IS THERE ANYTHING WORTH SAVING IN EMPIRICISM?  
(9th Girona lecture)

In earlier lectures I said that the American pragmatist tradition founded by Peirce, James and Dewey is continued in the work of Sellars, Quine, Putnam, and Davidson. In these last two lectures I want to focus more narrowly on the work of Sellars and Davidson, and to relate their work to that of two other philosophers--Robert Brandom and John McDowell--who have been greatly influenced by them.

Robert Brandom's *Making it Explicit* and John McDowell's *Mind and World* were both published in 1994. These two path-breaking books are being widely discussed by anglophone philosophers. One reason for this is that both help bring out the overlap between the views of two great critics of empiricism--Sellars and Davidson, philosophers who never discussed one another's work. Though they share indebtedness to Sellars and Davidson, the two books differ dramatically. Brandom helps us to tell a story about our knowledge of objects which makes almost no reference to experience. He does not so much criticize empiricism as assume that Sellars has disposed of it. The term "experience" does not occur in the admirably complete index to Brandom's 700-page book; it is simply not one of his words. By contrast, McDowell's book tries to defend empiricism against Sellars and Davidson--conceding most of their premises but dissenting from their conclusions. Brandom can be read as carrying through on "the linguistic turn" by restating pragmatism in a form which makes James' and Dewey's talk of experience entirely obsolete. McDowell
can be read as arguing that pragmatists should not be allowed to banish the term "experience" from philosophy, because the price of such disappearance is much greater than Sellars, Davidson or Brandom realize.

The possibility of such disappearance raises the question of the place of British empiricism in the history of philosophy. The American pragmatists have usually been viewed as belonging to the same empiricist tradition to which the so-called "logical empiricism" of Russell, Carnap, and Ayer also belongs. Their version of empiricism has seemed, to many historians of philosophy, to differ from others simply by being less atomistic in its description of the perceptual given. Yet carrying through on the anti-dualist and pan-relationalist impulses which gave rise to James' and Dewey's critiques of Hume's and Mill's psychological atomism seems, in the light of Sellars and Davidson, to lead to a much more radical view--one which is no longer a version of empiricism at all.

Looked back upon in the light of the work of these two men, British empiricism may well seem a mere unfortunate distraction, a parochical and unimportant movement whose only impact on contemporary philosophy has been to provide piles of rubbish for us to sweep away. Those who have been convinced by Sellars and Davidson are led to wonder whether the epistemologico-metaphysical efforts of Locke, Berkeley and Hume leave us with no residue (except perhaps for the proto-pragmatism which Berkeley formulated in response to Locke's unhappy distinction between primary and secondary
qualities). Sellars and Davidson can be read as saying that Aristotle's slogan, constantly cited by the empiricists, "Nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the senses," was a wildly misleading way of describing the relation between the objects of knowledge and our knowledge of them.

McDowell, however, though agreeing that this slogan was misleading, thinks that we are now in danger of tossing the baby out with the bath. We need to recapture the insight which motivated the empiricists. He disagrees with Brandom's implicit suggestion that we simply forget about sense-impressions, and other putative mental contents which cannot be identified with judgments. The controversy between McDowell and Brandom is exciting wide interest among anglophone philosophers because it is forcing them to ask whether we still have any use for the notion of "perceptual experience." Brandom thinks that this notion was never of much use, and that its place can be taken by that of "non-inferential judgments caused by changes in the physiological condition of sense-organs". McDowell thinks that such a replacement would deprive of us an important empiricist insight--one which Locke and Aristotle shared, though both formulated it very badly indeed.

