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OBJECTIVITY AND MODERN IDEALISM: WHAT IS THE QUESTION?[1]

I think many persons now see all or part of what I shall say: but not all do, and there is a tendency to forget it, or to get it slightly wrong. In so far as I am merely flogging the converted, I apologize to them.

J. L. Austin, ' The Meaning of a Word'

I. Introduction

If you're going to call a volume 'Philosophy in Mind' you should eventually point out that in one crucial sense, the mind cannot possibly matter as much to philosophy today as it has in the recent past. As David Stove has recently reminded us (Stove 1991), most of the good philosophers writing in the 19th century took it for granted that *the world as a whole* was in some sense psychic — penetrated through with thought or mentality — and hence that the study of Mind was the proper foundation for the study of absolutely everything. These days, of course, we can hardly take the idea seriously. Metaphysical idealism of the old German sort strikes us as simply incredible. And while the facts surrounding the eclipse of idealism are no doubt complex, it's not very hard to say what it is about the way we think now that places the view beyond the pale of serious possibility.

The Mind of the idealists was, after all, a very peculiar thing by our lights: an entity not quite identical with anything we encounter in the natural world — and this includes the 'subject' of empirical psychology — which nonetheless somehow constitutes or conditions that world. And the trouble with idealism is that we just can't bring ourselves to believe in this Mind anymore. A flexible and relatively undemanding naturalism functions for us as an unofficial axiom of philosophical common sense. This naturalism is so vague and inchoate that any simple formulation will sound either empty or false. But it is a real constraint: and one of its implications is that if we believe in minds at all, they are the embodied minds of human beings and other animals. Our most basic assumptions thus leave no room for the trans-empirical Subject whose relation to nature was the urgent problem of post-Kantian metaphysics. And since it is just plain obvious that empirical, embodied minds

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do not actively constitute the bulk of inanimate nature, the idea that the world as a whole is in some sense mental can only strike us as an incredible fantasy.

So understood, the problem of idealism is about as dead for us as a philosophical problem can get. Still, to judge from the jargon of recent metaphysics one may legitimately suspect that the ghost has not been entirely laid. We may not discuss 'idealism' any more. But we do discuss — at great length, and with surprising intensity — something called 'realism' and the various 'antirealisms' to which it is opposed. Now the debates that unfold under these colorless terms are terrifically various; and the emergence of a daunting technical apparatus can give the impression that in each case some relatively precise thesis in logic or semantics is at stake. But of course these logical and meaning-theoretic theses are rarely so urgent in themselves. Rather they derive their urgency (along with their unity as a class) from their supposed connection to something much vaguer — a metaphysical stance or picture, deriving directly from the concerns of post-Kantian philosophy, the cogency of which is supposed to turn on these seemingly more tractable, technical questions.

Like the older debates over realism and idealism, the modern discussions are concerned *au fond* with our right to certain imagery. Whether the topic is moral realism, realism about causation and modality, platonism in the philosophy of mathematics, or Metaphysical Realism about the world as a whole, what the realist mainly claims is the right to say things like this:

Our discourse about X concerns a domain of fact that is *out there*. These facts obtain *anyway*, regardless of what we may think. When all goes well, inquiry in the disputed area *discovers* what is *already* there, rather than *constituting* or *constructing* its object. Successful thought amounts to the *detection* of something real, as opposed to a *projection* onto the real of our own peculiar or subjective perspective ...

And so on down the list of familiar words and pictures. The antirealist denies our right to this imagery, just as the post-Kantian idealist would have done. The link between the old problem of realism and the various new ones is thus forged at the level of rhetoric. And the most basic question one can ask in this area is then simply this: once one has rejected the post-Kantian metaphysics of experience with its commitment to a trans-empirical Subject, what can this denial possibly mean?

We can epitomize the realist's basic commitment by saying that for the realist as against his opponents, *the target discourse describes a domain of genuine, objective fact.* The basic foundational question is then: What is objectivity in the relevant sense, and what are the alternatives? Can we find a definite and debatable thesis upon whose truth the legitimacy of the rhetoric of objectivity depends? If anything has emerged from the long and noisy discussion of these issues, it is the pointlessness of trying to engage them without first attaining a sharper account of what the familiar imagery is all about. This is the question I would like to discuss here.

I should say from the start that I am pessimistic about the prospects for an answer. So far as I can see, it adds nothing to the claim that a certain state of affairs obtains to say that it obtains objectively. To be sure, we do have 'intuitions' of a sort about when the rhetoric of objectivity is appropriate and when it isn't. But these intuitions are fragile, and every effort I know to find the principle that underlies them collapses. We *sense* that there is a heady metaphysical thesis at stake in these debates over realism— a question on a par in point of depth with the issues Kant first raised about the status of nature. But after a point, when every attempt to say just what the issue is has come up empty, we have no real choice but to conclude that despite all the wonderful, suggestive imagery, there is ultimately nothing in the neighborhood to discuss.

I won't have time to defend this pessimism here. I'll spend most of the paper distinguishing this 'fugitive' question from other perfectly good ones with which it is sometimes confused. I shall then consider only a small handful of the extant proposals for framing a definite question of objectivity. The proposals I want to discuss take the traditional distinction between primary and secondary qualities as the starting point for describing a more general contrast between features of the objective world — the world as it is in itself — and features of the world as it is for us. I will suggest that these proposals fail — not because they fail to draw an interesting line, but because the line they draw fails to correlate in any interesting way with our intuitions about the appropriateness of the realist's rhetoric of objectivity. In a later paper I hope to extend the critique to a range of distinct proposals. For now, however, my pessimism about the genuineness of the issue plays the role of a working hypothesis, nothing more.

I should guard against one misconstrual, however. Some philosophers will be tempted to conclude that to say that there is no clear statement of the fugitive question is to say, in effect, that the realist wins on the grounds that his opponent has failed to stake out a genuine thesis. My own view, by contrast, is that it would be more accurate to say that in that case neither side wins. If it makes no good sense to deny the realist's characteristic claims, then it makes no good sense to affirm them either. Quietism, as the view is sometimes called,

is not a species of realism. It is rather a rejection of the question to which 'realism' was supposed to be the answer.

II. Realism[2]

Now in fact this overstates my worry. What I have called the realist's central contention — the thesis that the disputed facts are objective facts — naturally factors into two parts: the thesis that there really are facts to discuss in the relevant area, and the further claim that those facts are in some sense objective. The first claim is clear enough, I think, and insofar as the discussion of realism turns on it, that discussion makes excellent sense. My doubts are confined to the second claim.

Let us follow what seems to be an emerging consensus by dividing the first thesis in turn into two more basic components.

The realist's most basic commitment is to the view that

(1) Declarative statements in the disputed area are genuinely assertoric: they normally express beliefs rather than some other state of mind, and are therefore properly evaluated in terms of truth and falsity.

To reject this part of the realist's view is to embrace a species of 'non-factualism' or 'non-cognitivism' in the disputed area. The paradigms here are emotivism and prescriptivism in ethics, though the view has lately received much wider application at the hands of Simon Blackburn and others (Blackburn 1984, Gibbard 1990). Obviously, if a class of sentences resembles the typical linguistic manifestation of a command or a question in not being apt for truth and falsity, it would be a mistake to regard it as correctly representing a region of reality or a domain of genuine fact. So any view that sustains the realist's rhetoric will incorporate something like (1).

But equally obviously, (1) is not enough. The atheist grants that talk about the Godhead is genuinely assertoric — that theology is in the market for truth and falsity — but he is no theological realist. So beyond (1), we should say that realism also demands a commitment to something like (2):

(2) Our current doctrine in the disputed area is not massively mistaken. Some of our core commitments are true, or at least 'on the right track', and some of our most confident posits exist.

This is vague, but still clearly substantial. To reject this aspect of the realist's commitment while retaining the first is to leave it open that our view may be infected with wholesale error. This sort of non-realism comes in varying degrees of strength, corresponding to the varieties of atheism and agnosticism in the theological case. Bas van Fraassen's constructive empiricism in the philosophy of science is a species of 'agnostic' non-realism (van Fraassen 1980). It is a sort of local skepticism which consists in the resolution to suspend judgment on all matters concerning the unobservable causes of observable things. J. L. Mackie's moral skepticism, on the other hand, is a species of 'atheistic' non-realism (Mackie 1977). On Mackie's view, ordinary ethical thought is committed to the existence of 'objectively prescriptive' states of affairs: facts which by their very existence provide all rational beings with reasons for action. Since he also holds that no such facts exist, Mackie charges everyday morality with a massive ontological error. Error theorists in various areas differ about what the upshot of their non-realism should be. Some, like Mackie, propose that we retain the discourse, at least in its surface aspect, while revising our interpretation of it. Others, like Harty Field in the mathematical case, argue for retaining the discourse with its standard interpretation while withholding our assent from its false commitments (Field 1989). And still others, like the Churchlands in the case of discourse about the mind (and most atheists in the theological case) propose that we simply abandon the error-ridden discourse in favor of something entirely different (Churchland 1984). In each case, however, the basic metaphysical stance is the same. The error theorist refuses to accept the basic claims of the disputed discourse. What the realist calls a fact, the error theorist calls a fiction. The only question then is what to do with it: use it in good conscience, change it, or reject it altogether.

Say that a philosopher who accepts both (1) and (2) for a given region counts as a *minimal realist* in that area. Minimal realism is just the view that our core beliefs about the disputed subject matter are more or less true. Or to put the point somewhat differently, the minimal realist holds that in a thin and metaphysically unambitious sense, our doctrine *correctly represents* or *corresponds to a genuine domain of fact*: at least some of the objects the discourse posits really exist, and the corresponding singular terms refer; some of the predicates pick out genuine properties, and these are really instantiated, etc.[3] The irrealist, the agnostic and the error theorist in one way or another reject this, and so refuse to allow that anything in the world is faithfully described by the characteristic judgments of the disputed area.

The issues surrounding minimal realism in a given area are perfectly clear, up to a point, even if it is often quite unclear how best to resolve them. There is nothing distressingly metaphorical about (1) and (2) — and insofar as our gloss on the view imports the imagery of correspondence between representations in the mind or language and certain worldly items — objects, properties, states of affairs — we know how to dispense with that imagery in favor of relatively colorless talk about whether certain declarative judgments are

true; an idiom which gives way in any particular case to first-order discourse in the material mode about whether certain objects exist and what they are like. So to illustrate, the minimal realist about ethics holds that moral judgments are genuine assertions, capable of truth and falsity, and also that our received moral view is not massively mistaken. We can put this by saying that for the minimal moral realist, our moral opinions correctly describe some of the moral facts. But to say this is just to say that some of our moral opinions are true. Or we can formulate the view as the claim that some of the things we call 'good' and 'right' do in fact possess the properties of goodness and rightness. But to say this is just to say that some of the things we call 'good' really are good, and so on. This casual way with the idiom of facts and properties is not uncontroversial; but it is tremendously convenient for approaching the issues that interest us. I propose to acquiesce in it for now. We shall have occasion to reconsider this concession later on.

