August 18, 2020

Introduction (Week 1):

Representation, Representationalism, and Two Varieties of Antirepresentationalism

<u>**Introduction:**</u>

I want to begin by telling what we will see Rorty calling a "big, swooshy, *Geistesgeschichtlich* metanarrative," to set the stage for the authors and texts we'll read and the issues we'll worry about in the rest of the course.

One of the metaphilosophical issues Rorty's reception raises is just how enlightening one finds, or ought to find, such stories—how much specifically philosophical light they shed. One way of thinking about Rorty is as making the Hegelian claim that this is in the end the *only* specifically *philosophical* form of enlightenment or understanding. And it seems to be sociological fact that one's sympathy for Rorty generally is directly proportional to the extent to which one finds such stories illuminating.

The central focus of our concern is on the concept of <u>**representation**</u>.

One way of putting what is most fundamentally at issue in this course is to ask the *radical* Hegelian question of whether *representation* is something that has a *nature*, or something that has a *history*—does it belong in a box with electrons and sulphur, or with freedom and the right to vote? Is it a proper subject of investigation by the *Naturwissenschaften* or the *Geisteswissenschaften?*

I am going to begin by addressing the *moderate* Hegelian strategy of asking about the nature of the phenomenon *by* looking at the history of the concept.

Terminological note: "representation" is a term that exhibits what Sellars called "the notorious 'ing'/'ed' ambiguity" between represent*ings* and represent*ed*s. In this respect it belongs in a box with other central philosophical terms such as "experience," "perception," "judgment," "belief," "desire," "intention," and "action." It is accordingly a good practice to use "representation" to refer to the *relation* between representings and representeds, and to use those terms for the two kinds of *relata*.

- I want to talk first about just how central the concept of <u>**representation**</u> was to Enlightenment epistemology and philosophy of mind. Understanding early Modern philosophy as revolving around this axis is a thought we owe to Kant, who first brings the *term* "representation" (his *Vorstellung*) to center stage.
- Then I'll turn to talk about the philosophical *ideology* that Rorty calls "**representation*alism*.**"
- Finally, I'll sketch two different argumentative paths to the *rejection* of that ideology: two initially disparate but eventually converging forms of *anti***representationalism**.

The contemporary tradition we'll look at is in some sense subterranean, and not a few people think of it as subversive. But among the things we'll read by *each* of the philosophers involved is their Presidential addresses to various mainstream philosophical organizations.

Part One: The concept of representation, some history

1) From Resemblance to Representation: The philosophical significance of the Scientific Revolution.

The key thing to realize is that representation is a distinctively *modern* concept.

Premodern (originally Greek) theories understood the relations between appearance and reality in terms of *resemblance.* Resemblance, paradigmatically the relation between a picture and what it pictures, is a matter of *sharing* (local, independently definable) *properties*. A portrait resembles the one portrayed insofar as it shares with its object properties of color and shape, for instance of nose, ear, and chin (perhaps as seen from some perspective). The thought behind the resemblance model is that appearance is veridical insofar as it resembles the reality it is an appearance of in the sense of sharing properties with it. Insofar as it does not resemble that reality, it is a *false* appearance, an *error*. Plato and Aristotle had different ways of construing what was shared.

The rise of modern science made this picture unsustainable.
Copernicus discovered that the reality behind the appearance of a stationary Earth and a revolving Sun was a stationary Sun and a rotating Earth. No resemblance, no shared properties there. The relationship between reality and its appearance here has to be understood in a much more complicated way.
Galileo produces a massively effective and productive way of conceiving physical reality, in which periods of time appear as the lengths of lines and accelerations as the areas of triangles. The model of resemblance is of no help in understanding *this* crucial form of appearance. The notion of shared property that would apply would have to be understood in terms of the relations between this sort of mathematized (geometrized) theoretical appearance and the reality it is an appearance of. There is no antecedently available concept of property in terms of which that relationship could be understood.

Descartes came up with the more abstract metaconcept of representation required to make sense of these scientific achievements—and of his own. The particular case he generalized from to get a new model of the relations between appearance and reality (mind and world) is the relationship he discovered between algebra and geometry. For he discovered how to deploy algebra as a massively productive and effective appearance of what (following Galileo) he still took to be an essentially geometrical reality. Treating something in linear, discursive

form, such as "$a\text{x} + b\text{y} = c$" as an appearance of a Euclidean line, and "$\text{x}^2 + \text{y}^2 = d$" as an appearance of a circle allows one to calculate how many points of intersection they *can* have and what points of intersection they *do* have, and lots more besides. These sequences of symbols do not at all *resemble* lines and circles. Yet his mathematical results (including solving a substantial number of geometrical problems that had gone unsolved since antiquity, by translating them into algebraic questions) showed that algebraic symbols present geometric facts in a form that is not only (potentially and reliably) *veridical*, but conceptually *tractable*.

In order to understand how strings of algebraic symbols (as well as the Copernican and Galilean antecedents of his discoveries) could be useful, veridical, tractable appearances of geometrical realities, Descartes needed a new way of conceiving the relations between appearance and reality. His philosophical response to the scientific and mathematical advances in understanding of this intellectually turbulent and exciting time was the development of a concept of <u>representation</u> that was much more abstract, powerful, and flexible than the resemblance model it supplanted.