Brandom carries through on Sellars' criticism of "the Myth of the Given" by showing how the notion of "accurate representation of objective reality" can be constructed out of material provided by our grasp of the notion of "making correct inferential connections between assertions". He carries through on the "linguistic turn"
by showing that if we understand how organisms came to use a logical and semantical vocabulary we do not need to give any further explanation of how they came to have minds. For to possess beliefs and desires, on Brandom's view, is simply to play a language-game which deploys such a vocabulary. McDowell demurs from Brandom's conclusions while accepting many of his premises. He does not agree that we can reconstruct the notion of representation out of that of inference, and thinks that Brandom's "inferentialist" account of concepts does not work. For McDowell, it is equally important to accept Sellar's point that something without conceptual structure cannot justify a belief and to insist, pace Sellars, that mental events which are not judgments can justify beliefs. So he pumps new life into the notion of "perceptual experience" by arguing that such experience is conceptually structured, but is nonetheless distinct from the belief which may result from it.

McDowell's book is daring and original. Reading it side-by-side with Brandom's permits one to grasp the present situation in anglophone philosophy of mind and language. One way of describing that situation is to say that whereas Sellars and Davidson use Kantian arguments to overcome the Humean dogmas retained by Russell and Ayer, Brandom and McDowell supplement Kantian arguments with Hegelian ones. Most anglophone philosophers still do not take Hegel seriously, but the rise of what Brandom and McDowell refer to as their "Pittsburgh School of neo-Hegelians" may force them to. For this school holds that analytic philosophy still needs to pass over from its Kantian
I shall begin my discussion of Brandom and McDowell by citing some of the Sellarsian and Davidsonian doctrines which I and other admirers of these two men have found most inspiring.

Sellars is perhaps best known for a doctrine he called "psychological nominalism", formulated as follows:

...all awareness of sorts, resemblances, facts, etc., in short all awareness of abstract entities--indeed, all awareness even of particulars--is a linguistic affair...[Not] even the awareness of such sorts, resemblances and facts as pertain to so-called immediate experience is presupposed by the process of acquiring the use of language.

("Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", sec. 29)

Sellars discussion of awareness in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" follows the same lines as Wittgenstein's discussion of sensation in his Philosophical Investigations. Wittgenstein says, when talking about private sensations, that "a nothing would be as good as a something about which nothing can be said". Sellars' version of this slogan is that a difference which cannot be expressed in behavior is not a difference that makes a difference. The pragmatism he shares with Wittgenstein can be summed up as I did in my discussion of "pan-relationalism on Wednesday: if you find people talking about something like "sentience" or "consciousness" or "qualia" which seems not to tie up with anything else, to be capable of varying even when everything stays the same,
to be merely externally related to everything else, forget about it. Or, at least, do not regard it as a topic on which philosophers need to shed light.

Sellars' psychological nominalism paves the way for his claim that if you have semantical talk you have all the intentional talk you need. For, as Sellars says, "the categories of intentionality are, at bottom, semantical categories pertaining to overt verbal performances." (ibid., sec. 50).

The force of this claim is that if you understand how we started using a meta-linguistic vocabulary to comment on and criticize our overt verbal performances, you understand how intentionality came to exist. You can see intentionality, the ability to have beliefs and desires, and rationality, the self-conscious attempt to make those beliefs and desires more coherent, as emerging over the course of time, just as we see an ability to stand on two legs, and to pick up sticks, as emerging over the course of time. If you accept what Sellars says in the passages I have quoted, you can not only link cultural to biological evolution in the way Dewey hoped to link it, but do so far more perspicuously and convincingly than Dewey did.

The trick here is not to try, as Carnap once did, to give necessary and sufficient conditions for sentences like "The word 'red' refers, in English, to this color" or "That Spanish sentence is about the union of Leon and Castille" by describing how these sentences are used by the relevant sets of speakers. There is no reductionist impulse at work in Sellars, but there is a therapeutic
impulse. The therapy consists in saying: imagine how a term like "refers to" or "is about" came to be used, and you will thereby all you need to know about how reference, aboutness, intentionality came into the world. The analogy here is with a term like "money": imagine how a barter economy transformed itself into one in which legal currency and commercial credit were in use, and you know all you know both about how money came into existence and about what money is. No mystery remains for philosophers to puzzle about. The illusion of depth vanishes--an illusion which was caused, in this case, by the idea that only things that can be experienced through the senses are unproblematic.

