

# Realism with a Human Face

Hilary Putnam

*Edited by James Conant*

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## Introduction by James Conant

The title of this volume, *Realism with a Human Face*, alludes to Alexander Dubcek's slogan "Socialism with a Human Face," which was the rallying cry of the Prague Spring of 1968. "Socialism" originally stood as the name for a dream of realizing some of humanity's most cherished aspirations. Yet somehow in the course of its development, Dubcek felt, what was called socialism in his country had turned into the enemy of everything it once stood for. The title Hilary Putnam has chosen for this volume proposes that the history of philosophical realism represents a parallel development. Having originally stood for the dream of realizing our natural human aspirations to knowledge and objectivity, "philosophical realism" now names an intellectual current that ultimately serves only to corrode our conviction in the possibility of attaining either. Putnam draws a distinction in the title essay of this volume between what he calls "Realism with a capital 'R'" (the currently regnant metaphysical image of the world in analytic philosophy) and "realism with a small 'r'" (our commonsense image of the world). He proceeds to argue that while claiming to serve as its representative, the former gives up on everything in which the latter believes. The Realist begins by offering to rescue us from the threat of philosophical skepticism and to vindicate our commonsense belief in the reality of the external world and the possibility of objectivity and truth, and ends by giving us back a world in which common sense no longer has a home; thus he begins by promising to save the world and ends by dehumanizing it. The essays collected in this volume argue that the cognitive values of objectivity and truth are only able to retain their sense within the framework of an overarching ideal of human flourishing. Hence, in attempting to wrench certain cognitive ideals from our overall conception of human flourishing, philosophical realism ends by undermining itself (and precipitating a

backlash of philosophical skepticism). In order to fulfill the philosophical program of providing an accurate and coherent account of the nature of knowledge and objectivity, our image of knowledge and objectivity must wear a human face.

In calling for "socialism with a human face," Dubcek's hope was to rehumanize the movement in Czechoslovakia by confronting it with the fact that it had betrayed its original motivations. In giving a similar name to his philosophical program, Putnam is evidently also calling for reform. The suggestion would appear to be that the time has come to rehumanize philosophy, to call upon the prevailing currents within this field of activity to attend to the gap between the present condition of the subject and the human aspirations that philosophy should (and once claimed to) represent. Like Dubcek's before it, Putnam's call for reform will no doubt strike some people as out of touch with reality—just another instance of starry-eyed idealism rather than a serious program. Hence the allusion might also appear to be an unfortunate one in that Dubcek's attempted revolution is famous for having ended in disaster. As I write, however, momentous changes are taking place: enormous crowds are assembling in the streets and public squares of Prague, brandishing placards that call for, among other things, "a time when people can begin to live as human beings"; the Berlin Wall has come down—a structure that was once the single most concrete symbol in our contemporary world of human aspiration divided against itself. The spark of Dubcek's vision is therefore not only being rekindled in Czechoslovakia but has caught fire and is presently spreading like a blaze across all of Eastern Europe. In the light of these developments, it would appear that Putnam's title is an apposite one.<sup>1</sup>

I came to know Putnam first as a teacher of philosophy. I attended his classes at Harvard and was repeatedly struck by the following peculiar feature of his pedagogic practice: he would usually motivate the approach he wished to take to a contemporary philosophical issue through a discussion of the work of some philosopher whom he admired. One's first fleeting impression would therefore perhaps be of someone unable to arrive at ideas of his own—an impression, however, that would vanish as one came to realize that Putnam's readings of philosophers tended to be no less idiosyncratic than his own approach to philosophical problems. The lectures for any given course that Putnam gave were peppered with numerous, though often puzzling, references to his current philosophical hero(es). An index of

how his readings of philosophical texts would tend to parallel developments in his own personal philosophical views is afforded by the following remark he made in one such course: "I find that as I keep getting clearer about these issues, Aristotle keeps getting clearer about them, too." Nonetheless, each decisive shift in Putnam's thought is generally accompanied by the concomitant abandonment of some (previous) philosophical hero and the inauguration of a new one—sometimes a thinker whom he had previously (and sometimes even famously) denounced. Thus the membership of Putnam's constellation of heroes, not unlike his own substantive philosophical views, tends to exist in a condition of perpetual flux; at any given point in his career, one has only to glance at the current membership of this constellation to ascertain the general philosophical direction in which he is (often quite rapidly) moving.