Descartes's new conception is best understood in terms of what **Spinoza** made of it, by looking at what Descartes *did*, rather than what he *said* about what he did.
(Descartes himself adapted the obscure Scholastic idiom of the sun having "objective being" in our idea of it. See Joe Camp "Descartes, the last Scholastic.")
In particular, Spinoza saw that the key to Descartes's *philosophy* is his principal *mathematical* innovation: algebraizing geometry. Spinoza saw more clearly than Descartes himself did, that Descartes's real insight is that what made algebraic understanding of geometrical figures possible was a *global isomorphism* between the whole *system* of algebraic symbols and the whole *system* of geometrical figures.
As Spinoza put it, "the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas." That isomorphism defined a notion of <u>form</u> shared by the licit manipulations of strings of algebraic symbols and the constructions possible with geometric figures.
In the context of such an isomorphism, the particular material properties of what now become intelligible as representings and representeds (the one-dimensional linear concatenation of algebraic symbols and the two- or three-dimensional spatial extendedness of geometrical figures) become irrelevant to the *semantic* relation between them.
All that matters is the correlation between the rules governing the manipulation of the representings and the actual possibilities that characterize the representeds.
Inspired by the newly emerging forms of modern scientific understanding, Descartes concluded that this *representational* relation (of which resemblance then appears merely as a primitive species) is the key to understanding the relations between mind and world, appearance and reality, quite generally.

3

This was a fabulous, tradition-transforming idea, and everything Western philosophers have thought since (no less on the practical than on the theoretical side) is downstream from it, conceptually, and not just temporally—whether we or they realize it or not.

Two representational regresses:
To linger just for a moment more on Descartes:

In these terms, we can see that Descartes combined his basic idea with another, more problematic one concerning representation. This is the idea that **if *any* things are to be known representationally** (whether correctly or not), by being represented, **then there must be *some* things that are known or understood *non*representationally, *immediately*,** *not* by means of the mediation of representings. If representings could only be known representationally, by being themselves in turn represented, then a vicious infinite regress would result. For we would only be able to know about a represent*ed* thing by knowing about a represent*ing* of it, and could only count as knowing about *it* if we already knew about a representing *of* it, and so on.

In a formulation that was only extracted explicitly centuries later by Josiah Royce, if even *error* (*mis*representation), never mind knowledge, is to be possible, then there must be something about which error is *not* possible—something we know about *not* by representing it, so that error in the sense of misrepresentation is not possible. If we can know (or be wrong about) anything representationally, by means of the mediation of representings of it, there must be some representings that we grasp, understand, or know about *immediately*, simply by *having* them.

This regress of representings of representings led directly to another: the regress of representings of *relations* between represented and representings.

The solution to both is *immediate* knowledge, that is, knowledge not mediated by representings. It can be thought of as knowledge where representing and represented are identical: a limiting case. But if we can't have knowledge of that sort of representational *relations*, then epistemological skepticism would result. (So God must guarantee what we cannot.)

So Descartes could already see one potential threat raised by his new notion of representation: the danger that it makes us patsies for *epistemological skepticism*.

   i. This is closely related to, but importantly distinct from, the worry that Rorty develops, which is that not about the threat of skepticism, but about what he sees as the built-in commitment to epistemological *foundationalism*, which is evident already in Descartes's own response to the skeptical threat.

   ii. One of Kant's many insights is that the *real* skeptical threat raised by understanding the relations between appearance and reality in terms of representation is not *epistemological* skepticism, but *semantic* skepticism: challenges to the intelligibility of the very idea of knowing something by representing it correctly.

2) **Understanding Enlightenment philosophy in terms of *Representation* I:**
   Rationalists vs. Empiricists

Appreciating the axial character of the concept of <u>representation</u> in Enlightenment philosophy makes it possible to understand better various competing ways of conceiving what, at least since Kant, have shown up as the great divide in that period: between Rationalists and Empiricists.

- **Kant** himself famously takes it that Descartes was right to think exclusively in terms of *representations*, but that his conception of *pensées* runs together **two fundamentally different kinds of representations**: roughly picture-like images or sensations and sentence-like thoughts. These are actually fundamentally different kinds of representation, and play quite distinct functional roles in cognition. Descartes's successors followed him in this mistaken assimilation, adding the fundamentally mistaken idea that the two different kinds should be thought of as different ends of a single spectrum: as though cats and dogs were really the same kind of animal, just differing as to the extent to which they are cat-like or dog-like. Empiricists treat thoughts as fancy, abstract sensations, and Rationalists treat sensations as confused, indistinct thoughts. Neither saw that the genus *representation* has these two different species.

- **Spinoza**'s way of understanding what is distinctive about Descartes's understanding of representation underwrites a different way of understanding the two broad schools of thought:

  Holism vs. Atomism, within a representationalist picture.

  Empiricists are relentlessly atomistic in their understanding of representation. This was the basis of Sellars's objection to the Myth of the Given, and to Quine's objection to <u>meaning</u> as opposed to <u>reference</u> in Carnap.

  Rationalists, while retaining the notion of <u>representation</u>, read it holistically rather than atomistically. This is the basis of Spinoza's notorious *hen kai pan*, and is striking in Leibniz, whose notion of degrees of perception and the infinite mirroring of monads is essentially holistic, in the sense that *any* difference anywhere would be a difference in *every* monad.

    Q: Does Kant treat intuitions atomistically and concepts holistically? For Hegel, immediacy is understood (e.g. by consciousness understanding itself as sense certainty) atomistically. But properly appreciating its significance requires looking at the functional *role* immediacy plays in a holistic structure of mediation. And functional roles are essentially holistic.