The effect of focusing on intentionality rather than consciousness is to deflect attention from non-sentential sense-impressions--the sort of thing which might cause a squawk of "Red!" in a parrot or a human--to beliefs and desires, the sort of thing expressed in complete sentences. Focusing on consciousness leads to the question which intrigues Nagel and other defenders of the idea of "qualia": the question of how machines which respond differentially to a range of stimuli differ from animals which do the same. For Nagel, there is a thing called "consciousness" which such machines, and zombies, lack, and which animals such as ourselves possess. For Sellars, it is not clear that the machines lack anything except behavioral flexibility and complexity.

To put this point another way, almost all philosophers, from Aristotle through Locke to Hegel and Dewey have assumed that there
was a sort of quasi-intentionality called "sentience" present in non-human animals, and that sentience was something more than merely an ability to respond differentially. Those who denied this, as Descartes did in his suggestion that non-human animals might be just complex machines, are thought to be insufficiently sympathetic to the situation of dogs--creatures which have feelings but no language. The most common objection to Sellars' psychological nominalism is that babies and dogs are aware of pain--and therefore have some sort of proto-consciousness--even though their awareness can obviously not be a "linguistic affair". Philosophers like Nagel and Searle still dismiss psychological nominalism on this ground alone: that he failed to make a place for sentience.

As I shall be saying in my final lecture, McDowell wishes to revive the notion of sentience, even though he accepts psychological nominalism. But almost the only passage in Brandom's book at which sentience is mentioned reads as follows: Described in the language of physiology, our sensing may be virtually indistinguishable from that of nondiscursive creatures. But we not only sense, we also perceive. That is, our differential response to sensory stimulation includes innoninferential acknowledgement of propositionally contentful doxastic commitments...Our mammalian cousins, primate ancestors, and neonatal offspring--who are sentient and purposive but not discursive creatures--are interpretable as perceiving and
acting only in a derivative sense. [emphasis added] An interpreter can make sense of what they do by attributing propositionally contentful intentional states to them, but the interpreter's grasp of those contents and of the significance of those states derives from mastery of the richer practices of giving and asking for reasons...

(Making it Explicit, p. 276)

On Brandom's and Sellar's view, the difference between complex animals like dogs or complex machines like computers on the one hand, and simple animals like amoebae or simple machines like thermostats on the other is simply that it pays to describe the former, but not the latter, as having beliefs and desires. We can predict and explain the behavior of dogs and computers on the basis of such descriptions better than we can without them. So we do what Daniel Dennett calls "taking the intentional stance" toward these more complexly behaving entities. There is not much point in adopting the intentional stance toward amoebae and thermostats, though we can do so if we like.

For pragmatists, the question which looms large for Thomas Nagel and John Searle "Yes, but do computers really have beliefs and desires?" does not arise. For the question of the utility of a vocabulary is not distinct from the question of the real possession of properties signified by the descriptive terms of that vocabulary. Pragmatists agree with Wittgenstein that there is no way to come between language and its object. Philosophy cannot answer the question: Is our vocabulary in accord with the way the world is?
It can only answer the question: Can we perspicuously relate the various vocabularies we use to one another, and thereby dissolve the philosophical problems which seem to arise at the places where we switch over from one vocabulary into another?

I read Sellars and Brandom as pragmatists, because I treat psychological nominalism as a version of the pragmatist doctrine that truth is a matter of the utility of a belief rather than of a relation between pieces of the world and pieces of language. If our awareness of things is always a linguistic affair, if Sellars is right that we cannot check our language against our non-linguistic awareness, then philosophy can never be anything more than a discussion of the utility and compatibility of beliefs—and, more particularly, of the various vocabularies in which those beliefs are formulated. There is no authority outside of convenience for human purposes which can be appealed to in order to legitimize the use of a vocabulary. We have no duties to anything non-human.