The present stage in Putnam's intellectual trajectory does not constitute an exception to this general rule of thumb. Scattered throughout the essays collected in the present volume, one finds the names of four philosophers in particular who are of interest in this connection: Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Stanley Cavell, and William James. Each of them is invoked at a critical juncture in the book; each functions as an exemplar of a particular aspect of the philosophical calling to which Putnam wishes to remain faithful. My aim in this introduction is to say something about what it is that Putnam admires about each of these philosophers. This endeavor has already been partially preempted by Putnam himself, since two of the essays collected here are devoted primarily to exploring the extent to which contemporary philosophers can still learn from the work of William James; therefore I have confined myself to a consideration of Putnam's relation to the other three of these figures. My aim in doing so is to say something of a general nature about the ways in which the work collected in the present volume represents a departure from Putnam's earlier work. I have tried, in particular, to shed light on the present character of Putnam's overall conception of philosophy and on what he (at least for the time being) thinks philosophy may reasonably hope to achieve.

### Putnam's Kantianism

It should come as no surprise to readers familiar with Putnam's recent work that the pair of lectures that constitute the title chapter of this

volume are dedicated to Kant. Still, some readers may be surprised by just how strong a claim Putnam is prepared to make for the contemporary relevance of Kant's work. Indeed, this volume opens with the following remark: "I hope it will become clear that my indebtedness to Kant is very large . . . For me, at least, almost all the problems of philosophy attain the form in which they are of real interest only with the work of Kant." This remark is as striking as it is sweeping—especially in view of the fact that in Putnam's first two volumes of philosophical papers there is no sustained discussion of Kant's work. At that stage Kant does not appear to constitute a significant influence on Putnam's own philosophical outlook; although his name makes an occasional appearance, it almost always stands for the figure that analytic philosophy was, in those years, forever distancing itself from: a deplorably influential dead German philosopher who held misguided views about the synthetic *a priori* nature of geometry and arithmetic. It is only in Putnam's last three books that Kant's name begins to stand for a figure from whom contemporary analytic philosophy still has much to learn. In the first of these books, Kant's attack on the correspondence theory of truth is identified as a pivotal chapter in the history of metaphysics;<sup>2</sup> the second book takes its bearings from the role of the concept of autonomy in Kant's moral philosophy;<sup>3</sup> and the third praises Kant's delicate treatment of the mind/body problem.<sup>4</sup> What happens in these books is not that Putnam undergoes a conversion to Kantianism; rather, his entire picture of Kant's achievement and its position in the history of philosophy is transformed. As Putnam's own philosophical views develop, his philosophical agenda increasingly comes to resemble the one he finds in Kant. The result is both an increasing interest in Kant and a deepening appreciation of the extent to which he succeeded in grasping and defining the problems that continue to plague contemporary philosophy. Kant's achievement, on this view, lies not primarily in the answers he provided but rather in the manner in which he pressed the questions. The aim throughout this volume is therefore not so much to defend or rehabilitate any specific solutions to standing problems that Kant himself tried to tackle, as to recapture an overall perspective on the character, structure, and interrelationship of the basic problems that have preoccupied modern philosophy.

In the first of the three books mentioned above, *Reason, Truth, and History*, Putnam credits Kant with being the first philosopher clearly to point the way toward the position in metaphysics<sup>5</sup> that Putnam

himself seems now to favor: "Although Kant never quite says that this is what he is doing, Kant is best read as proposing for the first time, what I have called the 'internalist' or 'internal realist' view of truth."<sup>6</sup> The significance of Kant's example for Putnam in this regard is perhaps best summarized by saying that Kant offers the first serious attempt in the history of philosophy to explicate the concept of genuinely objective knowledge in a fashion that does not presuppose the coherence of the notion of an "absolute conception" of the world—the notion that there is some conception of the world that captures the way the world (already) is, in and of itself, independent of our particular (human) conceptions of it.<sup>7</sup> This Kantian quest for a coherent conception of what is "objective humanly speaking"<sup>8</sup>—a conception that avoids the twin perils of a relativism that denies the possibility of objective knowledge and of a metaphysical absolutism that transcends the limits of what is coherently conceivable—has emerged as perhaps the single most pervasive theme in Putnam's recent work. The essays collected in the present volume subserve this ideal in different ways. Those in Part I are concerned specifically with diagnosing the various sources of the traditional metaphysical picture of objectivity and showing that the abandonment of that picture does not require that we give up on the notion of objectivity itself. The essays in Part II argue that our everyday means of adjudicating practical disputes on matters of ethical and aesthetic controversy often represent what may be properly termed "objective resolutions of problematical situations"—and that *that* is "objectivity enough."<sup>9</sup> Thus the argument of the essays in Part II depends on the argument of those in Part I. The overarching claim is that the ways in which philosophers have attacked the possibility of genuine ethical or aesthetic knowledge have generally turned on their allegiance to a false (metaphysical) conception of objectivity. It is the burden of the essays in Part I to advance a critique of this traditional conception of objectivity. Putnam's so-called internal realism—or, as he prefers to call it here, "realism with a small 'r'"—aims to set forth a conception of objectivity that is more faithful to our actual (both everyday and scientific) practices of adjudicating conflicting knowledge-claims and achieving forms of rational consensus.

