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## The Program and First Platform of Six Realists

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# THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

## PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

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### THE PROGRAM AND FIRST PLATFORM OF SIX REALISTS

PHILOSOPHY is famous for its disagreements, which have contributed not a little towards bringing it into disrepute as being unscientific, subjective, or temperamental. These disagreements are due in part, no doubt, to the subject-matter of philosophy, but chiefly to the lack of precision and uniformity in the use of words and to the lack of deliberate cooperation in research. In having these failings philosophy still differs widely from such sciences as physics and chemistry. They tend to make it seem mere opinion; for through the appearance of many figurative or loose expressions in the writings of isolated theorists, the impression is given that philosophical problems and their solutions are essentially personal. This impression is strengthened by the fact that philosophy concerns itself with emotions, temperaments, and taste. A conspicuous result of this lack of cooperation, common terminology, and a working agreement as to fundamental presuppositions is that genuine philosophical problems have been obscured, and real philosophical progress has been seriously hindered.

It is therefore with the hope that by cooperation genuine problems will be revealed, philosophical thought will be clarified, and a way opened for real progress, that the undersigned have come together, deliberated, and endeavored to reach an agreement. Such cooperation has three fairly distinct, though not necessarily successive stages: first, it seeks a statement of fundamental principles and doctrines; secondly, it aims at a program of constructive work following a method founded on these principles and doctrines; finally, it endeavors to obtain a system of axioms, methods, hypotheses, and facts, which have been so arrived at and formulated that at least those investigators who have cooperated can accept them as a whole.

After several conferences the undersigned have found that they hold certain doctrines in common. Some of these doctrines, which constitute a realistic platform, they herewith publish in the hope of carrying out further the program stated above. Each list has a dif-

ferent author, but has been discussed at length, revised, and agreed to by the other conferees. The six lists, therefore, though differently formulated, are held to represent the same doctrines.

By conferring on other topics, by interchange of ideas, and by systematic criticism of one another's phraseology, methods, and hypotheses, we hope to develop a common technique, a common terminology, and so finally a common doctrine which will enjoy some measure of that authority which the natural sciences possess. We shall have accomplished one of our purposes if our publications tempt other philosophers to form small cooperative groups with similar aims.

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## I

1. The entities (objects, facts, *et cæt.*) under study in logic, mathematics, and the physical sciences are not mental in any usual or proper meaning of the word "mental."

2. The being and nature of these entities are in no sense conditioned by their being known.

3. The degree of unity, consistency, or connection subsisting among entities is a matter to be empirically ascertained.

4. In the present stage of our knowledge there is a presumption in favor of pluralism.

5. An entity subsisting in certain relations to other entities enters into new relations without necessarily negating or altering its already subsisting relations.

6. No self-consistent or satisfactory logic (or system of logic) so far invented countenances the "organic" theory of knowledge or the "internal" view of relations.

7. Those who assert this (anti-realistic) view, use in their exposition a logic which is inconsistent with their doctrine.

EDWIN B. HOLT.

## II

1. Epistemology is not logically fundamental.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some of the principles of logic are logically prior to any proposition that is deduced from other propositions. The theories of the nature of knowledge and of the relation of knowledge to its object are for this reason logically subsequent to the principles of logic. In short, logic is logically prior to any

2. There are many existential, as well as non-existential, propositions which are logically prior to epistemology.<sup>2</sup>

3. There are certain principles of logic which are logically prior to all scientific and metaphysical systems.

One of these is that which is usually called the external view of relations.

4. This view may be stated thus: In the proposition, "the term *a* is in the relation *R* to the term *b*," *aR* in no degree constitutes *b*, nor does *Rb* constitute *a*, nor does *R* constitute either *a* or *b*.

5. It is possible to add new propositions to some bodies of information without thereby requiring any modification of those bodies of information.

6. There are no propositions which are (accurately speaking) partly true and partly false, for all such instances can be logically analyzed into at least two propositions one of which is true and the other false. Thus as knowledge advances only two modifications of any proposition of the older knowledge are logically possible; it can be rejected as false or it can be analyzed into at least two propositions one of which is rejected.

As corollaries of the foregoing:

7. The nature of reality can not be inferred merely from the nature of knowledge.

8. The entities under study in logic, mathematics, physics, and many other sciences are not mental in any proper or usual meaning of the word mental.