Some writers have suggested that minimal realism is really the only realism we understand: that the only genuine issues in the neighborhood are the question of truth-aptitude and the question of truth. If this were right, it would plainly be a mistake to construe the modern debate as an interesting transformation of the traditional concerns of post-Kantian metaphysics. To reject minimal realism is obviously to forgo all right to the realist's imagery. If you don't believe that moral or modal judgments are ever true, then you shouldn't say that they describe a domain of fact that it is out there, independently of us, waiting to be detected, etc. *And yet it would be just as misleading to say that there are moral or modal facts of some other, less-than-fully-objective sort, somehow constituted by us or our practices.* On a view like this the realist's rich imagery conveys nothing of substance, and so neither does its denial. Our sense that these debates engage a subtle metaphysical issue about the *status* of certain facts or states of affairs is just a mistake.

The persistence of the Kantian imagery suggests, however, that for many writers there is a residual dispute — one that arises only after minimal realism has been accepted. The residual issue concerns not the existence of the objects, properties and facts described by the disputed discourse, but rather what we have called their objectivity. The challenge, then, is to indicate a line within the world (considered as the totality of facts, or the totality of things together with their properties and relations) between the objective items and the rest.[4] A solution need not actually say which things fall where. It will be enough to say, in relatively non-metaphorical terms, what it is for an item to fall on one side or the other. The line will correlate, in a rough and ready way, with whatever intuitions we possess about the legitimacy of the rhetoric of objectivity.

Until the challenge is met, our sense that there is a genuine issue for realists and their rivals to debate over and above the 'flat' ontological issues associated with the debate over minimal realism can represent at best the pious hope that one of the most compelling problems of traditional philosophy is a real problem after all, and not just a rhetorical illusion.

III. Some Senses of 'Objectivity'

First, however, a word is in order about certain *other* senses of 'objectivity' and related terms. Just as there are a number of reasonably straightforward issues about realism that have nothing to do with objectivity in the sense that interests us, there are a number of reasonably clear questions about objectivity that must be carefully prised apart from the ones that divide realists from their antirealist rivals.

The dominant use of 'objectivity' these days has nothing to do with metaphysics or ontology, but belongs rather to epistemology or methodology. Methodological objectivity, as we may call it, is primarily a feature of inquiries or methods of inquiry, and derivatively of the people who conduct inquiries and the judgments they form as a result. To a first approximation, we call an inquiry 'objective' when its trajectory is unaffected in relevant ways by the peculiar biases, preferences, ideological commitments, prejudices, personal loyalties, ambitions, and the like of the people who conduct it. When the Bulgarian judge falls in love with the Romanian gymnast and gives her clumsy routine on the balance beam a 9.8, we may suspect that his objectivity was less than ideal. When the Church investigates Galileo's astronomy and finds it unsupported by the available evidence, we may doubt the conclusion was driven by an entirely unbiased or objective appraisal of the data. And so on.

These paradigm cases are clear enough. Still, it is not easy to say what unifies them and the others we might supply. On one conception, the idea of a perfectly objective inquiry is the idea of one whose outcome is determined solely by the way the world is together with the fact that the inquirers in question are rational. An objective view would then be one which any purely rational inquirer who turned his attention to the matter would eventually hold.[5] Against this background we may recognize it as a falling away from ideal objectivity whenever we find that an inquiry was sensitive to the peculiar, extra-rational features of the inquirers — their sensory endowment, their powers of concentration or computation, their histories, their cultures, their training, their senses of salience and interest, etc.

It is a post-modern commonplace that methodological objectivity so conceived is a chimera. Indeed, it is far from clear that an inquiry with no substantial starting point and no substantial constraints apart from the formal constraints of rationality makes sense at all, even in areas like mathematics where it has historically had the most play.[6] Of course this does not prevent the idea from functioning as a sort of regulative ideal for actual practice. This is to suggest that even though perfect methodological objectivity is impossible, whenever we find ourselves falling away from it we have reason to correct our bias. From this point of view, pointing up surprising failures of methodological objectivity is the central task of a critical philosophy.[7] But of course this perspective implies a prior judgment to the effect that failures of objectivity are ipso facto undesirable. And this is doubtful. The fact is that sometimes the disclosure of imperfect objectivity debunks an inquiry or undermines its legitimacy and sometimes it doesn't. And the really interesting philosophical problem consists, it seems to me, in reflection on how to draw this line between pernicious and benign lapses from the ideal. [8]

These are tremendously important issues, and they are not unrelated to the problem of realism. One standard non-realist tactic consists in pointing out that in some potentially surprising way, the processes by which we fix opinions in areas like science and ethics are crucially sensitive to our starting point, or to various contingent cultural and political forces that have nothing to do with the facts. This observation is supposed to undermine our confidence that our way is (even approximately) the right way, as against the various routes we might have taken if not but for fortune. The suggestion is that failures in objectivity should push us towards skeptical suspense of judgment— and hence to a rejection of minimal realism. Against this the realist may argue either that even given the failure of objectivity in the near term, in the long run these alien pressures are diluted to the point of vanishing under pressure from the facts themselves, or instead that a certain solidarity with one's actual (albeit contingent) non-rational inheritance is rationally permissible even in the absence of a compelling proof that our way is the best way. The first sort of defense is most prominent, for obvious reasons, in the philosophy of science (Boyd 1984). The second is associated with the realism of Richard Rorty, among others (Rorty 1989).

This is obviously a central line of debate. But it is a debate over minimal realism, whereas our present quarry is a debate that allegedly remains even after that one has been settled. I mention the issue only to point out that on the face of it, whether an inquiry is objective in the methodological sense has nothing to do with whether the facts it aims at are objective in the sense

that interests us. Let it be granted that due to the inevitable complications of transference and countertransference every psychoanalytic investigation of neurosis is subtly influenced by the unconscious affinities of analyst and analysand, and so counts as less than fully objective. This recognition is nonetheless compatible with saying that the facts about why Dora refuses to speak German are entirely objective or *out there*, and that psychoanalysis constitutes a flawed but valuable procedure for *discovering* what is *already there*. The methodological conception of objectivity may have something subtle to do with the metaphysical notion that interests us. We will return to the suggestion later. But they are clearly not the same idea, so it is important to keep them distinct.[9]

We should also mention a second conception of objectivity — this time a more 'metaphysical' one — that has just as little to do with the concept we're after. I have in mind the sense in which the 'objective' world is sometimes opposed to the 'inner' or 'subjective' world, a contrast central to the Cartesian tradition in the philosophy of mind, and anathema to post-modern thought. According to the traditional conception, some items exist in an external, public space — rocks, stars, human bodies, etc. — to which no thinking subject has any privileged relation, while others exist in a private world, non-inferentially accessible to only a single subject. To the extent that we can be acquainted with things like rocks and stars, any number of people can be acquainted with any such item; but there is supposed to be a sense in which only I can be acquainted with my pains and other objects of consciousness; the extent of this special sort of acquaintance is the extent of inner space.

Now this conception takes a number of forms, and I wouldn't want to defend any of them.[10] Nonetheless, I think we can agree that even if subjective phenomenal states or objects in the traditional sense do exist, the facts about them would not be less-than-fully objective in the sense that we are concerned to capture. When I consider the spider and ask (perhaps idly), 'What is it like to be him?,' even if I can't frame an adequate answer, the fact that does answer my question (or would if I could only 'grasp' it) is conceived as an entirely objective state of affairs. If anything its claim to objectivity is driven home by my admitted incapacity to form any conception of it. For according to the rhetoric that surrounds our topic, one of the hallmarks of the objective is precisely its independence of our theories or conceptions. Likewise, if Jones is essentially alone with his pain, still the fact that he feels a pain of a certain perfectly determinate sort is conceived in the tradition as an entirely objective fact — a fact God would know, but about which any ordinary external observer might be radically mistaken. So without troubling to make this contrast

precise, we may say that as a conceptual matter there is a clear distinction between the subjective/objective contrast as it derives from Descartes and the contrast between the objective and the less-than-fully objective that is at stake in debates over realism. Cartesian experience may be private. But the Cartesian is a robust realist about it. The facts about subjective experience are — in our sense — objective facts, even though they are obviously, in another sense, 'subjective'.

It is not too much of an exaggeration to suggest that what is sometimes 'post-modern' philosophy is constituted by its denial of two allegedly Cartesian principles: the claim that any good inquiry must be objective in the methodological sense, and the claim that the proper starting point for such inquiry is the 'inner' or the 'subjective' world. So in one sense the post-modern philosopher sets himself against objectivity, and in another he sets himself for it. Obviously this sort of posturing is not the sort of thing one can argue about. I mention it only to point out that our fugitive issue — the question of 'objectivity' at stake in disputes over realism — is neither of these.

IV. Mind-dependence

Unlike objectivity in the methodological sense, the objectivity that interests us is a feature of worldly items and not just of judgments or representations. I have spoken fairly loosely of 'facts' or 'states of affairs', though we might just as well have spoken of objective properties and relations, and in some cases even of objective objects. It is important for present purposes that we not be distracted by the various detailed metaphysical proposals about how these worldly items are to be construed. We should not presuppose any particular construction of facts or states of affairs, or any particular theory of properties. The best way to formulate the issue is to acquiesce in what is sometimes called minimalism about these entities. For the minimalist, whenever we have a true sentence *p* we may harmlessly invoke an entity, *the fact that p*; and whenever we have a meaningful predicate *F* we may harmlessly invoke *the property of being F*. The slogan sometimes associated with the view is that these worldly items are mere shadows of the linguistic objects to which they correspond. But this image suggests a certain insubstantiality or dependence on language that has no proper place in the minimal conception. It is open to the minimalist to maintain that the fact that snow is white, or the property of being a tree would have 'obtained' or 'existed' even if there had been no language at all.[11] For him, this is just a way of saying that even if there had been no language, snow

would still have been white and there would still have been trees. The minimal view has problems, of course. It aims to be deliberately naive. But paradox threatens if we unreservedly endorse the transition from '*X* is *F*' to '*X* has the property of being *F*'; and if nothing else, the theorizing that responds to the paradox will involve some distinction between meaningful predicates that pick out properties and those that don't.[12] Let us set these genuine concerns to one side, however. From the present perspective, the line between the objective and the rest is a line drawn within the world of facts so conceived. If the world is the totality of facts, then we may distinguish (at least notionally) the objective world — the totality of objective facts — from the world as whole. *P* is an objective property if it is an objective fact whether an object possesses it: and an object *x* is objective if the fact that *x* exists is an objective fact.

Given this way of speaking, the question about the objectivity of morality — if it is not a question about the methodological objectivity of moral judgment — is to be understood as a question about whether properties like goodness and rightness are features of the objective world which in the most favorable cases we discover, or whether their distribution is somehow determined by our moral attitudes, institutions and practices. The question about the objectivity of mathematics (which may or may not be the question Kreisel called *the* question) is similarly: Are the mathematical facts — the states of affairs that correlate with the truths of mathematics — entirely independent of our mathematical thinking, or are they rather somehow constructed by it? And so on.