The doctrine of "internal realism" (of which Putnam discerns a version in Kant's work) has been summarized by Putnam in several different places and in a number of different ways. Many of the essays in this volume represent further attempts at its formulation from a

variety of complementary perspectives. One such formulation sheds light on the relationship between Putnam's views and those of Kant:

My own view is that the success of science cannot be anything but a puzzle as long as we view concepts and objects as radically independent; that is, as long as we think of "the world" as an entity that has a fixed nature, determined once and for all, independently of our framework of concepts . . . If we do shift our way of thinking to the extent of regarding "the world" as partly constituted by the representing mind, then many things in our popular philosophy (and even in technical philosophy) must be reexamined. To mention just two of them: (1) Locke held that the great metaphysical problem of realism, the problem of the relation of our concepts to their objects, would be solved by just natural scientific investigation, indefinitely continued. Kant held that Locke was wrong, and that this *philosophical* question was never going to be solved by empirical science. I am suggesting that on this subject Kant was right and Locke was wrong . . . (2) Since the birth of science thousands of years ago we have bifurcated the world into "reality"—what physical science describes—and appearance . . . I am suggesting that this is an error, and a subtle version of Locke's error. The "primary/secondary" or "reality/appearance" dichotomy is founded on and presupposes what Kant called "the transcendental illusion"—that empirical science describes (and *exhaustively* describes) a concept-independent, perspective-independent "reality."<sup>10</sup>

The importance of Kant's work for Putnam is connected not only to Kant's insight into the incoherence of the seductive idea of a "concept-independent, perspective-independent reality" but also to his appreciation of the ways in which certain forms of moral confusion are fueled by this species of metaphysical confusion.

In *The Many Faces of Realism*, the second of the three books alluded to previously, Putnam again looks to Kant—this time as an important source for "ideas that may be the beginning of a kind of 'internal realism' in moral philosophy."<sup>11</sup> Kant receives credit here for offering "a radically new way of giving content to the notion of equality"<sup>12</sup> through his "radical" and "deep"<sup>13</sup> explication of the concept of autonomy. What Putnam emphasizes most in this discussion is the intimacy of the connection revealed between ethics and metaphysics. Kant's views on moral philosophy flow naturally from his rejection of a metaphysically loaded conception of objectivity: "Kant's glory, in my eyes, is to say that the very fact that we cannot separate our own

conceptual contribution from what is 'objectively there' is not a disaster . . . Similarly, I am suggesting, Kant rejects the idea that we have something analogous to the medieval 'rational intuition' with respect to moral questions. And again here he argues that this is not a disaster, that on the contrary it is a Good Thing. The whole Kantian strategy, on this reading . . . is to *celebrate* the loss of essence."<sup>14</sup>