Brandom puts this point by saying that philosophy's job is to make our practices, linguistic and other, explicit, rather than to judge these practices in the light of norms which lie outside them. He takes Wittgenstein's infinite-regress argument against the possibility of appealing to such outside norms as fundamental to his metaphilosophical position. "Pragmatic theories of norms are distinguished from platonist theories, in treating as fundamental norms implicit in practices rather than norms explicit in principles" (ibid., p. 23; cf. p. 77, p. 629). There is no way for human beings
to get beyond their own practices except by dreaming up better practices, and no way to judge these new practices better except by reference to their various advantages for various human purposes. To say that philosophy's task is to make human practices explicit rather than to legitimize them by reference to something beyond them is to say that there is no authority beyond utility for these purposes to which we can appeal.

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So much, for the moment, for Sellars and psychological nominalism. I turn now to Davidson. Davidson's most pregnant and striking philosophical doctrine is his claim that most of our beliefs, most of the beliefs of any language-user, must be true. This is also his most controversial doctrine, but I choose it because I think that expounding it is a good way of bringing out Davidson's central contribution to the philosophy of mind and language: his insistence that the idea of "accurate representation of reality" is as dispensable a notion as "sentience" or "experience" or consciousness".

As I read him, Davidson does for the very idea of representation what Sellars does for the very idea of experience. Just as Sellars gets rid of the question "What is the relation between experience and knowledge?" by replacing experiences with non-inferentially acquired beliefs, so Davidson gets rid of the question "How do we know that our knowledge represents the world accurately?" by replacing beliefs viewed as representations with beliefs viewed as states attributed to persons in order to explain their behavior.
Both of these therapeutic moves are recommendations for changes in philosophers' linguistic practices, suggestions that we shall lose nothing except our grip on traditional philosophical problems by making these changes.

In an essay called "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge" (in Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson, ed. E. LePore (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, pp. 307-319) Davidson says that a correct understanding of the speech, beliefs, desires, intentions and other propositional attitudes of a person leads to the conclusion that most of a person's beliefs must be true, and so there is a legitimate presumption that any one of them, if it coheres with most of the rest, is true (p. 314)

He sums this up as the doctrine that "belief is in its nature veridical".

If one understands true beliefs as accurate representations of something which would be as it is even if never represented adequately in any human language, then this claim will seem paradoxical. But if one takes beliefs to be states ascribed to an organism or a machine in order to explain and predict its behavior, then one will find oneself agreeing with Davidson that we can't in general first identify beliefs and meanings and then ask what causes them. The causality plays an indispensable role in determining the content of what we
say and believe”. This is a fact we can be led to recognize by taking up, as we have, the interpreter's point of view. (p. 317)

Taking up that point of view amounts to being interested in what people believe not because we want to measure their beliefs against what they purport to represent, but because we want to deal with these people's behavior. Dealing with that behavior may mean disregarding those people's beliefs as insufficiently coherent with her own, and thereupon treating them as we treat the uninformed and uneducated. Or it may mean blending ours and theirs in the course of instructive conversation. Or, in the most interesting case, it may mean being converted by those with whom we have been conversing to a new Weltanschauung, a fairly radical change in one's goals.

Davidson's coherentism amounts to the claim that the decision between these alternatives is never a matter of comparing these people's beliefs with non-beliefs, thereby testing for accuracy of representation. It is always a matter of seeing how much coherence between new and old candidates for belief is possible.

Putting this point in Brandom's preferred terms of "social practices", decisions about truth and falsity are always a matter of rendering practices more coherent or of developing new practices. They never require us to check practices against a norm which is not implicit in some alternative practice, real or imagined. Davidson agrees with Sellars that the search for truth cannot lead
us beyond our own practices into what Sellars called "an arche beyond discourse". It can only be a search for a discourse which works better than previous discourses, a discourse which is linked with those previous discourses by the fact that most of the beliefs had by any participant in discourse must be true.¹

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Brandom would like to fill in the details of Davidson's argument that a grasp of the distinction between true and false belief "can emerge only in the context of interpretation, which alone forces us to the idea of an objective, public truth". (See Making it Explicit, p. 152-3) He agrees with Davidson that interpretation comes first and objectivity later--that the distinction between intersubjective agreement and objective truth is itself only one of the devices we use in order to improve our social practices. But he thinks that Davidsonians need to be more tolerant of notions such as "representation" and "correspondence to reality".

