PHIL 470: *Seminar: Metaphysics & Epistemology*
Truth and Reality

Handout (15)

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Nelson Goodman: *Ways of Worldmaking* **[II]**

§ The Fabrication of Facts

* The perceptual is no more a rather distorted version of the physical facts than the physical is a highly artificial version of the perceptual facts. (92-3)

* "Facts" like "meaning" is a syncategorematic (syn·cat·e·gor·e·mat·ic adj used to describe an expression that has meaning only in conjunction with another expression) term; for facts, after all, are obvious factitious (not real or natural but artificial or invented)…. As meanings vanish in favor of certain relationships among terms, so facts vanish in favor of certain relationships among versions. (93)

* Facts are theory-laden; they are as theory-laden as we hope our theories are fact-laden. (96-7)

Goodman's radical relativism:
1. **Willingness to accept countless alternative truth or right world-versions does not mean that everything goes, that tall stories are as good as short ones, that truths are no longer distinguished from falsehoods.**
2. **However, truth ≠ correspondence with a ready-made world (because there is no "ready-made world").**
3. **Though we make worlds by making versions, we do not make a world by putting symbols together at random.**
4. **Multiple worlds are just the actual worlds made by and answering to *true* or *right* versions.**
5. ***False* versions have no place in my philosophy.**

Q: **What world-versions are true or right then?**

Nominalism	Physicalism
Authorizes an abundance of alternative versions based on physical particles or phenomenal elements or ordinary things or whatever else one is willing to take as individuals.	Admits of only one correct (even if yet unidentified) basis.

* This does not mean that right versions must be arrived at casually, or that worlds are built from scratch. We start, on any occasion, with some old version or world that we have on hand and that we are stuck with until we have the determination and sill to remake it into a new one…. Worldmaking begins with one version and ends with another.

(JeeLoo's examples:
___ the Christian world
___ the Greek world
___ the Chinese world
___ the native Americans' world
___ the physicalistic world
…..
In one world we have a God; in another we have multiple gods. In one world we have ghosts and spirits; in another only physical things exist. How do we say which world is true or right and which is false?
JeeLoo's answer: I now think it is a matter of choice, based on our preferences, the things we hold on to and the things we refuse to accept.
Q: What do you think?)

Goodman's conclusion:
___ Not everything goes; no laissez-faire – Standards distinguishing right from wrong versions become more important in this view. Truth is often inapplicable, is seldom sufficient, and must sometimes give way to competing criteria. (107)

§ Rightness of Rendering World-versions

[rightness]
___ This notion includes, along with truth, standards of acceptability that sometimes supplement or even compete with truth where it applies, or replace truth for non-declarative renderings.

The worlds of fiction, poetry, painting, music, dance and the other arts are built largely by such non-literal devices as metaphor, by such non-denotational means as exemplification and expression, and often by use of pictures or sounds or gestures or other symbols of nonlinguistic systems. → The arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of the understanding. (102)

e.g. "Don Quixote", taken literally, applies to no one, but taken figuratively, applies to many of us …

* When we strip off as layers of convention all differences among ways of describing *it*, what is left? The onion is peeled down to its empty core. (118)

§ Truth

1. A standard though uninformative formula (Tarski) concerning truth requires modification to a no more informative one. (120)

e.g. 'Snow is white' is true iff snow is white.
→ 'Snow is white' is true in a given world iff snow is white in that world. OR:
→ 'Snow is white' is true according to a true version iff snow is white according to that version.

2. Considerations other than truth take on added importance in the choice among statements or versions.

* Even where there is no conflict, truth is far from sufficient. Some truths are trivial, irrelevant, unintelligible, or redundant; too broad, too narrow, too boring, too bizarre, too complicated; etc.

3. A hard problem concerning the relation between truth and tests for it may be slightly softened.

* Truth is no more a necessary than a sufficient consideration for a choice of a statement. Not only may the choice often be of a statement that is the more nearly right in other respects over one that is the more nearly true, but where truth is too finicky, too uneven, or does not fit comfortably with other principles, we may choose the nearest amenable and illuminating lie. (121)

Q: Do we deliberately choose what we know to be a lie?

* We must use some tests in judging truths; and such features as utility and coherence are prominent candidates. That we can readily produce ostensible examples of useless tangled truths and of useful neat falsehoods shows at most only that **the tests are corroborative rather than conclusive.** (122)

§ What Constitutes "Rightness"?

* A deductive argument is right in a fuller sense only if the premiseses are true and the inferences valid.

* An inductive rightness, on the other, consists of conformity with principles that codify practice. Inductive validity is one step further removed from truth than is deductive validly, for valid inductive inference from true premises need not yield a true conclusion. (126)

* Rightness of induction requires rightness of predicates projected, and that in turn may vary with practice.

* A statement is true, and a description or representation right, for a world it fits.

* Rather than attempting to subsume descriptive and representational rightness under truth, we shall subsume truth along with these under the general notion of rightness of fit. (132)

Goodman's Conclusion: (138-40)

1. **Truth of statements and rightness of descriptions, representations, etc., is primarily a matter of fit: fit to what is referred to in one way or another, or to other renderings, or to modes and manners of organization.**
2. **Knowing or understanding is seen as ranging beyond the acquiring of true beliefs to the discovering and devising of fit of all sorts.**
3. **Rather than being able to justify our confidence in inductive inference or in the procedures for taking fair samples, we look to the confidence itself for whatever justification there may be for those procedures.**
4. **The line between artistic and scientific judgment does not coincide with the line between subjective and objective.**