Although there is little specific discussion of Kant's views on moral philosophy in the present volume, in Chapter 13 ("Taking Rules Seriously") Putnam does take recent Anglo-American moral philosophy to task for assuming "a derogatory attitude toward rules and toward the Kantian account" of the place of rules in moral reasoning.<sup>15</sup> Putnam points out that Kant does allow an important role for the pursuit of happiness in his moral scheme;<sup>16</sup> that, rather than devaluing the significance of happiness, Kant was concerned to keep its pursuit from being "allowed to degenerate into a consequentialist ethic,"<sup>17</sup> and that consequently there is room for considerably more harmony between Kantian and Aristotelian ethics than has hitherto generally been acknowledged.<sup>18</sup> Outside of his remarks in this one essay, however, Putnam devotes no further attention to the details of Kant's own moral theory. The feature of Kant's philosophy that resonates most in the present volume is the insistence on the interconnected character of metaphysical and ethical confusion. In particular, Putnam finds in Kant a concern with the way in which the metaphysical realists' picture of scientific objectivity leads to a devaluation of the objectivity of moral judgment. The pervasive attention to the ethical implications of prevailing metaphysical assumptions—and, in particular, to the subtle mutual influences exercised by prevailing conceptions of objectivity in philosophy of science and moral philosophy—represents perhaps the most significant sense in which the essays collected here constitute an important shift in the focus of Putnam's philosophical interests. It is not that these issues receive attention here for the first time in Putnam's work. However, as his conviction in their significance for philosophy (and in their impact on our culture as a whole) has deepened, they have come to assume an unprecedented degree of centrality. In this connection, I will simply note the extent to which the essays pervasively register the pressure of the following two questions: What are the moral (or political) implications of a given philosophical view (in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, or philosophy of science)? How do our analyses in various areas of philosophy impinge on our understanding of our everyday practices of

ethical reflection and criticism? My suggestion is that the manner in which these questions haunt the pages of this volume itself forms a further significant affinity between Putnam and Kant.

In *Representation and Reality*, the third of the three books mentioned earlier, Kant's claim concerning the impossibility of giving a scientific account of "schematism"<sup>19</sup> is acknowledged as an antecedent version of one of Putnam's central claims: namely, the inability of a thoroughgoing physicalist or materialist view of the world to provide a coherent account of intentionality.<sup>20</sup> This feature of Kant's influence also surfaces in a variety of ways in Putnam's most recent work.<sup>21</sup> Putnam argues, for example, that Kant's thought marks a decisive break with the Cartesian tradition: "Note that Kant does not say there are two 'substances'—mind and body (as Descartes did). Kant says, instead, that there are 'dualities in our experience' (a striking phrase!) that refuse to go away. And I think Kant was, here as elsewhere, on to something of permanent significance."<sup>22</sup> What is of permanent significance here is Kant's idea that the relation between mind and body should not be pictured as a binary opposition, a dualism of two incommensurable kinds of entity, but rather as a *duality*: two complementary poles of a single field of activity—the field of human experience. Putnam goes on to suggest that the clock was turned back and that philosophy of mind in the Anglo-American world retreated for several decades to a pre-Kantian formulation of the mind/body problem: "It was with the decline of pragmatism and idealism and the rise of logical positivism that English-speaking philosophy reverted to its traditional, empiricist way of conceiving mind-body issues."<sup>23</sup> Recent developments in the philosophy of mind (in particular, the functionalism controversy), however, have had the salutary effect, in Putnam's view, of finally bringing a variety of Kantian "topics and concerns back into English-speaking analytic philosophy in a massive way."<sup>24</sup>

The various passages quoted above offer some indication of the magnitude of the achievement that Putnam wishes to claim for Kant's contributions to philosophy—in metaphysics, moral philosophy, and philosophy of mind—as well as the degree to which Putnam feels philosophical progress is to be attained by returning to Kant and reconsidering many of the traditional problems in the terms in which he formulated them. That one of the leading figures in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy should reach *this* conclusion is a devel-

opment worth pondering. I have attempted to indicate here that, despite the exceptional diversity of the topics that are taken up in this volume, one legitimate way of grouping their various concerns under a single heading is to note how they all tacitly participate in a single project: to inherit, reassess, and appropriate Kant's philosophical legacy, with the aim to take up philosophizing at the point at which he left off.

Given that in each of his last three books, Putnam has singled out a different aspect of Kant's view as playing a formative role in shaping his own work, the question naturally arises: What about *this* book? Is there a further Kantian problematic that emerges here and that can be recognized as now playing a decisive role in structuring Putnam's preoccupations? Or to shift the question slightly: Insofar as Putnam's reflections in these essays represent a further departure from his previously published work, do they in any way also represent a further step toward Kant? The frequency with which Kant's name recurs at critical junctures certainly encourages such a question. Yet it is difficult to specify the appropriation of any additional point of doctrine that would mark a further approach toward Kant. This is no doubt partly because the peculiarly Kantian flavor of many of these essays stems not from a new departure in Putnam's thought, but rather from the flowering of a tendency that has been maturing for some years. Earlier I specified one symptom of this process of maturation: the pervasive responsiveness of these essays to questions about how the formulation of issues in certain areas of philosophy (metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of science) both determines and is determined by the formulation of (often apparently unrelated) issues in moral and political philosophy. Reflection on the nature of the relationship between these different branches of philosophy is the explicit topic of only a few of the essays in this volume.<sup>25</sup> Implicitly, however, this concern shapes almost all of them. Indeed, it would not be much of a distortion to summarize the underlying agenda of the volume as a whole in the following terms: Putnam wishes to draw limits to scientific reason in order to make room for ethics. Sacrificing the strictness of the parallel with Kant, it would be still more accurate to say: Putnam wishes to find a way to make sense of both our scientific and everyday practices of adjudicating disputes and arriving at truths in a way that also enables us to make the right kind of sense of our moral lives. Consequently, as with many of Kant's works, many of Putnam's

