoubliable et l'inespéré* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer).

[80] Jacques Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans Leonard Lawlor (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010).

'postponement' of the test of truth looks as residually foundationalist as Rorty's view that the truth can be tested in future practice.

For this reason, in part, Continental philosophy has more recently tended to reject the lingering humanism of deconstruction in favour of 'speculative realism', whether in the versions articulated by Gilles Deleuze or Alain Badiou, or their now multiple successors.[81] Phenomenology, it is suggested, does not secure a discretely non-dogmatic 'middle realm' between subjectivity and objectivity, because nothing is given to one prior to interpretation or linguistic construal, and this process itself cannot (as for Derrida) be legitimately transcendentalised.

An ontology raised on a phenomenological basis is accordingly going to risk a dogmatism which absolutises the perspective of the human spirit and fails to give an account of how spirit arises, and indeed, how it happens to 'correlate' with a received reality, as Badiou's pupil Quentin Meillassoux argues.[82] In order to reach the real beyond appearances, which cannot be critically isolated, one is doomed metacritically, if responsibly – with attention to both mathematics and science – to speculate, in such a manner which may call the Kantian critical turn itself into question. In this way, a deconstructed humanism is denounced, and the primacy of extra-human truth in-itself over truth for one is reaffirmed, albeit in a manner that problematically reinstates the unavoidability of the human speculative gesture or contribution.

Inevitably, in consequence, speculative realism oscillates between a confidence concerning one's human ability to reach the truth of things, including oneself as merely a thing amongst other things, and a continued reserve about the real and inaccessible truth of all things-in-themselves to *all* other things, and no longer simply to human beings as subjects, as for Kant. This is the position of Graham Harman.[83] Such an ultimate inaccessibility can also be taken as the gnostic truth of a real single reality which one's false pluralities and dualities disguise from one, as for François Laruelle.[84] For both these latter modes of realism, in contrast to Meillassoux's sustained Cartesian

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[81] Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1988); *Difference and Repetition* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); *Logic of Worlds: Being and Event II* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

[82] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*.

[83] Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: Pelican, 2017).

[84] François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Nicola A. Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

rationalism, reality lies beyond thought, and reason is itself perhaps ultimately unreal and illusory.

The main speculative varieties have been derived from the rival positions of Gilles Deleuze and Alain Badiou. Deleuze offered a neo-Bergsonian immanentist vitalism; Badiou, somewhat like Quine, offers a mathematical ontology. In both cases, the existence of human subjectivity is accounted for, and not just assumed, though in not altogether reductive ways that regard subjectivity as anticipated by either pre-subjective life, as for Deleuze, or as the aleatory openness of the void itself, as for Badiou.

It should be noted that speculative realism is apprised of the parallel courses and deconstructions of the Analytic and phenomenological traditions which I have endeavoured to chart in the foregoing. It draws on Analytic philosophers, such as Sellars, and tends to present itself as being as much 'post-Analytic' as 'post-Continental'.[85] It is possible that its advent is the beginning of the end of the peculiar and unprecedented 'great split' that arose in the twentieth century concerning the understanding of what philosophy is supposed to be. Rival modes of a logical disavowal of metaphysics tended to favour philosophy as a humble handmaid of science and mathematics, and philosophy as an elaborator of humanistic and subjective insights, respectively. It is not accidental that Henri Bergson and Alfred North Whitehead are currently returning to favour, as these two thinkers stood somewhat on the outside of both schools. Both tended rather to build upon, and yet attempt to surpass natural science, and to integrate scientific with humanistic and artistic insights.[86]

1.4 The Theological Turn

As an alternative to the foregoing, the so-called theological turn in phenomenology, associated with Jean-Luc Marion, dices with a full-blown metaphysics of the spirit, while claiming that it is offering an 'objective phenomenology'.[87] It articulates a pure donation beyond being, from nothing and of nothing, to no recipient, and not 'being as nothing', which is dragged into the logicist circle of the apparent, though this holds open a space in which revelation can be recognised. Since this space is henological, and can be transcendent, it would seem to escape the risk of an Heideggerean

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[85] Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[86] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Dover Books, 1998).