Brandom's attitude toward these notions is analogous to McDowell's attitude toward the notion of "experience." Just as McDowell thinks that one can be a psychological nominalist and still

¹See Davidson's remark that we do not "understand the notion of truth, as applied to language, independent of the notion of translation ("On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" in Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation, p. 194). Compare Sellars' claim that "semantical statements of the Tarski-Carnap variety do not assert relations between linguistic and extralinguistic items" (Science and Metaphysics, p. 82), but rather relate linguistic items with whose use we are familiar, elements of a language we already know, with other linguistic items. (See also "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", sec. 31.)
find something true and important in empiricism, so Brandom thinks that one can be a good pragmatist and a good Davidsonian and still find something true in the correspondence theory of truth, and in the distinction between reality and appearance. This is the burden of chapter 8 of his book, which is titled "Ascribing Propositional Attitudes: The Social Route from Reasoning to Representing".

Brandom is, in this respect, to Davidson as to McDowell is to Sellars. Each thinks that a distinguished precursor was unfortunately tempted to throw the baby out with the bath. Brandom wants to recuperate "representation" and McDowell wants to recuperate "perceptual experience". It is natural, therefore, that both Brandom and McDowell have doubts about my own version of pragmatism--a version which delights in throwing out as much of the philosophical tradition as possible, and urges that philosophers perform their social function only when they change intuitions, as opposed to reconciling them. In the eyes of both Brandom and McDowell, I am a sort of aging enfant terrible, making the appropriation of Sellars and Davidson unnecessarily difficult by recasting the views of each in unnecessarily counter-intuitive ways.

In what follows, I shall first summarize Brandom's treatment of objectivity and of representation. Then I shall discuss the relative advantages of abandoning and preserving the notion of "representation".

Davidson's view of representation is simple and dismissive.
He says that "Beliefs are true or false, but they represent nothing. It is good to be rid of representations, and with them the correspondence theory of truth, for it is thinking there are representations that engenders thoughts of relativism." ("The Myth of the Subjective", in *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*, ed. M. Krausz, pp. 165-6.) Brandom's view is more complex. He writes as follows:

The chief task [of chapter 8] is to explain the representational dimension of thought and talk...The representationalist order of explanation, dominant since the seventeenth century, presents propositional contentfulness in representational terms from the outset...This approach is objectionable if it is pretended that an account in these terms gives one an independent grip on what is expressed by the declarative use of sentences--as though one could understand the notions of states of affairs or truth conditions in advance of understanding claiming or judging. The representationalist semantic tradition embodies an undeniable insight: whatever is propositionally contentful does necessarily have such a representational aspect; nothing that did not would be recognizable as expressing a proposition. (Making it *Explicit*, pp. 495-6)

To grasp what Brandom is saying it is important to realize that he does not think that to call a belief true is to describe a property
the belief has. A fortiori, it is not to impute the property of corresponding to reality. Brandom thinks that "the classical metaphysics of truth properties misconstrues what one is doing in endorsing the claim as describing it in a special way". (ibid., p. 515) For Brandom, to call one's conversational partner's claim "true" is simply to endorse it, not to say something about its relation to non-linguistic reality. So Brandom can heartily agree with Davidson that most of our beliefs must be true, if that simply means that translation and conversation require that interlocutors endorse most of each other's beliefs (not to mention their own).