essays in this collection that are overtly concerned with epistemology or metaphysics can be viewed, from a certain perspective, as exercises in moral philosophy.

Earlier we saw Putnam praising Kant's characterization of the mental and physical as constituting (not a dualism of substances but rather) a "duality of experience." The notion that these two poles constitute a *duality* is meant to indicate that neither pole is completely reducible to, nor completely separable from, its counterpart. The philosophical task here becomes one of doing conceptual justice to the intricacy of the relations of mutual interdependence and relative autonomy that obtain among the phenomena. For Kant, the field of experience is constituted by the *joint* exercise of the human faculties of understanding and sensibility. He writes: "To neither of these powers may a preference be given over the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."<sup>26</sup> The "duality" that Kant detects in the nature of human experience lies in the manner in which its constitution depends on the *interplay* of these two complementary faculties of sensibility and understanding, and the manner in which the character of human experience hence reflects their respective constitutive aspects of receptivity and spontaneity.

I would like to suggest that Putnam's most recent step forward toward Kant can be found in the extent to which his work increasingly registers the tension of yet another duality—one that Kant detects in the very nature of the enterprise of philosophical reflection itself. Kant characterizes it, in the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled "The Architectonic of Pure Reason," as a duality of two different concepts of philosophy—the scholastic concept of philosophy (*der Schulbegriff der Philosophie*) and the universal or cosmic concept (*der Weltbegriff*):

Hitherto the concept of philosophy has been a merely scholastic concept—a concept of a system of knowledge which is sought solely in its character as a science, and which has therefore in view only the systematic unity appropriate to science, and consequently no more than the logical perfection of knowledge. But there is likewise another concept of philosophy, a *conceptus cosmicus*, which has always formed the real basis of the term 'philosophy,' especially when it has been as it were personified and its archetype represented

in the ideal of the *philosopher*. On this view, philosophy is the science of the relation of all knowledge to the essential ends of human reason.<sup>27</sup>

It emerges that the duality indicated here (as belonging to the nature of philosophical reflection) parallels the one that obtains between the moments of receptivity and spontaneity that characterize human experience, insofar as Kant goes on to suggest that it would be equally correct here to assert with respect to these two aspects of the field of philosophical activity: "To neither of these powers may a preference be given over the other." Thus the field of philosophical experience depends on the interplay of these two complementary concepts of philosophy.

The *Schulbegriff* (the scholastic concept) embodies philosophy's aspiration to the systematicity and the rigor of a science. Kant does not exactly say here that philosophy aspires to be a science, for it is neither exactly a science nor something alongside the other sciences; rather, he says that it aspires to "a system of knowledge which is sought solely in its character as a science." It is sought and valued as a science ("wird als Wissenschaft gesucht") for two reasons: first and foremost, because it strives to clarify the foundation of the other sciences (properly so-called) and to lay a groundwork for them; and second, because it provides a fertile breeding ground for scientific ideas.<sup>28</sup> Philosophy, pursued under the aspect of its *Schulbegriff*, will occasionally lay open to view new domains of inquiry and will thereby act as a midwife to new branches of science. Even the development of the methods of particular sciences—although these sciences themselves may be oblivious to this fact—can often be traced back historically to philosophical investigations into the sources and nature of the varieties of human knowledge. The crucial feature of the *Schulbegriff* of philosophy that Kant pauses over here, however, is its esotericism—the fact that it is the province of a few professionals. In this respect as well, philosophy can come to resemble a science: it requires of its practitioners a thorough knowledge of detailed matters of doctrine, method, and terminology. Its practice presupposes a mastery of all the elaborate tools and technicalities that come with any highly developed and specialized discipline. Philosophy's aspirations to clarity, rigor, and completeness exert a pressure for it to become a field in which a narrow class of specialists write only for one another. Insofar as philosophy aspires to gain a secure foothold in the academy,

the forces of professionalization that prevail there will tend to ensure the ascendancy of the *Schulbegriff* over the *Weltbegriff*.