[87] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

reduction of theological discourse to the ontically regional. And indeed Marion's insistence upon the figure of 'distance' as disclosive of God, whilst not affirming a dialectical identity of such distance with absolute intimacy or hyper-presence, as for Augustine, might seem to confine God, in the wake of Lévinas, within the ontic space of the finite alterity of the other and her ethical demand upon one.[88]

   In the case of Continental thought, therefore, one sees a similar deconstructive collapse of the 'logicist middle', in favour of a return of primarily ontological issues. Post-analysis is paralleled by post-phenomenology. Truth has stopped being immediately 'given' to the everyday, or even to one's overall existential condition, yielding a specifically phenomenological ontology, as for Heidegger. Rather, it has become an extraordinary 'excess', whether in the form of David Lewis's unrestrained possibilism, Marion's saturated phenomenon, which grounds lesser phenomenally given truths, Deleuzian 'life', to which one conforms if one overcomes one's normal human condition, Badiou's speculated ontology of objectively empty mathematical realities, which undergird one's apparent solidities and which instigates revolutionary disturbances to disrupt their placid persistence, or Harman's and Laruelle's truth of untruth beyond the access of reason.

1.5 Pre-Modern Accounts of Truth

The attempt to adjudicate on truth via a logical instrument, and to 'suspend' certain ontological and epistemological disputes, appears to have become problematic. In consequence, the old arguments concerning truth seem to have returned: does truth exist? Is it real or ideal? Can there be spiritual as well as natural truths? And as we have seen in the case of McDowell, and the speculative realists, the possibility that truth enjoys an ontological dimension has surreptitiously returned to consideration. If twentieth-century philosophy was associated with a kind of agnostic quasi-realism, perhaps twenty-first-century philosophy will nurture a full-blown realism, whether in naturalist or spiritualist form?

   This possibility suggests that it might be time to reconsider the scope of pre-modern theories of truth, especially if their pivotal questioners, René Descartes and Immanuel Kant, are themselves being re-read, and if one cannot take for granted that seventeenth-century science dealt a death blow to the Platonic-Aristotelian legacy. This science was itself linked with

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[88] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne, 1999).

the philosophies now being questioned, and it is no longer clear that Galilean-Newtonian accounts of motion, the definitory core of physics, were negotiating motion at the fundamental level supposed by Aristotle, nor that the revised and deeper accounts of motion in more recent physics are incompatible with the reflections of Aristotle, just as they call into question supposed fundamental ontological validity to the idea that everything is 'naturally' moving perpetually in a void, until it is 'artificially' disturbed.[89] Given the non-universality of a merely mechanical physics, it cannot be taken for granted that it displaces questions concerning the substantial forms of things, why things 'hold together', why and how qualities 'inhere' in them, why they habitually move in the same fashion, and how they are originally generated: circumstances which modern physics, concerned with repeatable motions, processes, interactions and relations, assumes and may describe though not account for.[90]

Differing accounts of 'form', integral inclusions, motions and generations constituted the bases for pre-modern realism, and its 'ontological' approach to truth. Forms were held to be out there in reality, and, in a transformed mode, to arise within one's mind, through horizontal transmission or vertical participation. Mediation did not occur between alien realms of physical unknowing and mental knowing, but rather between materialised and spiritualised formations, between which there is an assumed though perhaps unknown continuity.[91]

We have already seen that the modern notion of an alien mediation, which involves a mysterious 'correlation', gradually came to be questioned in the last century in terms of the notion that one can never escape a non-interior mediating realm, linking inner and outer on the surface of one's human world, this linking being at once corporeal, linguistic and social.[92]

One question which this book addresses is whether one can restore a realism about truth in these latter terms, or whether such terms must be linked with recuperated notions of *eidos*, substantive inherence of qualities in substances, teleological motion and metaphysical generation. But this may involve a reversed enrichment of such pre-modern notions by a newer sense of the importance of body, language, time and community in the attainment

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[89] See Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: Verso, 2010), 49–147; Simon Oliver, *Philosophy, God and Motion* (London: Routledge, 2013); Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[90] Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* 329–44.