- **Inferentialist vs. Representationalist orders of explanation**:

  I have argued that one important division between Enlightenment Empiricists and Rationalists consists in where in the order of explanation the concept of <u>representation</u> comes up.

  Empiricists follow Descartes's official policy of treating it as *primitive*. They aim to understand inferential reason-relations in terms of an explanatorily prior notion of representational content.

  Rationalists treat inferential reason-relations as primitive, and aim to explain representational content in terms of inferential relations.

So it is one of Leibniz's most basic ideas that we should understand the representational content of a map in terms of the *inferences* that someone who takes or treats it *as* a map makes from *map-facts* (there is a blue, wavy line between these two black dots) to *terrain-facts* (one must cross a river to go from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia).

- **Sellars** has a characteristically original and insightful way of distinguishing the two camps of philosophers (not just the Enlightenment originals, but their contemporary heirs) in terms of their use of the concept of <u>representation</u>. His preferred way of putting the point is in terms of "the model of description." (I'll have something to say later about the distinction between the intimately related concepts of <u>representation</u> and <u>description</u>, but the differences don't matter for the present point.) And, crucially for the theme of this course, he discerns a dangerous ideology that Empiricists and Rationalists share—the ideology he calls "*descriptivism*." This is the idea that to be conceptually contentful or cognitively significant just is to describe or represent how things are.

  Empiricists start with a narrowly circumscribed *a priori* notion of what representing is, and exclude and condemn a lot of genuinely conceptually contentful and cognitively significant activity for not fitting that standard. The result is expressivism in ethics and skepticism about modality of the Hume-Quine sort. Sellars calls this result "nothing-but-ism in all its varieties."

  Rationalists accept the representationalist-descriptivist ideology, and accordingly look for what is represented or how the world is described by every sort of genuinely conceptually contentful or cognitively significant expression. The result is ontological extravagance, postulating objective values, universals, propositions, and laws.

  Exclusive reliance on the representational model, thinking that whatever is cognitively significant must be so by being a description or representation of how things are, is the common root of the twin mistakes of the Procrustean empiricist epistemology and the profligate rationalist ontology.

  Sellars saw the *Tractatus* as teaching us how to get beyond this descriptivist-representationalist ideology in thinking about *logical* vocabulary, and that we should extend that paradigmatic treatment to other sorts of expressions that have been taken to be philosophically problematic, such as modal vocabulary, normative vocabulary, talk of universals and propositions.

3) **Lessons from Enlightenment treatment of <u>representation</u>.**
I think there are three fundamental lessons about the concept of <u>representation</u> that we should see as emerging from Enlightenment investigations of it, culminating in Kant and Hegel:

  1. Representation is an essentially *holistic* conception. The Spinoza and Leibniz were just right about this.
  2. Representation and description essentially involve subjunctively robust relations between representings and representeds, relations that are properly specified in *alethic modal* terms. In this sense, <u>representation</u> and <u>description</u> are not purely *descriptive* terms, in

the straitened sense that empiricists give to that term, expressing what Sellars took to be their mistaken descriptivist scruples.

3. Representation has an essential *normative* dimension.

I've already said something about the first, *holist* point. It plays a significant role in Kant's understanding both of concepts and of judgment. Hegel is the first one to build this insight into the ground-floor of his philosophical idiom—the first to think through the logic of conceptual content conceived holistically.

The second point, about the essentially *modal* character of representational relations, shows up already if we think a bit more about the map example I mentioned in connection with Leibniz. To treat something as a *map* of something else is, Leibniz thought, a matter of the goodness of *inferences* from map-facts to terrain-facts.
What he perhaps did not sufficiently appreciate is the fact that such inferences must be *subjunctively robust*. Part of treating something *as* a map is taking it that *if* the terrain *were* different, the map-facts *would be* different. This is the basis of Fodor's account of representation in terms of "one-way counterfactual dependences of 'horses' on horses."

This point about the crucial role of *subjunctive robustness* of the relations between representings and representeds comes out in a striking way in the **Tractatus**. Picturing of object-facts by name-facts requires a "**method of projection**." And it turns out that projection in this sense includes at least that *if* the facts *were* or *had been* different, the representings *would be* or *would have been* different, in systematic ways. Such modal (subjunctively robust, counterfactual-supporting) relations are not picturable, according to the *Tractatus*. So by its standards, they are ineffable. They cannot be said. So Wittgenstein makes up a notion of <u>showing</u> to cover how we get onto them.
The *Tractatus* is not an *empiricist* work, because it is not *epistemological*. But its deep affinity with the empiricist tradition—appreciated by Carnap, Schlick, and Neurath—consists in no small part in its *atomism*, and in its *suppression* of this *modal* element, its fantasy of description *all the way down* (with the substantial progressive exception of its treatment of *logical* vocabulary as *non*-descriptive).
Here "descriptive" concepts are thought of as *extensional*, in Quine's sense. He ran together under that heading two distinct properties: the intersubstitutability *salva veritate* of coreferential expressions and the expression of a property that, as we would say, applies or does not apply in a possible world independently of how things are in any other possible world. The latter is *modal insulation*.
The significance of this *modal* dimension of representing is that more is required than just *isomorphism*—even *global* isomorphism, non-atomistically conceived. Even *picturing*, thought of as resemblance, as consisting in the sharing of local properties, already had to have this modal dimension. Otherwise one gets merely *accidental* pictures: the water stain or piece of toast that is a "picture of Jesus," the Swampman, the pattern in the dust on the Moon that has the shape of the equation "e = mc^2." The move from sharing of *local*, *atomistic* properties to sharing of *global*, *holistic* properties, which is, as Spinoza saw, the move to *isomorphism* was momentous. But, properly understood, even local, atomistic picturing of the Tractarian kind, still requires the modal dimension: that *if* the object pictured *had* had a different local property, the picture *would* have had a different local picture-property.