9. The proposition, "This or that object is known," does not im-

epistemological theory. Again, as theories of reality are deduced and are made to conform to the laws of logic they too are logically subsequent to logic; and in so far as logic is logically present in them it is itself a theory or part of a theory of reality.

<sup>2</sup> The terms knowledge, consciousness, and experience found in common sense and in psychology are not logically fundamental, but are logically subsequent to parts at least of a theory of reality that asserts the existence of terms and relations which are not consciousness or experience. *E. g.*, the psychical is distinguished from the physical and the physiological.

Now idealism has not shown that the terms knowledge, consciousness, and experience of its epistemology or of its theory of reality are logically fundamental or indefinable, nor has it succeeded in defining them without logically prior terms that are elsewhere explicitly excluded from its theory of reality. In short, idealistic epistemologists have borrowed the terms knowledge, consciousness, and experience from psychology, but have ignored or denied the propositions in psychology that are logically prior. In other words, epistemology has not thus far made itself logically independent of psychology nor has it freed itself logically from the common-sense dualism of psychology. On the contrary, epistemology from Locke until to-day has been and has remained, in part at least, a branch of psychology.

ply that such object is conditioned by the knowing. In other words, it does not force us to infer that such object is spiritual, that it exists only as the experiential content of some mind, or that it may not be ultimately real just as known.

WALTER T. MARVIN.

### III

#### I. *The Meaning of Realism.*

1. Realism holds that things known may continue to exist unaltered when they are not known, or that things may pass in and out of the cognitive relation without prejudice to their reality, or that the existence of a thing is not correlated with or dependent upon the fact that anybody experiences it, perceives it, conceives it, or is in any way aware of it.

2. Realism is opposed to subjectivism or epistemological idealism which denies that things can exist apart from an experience of them, or independently of the cognitive relation.

3. The point at issue between realism and idealism should not be confused with the points at issue between materialism and spiritualism, automatism and interactionism, empiricism and rationalism, or pluralism and absolutism.

II. *The Opposition to Realism.* Among the various classic refutations of realism the following fallacious assumptions and inferences are prominent.

1. The Physiological Argument: The mind can have for its direct object only its own ideas or states, and external objects, if they exist at all, can only be known indirectly by a process of inference, of questionable validity and doubtful utility. This principle is fallacious because a knowing process is never its own object, but is rather the means by which some other object is known. The object thus known or referred to may be another mental state, a physical thing, or a merely logical entity.

2. The Intuitional Argument: This argument stands out most prominently in the philosophy of Berkeley. It has two forms. The first consists of a confused identification of a truism and an absurdity. The truism: *We can only know that objects exist, when they are known.* The absurdity: *We know that objects can only exist when they are known.* The second form of the arguments derives its force from a play upon the word idea, as follows: *Every "idea" (meaning a mental process or state) is incapable of existing apart from a mind; every known entity is an "idea" (meaning an object of thought); therefore, every known entity is incapable of existing apart from a mind.* It is to the failure to perceive these fallacies that idealism owes its supposedly axiomatic character.

3. The Physiological Argument: Because the sensations we receive determine what objects we shall know, therefore the objects known are constructs or products of our perceptual experience. The fallacy here consists in arguing from the true premise that sensations are the *ratio cognoscendi* of the external world, to the false conclusion that they are therefore its *ratio fiendi* or *essendi*.

### III. *The Implications of Realism:*

1. Cognition is a peculiar type of relation which may subsist between a living being and any entity.

2. Cognition belongs to the same world as that of its objects. It has its place in the order of nature. There is nothing transcendental or supernatural about it.

3. The extent to which consciousness pervades nature, and the conditions under which it may arise and persist, are questions which can be solved, if at all, only by the methods of empiricism and naturalism.

W. P. MONTAGUE.

### IV

1. The object or content of consciousness is any entity in so far as it is responded to by another entity in a specific manner exhibited by the reflex nervous system. Thus physical nature, for example, is, under certain circumstances, directly present in consciousness.

In its historical application, this means that Cartesian dualism and the representative theory are false; and that attempts to overcome these by reducing mind and nature to one another or to some third substance, are gratuitous.

2. The specific response which determines an entity to be content of consciousness, does not directly modify such entities otherwise than to endow them with this content status. In other words, consciousness selects from a field of entities which it does not create.