This is a thoroughly pragmatist approach to ascriptions of truth. But Brandom thinks this approach is compatible with saying that "objects and the world of facts that comprises them are what they are regardless of what anyone takes them to be" (ibid., p. 594-5). This latter claim seems to be at odds with my claim, in earlier lectures, that pragmatists are pan-relationalists who do not believe that there is a way the world is in itself. For Brandom thinks that "thought and talk gives us a perspectival grip on a nonperspectival world." (ibid., p. 594) For Nietzsche, Dewey and Nelson Goodman there are perspectives all the way down, but for Brandom there seems to be something more.

It seems that way, but the appearance may be illusory. Brandom never suggests that inquiry will someday converge to this non-perspectival world. On the contrary, he insists that any and very grip on it will be perspectival, determined by some historically
contingent set of human needs and interests. Brandom is not saying that there is, pace Goodman, a Way the World Is. He is saying that something like the idea of such a way is essential to our linguistic practices. He is, as he says, reconstruing objectivity as consisting in a kind of perspectival form, rather than in a nonperspectival content. What is shared by all discursive practices is that there is a difference between what is objectively correct in the way of concept application and what is merely taken to be so, not what it is—the structure, not the content. (ibid., p. 600)

Like Davidson—and unlike Peirce, Putnam and Habermas—Brandom is not committed to defining "true" in epistemic terms. He does, in other words, define by reference to "what is taken true by all the members of a community, or by the experts in a community, or what will always be taken true by them, or by what would be taken true by them under some ideal conditions for inquiry". (ibid., p. 600). As he goes on to say "there is no bird-s eye-view above the fray of competing claims from which those that deserve to prevail can be identified, nor from which even necessary and sufficient conditions for such deserts can be formulated. (ibid., p. 601; emphasis added). Brandom is not defining the word "true", but rather agreeing with Davidson that one should not attempt such a definition.

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When I first read Brandom's book, it seemed to me that Brandom
was abandoning hard-won ground by making the notions of "representation", "fact", and "making true" respectable. This was because I had gotten accustomed to Davidson's repudiation of all these notions. I no longer am sure about this, and now I am inclined to say that Brandom and Davidson pretty much agree on all the issues, and are simply employing different rhetorical strategies to make pretty much the same points. But rhetoric matters, especially if, as I do, one sees the pragmatist tradition not just as clearing up little messes left behind by the great dead philosophers, but as taking part in a world-historical change in the self-image of European and American civilization.

Consider the question of whether there are such things as facts—what Strawson sneeringly called "sentence-shaped bits of reality"—which make true sentences true. Davidson thinks that one of the great contributions of Tarski was to show how could avoid the notion of facts. He thinks that there is no need to talk of any sort of truth-maker, and that doing so is highly misleading. Brandom thinks that doing so is harmless, and cheerfully says things that would make Davidson's hair stand on end. For example:

the nonlinguistic facts could be largely what they are, even if our discursive practices were quite different (or absent entirely) for what claims are true does not depend on anyone's claiming of them. But our discursive practices could not be what they are if the nonlinguistic facts were different. (Ibid., p. 331)
Again, Davidson thinks that one good reason never to talk about representation is that doing so encourages talk of relativism, and thus attempts to defeat relativist by cultivating what philosophers like Michael Devitt and Crispin Wright call "our realist intuitions"—our sense that we are committed to getting something out there, something which exists independently of our human needs and interests, right. Brandom, in an as yet unpublished reply to my doubts about his book, says that "a central enterprise of [his] book is an anti-relativist one: to offer an account of what it is to be committed to the correctness of our claims answering to how things actually are, rather than to anyone or everyone takes them to be". He goes on to say that "our use of de re ascriptions of propositional attitudes" expresses our nonrelativist commitments to one way of talking being a better way of talking about what there really is—[as when we say things like] 'Ptolemy claimed of the orbital trajectories of the planets that they were the result of the motion of crystalline spheres'.