7

One can see philosophers exploring the significance of moving around the modal bump in the descriptive-representational rug. For there are three possible loci:

i. modally robust relations among represented: the "law-governed" behavior of objective things, properties, and relations. (Note, but put to one side, the important but subsidiary issue of the mistake—understandable in the wake of Newton, but a mistake nonetheless—of thinking that behind every sort of subjunctive robustness there must be a universal covering *law* that is the real locus and source of that subjunctive robustness. This has been a hard prejudice to wrestle ourselves out of. But the counsel of wisdom is: subjunctives first, necessities later (if at all). Modal *logic* of the C. I. Lewis kind, the subject of the first wave of the modal revolution, misled in this regard. It is essential to the second wave that we move beyond this crude restriction of modal expressive power.)

ii. modally robust relations between representeds and representings. This is the point about "modes of projection" and the essential alethic modal dimension of representation or description as such.

iii. modally robust relations among representings. These are the "habits" of the Humean empiricist or the Peircean pragmatist.

Programs of taking one or another of these as primary in the order of semantic (and so, epistemological) explanation have flourished.

So, for instance, Humean-Blackburnian *modal expressivism* takes (iii) as primary, and sees them as "projected" into (i) by (ii). This notion of projection runs in the opposite direction from the Tractarian one.

At the opposite end of the spectrum of possibilities, *causal modal-realist*-representationalist approaches (like Fodor's) want to understand *both* (ii) and (iii) as species of (i).

A variant of the *modal realist-representationalist* approach, one can understand (ii) as having a special *selectional* form. Millikan-style *teleosemantics* does this.

Peirce is special in taking the model of "selection of habits" as the covering model for *all* of (i), (ii), and (iii). Selection here is the special kind of alethic modal relation common to Darwinian evolution of species and individual learning. (Menand)

Kant occupies a special place in seeing (iii) as primary. I should think carefully about the differences between his *idealist* strategy and that of the Humean-Blackburnian expressivist.

As to the third lesson, **Kant** was not only the philosopher who made explicit what was implicit in the Enlightenment concern with *representations*, he was also, crucially, the philosopher of *rules*.

And those large orienting concepts, representation and rule are intimately linked for him. Understanding Kant is in no small part a matter of understanding the intricate ways in which he saw the concepts of rules and of representation as related.

From Kant's point of view, while Spinoza was entirely right to see that it was the essence of the representational relation between them that "the order and connection of things is the same as the order and connection of ideas," what Spinoza did *not* see is that the order and connection of represented *things* is articulated by rules in the form of *laws* of nature, expressible in alethic modal terms, while the order and connection of *ideas* is an essentially **normative** order, articulated by rules specifying what conclusions one *ought* or is *obliged* to draw from judgments to which one has *committed* oneself.

Rules, Kant says, express relations of *necessity*. And necessity is a genus with two species: natural and practical (expressed respectively by alethic and deontic modal vocabularies). The rationalists implicitly, at least dimly grasped the "rulishness" of the holistic "order and connection" of things and ideas, even if there idea of that order and connection as "rational" ran together the two importantly different species. The empiricists were oblivious to it.

Hegel thought that it was one of Kant's central insights—even though he never makes it explicit—to see the *relation* of representation as *also* an essentially *normative* relation. This is the idea that something counts as a representing of something it represents just insofar as it is **responsible to** that represented thing, in that what is represented provides the normative standard of assessment of the *correctness* of the representing *as* a representing of that represented. What is represented is precisely what exercises that sort of normative **authority** over what counts as a representing of *it* just insofar as it is responsible to the represented in this sense.

I take it that this idea is of central importance to **Rorty's** critique of representationalism. For he extracts its significance in concert with the normative pragmatist thought that all normative relations of authority and responsibility are ultimately matters of social practices. It

then follows that representational relations themselves must be understood in terms of the roles representings and representeds play in social practices. And we are off to the pragmatist races. (But we'll pay a lot more attention to that dialectic later in the course.)

[**BREAK HERE**, if have not already called seminar break.]

Part Two: From Representation to Representationalism and Antirepresentationalism

1. Representationalism:
    I have so far waved my hands at some of the largest contours of the role of the concept of representation in the period from Descartes to Kant. Now I want to introduce the allegedly toxic ideology of *representationalism* which grew up around it and with which it is said to be afflicted. In the end, a necessary, and perhaps the best, way to understand the constellation of commitments and habits of thought that are collected under that umbrella-term is to approach it through the criticisms of its *anti*representationalist foes and critics. As the title of the course indicates, I think there are two principal strands of antirepresentationalist thought: ***pragmatism*** and ***expressivism***. They are quite different in origins and motivations.
    Rorty has been most explicit in codifying *pragmatism* as at base a global *antirepresentationalist* creed—and, as we shall see, Cheryl **Misak**, the most important contemporary philosophical scholar of pragmatism, strongly contests this characterization and appropriation of that tradition.
    Simon **Blackburn** is one of the most articulate and sophisticated contemporary exponents of the sort of local *expressivism* that opens up the other route to a distinctive kind of antirepresentationalism.
    I will argue that Huw **Price**, Blackburn's successor as Bertrand Russell Professor of Philosophy at Trinity College, Cambridge (whom Misak identifies as the contemporary heir of the Cambridge Pragmatism she sees as complementing classical American Pragmatism) should be understood as synthesizing these two, initially quite disparate, strands of antirepresentationalism.