The objectivity that interests us is thus evidently to be contrasted with a sort of mind-dependence — or, to use a more modern idiom, a dependence on our linguistic and social 'practices'. What is less-than-fully objective owes what reality it possesses to our thinking, and is to that extent something mental. This way of talking makes vivid the supposed point of contact between the modern debate and the post-Kantian metaphysical problematic. But it can also be quite misleading. A few plodding words about the varieties of mind-dependence are therefore in order.

Tables, frescoes, political institutions and baseball games all owe their existence to thought in one obvious sense. They are artifacts. They come into being in part because someone intends that they should. The depletion of the ozone layer, global warming and the middle class are also mind-dependent, though in a different sense. They are the unintended consequences of intentional social activity. Let us say that an item depends *causally* on the mind iff it is caused to exist or sustained in existence in part by some collection of everyday empirical mental events or states. Mind-dependence of this sort is

perfectly familiar. And no one supposes that the observation that an item is causally mind-dependent in any way undermines its claim to objectivity in the sense that interests us. The most full blooded realist about frescoes and social classes can allow that these things are artifacts in a generalized sense. If the Kantian imagery is to be made sense of, it must therefore be possible at the very least to sketch a species of mind-dependence distinct from this sort of causal dependence.[13]

And as soon as this is pointed out, it becomes eqnally clear that a range of other not-quite-causal conceptions of mind-dependence are also distinct from our target. Mental activity is itself mind-dependent in the trivial sense that it would not exist if there were no minds. The fact that Jones is in pain would not obtain if Jones were not a thinking thing. This sort of mind-dependence need not be causal. The causal antecedents of Jones's pain may be strictly physiological. So we need a more general term. Let us say that an item depends *existentially* on the mind just in case it could not exist or obtain if there were no empirical minds or mental activity. Other examples include states of affairs which, though not exclusively psychological, nonetheless essentially involve the psychological, like the fact that New Zealand is a democracy or the fact that baseball is more popular than sled dog racing. In general, the subject matters of history, psychology, anthropology and the other human sciences all essentially involve the mental in this way, and so count as existentially mind dependent. But once again, this observation has no tendency to impugn the objectivity of these regions of fact all by itself. We can grant that these disciplines concern the mind without forgoing our right to the rhetoric of objectivity, discovery and detection. Of course there are subtle doctrines in the philosophy of the social sciences that are supposed to undermine this imagery. For now my point is only that there is no simple connection between possessing a psychological subject matter and failing of objectivity in the sense relevant to the debates over realism.

Objectivity, if the notion makes sense at all, is thus opposed to some sort of non-causal, non-existential (for short: non-empirical) mind-dependence. And it is precisely this that links the present debate with the post-Kantian problematic. For Kant the empirical world is 'conditioned' by the structure of the mind. This claim is not transparent. But one thing we know about it is that the mind that does this conditioning is not itself a part of the empirical world. It is not the object of empirical psychology or personal introspection. And this at least points in the direction of a thesis: for Kant, the structure of something that is not quite part of nature somehow determines the structure of nature itself. And whatever the nature of this determination is, it is obviously distinct

from the various relations of dependency that may obtain among empirical subjects and the world they inhabit. Now as we said at the start, the modern discussion is defined, in part, by its rejection of this transcendental standpoint. The modern idealist — the antirealist who acquiesces in minimal realism — holds that some states of affairs depend non-empirically on *us* or *our practices*. But given the undemanding naturalism that conditions the debate, there is nothing for this plural subject to be except a part of the natural world itself. This means that the problem of staking out a debatable thesis in this general vicinity is if anything harder now than it was before. To put the point bluntly, the modern antirealist must apparently advocate an idealism that is *neither empirical nor transcendental*: a view according to which parts of the everyday world are non-empirically determined or constituted by other parts of that very world, namely ourselves. And the question, once again, is: What on earth could this possibly mean?[14]

V. Objectivity as Response-Independence

It would be pointless to attempt a survey of every effort to flesh out a distinction between the fully objective facts and the rest, not to mention the presuppositions of every philosophy that takes such a contrast for granted. Instead, by way of an illustration of just how hard the problem can be, I want to consider a family of important proposals, all of which take the distinction between primary and secondary qualities as a starting point. Here is why this should seem promising. On the traditional conception, it can be true to call this tomato 'red', just as it can be true to call it 'round'.[15] So in our preferred, metaphysically light-weight sense, the conception admits facts about the distribution of primary and secondary qualities alike. The difference is that a thing's being red, though an intrinsic feature of the object, is nonetheless supposed to have something to do with us and our sensibility, whereas a thing's being round is supposed to have nothing to do with us. And yet this 'subjectivity' or 'mind-involvingness' of the secondary is supposed to be compatible with the common-sense view that colors, like shapes, are neither causally nor existentially dependent on mental activity. Tomatoes are not literally tinted red by our perception of them; indeed they would have been red even if there had been no perceivers at all. The traditional conception therefore promises to provide a paradigm for a species of mind-dependence that is not an empirical dependence. What's more, the only minds in the picture here are the embodied minds of ordinary human beings. The contrast between primary and secondary quali-

ties, and its attendant version of the contrast between objective and subjective, predates the conception of the transcendental subject. If the contrast can be sharpened, defended and generalized, then, the issue between realists and their rivals about the objectivity of a certain class of facts might reduce to the question of whether the facts in that class concern only the distribution of primary qualities. And this might be a genuinely debatable issue.

This line of thought can be developed in more than one way, depending on which strand in the traditional distinction one regards as central. We begin with a relatively straightforward suggestion due to Mark Johnston.

Johnston's central suggestion is that the contrast between primary and secondary qualities is fruitfully viewed as a special case of a more general contrast between what he calls 'response-independent' and 'response-dependent' concepts. The general contrast is drawn as follows. First say that a concept F is *dispositional* just in case there is an identity of the form

(3) The concept F = the concept of the disposition to produce R in S under C,

where R is the manifestation of the disposition, S is the locus of the manifestation, and C is the condition of the manifestation. So the concept fragility is the concept of the disposition to break when struck, where the locus of the manifestation is the fragile thing itself.

Next, let us say then that the concept F is a *response-dispositional* concept when something of the form (3) is true and (i) the manifestation R is some response of subjects which essentially and intrinsically involves some mental process (responses like sweating and digesting are therefore excluded), (ii) the locus S of the manifestation is some subject or group of subjects, and (iii) the conditions C of manifestation are some specified conditions under which the specified subjects can respond in the specified manner. Moreover, we shall require (iv) that the relevant identity does not hold simply on trivializing 'whatever it takes' specifications of either R or S or C.

Finally,

A concept is *response-dependent* just in case it is either a response-dispositional concept or a truth-functional or quantificational combination of concepts with at least one non-redundant element being a response-dispositional concept. Otherwise we shall say that the concept is a response-independent concept. (Johnston 1993, 103-4; cf. Johnston 1989, 145 ff.)

Johnston then goes on to suggest that the secondary qualities of traditional epistemology may be identified with the response dependent concepts for the special case in which the response is a sensory state or event.[16]

On this sort of view, to say that *red* is a response-dependent concept is to say that it is identical with some concept one of whose components is the concept of a disposition to produce a psychological response. More specific versions of the proposal would include

(4) The concept of being red = the concept of being disposed to look red to statistically normal human beings in broad daylight at sea level.

or

(5) The concept of being red = the concept of being disposed to look red to us as we actually are under conditions which we are actually disposed to regard as good conditions for the perception of colors.

Because a thing's looking red to a subject is a sensory state, either account would imply that red is a secondary quality concept. (For the record, Johnston himself is explicitly skeptical about the possibility of providing such equivalences for our ordinary color concepts. So for him, red is *not* a secondary quality, at least not as we ordinarily conceive it.)

The important point, however, is that the contrast has application beyond the standard lists of secondary qualities. Thus David Lewis has recently argued that

(6) x is a value iff we would be disposed to value x under conditions of fullest possible imaginative acquaintance with it.

and Hume may have held that

(7) c caused e iff we are disposed to imagine the occurrence of an e-like event upon perceiving or imaging a c-like event given sufficient exposure to the course of nature.

We may take these biconditionals to be underwritten by claims of conceptual identity.

(6*) The concept of being a value = the concept of being such as to be valued by us under conditions of fullest possible imaginative acquaintance.

(7*) The concept of causation = the concept of the relation that holds between events when we are disposed to imagine the second upon perceiving the first given sufficient exposure to the course of nature.

And if we do then we may say, as Johnston does, that these and similar proposals represent response-dependent conceptions of value and causation, even though the responses here are not sensory responses — valuing and imaging, while psychological, are not forms of sensation — and the concepts in question are therefore not secondary quality concepts *strictu sensu*.

Now there is some reason to doubt that the traditional contrast between primary and secondary quality concepts is properly drawn in these terms. For

note that on the present view, whether a concept is response-dependent or not is always an a priori matter. It is a question of considering and evaluating claims of concept equivalence; and on most ways of understanding this task is always, at least in principle, a reflective, non-empirical enterprise. By contrast, the traditional conception treats the claim that colors and the rest are secondary qualities as an empirical discovery of the highest order. The scholastics who denied it with their doctrines of sensible species were not necessarily confused about the contents of their concepts, and no early modern scientist would have suggested that a priori reflection by itself should have changed their minds. The scholastic mistake was a mistake about the psychophysics of color perception. Their view was an explanatory hypothesis, subject in principle to experimental refutation.[17]

Still, there is an obvious affinity between Johnston's contrast and the traditional one. In Philip Pettit's phrase, response-dependent concepts 'implicate subjects' in a way in which response-independent concepts don't. (See Pettit 1992.) If *red* were response-dependent [18] then the thought that a certain tomato was red would be a thought about how the world is for subjects of a certain sort. And yet if the explanation of the concept features one or two judicious deployments of the rigidifier 'actual' (as in (4)), then the thought will not vary in truth value from world to world as the facts about subjective responses vary. Ripe tomatoes intrinsically like the ones in my garden are disposed to look red to us as we *actually* are even if they never get the chance, either because there are no perceivers around or because the only perceivers differ from us in their patterns of sensory response. Hence the prospect of securing a sort of mind-dependence — the concepts implicate subjects — that is at the same time neither causal nor existential.

A promising thought, at least on its face; so let us consider the following proposal.

(8) When the central concepts of a discourse are response-dependent, the true sentences within the discourse represent a range of subjective or mind-dependent facts. A fact is genuinely objective, then, when it is represented in a discourse whose central concepts are response-independent.

Johnston calls the theorist who regards the central concepts of a discourse as response-dependent a Descriptive Protagorean. Clearly, the Descriptive Protagorean can be a realist in our minimal sense. Against the non-factualist and the error theorist he may consistently hold that our central claims in the discourse are true, which is just to say that they represent a domain of genuine facts and properties. Things may be good or red; these properties may be instantiated by real things; there may be facts about their distribution, etc. The suggestion in (8) is that the Descriptive Protagorean is nonetheless something less than a ***full-blooded*** realist, since he holds that the subject matter of the discourse depends (though not empirically) on our patterns of subjective response.