In its historical application, this implies the falsity of Berkeleian and post-Berkeleian idealism in so far as this asserts that consciousness is a general *ratio essendi*.

3. The response which determines an entity to be content, may itself be responded to and made content in like manner. In other words, the difference between subject and object of consciousness is not a difference of quality or substance, but a difference of office or place in a configuration.

In its historical application, this implies the falsity not only of the Cartesian dualism, but of all idealistic dualisms that, because they regard subject and object as non-interchangeable, conclude that the subject is either unknowable, or knowable only in some unique way such as intuitively or reflexively.

4. The same entity possesses both immanence, by virtue of its membership in one class, and also transcendence, by virtue of the fact that it may belong also to indefinitely many other classes. In other words, immanence and transcendence are compatible and not contradictory predicates.

In its historical application, this implies the falsity of the subjectivistic argument from the ego-centric predicament, *i. e.*, the argument that because entities are content of consciousness they can not also transcend consciousness; it also implies that, so far as based on such subjectivistic premises, the idealistic theory of a transcendent subjectivity is gratuitous.

5. An entity possesses some relations independently of one another; and the ignorance or discovery of further relations does not invalidate a limited knowledge of relations.

In its historical applications, this implies the falsity of the contention of absolute idealism that it is necessary to know all of an entity's relations in order to know any of its relations, or that only the whole truth is wholly true.

6. The logical categories of unity, such as homogeneity, consistency, coherence, interrelation, etc., do not in any case imply a determinate degree of unity. Hence the degree of unity which the world possesses can not be determined logically, but only by assembling the results of the special branches of knowledge. On the basis of such evidence, there is a present presumption in favor of the hypothesis that the world as a whole is less unified than are certain of its parts.

In its historical application, this implies that the great speculative monisms, such as those of Plato, Spinoza, and certain modern idealists, are both dogmatic and contrary to the evidence.

RALPH BARTON PERRY.

## V

The realist holds that things known are not products of the knowing relation nor essentially dependent for their existence or behavior upon that relation. This doctrine has three claims upon your acceptance: first, it is the natural, instinctive belief of all men, and for this, if for no other reason, puts the burden of proof upon those who would discredit it; secondly, all refutations of it known to the present writer presuppose or even actually employ some of its exclusive implications; and, thirdly, it is logically demanded by all the observations and hypotheses of the natural sciences, including psychology.

Involved more or less intimately in a realistic view are the following:



1. One identical term may stand in many relations.
2. A term may change some of its relations to some other terms without thereby changing all its other relations to those same or to other terms.
3. What relations are changed by a given change of relation can not always be deduced merely from the nature of either the terms involved or their relation.
4. The hypothesis that "there can be no object without a subject" is pure tautology. It is confessedly a description of the cognitive situation only; and it says, in effect, that everything experienced is experienced. It becomes significant only by virtue of the wholly unwarranted assumption that doctrines 1, 2, and 3, above given, are false. This assumption, however, is fatal to the idealist's supposed discovery, inasmuch as it means that there can be no true propositions. In conceding this, the idealist refutes himself.
5. In no body of knowledge, not even in evidences about the nature of the knowledge relation, can we discover that possible knowledge is limited or what its limits may be.
6. Entities are transcendent to the so-called "knowing mind" or "consciousness" only as a term is to the relations in which it may stand, viz., in two radically different manners: first, as the term is not identical with a particular relation in which it stands, so too a thing in the knowledge relation is not the relation itself; secondly, as the term may enter into or go out of a particular relation, without thereby being changed essentially or destroyed, so too can an object of knowledge exist prior to and after its entrance into or removed from the knowledge relation. Transcendence thus means, in the first place, distinctness and, in the second place, functional independence.
7. There may be axiomatic truths or intuitive truths. But the fact that a truth belongs to either of these classes does not make it fundamental or important for a theory of knowledge, much less for a theory of reality. Like all other truths, it too must be interpreted in the light of other relevant truths.
8. Though terms are not modified by being brought into new contexts, this does not imply that an existent can not be changed by another existent.

WALTER B. PITKIN.