2. **Rorty**:
Rorty makes a series of ever-more incendiary claims:
- There is a philosophical *ideology* that has grown up around the concept of representation. He calls it "**representationalism**."

'Representationalism' refers to a semantic *ideology*.
It is, roughly, the idea that **the meaning or contentfulness of thought and talk should be understood principally or exclusively in terms of the *representational* relations thinkings and sayings stand in to what they (purport to) represent**.

- That ideology *defined* central philosophical sub-disciplines including epistemology, philosophy of mind, and later, philosophy of language.

- It continues to do so right through analytic philosophy of *PMN*'s day (and beyond).

- The ideology of representationalism *essentially* involves various fundamental philosophical pathologies.

- Those pathologies are so crippling that the toxic ideology of representationalism should be rejected, *holus bolus*.

- Even more radically, he claims that the weed that is that pathological ideology has become so intertwined with the concept of <u>representation</u> that there is no longer any reasonable prospect of separating them, pruning the weed to leave a healthy plant.
His radical suggestion is accordingly that this toxic ideology shows that the concept of <u>representation</u> with which it is inextricably bound up should *also* be given up. The very idea of us as "mirrors of nature" has had its day and outlived its usefulness. It is best not reformed or restricted, but simply jettisoned.

(One way of thinking of it is that what started off as a perfectly good special-use tool was employed indiscriminately, for ever wider purposes for which it was less apt, and its sharp edges were spoiled, making it unfit even for its original purpose. Compare: using a knife as a screwdriver, a wrench as a hammer. This image is apt, but does not fit well with the actual critique of <u>representation</u> in *PMN*.)

- Rorty's constructive alternative is a version of *pragmatism*.

- But his further, still more radical, claim is that *since* representation has defined modern philosophy in its definitive Kantian form, and still today doing philosophy can be defined as "doing the sort of thing Kant did, jettisoning it is jettisoning *philosophy*. If we can't do *that* anymore (since we can't have the concept of <u>representation</u>) then we will just have moved to a new sort of discipline.

- The radical character of his diagnosis (<u>representation</u> is the defining concept and Great Bad of modern philosophy) and proposed remedy ("Écrasez l'infame") made these the great topics of outraged discussion. His specific criticisms and proposed alternative have been less critically examined. But they have had an honorable subsequent career.

I'll return to those arguments a bit further along.
But first, I want to say something about the larger context in which a "representationalist" view about the significance of the concept of <u>representation</u> arises, and in which the contrary idea of *antirepresentationalism* arises to complement it.

3.   **Wittgenstein**:
The divide between (global) representationalism and its denial is epitomized in the perspectives of the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*.

As I once put it in a course description for an undergraduate course that the Pitt registrar insisted must be mistaken, Wittgenstein was the greatest two philosophers of the twentieth century, having set the agenda by his writings in the forty years between 1915 and 1955.

The *Tractatus* is the bible of representationalism, as well as providing the model for a way to move beyond it. The *Investigations* plays a corresponding role for antirepresentationalism. Rorty is eager to appropriate the later Wittgenstein for his version of pragmatism as antirepresentationalism, and even his critic Misak agrees that late Wittgenstein should be counted as a Cambridge pragmatist. We'll be interested in the development of antirepresentationalism as a philosophical counter-ideology downstream, in the wake of the later Wittgenstein.

In particular, Huw Price synthesizes the hitherto quite disparate *pragmatist* and *expressivist* forms of and motivations for resisting *representational* or *descriptivist* semantic models for discourse generally by applying a lesson he learns from the later Wittgenstein.

4.   **Two philosophical traditions**:
Wittgenstein's two books stand out as canonical expressions of two broad, and broadly opposed traditions of philosophical thinking about language in twentieth century: the *logistical* and the *anthropological*.

The **logistical** tradition runs from Frege and Russell through the *Tractatus*, Carnap, and Tarski, Quine, to Kripke and David Lewis. The operative paradigm is the sort of formal calculi suitable for codifying mathematical proofs in artificial symbolic languages. Traditional analytic philosophy, on both sides of the Atlantic, is properly seen as a development of this stream of thought. Tarskian model theory, as interpreted and eulogized by Quine, and its more powerful successor, possible world semantics, is widely and correctly regarded as the most perfect development and distillation of the idea of understanding meaning or content in terms of representation.

By contrast, the **anthropological** tradition focuses on natural languages, thought of as a kind of social practice central to and characteristic of the natural history of biological creatures like us. The classical American Pragmatists, culminating in Dewey are exponents of this tradition, which embraces not only the Wittgenstein of the *Investigations* but the Heidegger of *Being and Time*. (Rorty's consequent appropriation of the early Heidegger as a pragmatist horrifies not only Misak, on behalf of a narrower traditional pragmatism, but also most of those who ally themselves with the Heidegger of *any* of his periods—with the notable exception of the circle around Bert Dreyfus.)
Here the emphasis is not on the *meaning* of linguistic expressions, thought of in terms of what those expressions *represent*, but on but on their *use*, on the functional roles they play in the lived lives of participants in discursive practices.