So we must ask: Does this gloss on the notion of a less than fully objective state of affairs do the trick. That is, does the Realist's rhetoric of objectivity, already-thereness, discovery and detection really fail to cohere with the recognition that a range of facts is given to us through the employment of response-dependent concepts? There is something quite natural in supposing that when we use such concepts what we are describing is the world as it is for us, and not the world as it is considered in itself. And this suggests that debates about the extent of response-dependence are a genuine sharpening of much older metaphysical issues. Is this natural thought a good one? [19]

No, it isn't. Consider (9):

(9) The concept of being annoying to fox terriers = the concept of being disposed to annoy statistically normal fox terriers under ordinary conditions.

Annoyance is a mental state, albeit a rather primitive one. So the concept is response-dependent in Johnston's sense. We may add that it is plainly instantiated, e.g., by certain pullings of tails and pokings of eyes. So there exists a range of facts about which things are annoying to fox terriers and which are not, and the discourse we use to represent these facts trades in a response-dependent concept. We may therefore ask whether there is any reason to treat these facts as anything but entirely objective. In calling the concept response-dependent are we in any way abrogating the right to think of these facts as robustly real constituents of a mind-independent order?

Well, unless we have concerns about the status of dispositions in general or about the status of psychological states like annoyance — legitimate worries, perhaps, but no part of Johnston's view — then it is hard to see why the facts about which sorts of proddings annoy a certain breed of dog should count as anything short of robustly real. The point is the obvious one: dispositions to bring about mental responses would seem to be on a par, metaphysically speaking, with dispositions to produce merely physical responses in inanimate things: the qualities Locke calls mere 'active Powers'. Absent a reason to construe mentality itself as less than fully real, the facts about the annoying, the embarrassing and the rest are no different from facts about the poisonous or the corrosive. If we have no reason to withhold the rhetoric of objectivity in the latter sort of case, we have no reason to withhold it in the

former either.

Could it be that the plausible core of the view emerges when we restrict (8) to cover only the concepts of dispositions to produce mental responses in *us*? There are two ways to take the suggestion. *F* might be the concept of a disposition to produce mental responses in a group G to which we all happen to belong. And for concepts of this sort the proposal is no better now than it was before. The facts about which things annoy *human beings* or *late twentieth-century bourgeois intellectuals* are not materially different from the corresponding facts about fox terriers. On the other hand, *F* might be given as an *essentially first-personal response-dependent concept*:

> The concept of being F = the concept of being such as to produce psychological response *R* in *us* (as we actually are) in *C*.

I take it that a proper theory of concepts may well distinguish between indexical concepts of this sort and the corresponding concepts where a non-indexical phrase is used to pick out the same group of subjects. The plural pronoun brings with it a certain vagueness, of course. 'Us' might mean the species, the culture, or some smaller group, or perhaps even a larger group like those who share our 'form of life'. But in any particular case some more or less definite restriction will be in place, and there will still be a conceptual difference between an indexical specification of a group as the one which bears a certain relation to the subject and a non-indexical specification of the same group. So we can ask: is there any reason to think that a discourse whose central concepts are first personal response-dependent concepts is concerned with a less than fully objective subject matter?

The thought is no doubt encouraged by the fact that when we employ such concepts there is now a definite sense in which our topic is the world as it is for us. This has a Kantian ring. And yet it seems to me that no matter how apt the phrase may be in this context, it is not usefully opposed to 'the world as it really is', or 'the world as it is in itself' as the rhetoric of objectivity demands.

Consider value as Lewis conceives it: (6*). So understood, the concept of value is a first-person response dependent concept. So we ask: is there any reason to think that the facts about which things are valuable in this sense are less than fully real or objective?

One might argue that there is as follows. Suppose I assert '*x* is a value' and someone else from another group — not part of my 'we' — asserts '*x* is not a value'. The analysis implies that we could both be right. Both utterances could be true. But at the same time, we obviously disagree, in the sense that our judgments cannot be coherently conjoined. So it must be that our judgments somehow concern different domains: his the world as it is for *him*; mine the world as it is for *me*. His true judgment picks out one evaluative fact; mine picks out another. These facts are incompatible. They can't sit together in a single world. So they must sit in different worlds. By symmetry, neither of these worlds can be the real world — the single objective world that is the same for everyone. Hence value judgments must concern features of not-quite-objective 'projected' worlds, distinct from the world as it is in itself.

I won't try to pin this line of thought on anyone in particular. It is clearly tempting, and it brings out a connection between a species of metaphysical relativism and the rejection of realism which a number of writers have plainly felt.[20] All the same, it is really a gross confusion.

Consider: I assert 'That is my foot' and someone else from another group asserts (with the same object in view) 'That is not my foot'. Clearly we could both be right. But at the same time we disagree, since our judgments resist conjunction. So it must be that our true judgments concern facts that inhabit different worlds. But symmetry precludes our calling one of them 'real' to the exclusion of the other. The facts about which feet are my feet must therefore reside in projected worlds, distinct from the world as it is in itself. So the fact that these feet are mine is not an objective fact.

This is just silly, of course. The mistake obviously lies in the suggestion that the two judgments disagree. In the relevant sense, judgments of the form fa disagree when they attribute incompatible *properties* to a single object. In the absence of indexicals, ambiguity and other related phenomena we may indeed move reliably from the fact that $\neg fa$ is the syntactic negation of fa to the claim that they disagree in this way. But when indexicals are on the scene, the inference obviously fails. Tokens of a single indexical predicate can pick out different properties on different occasions of use. So the property attributed to a by the use of f in the first sentence need not be incompatible with the property attributed to it by the use of $\neg f$ in the second. This is clearly what happens when the predicate is '... is my foot'. And it is only because the indexical is not right there on the surface in the case of Lewis-style value attributions that the corresponding argument is even remotely compelling. Run it again with the officially equivalent idiom 'we are disposed to value *x*...' and the two cases plainly converge.[21]

It may be objected that this diagnosis implies a controversial view about the individuation of properties. I have assumed that indexical predicates like '...is my foot' pick out different properties on different occasions of use. And yet throughout the discussion I have intended my talk of facts, properties, and the like to register only the most minimal commitment. Our heuristic slogan

was: facts are the ontic shadows of sentences; properties the shadows of predicates, etc. And it might well be asked: with what right do I then suppose that two uses of the same predicate in the same language in the absence of material lexical ambiguity pick out distinct properties? Why not say: 'There is one property — the property of *being my foot*, as distinct from the property of *being Rosen's foot*. I attribute it to x and you don't. But both attributions are true. So it is a fact that x has this property, and also a fact that x lacks it. Surely these facts cannot cohabit. So the worlds must be many: and as before, a symmetry argument suggests that none of the worlds we describe using indexical concepts — including first-person response-dependent concepts — deserves to be called the 'real' world'?

The first thing to say about this line of thought is that even if it is granted, (8) is still off target. The line between the objective facts and the rest would then have nothing to do with dispositions to produce mental responses, since as we've seen, many of these can be described in a non-indexical idiom, and when they are we have no reason to regard them as less than fully objective. It has rather to do with the contrast between facts corresponding to sentences involving indexicals and the rest. Whenever a sentence (considered as a type) can vary in truth value from one context of use to another the argument will work to show that the facts it describes are not features of the real world. So when I truly say 'This ring contains 0.6 g of platinum', the fact that I describe is not quite objective, because you might utter these very same words and say something false. (You might be talking about a different ring.)

This is clearly preposterous, and at this stage any link with the traditional metaphysical debate over realism has been utterly severed. Still, it *is* a fair question for those of us who want to play fast and loose with a metaphysically light-weight notion of property and fact to say where exactly the mistake occurs. It is clear enough what we want to say. The proposal treats properties as shadows of orthographically individuated predicates — or better: as correlates of predicates that share the same Kaplanian character — whereas we want to treat them (roughly) as correlates of predicates that share the same Kaplanian content (Kaplan 1989). So if I say: 'x is my foot' and you say, addressing me as part of the same conversation, 'x is not *your* foot' or 'x is not Rosen's foot', we do attribute incompatible properties to a single object. Still it is unclear what the motivation for this preference should be.

I propose to leave the issue unsettled. Clearly, if there is an interesting issue between realists and their rivals that goes beyond minimal realism and continues the metaphysical problematic deriving from Kant, it cannot be a question about whether the characteristic concepts in the relevant discourse

are indexical or not. As everyone in the debate has always understood these matters, when we 'disagree' in the application of a predicate like '... is my foot' we are talking about a single world and attributing distinct and compatible relational properties to the indicated object. Perhaps this is an optional view. But it is hard to believe that weighty metaphysical issues of the sort that really have exercised the best minds of our generation could possibly hang on it.

VI. Objectivity as Judgment Independence

We have rejected the suggestion that response-dependent discourse is always discourse about a less-than-fully objective world for a simple reason. The concepts 'implicate' us, to be sure. But when we consider the properties they pick out — the subject matter of the discourse that involves them — they turn out to be *merely anthropological*. A being from another group might discuss the very same properties without implicating himself at all. He would be talking about the dispositions of one part of the objective world to affect another part of that world in certain apparently objective respects. And setting to one side the closing conundrum of the previous section, we have seen no reason to think that a realism about such facts is anything but a full-blooded realism about them.

I've gone on at such length about this proposal because it permits a particularly sharp formulation of the point. But with this in the background, we can afford to be briefer in discussing some related suggestions. Crispin Wright's latest book (Wright 1992) contains the most detailed and systematic treatment of this problem so far. Wright's view is that there are in fact *several* debatable issues about objectivity that may be taken to divide realists from their opponents even after minimal realism has been taken on board. A full discussion of Wright's suggestions is clearly to the point; but there is no space for it here. For now we focus on a single proposal that bears evident affinity with the last.

Let us say that a concept F is *judgment-dependent* if and only if

(10) It is a priori that: x is F iff certain subjects S would judge that x is F under conditions C.

— where as before, the class of subjects S and the conditions C are specified substantially, i.e., in such a way that the embedded sentence is not just a trivial logical truth. This approximates the more Johnstonian formulation of the corresponding idea:

(10j) The concept F = The concept of being an object disposed to elicit the judgment that it is F in S under C.

If the two were equivalent we could view the judgment dependent concepts as a species of the response-dependent concepts, where the response is restricted to judgments involving the very concept at issue. The equivalence fails, however, in part because talk of dispositions in (10j) corresponds to a counterfactual in (10); but more importantly for our purposes, because claims of concept identity are (on the face of it) stronger than claims of a priori coextensiveness. One way to show this would be to defend the controversial claim that when a term f has its reference fixed by means of a description d, it may be a priori that x is f iff x is d even though the concepts associated with the terms are quite distinct.[22] But for our purposes it is sufficient to observe that, whenever S is some complicated mathematical truth, it can be a priori that x is f iff (x is d & S) without the concepts of *being f* and *being d & S* coinciding.

These differences between Wright's apparatus and Johnston's make a difference. (See Wright 1992, ch. 3 appendix and Johnston 1993, Appendix 3 for discussion). But it is unclear whether it bears upon our present concerns. Here I proceed in terms of Wright's preferred idiom — so-called ' basic equations' of the form (10).[23] Our remarks apply equally to a parallel proposal developed in Johnston's framework.