## VI

1. Realism, while admitting the tautology that every entity which is known is in relation to knowing or experience or consciousness, holds that this knowing, etc., is eliminable, so that the entity is known as it would be if the knowing were not taking place. Briefly, the



entity is, in its being, behavior, and character, independent of the knowing. This position agrees with common sense and with science in holding (1) that not all entities are mental, conscious, or spiritual, and (2) that entities are knowable without being known.

2. The fact that terms are in the cognitive relation does not imply that the terms are mutually dependent on, or capable of modifying, either each other or the relation, any more than this dependence, etc., is implied for any two terms in any other relation. The proposition that there is this dependence, etc., constitutes the "internal view" of relations.<sup>1</sup> Most of those systems which are opposed to realism can be shown to presuppose this "internal view," but this view can be shown to be self-contradictory and to presuppose the "external view."

3. That position which is based in part on the acceptance and the consistent use and development of the implications of those logical doctrines which are presupposed as a condition for any position being stated, argued, and held to be true has, thereby, a strong presumption created in favor of its truth.<sup>2</sup>

4. There is at least one logical doctrine and one principle which are ultimately presupposed by any system which is held to be true. That doctrine is the "external view" of relations, and the principle is that truth is independent of proof, although proof is not independent of truth. The first of these means, briefly:

5. (1) That both a term and a relation are (unchangeable) elements or entities; (2) that a term may stand in one or in many relations to one or many other terms; and (3) that any of these terms and that some of these relations could be absent or that other terms and relations could be present without there being any resulting modification, etc., of the remaining or already present terms or relations.

6. By this "external view" it is made logically possible that the knowing process and its object should be qualitatively dissimilar. (Cf. 1.)

<sup>1</sup> To hold the "internal view" means, in my opinion, to hold that, in order that a relation may relate, the relation must either (1) penetrate its terms, or (2) be mediated by an underlying (transcendent) reality. From the penetration there is deduced (a) modification, or (b) similarity, or (c) the generation of a contradiction. Cf. my paper, "The Logical Structure of Self-refuting Systems," *Phil. Review*, XIX., 3, pp. 277-282.

<sup>2</sup> Such a system I hold to be realism, its chief feature being the interpretation of the cognitive relation in accordance with the "external view." This "external view" can be held to be true quite consistently with itself, and is in this sense, I hold, self-consistent, as is also, in my opinion, realism. Accordingly I hold further that realism is not a merely dogmatic system, and that, as self-consistent, it refutes and does not merely contradict certain opposed systems which, as based on the "internal view," are self-refuting.

7. The principle (see 4) means, that, while on the one hand no proposition is so certain that it can be regarded as exempt from examination, criticism, and the demand for proof, on the other hand, any proposition, if free from self-contradiction, may be true (in some system). In this sense every proposition is tentative, even those of this platform.

*Corollary.*—It is impossible to get a criterion, definition, theory, or content for the concept “absolute” by which it can be absolutely known or proved that any criterion, definition, theory, or content is absolutely true, *i. e.*, is more than tentative. The most that can be claimed for such a criterion, etc., is that it may be absolutely true, although not proved to be.

8. Any entity may be known as it really is in some respects without its being known in all respects and without the other entities to which it is related being known, so that knowledge can increase by *accretion*.

9. Knowing, consciousness, etc., are facts to be investigated only in the same way as are other facts, and are not necessarily more important than are other facts.

10. The position stated in this platform, which is a position concerning knowing as well as other things, can apply to itself, as a special instance of knowledge, all its own propositions about knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

EDWARD GLEASON SPAULDING.

## THE CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY IN RECENT DISCUSSION<sup>1</sup>

ONE might roughly divide the history of modern American philosophy into three periods, the theologic, the metaphysical, and the scientific. The first of these periods might be dated from the beginning of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, the second from the beginning of the *Philosophical Review*, and the third from the JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY, AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS. This division into periods probably does as much violence to the facts of the case as any other, but it has the merit of calling attention to a certain shifting of the center of gravity of philosophic discussion. During the dominance of the St. Louis School, the motive of philosophy was well reflected in the motto of the old *Journal of Specu-*

<sup>3</sup> I hold that for this reason the position here stated is self-critical, and that it is this which distinguishes it from a large class of historical systems, notably phenomenism, subjective and objective idealism, and absolutism.

<sup>1</sup> Read at the New Haven meeting of the American Philosophical Association.