[91] John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001), 1–18.

[92] Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism.*

of knowledge, as well as an openness to the partial anticipation of this awareness on the part of the perennial exponents of a metaphysics of formed essences.

Indeed, one can note that the speculative realists suggest that merely to remain within the mediation of body, sign and social order may still confine one, or curtail one's attainment of the objectively real; also that one might have presumptuously overlooked more fundamental ecological continuities between the human and the non-human. These continuities, however, are usually parsed by the speculative realists in terms of anarchy rather than rule, the aleatory rather than the ordered, and in terms of un-forming or randomly re-ordering and disordering processes, rather than in terms of formal order. If, however, one is confined to speculation concerning truth, are speculations concerning *eidos*, *ousia*, *telos*, *arche* and emanation obviously to be ruled out of the critical or meta-critical court?

The most perennial tradition of Western reflection on truth reaches back to Plato's *Theaetetus*. Perhaps this is a problematic starting point, given the contention concerning how this dialogue should be read.[93] Is it part of a 'revision' of Plato's original doctrine of the Forms? According to this doctrine, one can affirm truth insofar as the apparent finite shapes of things – of every kind, from trees to rabbits to triangles to virtues – 'participate' in eternal forms which they obscurely resemble and share in, since the forms are not just paradigms for, but incommensurable sources of their participants. Does *Theaetetus* call this seemingly strange doctrine into rational question? Or, for the 'unitarian' interpretation of Plato, does the inconclusiveness of this dialogue suggest that, for Plato, this doctrine remains the absent answer to the problems that are posed?[94]

The latter view seems more hermeneutically convincing. In this dialogue, Plato first criticises what we might call the 'empiricist' idea that truth is mere appearance. Since appearances always change, and a new appearance constantly reveals an earlier one to have been in part illusory, and certainly an illusion if it were mistaken for an abiding reality, one must on this account of truth have recourse to an infinite regress of the appearances of appearances. Plato criticises, in the second place, the sophistic view that truth is arbitrary belief, and fails to locate any *logos* or 'account' of belief which would explain how one's plucking of thoughts from one's head in such a way is any less aleatory than plucking different kinds of birds at random from an aviary.

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[93] Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. John McDowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[94] Kenneth Dorter, *Form and Good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues: The* Parmenides, Theaetetus, Sophist *and* Statesman (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1994); John McDowell, *Plato: Theaetetus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).

However, one can suggest that this double critique negatively suggests Plato's earlier espoused position. If stability is found neither in things nor in the mind, then is it not the participation of passing things within time in the abiding forms which gives them a relative stability, or immanent 'form', in more Aristotelian terms? Perhaps Plato is implying that the true philosophy would make provision for gazing at the stars and yet keeping an eye on the road, so as not to cause the mirth of the servant girl by falling into the well, like Thales, to refer to the fable alluded to at *Theaetetus* 174a.

Along this line of reflection, and following recent commentators such as Lloyd Gerson, one does not need to regard Aristotle as being in opposition to Plato.[95]

Plato provides a vertical account of truth: truth requires the ontological stability of things beyond time. One could argue that much twentieth-century philosophy is in negative accord with Plato here: without the transcendent forms, truth cannot be in agreement with the facts, or consistent with mental performance: rather, it tends to vanish, disquotationally, in one way or another, in favour of a natural process which may have no rhyme or reason.

However, Plato is not denying the relative truth of passing, finite things. Here Aristotle plugs a gap by providing an account of how truth is horizontally conveyed to us: the forms that are in things, because they are not material, but *inform* matter, migrate into one's mind as *species* without matter.[96] This is an ontological theory of truth which includes an ontology of mind – *as opposed to* an 'epistemology', which is a modern endeavour that seeks to find criteria for true knowing, without commitment to the ontological status of this knowing.