The proposal we need to consider then is this:

(11) When the central predicates of a discourse are judgment-dependent, the facts that discourse describes are less-than-fully objective.

Note that (11) offers only a sufficient condition for mitigated objectivity in keeping with Wright's suggestion that there are other ways for objectivity to be compromised. The question for us is: does the presence of pervasive judgment-dependence in a region of thought displace the rhetoric of objectivity and its attendant imagery? Are we any the less entitled in these circumstances to think of the facts we describe as facts that are already there: facts which we aim to describe or detect, and not to invent or construct?

The case for (11) can be made to sound quite compelling. As we observed in passing above, one familiar gloss on the notion of objectivity that interests us has it that the objective is that which obtains independently of our opinions about it. Now consider the judgment *in*dependent concept F. To say that F is judgment-independent is to say, in effect, that for any specification of conditions C we have no guarantee a priori that judgments about the extension of F formed in C are must be true. And this is as it should be if the facts about what is F are genuinely independent of our opinions about them. When two things are genuinely independent, after all, it is always an empirical matter

which conditions favor their co-occurrence. So if the F-facts are out there independently of us, we should have no insight a priori into when certain psychological events — our judgments that x is F — should co-occur with the distinct facts about which things are F. But by the same token, when F is judgment-dependent and we *do* possess a priori insight into the conditions under which the facts about F and our F-involving judgments coincide, we seem precluded from thinking of the facts and our opinions about them as two genuinely independent realities. It comes much more naturally to say that the facts about which things are F — the F-world — are *constituted* by our practice of judging things F. Or perhaps, if the directionality of this metaphor seems inappropriate, to say that rather than the world's being independent of the mind, in these respects at least, the mind and the world together make up the mind and the world.[24] Thus we seem to have a promising way of making out the sort of non-empirical connection with the mind (our practices) characteristic of the denials of realism whose content has so far eluded us.

Some of the most ambitious global rejections of realism can be seen as affirmations of global judgment dependence. Consider, for example, the Peircean suggestion that the truth is somehow constituted by the opinion we would hold in the limit of inquiry. This is widely regarded as something less than a full blooded realism; Peirce himself sometimes called it 'idealism'. The slogan under which such views currently move is that realism implies that 'truth is not epistemically constrained' , whereas antirealism implies the opposite. We can think of these views as global endorsements of the schema:

> It is a priori that: x is F iff we would judge that x is F were we to investigate the matter so thoroughly and clear headedly that a stable rational consensus were achieved.

Alternatively, we can view them as endorsements of the judgment dependence of the concept of truth:

> It is a priori that: S is true iff we would judge S true at the limit of an ideal rational inquiry.

We call such views 'antirealist' because, on the face of it, they imply that the facts in general (the world) are *constituted or at least constrained by our practices for fixing opinion*. These global proposals are obviously implausible — which is not to rule out the possibility that a philosophical argument could establish them. (See Johnston 1993 for extensive discussion). But local versions are possible and in many cases quite natural. Thus *interpretivism* in the philosophy mind:

It is a priori that *S* is in mental state *M* iff an interpreter employing our actual canons of mental state attribution who was fully informed about the non-intentional facts would attribute *M* to *S*;

or *constructivism* in political philosophy

It is a priori that a social arrangement is just iff free and rational beings would judge it just uuder conditions of full information and reflective equilibrium.

In each case, this sort of picture is supposed to be compatible with minimal realism about the disputed area while revealing the facts in question to be so internally connected with our practices for describing them that the enterprise of description is not properly regarded as aimed at an independent reality. In these cases, we are supposed to find the full rhetoric of objectivity out of place. But is this right? Is the demonstration of significant judgment dependence in an area of discourse enough to displace the realist's imagery?

Now I think the air of progress here is really illusory, and there are several ways to bring this out. Notice first that as we have formulated the view so far, the notion of judgment-dependence does not yet presuppose that the subjects in question are *us*. So (to adapt an example of Johnston's) let us suppose that

(12) It is a priori that: A U.S. law is constitutional (at t) iff the majority of the US supreme court, after informed and unbiased deliberation, would judge it constitutional (at t).[25]

On this assumption, the concept of constitutionality is judgment-dependent. But now ask: are the facts about which laws are constitutional somehow less than fully objective for that? I don't see why they should be. So far we have been given no reason to think that the facts about what a certain group of people would think after a certain sort of investigation are anything but robustly objective. The facts about how the court would rule are facts of modal sociology. These may be very hard to discover, and the idiom that describes them maybe vague (which means that there may be truth value gaps in our discourse about constitutionality); but on the face of it they possess the same status as the facts about what any other collection of animals would do if prompted with certain stimuli, or set a certain problem.[26] The facts about what the court would do with a given case — the facts given on the right hand side of (12) — are thus, for all we've said, features of the objective world. And if the facts given on the left hand side just are these very facts, then (12) gives us no special grounds for thinking of them as less than entirely real.

But is it fair to *identify* the facts about constitutionality with the facts about what the court would judge? The identification would be perfectly appropriate if instead of (12) we had (12_j):

(12_j) The concept of being a constitutional law = the concept of being a law that the court is disposed to judge constitutional.

But as we have remarked, (12) is significantly weaker than (12_j). So there is space for the suggestion that, while the facts about how the court is disposed to rule are objective, the facts about constitutionality which supervene upon them do not deserve this epithet.

In the absence of a real theory about facts and their individuation it is hard to know quite how to respond. My own view, for what it's worth, is that *intuitively*, if the facts in the contested class can simply be read off in a mechanical way from the facts in an uncontroversially objective class, then there can be no grounds for denying the same status to facts in the contested area. After all, if we have a class of facts which by universal consent the mind plays no role in constructing; and if it is also by universal consent an entirely *analytic* or *conceptual* truth that when those facts obtain, certain 'other' facts obtain, then it is entirely unclear where the mind is supposed to do its 'constructive' or 'constitutive' work. Think of it this way: an anthropologist studying the court might determine which laws are constitutional by theorizing about which laws the court would ratify. He thinks of the latter study as a matter of charting some modal facts that are *already* in place. His own way of thinking in no way *constitutes* these facts. But more importantly, the only sense in which anyone's thinking constitutes them is the sense in which they just are facts about the thinking of the members of the court; and we have already seen that this is not incompatible with complete objectivity. Now once these objective facts are known, he can deduce facts about the distribution of *constitutionality* by employing an entirely analytic principle — a conceptual truth. And the trouble is that even if we agree to call these facts 'distinct', it's still hard to see why they deserve to be called mind-dependent in any special sense. For the anthropologist they are every bit as 'out there' as the facts that allegedly constitute them: the facts about what certain people would think.

Of course the cases that interest Wright are all cases where the subjects in question are given as *us*. But given our previous discussion, I think we can see that this cannot make a material difference. Suppose that

It is a priori that: *x* is funny iff we would judge *x* funny under conditions of full information about *x*'s relevant extra-comedic features.

This allows that we may be wrong about what is funny in the familiar ways. A joke that strikes us as funny at first hearing may have meant and received as a vicious insult, or it may have had its origin as an in-joke among the guards at Dachau; and in these cases we should retract our initial judgment. 'It seemed

funny at the time, but I was wrong. It wasn't.' The suggestion is just that the facts about what is really funny are fully determined by what we would clearheadedly take to be funny if we were not mistaken in any of these material ways.

Now the question is whether the proposal (11) gets any more plausible when restricted to such first-personal judgment-dependent concepts. And as before, we can convince ourselves that the move to the first person cannot make a metaphysical difference by considering the anthropologist's perspective. The anthropologist is studying us, and he has gotten to the point where he can reliably determine which jokes we will judge funny under conditions of full relevant information. Perhaps he has achieved this through rigorous inductive social science; or perhaps he has engaged in an exercise in sympathetic immersion in our way of life — not to the point of conversion, but rather to the point of *Verstehen*. He may not call such jokes 'funny' himself. This might suggest that he finds them funny, which may not be the case. But suppose he asks himself about the property *we* attribute to objects when *we* call them 'funny' . This may not be the property he refers to when he uses this word. But he can still identify it, perhaps as 'the property denoted by *their* use of 'funny' — 'F', for short' . And then he can ask: 'Which things are *F*?' . And he will have no trouble answering. He has translated enough of our language to know that things have *F* when we are disposed to judge them funny. And since he can track such dispositions by anthropological means, he can determine which things have *F* with reasonable accuracy. And the important point is that from his point of view, the facts about the distribution of *F* are 'mind-dependent' only in the sense that they supervene directly on facts about our minds. But again, this has no tendency to undermine their objectivity.

Assuming the anthropologist's perspective seems to me just the right tactic for addressing claims to the effect that a certain class of facts is interestingly constituted by our practices of judgment.[27] From this perspective, the only sense in which this is true is the sense in which the relevant facts turn out to *be* facts about our practices — or at least facts analytically supervenient on facts of this sort. To recognize a class of concepts as first-person judgment-dependent is in effect to recognize that a discourse that employs them is tacitly autobiographical. When we employ these predicates that seemingly attach only to extra-mental items like jokes or laws, what we are really talking about is what we would think of these things under certain specifiable conditions. But if we regard facts about what other tribes would think as robustly objective, we seem compelled to a similar view about ourselves. From a metaphysical point of view, biography and autobiography are on a par. The only difference

lies in who is doing the talking. But that hardly converts into a difference in the facts described, unless one makes the peculiar error addressed in the previous section.

Still, there is an important difference between the anthropologist's stance and our own participant stance that may seem to cut against this verdict. Suppose that the *C*-conditions mentioned in the account of some first-person judgment-dependent concept *G* are met, and also that it is common knowledge that they are met. When the alien anthropologist considers whether a new object *x* possesses the property we pick out with *G*, the question presents itself to him as a substantive empirical question. He can wait to see what we in fact judge, or he can use his theory or his informed understanding to predict our judgment. Either way, he views his own inquiry as aimed at a fully objective and independent fact, identical with or supervenient upon facts about our dispositions to deploy certain concepts. But now consider our own ' inquiry' into whether *x* is *G*. We know that we are in conditions *C*, and we know a priori that whatever *we* judge in these conditions is automatically correct. Well, then it's hard to see how we can think of ourselves as *trying to discover* some independently constituted fact. If it's a question of something as brute as comedy, our 'inquiry' may consist in considering the joke and waiting to see how we 'respond' . We can of course try to theorize or speculate about our thinking before we actually do it. But this is just to take up the anthropologist's stance, temporarily treating ourselves as objects of a third-personal inquiry. When we are 'engaged' , on the other hand, we cannot think of our judgment as aiming to conform to anything apart from itself. Hence from this perspective it can seem very natural to say that the facts in question are 'up to us' . What we call a judgment can look more like an act of invention or decision (although these words suggest more deliberate activity on our part than is likely to be present). And of course, as soon as we start talking like this, the antirealist's rhetoric seems entirely rehabilitated.