It is perhaps worth noticing that, not by coincidence, there are analogs of these philosophical schools of thought also in **psychology**. The contemporary correlate of the tradition is the rise of "cognitive science," whose founding faith and origin-story in the late '70s and early '80s defined it by its methodological rejection of behaviorism in favor of postulating "internal representations." The opposing tradition runs from James J. Gibson's

reconceptualization of perception in terms of behavioral affordances through to contemporary embedded, embodied, ecological, and enactive approaches.

The motivation for and aspiration of the course is to get clearer about what is at stake between these large movements of thought by looking closely at the philosophical and metaphilosophical arguments of most sophisticated recent and contemporary critics of what they see as the philosophical ideology and shibboleth of *representationalism*.

5.   **Descriptivism**:

Sellars calls "descriptivism" the "tendency to assimilate all discourse to describing." And he takes it to be "responsible for the the prevalence in the empiricist tradition of 'nothing-but-ism' in its various forms (emotivism, philosophical behaviorism, phenomenalism)." [*CDCM* §103] Clearly one could think that describing how things are, or (to use a phrase Sellars takes to be equivalent) "fact-stating discourse" is *one* crucially important, even central and essential use of language without *further* assimilating *all* uses to this kind, or dismissing other uses as defective. It is that later move that counts as *ideological*.

Sellars also says:

[O]nce the tautology 'The world is described by descriptive concepts' is freed from the idea that the business of all non-logical concepts is to describe, the way is clear to an *ungrudging* recognition that many expressions which empiricists have relegated to second-class citizenship in discourse are not *inferior,* just *different.* [CDCM §79]

The idea that the world can, in principle, be so described that the description contains no modal expressions is of a piece with the idea that the world can, in principle, be so described that the description contains no prescriptive expressions. [CDCM §80]

For not all *knowing* is knowing how to describe something. We *know* what we *ought to do* as well as what the circumstances *are*. [§107]

One prominent way of resisting the ideology of descriptivism is *expressivism*. Dorit Bar-On characterizes the underlying idea like this:

'Expressivism' designates a family of philosophical views. Very roughly, these views maintain that claims in the relevant area of discourse are 'in the business' of giving expression to sentiments, commitments, or other non-cognitive (or non-representational) mental states or attitudes, rather than describing or reporting a range of facts. ["Varieties of Expressivism" *Philosophy Compass* (8/8) 2013, pp. 699-713.]

The paradigm is *metaethical* expressivism, which becomes prominent in the twentieth century in the emotivism of Ayer and Stevenson.

It is important to notice that, like Sellars's rejection of descriptivism, this sort of expressivism is a *local* form of antirepresentationalism or antidescriptivism. That is, it rejects understanding the use of *some* vocabularies or kinds of expression in terms of description or representational content: as describing or representing the world as being some way. They don't object to using that model for *some* locutions. After all, Sellars takes it to be a tautology that the world *is* described by descriptive concepts. He just objects to taking it that *all* concepts must be understood as having descriptive uses.

There is another, older, variety of expressivism that is *globally* antirepresentationalist and antidescriptivist. It originates with Herder and flowers into German Romanticism's project of using the concept of <u>expression</u> to do the work for which the Enlightenment had called on the concept of <u>representation</u>. (Hegel synthesizes these two opposed tendencies. He is a Romantic Rationalist.) It is one of Huw Price's remarkable achievements to have brought these two strands of expressivism together, by synthesizing both of them with Rortyan pragmatism.

At this point, some distinctions are in order.

The first point is that <u>representation</u> is a wider concept than <u>description</u>. All describing is representing how things are, but not all representing is describing. In particular, *demonstrative* and *indexical* uses (which should *not* be assimilated semantically) are not in any ordinary (philosophical) sense of the term "descriptive" uses. And proper names are do not function by describing. (We have been sensitized to it by Kripke in *Naming and Necessity*. Reference and representation go hand in hand, but not all referring is achieved by describing.) Sellars does not take this distinction as seriously as he should. It is the wider notion of <u>representation</u>, that includes but is not limited to description, that is the interesting target of complaint. That is, Sellars's objection to global descriptivism—assimilating all proper use of language to describing—applies to "describing" in the wide sense that includes names, indexicals, and demonstratives, not just to "describing" in the narrow sense. If we keep in mind this distinction, we can continue to use "global descriptivism" for the kind of representationalism Sellars opposes.

6.   **Declarativism**:

If construing representation as description is too constricted, there is a way of understanding it in terms of *fact-stating* or *truth-aptness* that is too expansive. Such a view understands all declarative sentences as being in the fact-stating line of work, and so to be semantically assimilated to paradigmatic statements of fact such as "the frog is on the log." This sort of ideological commitment can be denominated "declarativism." It has played a crucial role in the evolution of twentieth-century expressivism.

In his masterful, gem-like essay "Ascriptivism," Geach argues expressivist semantic analyses of terms of moral evaluation. [*Phil. Review*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 221-225. Apr., 1960.] His target is theories that understand the normative significance of terms such as 'good' not as part of the *content* of what is said about an act, not as specifying a characteristic that is being attributed, but rather as marking the *force* of the speech act. Calling something good is thought of as *doing* something distinctive: commending. Geach first asks what the limits of this ploy are. He points to the lovely archaic English verb "to macarize", which means to characterize someone as happy. Does the possibility of understanding calling someone happy as macarizing her mean that happiness is not a property being invoked in specifying the content of the claim that someone is happy, because in saying that we are really *doing* something else, namely performing the special

speech act of macarizing? If we can do that with 'happy', why not with 'mass' or 'red'? What are the rules of this game? He then suggests the embedding test: look to see if an expression can be used to construct a judgeable content that is *not* directly used to perform a speech act, paradigmatically in the antecedent of a conditional. Because imperatival force *is* grammatically marked, we cannot say:

*"If shut the door, then…."