One might argue that St Thomas Aquinas reaches a synthesis of Plato and Aristotle on this point, incorporating the intervening synthesising work of the Neoplatonists. The eternal forms are for him ideas in the mind of God, unified like the single Aristotelian first mover. One is moved to truth through the migration of forms from matter, through the sense to the intellect. But since one's mind is illumined by God, these forms recall the divine ideas in the divine utterance of the *Logos*, in which both things and human minds participate. It is in the divine light that one intuitively recognises things through one's senses, intuiting the coherence of essences, and the presence of being intellectually through one's mind, and rendering discursive judgements as to which sensory instances fall under which cognitive

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[95] Lloyd P. Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017).
[96] Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 1–18.

universals, in which categorical modes of inherence or attachment – whether substantial, properly or improperly accidental, relational, qualitative, quantitative or situational, etc. – and in which mixtures and proportions they are to be found.[97]

Material things for Aquinas have the relative advantage of participating in substantial being, but embodied minds have the relative advantage of participating, non-substantially, in a mode of being that is not inert, but which 'returns to itself' reflexively. In such a way, Aquinas achieves a kind of dynamic balance, as well as a connection between the realm of material things and the world of thinking and ideas.[98]

Moreover, Aquinas mediates and vitalises this balance by emphasising that reflection begins in sensation. The senses sense when they are aware that they are sensing, when they sense themselves. In doing so, the five senses synaesthetically combine, to compose a 'common-sensing' whose possibility is grounded in the factor of 'touch' which is shared by all the senses. For Aristotle, the medium of touch is not air or light, as for the other senses, but the bodily surface which communicates between matter and soul, and 'formally' unites them.[99] Somewhat similar conclusions were arrived at in the twentieth century by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, influenced by reconsiderations of Aristotle within the French spiritual realist tradition.[100] In this, one may see an ancient opening of mediation by *eidos* to mediation by the body, and a modern opening to a recuperation of the reality of form.

For Aquinas, the mediation by the senses and the body is not something which can be left behind as an initial instrumental means. Abstraction must 'return to the phantasm' if one is to complete one's act of judgement of the truth.[101] Sensory perception is both shadowed and enabled by an imaginative echo, in such a way that, in order to see this particular yellow aconite, one must be able to imagine it as somewhat other – larger or smaller, in flower or not, appearing alongside snowdrops, or flowering too soon to coincide with bluebells, under the shelter of a tree or out in the open – if one is to see it as a separable thing, and not part of a vague continuum of undifferentiated mergedness in a cosmically artificial and inauthentic herbaceous expanse. This means that, even at an imaginative level, there must be intimation of an

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[97] Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 19–59.
[98] John Milbank, 'Manifestation and Procedure: Trinitarian Metaphysics after Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas', in *Tomismo Creativo: Letture Contemporanee del 'Doctor Communis'*, ed. Marco Salvioli OP (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 2015), 41–117.
[99] Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 60–87.
[100] Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 15–16.
[101] Dominique Janicaud, *Ravaisson et la métaphysique: Une généalogie du spiritualisme français* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1997).

aconite as manifesting the universal of aconite, its last and defining 'specific difference', in and through its particular instantiation, since this is a precondition of its possible variability.

But if, for Aquinas, imagination, in sensing provisionally, opens up to the universal, then judgement, in affirming that a universal is here instantiated, must revert to the imagination, as rooting the universal back in the particular, if the aconite is to flower in one's comprehension. So, in the final staging-post of the interior journey of thought, for Aquinas, mind is drawn back to the very edge of the body and its external engagements.

We can see in the foregoing charting of negotiations of truth that, while twentieth-century logicism sought to be neither idealist nor realist, evading metaphysical commitment, Aquinas contrived to be both at once, in a metaphysical idiom. And the logical process was for him a *real* intellectual mode of existence and of life. In contrast to modern logical processes, it could not be taken to be independent of thinking mind, nor be seen as something translatable into a computerised process. It is for this reason that, for Aquinas, truth is first predicated of judgements, and not, as often the case for modern philosophy, predicated of propositions, which can be codified, and so confirmed in their instance by a machine.