The oddness is only exacerbated when we turn to more articulated practices of judgment, like the practice of deciding whether a law is constitutional, which in the nature of the case represent themselves as deliberative inquiries sensitive to reasons. If the concept of constitutionality were as we have described it, then from the anthropologist's point of view the facts about which laws are constitutional appear as thoroughly objective facts about what a certain group of people would think after due consideration. But consider the perspective of the sitting Supreme Court justice — and suppose, for the sake of vividness, that there is now only one sitting justice. When he tries to decide whether a law is constitutional, if he knows the analysis he knows that what-

ever he says will be right, provided only that he is thoughtful and clear-headed. And yet he must still think of himself as constrained to consider the balance of reasons, the force of precedent, and so on, on both sides of the issue. If he steps back from himself momentarily, he may see this process as simply a matter of providing input to a system whose output constitutes the relevant fact. He can theorize about what this output will be, and from this perspective, the facts about constitutionality will strike him as fully objective. But what is he to think when he is 'engaged' ? In a certain sense he must concede that the facts do not constrain his decision at all, but rather flow from it. He runs no risk at all of failing to weigh the evidence and arguments 'correctly' , and so failing to make the right decision. And yet, in another sense, when he is actively engaged in his deliberations, it seems to me that he cannot possibly think this. He must think of himself as trying to figure out where the arguments point: which decision they indicate as correct. He must think of himself as being led rather than leading. He must think of himself as aiming to conform his judgment to an independent fact in virtue of which it will be either correct or incorrect.

It seems to me a very interesting question what to say about the 'phenomenology' of the engaged perspective when the concepts employed are first-personal judgment dependent concepts and the conditions of deliberation are known to be 'ideal' . Does rational deliberation involve an inevitable illusion to the effect that one's verdict might fail to get things right? It is conceivable that a thought of this sort stands to theoretical reason — the practice of forming beliefs — much as the thought that one is metaphysically free stands to practical reason — the practice of deciding how to act: That is, it may be a thought that one cannot sustain on reflection, but which nonetheless forces itself upon us whenever we assume the relevant deliberative standpoint. Obviously, this requires further investigation. Nonetheless, I am convinced that it does not bear directly on the metaphysical question. It seems to me clear that

(a) The facts described by a discourse whose central concepts are first-personal judgment-dependent concepts are in principle describable from the anthropologist's stance in an entirely third-personal idiom,

and that

(b) The facts the anthropologist describes — the properties he attributes to objects — are, for all we have said, entirely objective in the sense that interests us.

And this seems to me enough to establish that the proposal presently on the table, however seductive, cannot be right.

Of course things would be otherwise if we had an independent argument to the effect that what I have called the 'anthropological' facts were somehow less than fully real. Recall that these are facts about what members of a certain population would judge under certain conditions. Now if one had independent grounds for thinking that either the modal facts or the facts about the content of judgment were less than entirely objective, these reasons might transmit to the facts which, according to the analysis, supervene upon them. More interestingly, since the 'conditions' in question will typically involve *inter alia* the requirement that the inquiry in question be 'rational' , 'clear-headed' , etc., it follows that if one took a less than fully objective view about the distribution of these properties, one might have grounds for denying objectivity to the facts represented by the left-hand side of the basic equation. Nothing I have said so far rules out these considerations. All we are entitled to conclude is that if one wishes to maintain that the facts given in a judgment-dependent discourse are less than fully objective for reasons like this, one must give an *independent* argument for the mitigated objectivity of facts about modality, semantic content, rationality or whatever. It will not suffice to show that these concepts themselves are judgment-dependent, as they well may be. For the point of the argument is to *show* that there is an interesting connection between judgment-dependence and failed objectivity; so it would be question-begging to take this for granted at the start.

VII. Objectivity and the Absolute Conception of the World

I want to close with a discussion of a rather different family of proposals due largely to Bernard Williams. Like Wright, Williams is expressly concerned to draw a line between those aspects of our thought which represent an objective reality and those which merely represent the world as it is for us by generalizing the contrast between primary and secondary qualities. Williams understands this distinction rather differently, however, so the problems with his approach demand separate discussion.

Williams' leading idea is that an objective fact is one which receives representation in what he calls 'the absolute conception of the world' . Williams explains this suggestion in more than one way, and I doubt they are all equivalent. The general idea is nonetheless clear enough. To begin with, the absolute conception of the world is a *conception* — that is, a representation of the world. It is, moreover, a true representation. However it is not the whole truth. Some facts (true propositions) are left out. The chief exegetical question is how precisely Williams intends us to distinguish the absolute conception of the world — a catalog of elite truths — from the complete true story of the

world — the catalog of truths tout court. The latter captures all the facts; the former only the objective ones.

Sometimes Williams seems to suggest that the absolute conception is distinguished by its vocabulary: the array of concepts that compose it (Williams 1978, pp. 244-5). For Williams, some concepts are parochial, in the sense that they are 'available' only to creatures of certain sorts, whereas others are available to any sufficiently sophisticated thinker regardless of his peculiar sensory endowment, history, culture or way of life. Williams offers no general theory of concepts or concept possession, so it's hard to know how to evaluate this sort of claim. But the examples convey the spirit of the view. Thus the usual secondary quality concepts are supposed to be available in the relevant sense only to creatures capable of the corresponding sense experience. The congenitally blind, no matter how fluent they may be in their use of the word 'red', nonetheless lack the concept that sighted speakers of English typically express with that word. (Williams 1978, p. 241). Or, to take a rather different example, the 'thick' ethical concepts associated with traditional cultures — like the Homeric $\alpha\iota\delta\omega\sigma$ — are supposed to be available only to unreflective participants in such cultures and not to modern ironic sophisticates (Williams 1985, ch. 8). So no matter how good the sympathetic anthropologist gets at anticipating the native's application of a word, his sophistication or his failure to endorse the point of the practice in which the concept is embedded somehow prevent him from fully grasping it. By contrast, the traditional primary quality concepts along with the more advanced concepts of modern science are supposed to be available to creatures regardless of their parochial interests, sensory capacities, and so on. In one sense of the term, then, the absolute conception of the world is the truth about the world insofar is it is available to anyone at all, regardless of his peculiar way of life. In Nagel's phrase, it represents those aspects of the world accessible to the view from Nowhere.

So one proposal we might consider is this:

(13) A fact is less than fully objective if and only if it would not be represented in the absolute conception of the world, conceived as the true story insofar as it can be stated in an idiom none of whose concepts are parochial.

The intuition here is that the real is potentially accessible from indefinitely many distinct perspectives. It is there for everyone, regardless of his peculiar angle on the world. The less-than-real, on the other hand, manifests itself only from some restricted point of view; and so deserves to be called, in the Kantian sense, a mere appearance for that point of view of the real state of affairs that underlies it. This is suggestive, of course. But we have learned to be suspicious of suggestive verbiage. So let's take a closer look.

Note first the oddness of the suggestion that what is real is that which might be known by the least fully equipped inquirer. Our natural view, I suppose, is that blindness, deafness and the rest are defects in part because they represent obstacles to knowing what the world is really like. On the present view, however, this is not quite right. Blindness may be an obstacle to attaining certain concepts. But for just this reason those concepts are not essential for representing the objective world. In the limit the proposal would seem to imply that the only real features of the world are those which might in principle be represented by a disembodied intelligence with no senses whatsoever. And this, if not obviously wrong, is at least a very strange suggestion.

A deeper worry is that as presently formulated the proposal may well be vacuous. Suppose the Azande employ the thick ethical term 'blog' as a term of praise for actions that show a special sort of respect for the chief. It is a kind of piety, but not one for which we possess even an approximate counterpart notion. By hypothesis, we cannot possess the concept the Azande express by this word, since to possess it requires an immersion in their practice which is impossible for us. So when they apply the concept to an object correctly, the thought they express is one we cannot grasp. On the present view, this is supposed to show that the facts about the distribution of *blogness* are not features of the world as it is in itself, since no representation of them figures in the absolute conception. But this transition from a claim about thoughts to a claim about facts should make us suspicious. From the fact that one representation of the blogness facts fails to figure in the absolute conception, it does not follow that no such representation appears there. And indeed it is conceivable that even if the absolute conception does not include the claim that x is blog, it does include the claim that

x has the feature the Azande actually call 'blog'.

This claim employs no thick ethical concept. In fact, for all we have said so far it may employ no parochial concepts at all. But the property denoted by 'blog' and the property denoted by the phrase 'the feature the Azande actually call "blog"' are (arguably) one and the same. And if they are, the thick ethical *property* may well be an objective feature of the world, even though the thick ethical *concept* fails to figure in the absolute conception. In general, then, if the absolute conception provides the means for referring to the properties denoted by parochial concepts in this way, then (13) is vacuous. Whenever a parochial concept *C* applies to an object, there will be an anthropological attribution in the absolute conception that attributes the property it denotes — as the property denoted by 'C' — to that object. So here we have another example of the

persistent failure in this part of philosophy to distinguish between concepts and the properties of which they are concepts.

This objection would lapse, of course, if we had independent reason for thinking that the absolute conception lacked the resources for anthropological attribution. The resources here include the capacity to refer to representations, say by quoting them, along with semantical terms like 'denotes' . Sometimes Williams talks as if the absolute conception were exhausted by the austere idiom of elementary particle physics; and if this were right, the present objection would not apply. As we shall see, however, Williams sometimes seems committed to a much richer conception, according to which the absolute conception includes the deliverances of a maximally detached anthropology or sociology. And if this is so, then pending clarification of the view, at least, I see no reason to think that any truths are excluded from the absolute conception.[28]

A second way of explaining what the absolute conception of the world amounts to points in a very different direction. On this approach, the absolute conception is defined as the limit of a certain procedure of abstraction. We begin with our naive, unreflective view of the world, where we take it for granted that the concepts with which we operate all reflect real features of things (occasional errors aside). We then notice that other people represent the world in different terms, not immediately commensurable with ours, and we set about trying to understand why our view differs from theirs. We step back for a moment from our naive representation and view it along with other representations as an item in the world. Our task is to understand how the variety of representations emerges from the interaction of variously constituted creatures with a single world. At the early stages of this procedure we may notice, for example, that the ways colored things appear to us depend in part on contingent features of our visual system, and that the best explanation for the variety of color appearances does not proceed by locating real colors in objects which some systems are better at 'receiving' than others. At more sophisticated stages we may realize that differences in ethical outlook or in judgments about the degree of confirmation attaching to a scientific hypothesis in light of certain evidence are similarly attributable to differences in us — in our ways of life, in our languages, iu our peculiar historical circumstances, etc. In the limit, after we have taken into account all of the actual (and perhaps even all the conceivable) variations in outlook we arrive at the absolute conception of the world. This includes first, an empirical account of what the extra-mental world is like; second, an inventory of the various local representations of this world; and finally, an explanatory account of how those various local representations emerge from the interaction of interested, historically and biologically conditioned human beings with a world of that sort. The absolute conception so understood therefore includes not just the austere idiom of ideal physics, but a complete anthropology wherein the cognitive doings of variously situated groups — including the purveyors of the ideal conception itself — are displayed and explained.