I think that Davidson's response to the passages I have just quoted from Brandom would run something like this: Certainly we should not think of our claims answering to how anyone or everyone takes things to be, but neither should we take them to answer to how things really are. The alternative is to take them as about things, but not as answering to anything, either objects or opinions. Aboutness is all you need for intentionality. Answering to things is what the
unhappy notion of representing adds to the harmless notion of aboutness: it is what differentialists good inferentialists like you and me from the representationalist bad guys. For as long as our beliefs are said to be answerable to something we shall want to be told more about how this answering works, and the history of epistemology suggests that there is nothing to be said. Aboutness, like truth, is indefinable, and none the worse for that. But "answering" and "representing" are metaphors which cry out for further definition, for literalization.

Whether or not this would be Davidson's response, it is mine. It seems to me that when Brandom says he is offering us a non-relativist view is he doing the same sort of thing that Kant did when he said that he was not a sceptic, but an empirical realist. A lot of his readers, including Hegel, decided that a transcendental idealist was just what they had been accustomed to calling a sceptic. Brandom says he is not a relativist, even though the objectivity he believes in is "a kind of perspectival form, rather than a nonperspectival content". But Brandom's readers who are accustomed to use "relativist" as a term of abuse are going to insist that being a relativist consists precisely in denying the existence of nonperspectival content. The shift from "about X" to "answering to X" is the same sort of shift as Kant makes from "non-illusory" to "empirically real"; this shift did not give critics the full-blooded notion of reality they were demanding.

Brandom wants to get from the invidious comparison made in such
de re ascriptions as "She believes of a cow that it is a deer," to the traditional distinction between subjective appearance and objective reality. It seems to me that all that such invidious comparisons give one is a distinction between better and worse tools for handling the situation at hand--the cow, the planets, or whatever. They do not give us a distinction between more and less accurate descriptions of what the thing really is, in the sense of what it is all by itself, apart from the utilities of human tools for human purposes. But only the latter sense of "what it really is" is going to satisfy people who worry about relativism. What Brandom calls "the fundamental distinction of social perspectives between commitments one attributes to another and those one undertakes oneself" gives me a distinction between your bad tools and my better ones. But I doubt that it gives us a distinction between my representing reality accurately and your representing it inaccurately.

I can restate my doubts by considering Brandom's description of "intellectual progress" as "making more and more true claims about the things that are really out there to be talked and thought about". I see intellectual progress as developing better and better tools for better and better purposes--better, of course, by our lights. Philosophers like Searle, who find Kuhn's description of scientific progress intolerable, insist that we are only making genuine intellectual progress if we are getting us closer and closer to the way things are in themselves. Brandom's perspectivalism prevents
him from using the phrase "in themselves", but his term "more and more true claims about the thing things that are really out there" flirts with something like the "bird's eye view above the fray of competing claims" which he has already repudiated.

To sum up, my hunch is that Brandom, like Kant, is trying too hard to compromise an uncompromisable dispute, and so falls between two stools. When he says that "concern with getting things right is built into any practices that generate disposition-transcendent conceptual norms," aggressive realists like Searle are going to read "getting things right" in one way, while sympathetic pragmatists like me are going to read them in another way. It is hard to pour new wine into old bottles without getting the customers confused.

I want to interpret the claim that Copernicus got right what Ptolemy got mostly wrong, or that St. Paul got right what Aristotle got mostly wrong, as claims about the greater suitability of the former figures for the purposes I want to serve. But people who worry about realism vs. anti-realism—as I do not, but as the vast majority of angolphone philosophers do—will feel cheated if they think that that is all that Brandom has in mind.

One way of putting the issue is to revert to the words I put in Davidson's mouth earlier, and to say that one should just stop answering altogether, thus avoiding the choice between answering to people and answering to non-people. As long as the latter choice is posed, one will count as a defender of objectivity merely by virtue of denying, as Brandom does, that truth can be identified with what
people believe under certain conditions. But when Brandom then goes on to say that he identifying truth with answering to non-people, realists like Searle will ask him how he knows that he is giving the right answers.