But we *can* say things like "If he is happy, then I am glad," and "If that is a good thing to do, then you have reason to do it." In the first of these, I have *not* macarized anyone, and in the second, I have not commended any action. So the terms 'good' and 'happy' contribute to the specification of content, describing how things are, and are not to be understood as mere force indicators. (I called this essay "masterful" and "gem-like." Geach exhibits a deep fault-line in an entire philosophical approach, nails down his point, and leaves it at that. The essay is five pages long.)

This important argument offers dangerous a temptation to the declarativism that consists first in putting everything expressible by the use of declarative sentences into a single semantic box, assimilating them semantically, and then understanding them as sharing the representational role of stating possible facts—whether used free-standing to make assertions, or embedded and contributing to the contents of assertibles.

A cheaper route to the declarativist conclusion is given by taking *truth-aptness* to be a sufficient condition for playing a fact-stating role, hence being deserving of a representational semantic analysis. For the question of truth can be raised for whatever can be expressed by declarative sentences. One can ask whether it is true that one ought not to torture helpless strangers, after all.

Declarativism can be thought of as a way of trying to have broad global descriptivism on the cheap. It gets an eminently defensible version of broad descriptivism-representationalism, but only at the cost of making it platitudinous.

The trouble is that none of Rorty, Sellars, Price, or the other expressivists wants to deny that the locutions they are urgning us not to think of in representational terms nonetheless can be used to form declarative sentences, which can be used to make assertions, embed in other sentences, and are appropriately truth-assessable, and so in that very weak sense can be thought of as fact-stating. Some do object to seeing assertion and assertibles as the center of discourse, and so deny declarativism in that sense. (Belnap, for instance, thinks any autonomous discursive practice, any language-game one could play though one played no other, must also include *questions*.) But the observations of the declarativists are best thought of as establishing a *declarative criterion of adequacy* on accounts of the use of *any* vocabulary. It requires that such accounts must explain how the locutions in question can be used to form declarative sentences that can be asserted and embedded, and so have putatively fact-stating uses in what turns out to be the very weak sense of being truth-evaluable.

What is right about this assimilation is captured by the "iron triangle of discursiveness," relating *declarative sentences*, on the side of *syntax*, the speech act of *asserting*, on the side of

pragmatics, and *propositional content*, on the side of *semantics*. But to understand the use of all declaratives on the fact-stating model of "the frog is on the log," is to take an extra, optional, step. Local antirepresentationalists think that only someone in the grip of an ideology could be confident that that representational, fact-stating model is helpful in understanding "triangularity is a property," "patience is a virtue," "laws of nature are exceptionless," "the stock market is rising," "freedom is better than slavery," and "cows look goofy." On can bite the bullet and postulate a different variety of fact for every vocabulary that has declarative uses, disregarding the substantial differences between them. One then is committed to countenancing:

i)   *Logical* facts, such as *negative*, *conditional*, and negative *existential* facts.

ii)   *Modal* facts, about what is *possible* and what is *necessary*.

iii)   *Probabilistic* facts, about what is probable and improbable—and *how* probable/improbable it is.

iv)   *Semantic* facts, about what expressions *mean* or *represent*, about which claims are *true*.

v)   *Intentional* facts, about possibly non-existent objects of thought (golden mountains, round squares, fictions, fantasies, and contradictions).

vi)   *Normative* facts, about how things *ought* to be, or what people are *obliged* or *permitted* to do.

vii)   *Abstract* facts, about abstracta such as universals, propositions, sets, groups, and categories.

But such ontological extravagance seems bound to create more puzzles and confusions than it clears up.

When I introduced the Geach argument, which distills the temptations of declarativism, I said that it played an important role in the evolution of metaethical expressivism. Taking seriously the responsibility to respond to it, and deal with embedded as well as free-standing (force-bearing) uses of the vocabularies they want to give non-representational accounts of is what marks off second-wave expressivists, such as Blackburn and Gibbard, from their earlier, more naïve predecessors.

Part Three: Rorty and Price

The two central figures of our story are Richard Rorty and Huw Price.
Coming from diametrically opposed directions (Price is originally motivated by concerns arising in the philosophy of fundamental physics), they come together (and recognized each other as kindred spirits) in the conviction that it is *never* useful, appropriate, or correct to call on the concept of <u>representation</u> to do substantial explanatory work in understanding the workings of language or the mind. They are both *global antirepresentationalists*. This is a *very* radical philosophical and metaphilosophical position. But they offer strong arguments that it is correct.

7.   I have described in very general terms some of **Rorty**'s *claims*, beginning with his rejection of the utility of using the concept of <u>representation</u> in explaining the use of *any* vocabulary—including ordinary empirical descriptive vocabulary. This is his global antirepresentationalism.

I have said nothing about his *arguments* for those claims and positions.
Over the course of his long career, he offered a number of different arguments against representationalism. I think that he went through at least three quite distinct phases, individuated by three quite different arguments for radical global antirepresentationalism.