Rather, if truth belongs to the realm of judgement, for which there are no codifiable prescriptions, to think must *primarily* be a process in which the soul – as touching, feeling and willing – is engaged. Even though, for Aquinas, theoretical reason is concerned with truth and not goodness, according to a *relative* primacy, the willing of goodness is engaged in a minor key in an act of understanding, because, according to the convertibility of the transcendentals, no truth can fail to be good, and vice versa.[102] To see that such and such an instance is a case of x, is also to appraise x through the will as desirable, to the degree that it instances x as something desirable in general. One's discernment and dismay at the diseased or wilted rose is central to one's recognising the relative absence of the genuine roseate quality in reality.

The human mind is not a recording machine, for the pre-modern tradition I here chart. It was construed rather as a sharing in a wider reality of mind, and not as self-enclosed or 'buffered'.[103] If the degree of presence of form must be judged, and true desire is constituent in judgement, then, if this judgement is not arbitrary, it must be a refraction of a higher illumination.

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[102] Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 19–59.
[103] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), esp. 37–42.

Equivalently, if every act of willing is tied through judgement to thought, then it cannot be an unconstrained act of freedom, merely by dint of being an unobstructed blind 'choice', indifferent to reasoning. Rather, the combination of thought and will in judgement renders the mind a dynamic process, whose truth cannot be guaranteed by advertence to its correspondence with an exterior pole.[104] According to the pre-modern perspective, this exterior is more or less true insofar as it more or less conforms to eternal truth, in which it shares, and whose infinite formation it echoes. Both the movements of things, and the higher, if less perfectly substantial and self-sustaining movement of human minds, must be referred for an assessment of their truth to their shifting reflection of what holds eternally. This assessment can only be made by a judgement without criteria. For the truth of this judgement is itself the inherently unpredictable event of participating in divine light. At this juncture, one comes to see that the question 'what is truth?' is equivalent to another question: does mind, as the spiritual capacity for judgement, exist? Mind for such an outlook is the finite occurrence of truth, or it is not present at all.

Now that in the twenty-first century we seem to be on the verge of countenancing that meaning might be 'out there' as well as in one's mind, this pre-modern vision may no longer seem so utterly strange. If meaning is indeed 'out there', it must be so in the mode of the significant shape, structure or form, coherently and intrinsically generated as such. These are shapes of totalities not merely 'accidentally' bound together as a cluster of infinitesimally reducible items, or of related motions which possess a single indivisible 'shape' that cannot be divided into discrete stages and still remain themselves, as the modern mechanical outlook, with its 'cinematographical illusion', as Henri Bergson called it, assumes.[105]

In such a case, one may envisage truth as the transition of objective meaning into the refinement of thought, and the translation of material into spiritual form, given that one has no plausible way of thinking consciousness, will, intention, judgement and semantic coherence in terms of 'matter' – deploying this term to refer to a mysterious dense limit or confinement which renders 'things out there' to pertain as things, in all their solidity. Nothing about material density, which obscurely coagulates or draws things into themselves as things, and bridges their interactions, would seem to suggest there is any room for that transparency and linking of the most distant that is innate to thought and yet seems to be anticipated

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[104] Thomas Pfau, *Minding the Modern* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2013).
[105] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 272–370.

by the forms of things in the world. So, for example, 'similarity' is something that can be thought, and yet it can be thought because there are at least two forms out there in the world which can manifest themselves as similar. This is another respect in which the Kantian division between mental scheme and sensory content does not seem coherent. For this reason, the iteration of the Spinozistic nostrum that 'we do not know what matter can do' makes little sense, since a matter that started to think merely as matter would not conform to any notion of 'matter' within one's inevitable linguistic use of the term.