Note how different this account of the absolute conception is from the last one. On the last proposal, the absolute conception did not employ parochial concepts, and was therefore in principle intelligible to creatures regardless of their peculiar interests. When it is conceived as the upshot of a maximal cognitive anthropology, however, it would seem that it must employ parochial concepts. If I am to explain why the Azande hold that a gift of turtles is certainly blog, there is a sense in which I have to *use* the concept *blog* in setting out the explanandum. To say that *S* believes *x* to be *F* is to use the concept of an *F*. To be sure, when I use the concept in this way — within the scope of a propositional attitude verb — I do not myself apply it to an object. But still, if I didn't grasp the concept — if I didn't understand the word 'F' as a word in my own idiolect — then it's hard to see how I could understand what was being said when it was used to characterize the content of someone else's thought.[29] The procedural account therefore seems to imply that the idiom of the absolute conception is not the austere language of non-parochial concepts, but rather the maximal idiom that includes every concept anyone actually possesses, parochial or otherwise. Indeed we can frame the tension between the two approaches to the absolute conception as a dilemma: Either there are no parochial concepts, or the absolute conception is radically unattainable. For if there is a parochial concept *C*, possession of which requires unreflective immersion in a certain local way of life, then it is not available from the detached perspective of the ideal anthropologist. This means that he will not be able to represent in his own language the contents of the representations of those who employ *C*: and what he cannot represent, he cannot explain. So any account of the origins of representations that he produces will leave out an account of the sources of C-involving thoughts, and will therefore fall short of the absolute conception conceived as a total anthropology of knowledge.[30]

This seems to me a real tension in William's view, but I will not press the point. The criterion implicit in the second approach to the absolute conception is a familiar one from the literature on realism. We can put it in a preliminary way as follows:

(16) A fact (property) is objective iff it must be mentioned (attributed to an object) in the best causal/explanatory account of the plurality of representations of the world.

The suggestion is that the primary qualities and the other properties described in the natural sciences will be attributed to things in an account of why people believe what they believe, whereas the secondary qualities won't. It is plausible that we can explain why people think that some things are red or delicious, at least in principle, without saying whether anything really is red or delicious; whereas, if I want to explain why people hold that some things are extended or massive, I may very well have to describe the world in terms of these very properties.

Now very often this sort of observation is made in the service of an fairly straightforward argument for the rejection of *minimal* realism. The nominalist argues, for example, that since abstract objects play no role in the causation of our beliefs (or of anything else, for that matter) we can have no reason to believe in them, and should therefore reject any platonist view which implies their existence (Field 1989; see also Armstrong 1989). The moral skeptic argues that we can explain the origins of our moral views without positing moral facts; but since this sort of explanatory role is the only reason we could have for believing in such unobservable states of affairs, we should reject the ontological claims of morality out of hand (Mackie 1977). Whatever one makes of such arguments, however, they must be clearly distinguished from the sort of thing Williams has in mind. Williams does not claim that discourse that fails the test described in (16) is false or that it is unreasonable to believe it. Indeed he holds, at least in the case of discourse involving thick ethical concepts, that it may sometimes even constitute knowledge. The test is not a test for mere existence; it is a test for *objective* existence. The real items that fail the test are features of the word — but they are not features of the world as it is *anyway*, independently of us, etc. [31]

What are we to make of this sort of criterion of objectivity? Unlike the others we have considered, it does not on the face of it presuppose the legitimacy of a transition from a distinction among concepts to a distinction among properties. So if we are to object, we must object in a different way. There is a great deal to be said. My remarks constitute only the main outlines of a response.

Note first that (16) threatens to be profoundly restrictive. It is conceivable, for example, that all talk of natural substances like gold and water is eliminable from the account of our beliefs about these things in favor of accounts that mention only subatomic particles. That is, it is conceivable that we should be able to explain why physicists believe that gold is a metal without explicitly mentioning gold, speaking instead only of the collisions between subatomic particles.[32] Or, to take a less fanciful example, it is conceivable that we should be able to explain why all human beings believe that the stars are quite far away without mentioning the property of being a star, conducting the whole explanation at a smaller scale. The account thus threatens to imply that only the most fine-grained features of the world are real or objective features. Now if 'objective' is taken to mean something like 'ultimate' or 'basic', then this might not be so counterintuitive. But when it is contrasted with 'mind-dependent' or 'projected', its plausibility diminishes considerably. Are we really prepared to infer, from the fact that our opinions about the composition of the stars can in principle be explained at the level of elementary particles, that the fact that stars contain hydrogen is somehow constituted by us or our practices; that it is something we somehow project onto the world instead of detecting it? I doubt it. There may very well be an interesting contrast between the ultimate explanatory basis — the smallest set of properties in terms of which the phenomena can be explained— and the superstructure of supervening or constituted properties. But on the face of it this distinction is at right angles to the purported contrast between the objective and the rest that is at stake in the debates over realism.

To be sure, one can imagine all sorts of refinements in the proposal. We could say that an objective feature is one which *supervenes* on the features which must be mentioned in any account of the origins of our ideas. But this is likely to be far more permissive than those who endorse this line of thought intend. If there are facts about what's funny, then they probably supervene (at least globally) on the microphysical facts. So on the present refinement we should count them as objective, whereas it is clearly in the spirit of this line of thought that we shouldn't. Alternatively, one may say that the objective features are the ones that can figure in *some sort* of causal explanation of why our representations are as they are, even if it is not the most fundamental or basic sort of scientific explanation. But again, it is unclear what this proposal would exclude. It can be perfectly appropriate to say that we laughed our heads off because the movie really was very funny (and not because we had been drugged or tricked or whatever...) (Wiggins 1976).

Crispin Wright has suggested an interesting variation on this line of thought. The striking thing about explanations involving the funny is that while it seems perfectly all right to invoke the property in certain explanations of our comic responses or of events in which these responses play a crucial role, it doesn't look like the facts about what's funny can explain anything else. That

is, insofar as these facts play a causal or explanatory role, their influence is always mediated by some representation of them. By contrast, the properties one would like to call genuinely real seem capable of affecting all sorts of objects in all sorts of ways, many of which do not involve any intermediary thought about them.

Let us say that a property *F* possesses *wide cosmological role* iff

(14) Facts about which things are *F* figure in good causal explanations of a wide variety of phenomena, and some of these explanations do not involve as an intermediary any judgment about which things are *F*

and consider the proposal that

(15) A feature of objects is less than fully objective if it fails to possess wide cosmological role.

This is really quite compelling. Some properties make their presence felt only through our thought about them. Even if we do not literally make these properties, still their reality — their effect on things — is dependent on the mind in peculiar and crucial way. Others, by contrast, do their work independently of our conceptions, and so possess what deserves to be called a species of objectivity or mind-independence. What are we to make of this?

Well, the first thing to note is that (15) can't be quite right. It is possible to imagine a subtle physical property Q which, though intuitively thoroughly objective, is nonetheless nomically connected in the first instance only with brain state B — where this happens to be the belief that some things are Q. This peculiar discovery would not undermine our confidence that Q was an objective feature of things, as it should if (15) were true.[33] Another example is sensible species as conceived by scholastic Aristotelians. These were presumably objective properties of things whose only causal interactions were mediated by their representation in sensitive intellects of the appropriate sort. They failed to possess wide cosmological role, presumably as a matter of nomological necessity. But they were not for that matter conceived as being less than entirely real. To the contrary, detection of them was understood as the paradigm case of detecting what is objectively present in objects.

But this is just a minor glitch. The real difficulty with all these proposals is much more simpler. Consider speculative angelology. This is a discourse about angels, of course. It asks how many there are, what they think about, etc. But let us suppose that unlike ordinary angelologists, the speculative angelologists are all agreed that the angels have no causal commerce with us or perhaps even with one another. This being the case, they concede that it is very hard to know when you've got things right — hypotheses cannot be put to the test, as the skeptical angelologists are wont to point out. The angelologists

persist, however, in speculating and forming tentative opinions about the angels on the basis of tradition, their intrinsic sense of angelological plausibility, and so on. All agree, for example, that the number of angels is not 17, but rather some more sensible number; that angels are intelligent, immaterial, etc. The facts about angels so conceived do not by hypothesis figure in the causal explanation of angelological opinion. Indeed they don't figure in the causal explanation of much of anything. This recognition may tend to cast doubt on angelological doctrine. Maybe it is ultimately unreasonable hold detailed opinions about this sort of subject matter. But even so, this has no tendency to undermine our sense that the *facts* about angels, if they exist, are thoroughly objective facts that are in no way constructed or projected by us. To take some more familiar examples, consider the moral or mathematical facts as conceived by a character we may call the moderate platonist. For the moderate platonist the facts of morality and mathematics are irreducible facts about radically transcendent entities — the good, the numbers — as they were for Plato himself. His moderation consists in rejecting the idea of a special intuitive faculty by which these objects can influence us. His view is rather that insofar as we have knowledge of them it is speculative. Our opinions are constrained by considerations of plausibility, coherence with firmly held prior doctrine, elegance, systematicity, and the like; but not by anything like an encounter with the objects or their visible traces.[34] A more peculiarly philosophical example is discourse about possible worlds as Lewis conceives them (Lewis 1986). Again, the objects here are causally isolated from us and our representations. But if they exist the facts concerning them are 'intuitively' as objective as anything can be.[35]

The conclusion towards which these examples point is that however interesting the contrast between the causally or explanatorily potent features of the world and the rest may be for epistemology, it seems to have no intrinsic connection with the metaphysical contrast between that which exists independently of us and that which does not. I concede, however, that this discussion is far too compressed to make this conclusion anything more than plausible.

VIII. Conclusion

The problem was to draw a notional line between objective features of the world and those which the mind somehow constructs. This contrast is introduced to us by a series of images and metaphors which are most at home in a Kantian framework where the Mind's relation to the world of experience is

problematic. The question was, what are we to make of the metaphors once this metaphysics gives way to a naturalism according to which the only minds there are are *parts* of the natural world itself? We have surveyed a number of influential answers, all of which take as their starting point some version of the contrast between primary and secondary qualities. This is promising, at least in part because this contrast pre-dates the idea of a transcendental psychology, and so promises to be compatible with the naturalism we now take for granted. In each case I suggested that the initial promise depends on a subtle conflation: a contrast drawn at the level of concepts or representations of the world is transposed into a contrast drawn at the level of properties or facts. But this move is always illegitimate without further argument, and we saw some reason to think that in these cases the argument cannot be available. As I said at the outset, this is not supposed to show all by itself that there is no genuine issue about objectivity compatible with our moderate naturalism. In the nature of the case, it is very hard to show that there is no way to sharpen a putative issue. These remarks are only a challenge, then, to say what exactly the issue is.

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NOTES

[1] I am grateful to Sally Haslanger, Richard Holton, Allan Gibbard, Mark Johnston, Jim Joyce, David Lewis, James Woodbridge, Crispin Wright, Steve Yablo and José Zalabardo for their very helpful comments on this material.

[2] For a slightly more extensive presentation of the material in this section, see Rosen and Railton (1994).

[3] For the metaphysically unambitious talk of facts, properties, correspondence, etc., see Wright (1992).

[4] Which line may of course place all of the facts on one side or other.