The high tradition of analytic philosophy—which traces its roots back to the seminal writings of Frege, Russell, and the Vienna Circle—represents perhaps the fullest realization of the aspiration of philosophy in its *Schulbegriff*. Russell inaugurated this development by calling for the application of the methods of the sciences (in particular the mathematical method of the logical construction of entities) to the questions of philosophy. Putnam's early mentors in philosophy, Hans Reichenbach and Rudolf Carnap, both began as followers of Kant and admirers of Russell, and in their mature years they continued (while scoffing at most of his views) to praise Kant for having clarified philosophy's relation to the natural sciences. They championed a conception of philosophy that they believed could be traced back to Kant: philosophy as the logical analysis of science. However, the ascendancy of the *Schulbegriff* reached what one might consider its metaphysical apotheosis in the work of Putnam's colleague and erstwhile mentor, W. V. O. Quine, who defends the (ultimately extremely un-Kantian) conclusion that philosophy simply is one of the empirical sciences.<sup>29</sup> For Quine, all philosophy worthy of the title falls squarely under the *Schulbegriff* of philosophy.<sup>30</sup>

In distinguishing between the *Schulbegriff* and the *Weltbegriff*, Kant refers to them as two *concepts* of philosophy. This suggests that, for Kant, it is not a matter of delineating two different kinds of philosophy but rather of discriminating two different poles of a single field of activity—the implication being not only that each of these concepts has a claim to the title of “philosophy,” but that the philosophical enterprise itself can achieve full fruition only when pursued under the aspect of each. Hence, on this view, it would seem that in order for the subject to thrive, philosophy in the form of its *Schulbegriff* must flourish as well. It is this feature of Kant's conception of the subject that one could argue has been particularly enshrined in both the practice and the ideology of analytic philosophy. Few readers familiar with his previous work will be surprised to find Putnam vigorously espousing a latter-day version of this conception in one of his earlier writings: “If any further evidence were needed of the healthy state of philosophy today, it would be provided by the hordes of intellectuals who complain that philosophy is overtly ‘technical,’ that it has ‘abdicated’ from any concern with ‘real’ problems, etc. For such complaints have always occurred precisely when philosophy was signifi-

cant and vital! . . . The sad fact is that good philosophy is and always has been *hard*, and that it is easier to learn the names of a few philosophers than it is to read their books. Those who find philosophy overtly ‘technical’ today would no more have found the time or the inclination . . . to read one of the *Critiques*, in an earlier day.”<sup>31</sup>

Putnam comes by this particular affinity with Kant's conception of philosophy (namely, that in order for philosophy to flourish its *Schulbegriff* must flourish as well!) through the philosophical culture in which he has been educated and to which he has contributed some of his own most important work. That is to say, the fact that Putnam has this much in common with Kant fails to distinguish him from most of his colleagues. What does distinguish his recent work, however, is the degree to which it has come implicitly to embody an insistence on the complementarity—rather than the opposition—of the two concepts of philosophy that Kant discriminates. I believe Putnam today would no longer be comfortable with the way in which the passage just quoted appears to endorse the equation of the following two complaints concerning his own philosophical culture: (1) “It has become too ‘technical.’” (2) “It has ‘abdicated’ from any concern with ‘real’ problems.” More specifically, I believe he would no longer be comfortable with pairing these two criticisms in a fashion that suggests that their relative degrees of justification are necessarily a straightforward function of each other. Although Putnam continues to remain a committed advocate of philosophy's *Schulbegriff*, he has become increasingly concerned to draw attention to how this commitment can lead (and has led) to a neglect of philosophy's *Weltbegriff*. For example, in Chapter 12 of the present volume we find the following charge: “Part of what makes moral philosophy an anachronistic field is that its practitioners continue to argue in . . . [a] very traditional and aprioristic way . . . They are proud of giving ingenious arguments—that is what makes them ‘analytic’ philosophers—and curiously evasive or superficial about the relation of the premises of these arguments to the ideals and practices of any actual moral community.”