Are we in a position to think of truth as the translation of inherently meaningful form – including consistent generation, ineffable inherence of qualities in substance and shaped process – into consciously intended and judged significance, which is simultaneously the event of the partial vertical reception of an eternal ideality and luminosity? Without such grounding, any notion of 'truth' will perhaps remains always relative, and in the end lacking in the qualities of abidingness and thrall which seem to belong to the notion of truth as such. This would give the idea of truth 'somewhere to go', salvaging it from a fate of redundancy.

1.6 Christianity and Truth

The modern theories of truth can be considered as variously 'spatialising' because they assume a static representation of being by mind in an unmoving and unmodified situation, suppressing the temporal dynamism and emergence of thought outlined in the foregoing. This remains the case when such theories have an historicist dimension, as for Hegel or Heidegger, because these positions involve a fated unfolding of a 'representation' of being by an inexorable reason, in spite of the fact that Being overwhelms being, for Heidegger, and reason becomes the content of being, for Hegel.

By contrast, for the pre-modern theories which assume an ordered cosmos, there obtained a fitting 'proportion' between being and reason, an 'identity' which was nonetheless sensitive to non-identity. So, as we have seen, in the transition from material substance to 'intellectual being', for Aquinas, there is an element of becoming, of ordered transition, or of horizontal event, whose truth is realised at every stage in terms of the vertical event of participation, of descending being and descending grace. As Plato affirmed at *Phaedo* 101c, it is this primacy of the vertical which, in paradox, sustains the significance of absolute horizontal novelty, because it will not allow the radically new to be reduced to mere emergence from anterior

latency, nor to a random or aleatory spontaneity.[106] Equally, for Plato, because the lost eternal truths do not loiter or linger within one's mind, in the manner of an a priori, it is the historically new and specific instances of beloved realities which allow one to recall the abiding truth which has until this point been lost to view.

It is in this way that, three times over, the pre-modern framework, because it construed the eternal as true, maintained a primacy for truth of one's temporal existence which modernity shies away from: as the spiritualisation of form as *species*, as the vertical descent of a new event of illumination, and as the event of recollection in time which this descent allows. For the modern shying away, truth becomes punctiliar and semelfactive, with time handed over to the further accumulation or stockpiling of, and progress towards, already known truths, whose redundancy renders them material truths of equivalence and tautology.[107]

For Aquinas, following the Church Fathers, the human condition of fallenness meant that one's natural reason is not only imperfect by nature but improperly impaired as the result of a contingent and untraceable cosmic disaster which rendered the original order of the Creation obscure. For this reason, human analogical reasoning to God is only 'certain' because of the event of the Incarnation. This is the arrival of 'The Truth' in time as an event which guarantees that any true speaking and true thinking is possible in a lapsed cosmos.[108] In such a way, time comes to figure in the Christian account of truth in a fourth way: not just as a continuous biographical event in individual lives but also as a continuous historical event of restored knowledge through the advent of revelation as intensified grace, realised through the arrival of truth itself, the divine *Logos* in a human body, in human words and in a web of human relationships at a specific point in time.

This Christian framework was radicalised by Søren Kierkegaard in the nineteenth century. He anticipated a 'postmodern' approach, as heir to Friedrich Jacobi and Johann Georg Hamann's meta-critique of Kant, because he problematised the epistemological approach to truth by suggesting that the anchoring of thought in language, in specific inherited cultural conditions and in the unique narrative experience of the individual subject, makes the

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[106] Plato, *Phaedo*, 101c–e.
[107] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, *passim*. Bergson, however, argued that pre-modern thinkers also subscribed to the 'cinematographic illusion', albeit in terms of *genera* rather than mechanisms. Although one could argue that the pre-modern sense of time, change and historicity was deficient, one can say that it did not tend to reduce time and motion to spatial categories. One can cite, for example, Aristotle, Plotinus and Augustine.
[108] Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 60–111.