The choice is between dropping the notions of "answering" and "representing" (though not those of "of" and "about") and keeping them. My argument for dropping them is that they preserve an image of the relation between people and non-people which, in these lectures, I have been calling "authoritarian," and denouncing. I see both Brandom's identification of calling an assertion "true" with endorsing it and Davidson's refusal to define "true" as tools for persuading us to abandon this authoritarian image. But I see Brandom's persistence in using the terms "getting right", "really is" and "making true" as tools which will fall into authoritarian hands, and be used for reactionary purposes.

In the controversy between the authoritarians and the anti-authoritarians, Brandom's heart is certainly in the right place. This is clear from his insistence that reality has no norms of its own to offer, apart from those which we develop. But his rhetoric will not convey the state of his heart to those who still hanker after answerability.

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I shall conclude with some remarks on a neologism which Brandom invents in order to legitimize his use of the word "fact". This is the word "claimable". I quote from another unpublished paper of his
...we should distinguish between two sense of 'claim'; on the one hand there is the act of claiming, and on the other there is what is claimed. I want to say that facts are true claims in the sense of what is claimed (indeed, of what is claimable), rather than in the sense of true claimings. With this distinction on board, there is nothing wrong with saying that facts make claims true--for they make claimings true. This sense of 'makes' should not be puzzling, it is inferential. "John's remark that p is true because it is a fact that p" just tells us that the first clause follows from the second...

Consider an argument that what makes opium put people to sleep is its dormitive power. The sense of 'makes' here should not be puzzling, it is inferential. "The doctor's remark that opium puts people to sleep because it has a dormitive power" just tells us that the first clause follows from the second.

It seems to me that the notion of a claimable is as useless for explanatory purposes as that of dormitive power. Unless we are given some details about how the opium's dormitive power does the trick, what it consists in, we shall not find the term "dormitive power" useful. It is not rendered useful just because clauses referring to it can be given an inferential role. I find the notion of "claimable" useless, except to encourage a rhetoric which suggests that human inquiry is "answerable" to something, a rhetoric which
seems to me better avoided.

Brandom points out that to deny the existence of facts and truths about protons long before the term "proton" appeared in language leads to paradox. This is because it seems reasonable to infer from

(1) There were photons five million years ago
and then to

(2) It was the case then that there were photons
and then to

(3) It is true that it was the case then that there were photons
and then to

(4) It was true then that there were photons.

It seems reasonable, but of course philosophers have, paradoxically, denied it. Heidegger notoriously said that "before Newton, Newton's laws were neither true nor false". Brandom quotes me as having said "Since truth is a property of sentence, since sentences are dependent for their existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made by human beings, so are truths."

Paradox, however, is sometimes a small price to pay for progress, as the examples of Copernicus, Kant, and Freud may suggest. Further, it is a price Brandom himself is willing to pay, at least in the eyes of Searle, Nagel and others, when he follows Sellars in casting sentience to the winds and denying that dogs and babies have beliefs "except in a derivative sense". I am not sure that the paradox of which Heidegger and I are guilty is all that much more paradoxical
than the one which many people think Sellars and Brandom are guilty of when they assert that all awareness is a linguistic affair.

I am willing to say that facts make beliefs true in a derivative sense of "make"—namely, the inferential sense. The force of saying that this sense is derivative and metaphorical is to decline responsibility for giving further details about how the making gets done. Analogously, the force of saying that babies and dogs have beliefs only in a derivative and metaphorical sense is to decline responsibility for explaining how they differ from thermostats. Reference to such derivative senses should, however, be avoided where possible—if only because employing them will seem a cop-out to one's philosophical critics.

David Lewis once said that philosophy is a matter of gathering together our intuitions and then finding the way to keep as many as possible of them. I think that it is a matter of treating both intuitions and accusations of paradox as the voice of the past, and as possible impediments to the creation of a better future. Of course the voice of the past must always be heeded, since rhetorical effectiveness depends upon a decent respect for the opinions of mankind. But intellectual and moral progress would be impossible unless people sometimes, in exceptional cases, can be persuaded to turn a deaf ear to ancestral voices.