His critics have by and large not engaged with *any* of these arguments. They have almost exclusively focused instead on what they take to be objectionable *consequences* of the views he propounds.

But the arguments are worth considering. I think he sequentially moves through:
- First, the argument in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, that representationalism in *semantics* leads to an unproductive oscillation in *epistemology* between skepticism and foundationalism.
- Second, an argument from *pragmatism* about *norms*, and
- Third, an *antiauthoritarian* argument concerning what is required to complete the emancipatory project of the Enlightenment.

That is, he deploys all of an *epistemological* argument, a *pragmatist* argument, and an essentially *political* argument.
Each of them is interesting in its own right. We will examine and assess all three.

8.   **Price**:
Rorty came to pragmatism by combining his analysis of the current state of analytic philosophy (a reading of Quine's and Sellars's critiques of logical empiricism) with a unique reading of the history of philosophy. His interests in literature and politics were clearly important.
Price started in the philosophy of physics, and came to pragmatism as the solution needed for deep problems in fundamental physics regarding the interpretation of time variables.

Price performs two astonishing syntheses by introducing two new powerful and important arguments:
a) He unifies the two strands of *expressivism*,
    i.   The original German expressivism, beginning with Herder, which offers expressivism as a global alternative to and critique of Enlightenment representationalism,
    ii.   Second-wave metaethical and 3M (morals, modals, and mathematics) *local* expressivism as developed by Blackburn and Gibbard.
    The argument that drives this is Price's pointing out that any *local* expressivism relies on a *bifurcation thesis* that requires a principled distinction between vocabularies that should be given representational analyses and those that should not. He maintains that the only arguments for representational analysis of some bits of discourse are in the end declarativist arguments, that cut against the bifurcation thesis.

b) He brings the resulting *global expressivism* together with a reconceived *pragmatism* of Rorty's sort by offering a new understanding of that pragmatism, inspired principally by a powerful new reading of the later Wittgenstein.

The argument that drives this is Price's distinction between traditional *object naturalism* and the pragmatist's *subject naturalism.*

The former asks how the facts purportedly stated or represented in any potentially problematic discourse fit into the facts as construed by fundamental physics, or natural science more generally. These are Frank Jackson's "*location problems,*" or the search for Armstrongian "*truth makers*" specifiable in naturalistic vocabulary.

The latter is naturalistic only about the discursive practices in which the *use* of the vocabularies in question consists, leaving aside questions about how that use supposedly describes or represents the world it talks *about* as being.

9. I will argue that the radical *global* antirepresentationalism that Rorty and Price share (and plausibly, share too with the later Wittgenstein) in fact goes too far.

The pragmatism that consists in prioritizing the understanding of proprieties of *use* to understanding the *meanings* expressed by the use of various vocabularies (understanding *semantics* as answering methodologically to *pragmatics*), as progressively understood by Price's correct privileging of subject naturalism over object naturalism should *not* be thought of as ruling out representational or broadly descriptivist accounts of vocabularies in general. Representational semantics is appropriate for some locutions, but not for others.

Price is entirely right that taking any such merely *local* antirepresentationalism (which, potentially confusingly, is the rejection of *global* semantic representationalism) as committed to a *bifurcation thesis*, on pain of collapsing into banal declarativism.

But I think the challenge of formulating and defending such a bifurcation of discourse into the primarily and essentially representational or broadly descriptive and that which plays quite different expressive roles, having at most a secondary, derivative representational-descriptive role, parasitic on that of ordinary empirical descriptive vocabulary can and should be met.

As I understand things, ground-level, OED (ordinary empirical descriptive) vocabulary is distinguished by having as its basic expressive role the *epistemic tracking* of objective states of affairs and its use being *normatively governed* by those objective states of affairs. The first is specified in an *alethic modal* metavocabulary (the locus of Fodor's "one-way counterfactual dependencies), and the second is specified in a *deontic normative* vocabulary of "authority" and "responsibility."

The genus of the expressive roles characteristic of other vocabularies, towards which it is appropriate to adopt to begin with an *expressivist* rather than a *representationalist* analysis, is that of *pragmatic metavocabularies*: vocabularies in which to make explicit the *use* of other vocabularies, paradigmatically, OED vocabularies. Pursuing a Pricean *subject naturalism* is always deploying this sort of vocabulary: a metavocabulary for specifying the *use* of (typically, other) vocabularies.

Many vocabularies analytic philosophers have found to be potentially problematic—logical, modal, normative, semantic, intentional, abstract, metaphysical-ontological vocabularies—should be understood as pragmatic metavocabularies in this sense.

But my focus in this course will *not* be on the response I would recommend to the considerations raised by pragmatist and expressivist versions of antirepresentationalism. It will be on the commitments, considerations, arguments, and criteria of adequacy for accounts of the contentfulness of thought and talk that are deployed by those now confluent traditions.

For very end:

There is a *lot* of reading on the syllabus.

I urge you not to be daunted or discouraged, but to plough through it, trying to at least irradiate your retinae with every page.

Although the issues are important and have their intricacies, the texts are clear and well-written and generally a pleasure to read.

It is almost always easy to understand what is being said—unlike, say, Sellars or Wittgenstein.

What will emerge if one perseveres is a well-defined tradition, with relatively clear core claims and internal disputes.

And reading what is on the syllabus will put one at the cutting edge of this contemporary literature, fully in a position to contribute to it and carry the discussion further.