distinction between analysis and synthesis, content and scheme impossible.[109] Kierkegaard returned, in an innovative way, to a Socratic and Platonic outlook, combining this with a heightened Christian sense of human temporality, rather akin to that of Augustine.[110] Truth for him involved 'moments' of time relatively coincident with eternity. Indeed, every moment is for Kierkegaard like this, since the isolatable present instance is snatched from the flow of time, albeit time consists in a string of such snatched moments. One can comprehend time as, and may assume time to consist in the narrative sequence of presences containing an innate and abiding significance: recollections of the eternal now reconstrued as non-identical anticipations of the eternal as the future eschaton. Without such recollection or repetition, nothing would be recognisable, as only the repeated and habituated may establish a primary identity.[111] Every identity is a 'truth', and is one's only real truth, above all the identity of the consistent and ethical subject, since the bad subject is a deteriorating, unreliable and inconsistent one. And yet the identity of oneself as a subject, as Kierkegaard explored, remains somewhat uncertain and ambiguous. Real truth would have to be lived in a consistent succession of moments. Truth is not just a matter of right teaching or aspiration. For truth to be any reality whatsoever, it must be absolute, even though one experiences it to be elusive. Utterly reliable and exemplary truth would have to be tantamount to the perfectly lived human life, which is only possible for God in human flesh. The Incarnation becomes hereby the precondition of truthfulness and is incorporated into his philosophy. Truth is always subjective, and an approximately true life is one which participates in the life of the God-Man through the sequence of apostleship.[112]

In this respect, Kierkegaard follows Hegel. But unlike Hegel, he does not subject the event of the Incarnation to a scheme of unfolding logical necessity which renders it ineluctably coincident with the historical process. Rather, to remain in the truth, one must repeat non-identically, in order to be faithful to the truth, the moment of Incarnation. Since Christ is the true teacher who *is* his own message, one can only learn his still Socratic lessons through an internal appropriation of them in the existential patterns of one's life in one's

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[109] Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[110] Hjördis Becker-Lindenthal, *Die Wiederholung der Philosophie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015); Hjördis Becker-Lindenthal and Ruby Guyatt, 'Kierkegaard on Existential Kenosis and the Power of the Image: *Fear and Trembling* and *Practice in Christianity*', *Modern Theology* 35, 4 (October 2019), 706–27.

[111] Catherine Pickstock, *Repetition and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[112] One could argue that Kierkegaard's account of this ecclesial dimension is somewhat imperfect.

own exceptional moments in time. There are no hermeneutic rules for doing so, other than the enigmatic rule of Christ's personhood itself.

In such a way, Christianity brings to the classical legacy the idea that truth is not just an oft-repeated event of approximate temporal conformity to the abiding, but also a singular performance, an exception. Since participation has been ruptured by the fall, it can only be hyperbolically restored by the descent of God into time. In consequence, participation in the truth is one and the same with the repetition of Christ, the God-Man, as well as the illuminated recall of the eternal *Logos*. And the particularity, alongside the universality, of this recall, is given emphasis. It is possible, as for Hegel, Heidegger and Schelling, to add history to an ontologised epistemology, but one then concludes to something fated. Rather, by adding history to ontology, as for Augustine and Kierkegaard, one tarries within the contingency of history and with the transcendent mystery of providence.

Such a perspective allows truth to be objective and yet provisional, even in the case of the absolute truth of Christ, since although this absolute truth arrived once in time, it is held that it will arrive again, in a final future, but differently. Truth, as the event of the realisation of the meaning (*eidos*, form) of being in mind, becomes emphatically historical. It is apparent that time is the site of the manifestation of truth, besides its dissolution. Truth remains, as for the pagan ancients, an ontological bond between mind, matter and eternity, but it has been further ontologised as the ever-new instance of arrival.

As we have already seen in this introductory chapter, the question at issue is whether the modern displacement of truth as being and event by truth as imminently redundant representation is a matter of critical progress, or of innovative intellectual assumptions. The various meta-critical dissolutions of the modern perspective which we have tried to chart begin to suggest that it might be the latter.