[5] This formulation derives from Peirce (1878), of course. For more modern versions see Wiggins (1976); Nagel (1986), ch. II; Williams (1978, ch 8).

[6] On the impossibility of presuppositionless understanding see Gadamer (1975).

[7] See Geuss (1981) for discussion.

[8] Feldman (1994) is a useful discussion of the competing conceptions of methodological objectivity in recent philosophy.

[9] What about the converse? Suppose we could convince ourselves that a judgment had resulted from a methodologically objective inquiry. Would this be sufficient to convince us that the fact it describes was really 'out there', independent of us, etc.? Not obviously. Note that the idea of methodological objectivity presupposes the idea of a purely rational inquirer. Of course it is far from clear how this should be understood. But suppose there are some opinions the failure to hold which counts as a failure of rationality in the relevant sense — elementary principles of logic are plausible candidates, along with the cogito and principles like 'Rational inquiry is possible'. Then it might be that any methodologically objective inquiry would affirm these principles, simply because failure to affirm them would be a sign of irrationality. (See Haslanger 1992.) I take it that this sort of view about logic or the possibility of rationality does not by itself force the realist's rhetoric of metaphysical objectivity upon us. We can say that any rational creature must take a certain view without thinking of the corresponding fact as something 'out there' which rational inquiry is somehow compelled to 'discover'. On this point it is useful to note that Peirce himself is widely regarded as something less than a full blooded realist about the natural world, even though he held that scientific knowledge of that world was ideally the result of a methodologically objective inquiry.

[10] In recent writing the issue seems to have less to do with the existence of private inner *objects* —ideas, sensa — than with the existence of subjective *states* or *qualities*, known to each of us in his own case by a sort of Russellian acquaintance but somehow 'unavailable' to the objectifying third-personal gaze of natural science (Jackson 1982; Nagel 1974).

[11] The minimalist *may* of course go on to affirm the counterfactual dependence of worldly items on the existence of thought or language, and so to defend a species of empirical idealism. The point is only that minimalism by itself is neutral on the point. Thanks to Eric Bourneuf on this point.

[12] For some discussion of minimalism in this sense, see Johnston (1988), Wright (1992).

[13] Sometimes the claim that range of facts is objective is meant to contrast with claim that it is 'socially constructed', where nothing more is meant by this than a sort of causal dependence on social practice. Claims like this can be very important. But they do not imply the sort of deep metaphysical distinction with which we are currently concerned. On the senses of social construction, see Haslanger (1993).

[14] For some very suggestive but ultimately inconclusive discussion of the problem in the context of Wittgenstein's philosophy see Williams (1974) and Lear (1986).

[15] *Pace* Mackie (1976, ch. 1).

[16] The formulation in Johnston (1989) is rather different. The response-dependent concepts there are given as those for which a biconditional of the form

x is F iff in conditions C, subjects S are disposed to produce x-directed response R

may be seen to hold a priori given substantive specifications of S, R, and C. The distinction between the new formulation in terms of concept identities and the old one in terms of a priori biconditionals is subtle but important. But it does not directly affect the issues before us. For some discussion see §V below.

[17] See Curley (1972).

[18] The point about the scholastics is enough to show that it isn't. But we might have used quasi-color concepts that were explicitly response-dependent in Johnston's sense, i.e., concepts for which equations like (4) or (5) held true.

[19] It should be stressed that Johnston himself does not endorse this account of the significance of widespread response-dependence. He does say at one point that a response-dependent realism is 'if you like, a conceptual or transcendental idealism' (Johnston 1989, p. 148), and more recently:

> Descriptive Protagoreanism bids fair to be the best candidate for an appropriately qualified realism, the qualification being precisely the denial that the concepts in question are independent of subjects' responses. . . This independence of subjectivity is the hallmark of complete objectivity in one of its obvious senses. (Johnston 1993, p. 106)

The uses to which Johnston puts the notion are nonetheless rather different from the uses to which we imagine its being put in (8). Johnston never suggests that the facts described by means of response-dependent concepts are significantly mind-dependent in a sense that would license regarding them as constituted or constructed by our thinking,

[20] Locus classicus: Goodman (1978).

[21] There is, of course, a sense in which surface-contradictory value judgments 'disagree' on such

an analysis that does not apply in the case of 'my foot'. If you value x and I disvalue it, then our *values* conflict in the sense that they can't both be fully realized in a single world. The Lewis-style value judgment will typically *express* a state of valuing: two perfectly true such judgments may therefore disagree in the sense that the patterns of valuation they express cannot both be satisfied. The important point is that this sort of disagreement is merely disagreement in 'attitude' or desire. It is not a disagreement about what the world is like, and so cuts no metaphysical ice.

[22] Thus suppose the term 'water' had been introduced by the stipulation: Call something 'water' iff it is consubstantial with the stuff that fills up the lakes and rivers around here. It might then have been a priori (at least for those party to the stipulation) that something is water if and only if it is consubstantial with the contents of local rivers and lakes. And yet the concept of being water—the sense of the term 'water'; that which any competent speaker of the language 'grasps' — might be very different. This is suggested by the fact that later on, someone might come to understand the word 'water' perfectly well, and so to 'grasp' the associated concept, without ever having heard of rivers and lakes.

[23] For reasons not immediately relevant to the present discussion, Wright is ultimately concerned not with a priori biconditionals like (10) involving counterfactuals about the implementation of ideal conditions (so-called *basic equations*), but rather with what he calls 'provisoed equations' of the form

It is a priori that if C then (x is F iff S judges that x is F).

Here the connectives are all (presumably) material connectives. Certain difficulties to do with the conditional fallacy are thereby avoided. I have not pursued the interesting question of whether the metaphysical issues I discuss in the text are somehow affected by this shift to provisoed equations.

[24] The slogan is Putnam's. See, for example, Putnam (1981).

[25] This is not quite right, of course. It be more accurate to say that a law is constitutional if the Court would not judge it unconstitutional, since the Court routinely declines to rule.

[26] The characterization of these facts as facts about the mere responses of animals to stimuli may seem to neglect the crucial feature of definitions like (12), viz., that normative concepts like 'rational' and 'unbiased' may appear in the specification of the appropriate subjects or the appropriate conditions. Most of the interesting judgment dependent concepts will turn out to be normative in this sense: and if you think that this somehow counts against their objectivity, you may want to resist my assimilation of these cases to mere animal responses. Fair enough. My point is only that if this is right then it is the normativity of these interesting concepts and not simply their judgment dependence that is doing the work. What one wants in that case is an *argument* for the subjectivity of the normative, and in the present context it will not do simply to show, as may be the case, that the normative is in general judgment-dependent, since the subjectivity of the judgment-dependent is just what's at issue. In the absence of such an argument there is no metaphysically relevant distinction between concepts like constitutionality as defined in (12) and the concepts of dispositions to judgmental response in conditions specified in non-normative terms.

[27] Thanks to Allan Gibbard on this point.

[28] This is not necessarily a decisive objection. It could be that a successful attempt to explain the contrast between the objective facts and the rest would have the implication that every fact falls on the objective side. But this is clearly not Williams' view.

[29] I can imagine a Fregean response. The word 'F' may express one concept when employed in oratio directa, another in oratio obliqua, and it's conceivable that an anthropologist may grasp the second without being able to grasp the first.

[30] To be fair, I should say that Williams sometimes uses the phrase 'absolute conception' to refer only to the account of what the world is like that figures in the total anthropology, leaving out the story about how a world like that gives rise to the various representations. The absolute conception so conceived need not employ the array of parochial concepts, since it need not include in itself a specification of the representations whose existence is to be explained on its basis. This

brings the two accounts of the absolute conception closer together, though it by no means guaranteed their coincidence. It seems to me that we have no guarantee a priori that the features of the natural world we need to invoke in an account of the plurality of representations are available to creatures regardless of their peculiar circumstances. Suppose the scholastic realism about colors had been correct, so that the property of redness needed to be invoked in order to explain ordinary color perception; and suppose also (with Williams, I suppose) that the concept of redness would still in these circumstances have been unavailable to the color blind. Then there would have been a feature of the world that needed to be invoked in order to explain why things seem to us as they do which would not have been representable in the idiom of non-parochial concepts. We may hope that this is not the case; or we may take ourselves to have empirical evidence that it isn't. But from a philosophical point of view, we can have no guarantee.

[31] A similar application of the criterion is implicit in Harman (1977), though Harman does not employ the Kantian imagery.

[32] In fact this is only barely conceivable. It's one thing to suggest that in some level most of the causes of our opinions can be described in this austere idiom; quite another to suggest that an adequate *explanation* can be given at this level.

[33] Might one respond by pointing out that Q's lack of wide cosmological role is merely accidental? Even if as a matter of nomological fact Q's effects are all mediated by beliefs about its instantiation, we can imagine a world where the laws are slightly different in which Q's nomic connections are quite widespread. Contrast the funny. It seems odd to suppose that its merely an accident of nature that the facts about its distribution interact in the first instance only with thinking things. (Of course if one thinks of the funny as an objective dispositional property, this is not odd at all; but we are imagining that it is conceived in some other way.) This is suggestive. The response presupposes a controversial view about property individuation — if properties have their nomic roles essentially, as Shoemaker has suggested, then it is a non-starter. Nonetheless it is clearly worth exploring further.

[34] I take Quine to be a moderate platonist of this sort. See for example Quine (1961).

[35] There is a natural retrenchment in light of these arguments. Some properties have wide cosmological role, and some have none at all. The examples suggest that in both these cases we have no grounds for withholding the realist's imagery of objectivity. By contrast, properties like the funny and the interesting are *intermediate* cases: they are causally relevant, but their effects are always mediated by our representations. So consider the proposal that a discourse whose central concepts are have this intermediate status concerns a domain that is less than fully objective. The examples of angelology and moderate platonism do not tell against this proposal. What does?

The right response should begin like this. Suppose for a moment that the funny is that which is disposed to elicit in us the judgment that it is funny. The disposition to elicit such judgments is a causally relevant feature of objects. And on the face of it there is no special reason to regard the distribution of this property as a matter of less than fully objective fact. But here is a natural thing to say about dispositional properties: they are tailored to their manifestations, in the sense that any effects they have they bave by first bringing about their characteristic manifestations. The fragility of the glass is not causally inert; but if it is part of the explanation for any natural event, its efficacy is mediated by its first explaining the glass's breaking. Even if the glass's fragility is constituted by the same underlying microphysical property as (say) its transparency, there is something odd about saying that Jones can see through the glass because it is fragile. Dispositions in this sense are more fine grained than their categorial bases. Suppose this is the right way to think about dispositions. Then the fact that judgment dispositional properties are effective only via judgments involving concepts which represent them is just an instance of the general feature of dispositions that they are effective only via their manifestations. In other words, the fact that judgment-dependent concepts possess intermediate cosmological role is a straightforward consequence of their being dispositional concepts. The effects of flammability are always mediated by burning; likewise, the effects of funniness are always mediated by judg-

ments of humor. This conception of dispositional properties thus explains why the judgment dependent features of things should possess intermediate cosmological role without suggestin , that they are in any metaphysical sense peculiar.

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