In the passage from *The Critique of Pure Reason* quoted earlier, Kant tells us that the *Weltbegriff* (the universal or cosmic concept) of philosophy is concerned with “the relation of all knowledge to the essential aims of human reason.” He adds further: “The universal concept is meant to signify a concept relating to what must be of interest to everyone.”<sup>32</sup> And he speaks of it as embodying an idea that



“exists everywhere in the reason of every human being.”<sup>33</sup> Philosophy, viewed under the aspect of this concept, is radically *exoteric*: both its sources and its aims are rooted in the very nature of what it is to be human. The sources of philosophy—and, in particular, the sources of philosophical perplexity—constitute the guiding topic of the second division of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, entitled “The Transcendental Dialectic.” It emerges clearly in these pages that, for Kant, philosophy consists in the first order not primarily of a technical discipline reserved only for specialists, but of an elucidatory activity that aspires to illuminate those confusions of thought that ordinary human beings cannot escape entering into. Kant attempts to show that philosophical reflection derives from the natural human propensity to reason, and its problems stem from reason’s equally natural propensity to transcend the limits of its own legitimate scope of employment: “Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer.”<sup>34</sup> The *Weltbegriff* of philosophy is grounded in the fact that every human mind, by virtue of its sheer capacity to reason, harbors a philosopher. Each of us, as we reason, under the prodding of the philosopher within us (whether we wish to or not), concomitantly implicates himself or herself in the activity of philosophizing; and hence each of us is subject to the pressure of those questions that it lies “in the very nature of reason” both to pose to itself, and to be unable to answer, since “they transcend the powers of human reason.” This is the province of what Kant calls *transcendental illusion*: “Transcendental illusion . . . exerts its influence on principles that are in no wise intended for use in experience, in which case we should at least have had a criterion of their correctness. In defiance of all the warnings of criticism, it carries us altogether beyond the empirical employment of the categories.”<sup>35</sup>

The impact of this aspect of Kant’s thought on Putnam’s own meta-philosophical views is evident throughout the pages of this volume.<sup>36</sup> Equally pertinent, however, is the notion of a transcendental *dialectic* that Kant derives from his conclusions concerning the unavoidable character of transcendental illusion:

Transcendental illusion . . . does not cease even after it has been detected and its invalidity clearly revealed by transcendental criticism . . . This is an *illusion* which can no more be prevented than

we can prevent the sea appearing higher at the horizon than at the shore . . . For here we have to do with a *natural* and inevitable *illusion* . . . There exists, then, a natural and unavoidable dialectic of pure reason—not one in which a bungler might entangle himself through a lack of knowledge, or one which some sophist has artificially invented to confuse thinking people, but one inseparable from human reason, and which, even after its deceptiveness has been exposed, will not cease to play tricks with reason and continually entrap it into momentary aberrations ever and again calling for correction.<sup>37</sup>

Kant views our recurrent state of philosophical confusion as an unwittingly self-imposed condition of intellectual entanglement that arises through our natural propensity to follow what we take to be “fundamental rules and maxims for the employment of our reason.”<sup>38</sup> The form of entanglement in question here is therefore one that is imposed on the human mind by the human mind as a natural and inevitable symptom of the pressure of taking thought. It follows from this not only that some degree of philosophical confusion belongs to the natural condition of any creature endowed with reason, but that as long as the human animal wishes to enjoy the fruits of reason he must also expect to pay the price of repeatedly overstepping its limits. Hence as long as there are human beings there will be a need for philosophy. The idea that humanity has an enduring need for the vocation of philosophy is one that recurs in a number of the essays in the present volume—it is a region of Kant’s thought in which Putnam sees deep affinities with certain strains in the teaching of the later Wittgenstein.

We saw earlier that the *Weltbegriff* of philosophy was radically exoteric in a second, intimately related sense as well: namely, through its activity of reflection on (as Kant puts it) “the essential ends of human reason.” The object of all philosophical reflection, from the standpoint of its *Weltbegriff*, is that which relates to every rational being by virtue of his or her ability to reason, to that which must, as Kant says, “be of interest to everyone.” The *Weltbegriff* represents philosophy’s mandate to address, clarify, and illuminate those questions that naturally arise and come to perplex us in the course of exercising our capacities for deliberation and reflection. Kant begins the passage in which he distinguishes two concepts by speaking of a philosophy that is “merely scholastic”—merely scholastic because, insofar as the practice of philosophy confines itself to the satisfaction

cerned as clearly in Putnam's earlier work? To view philosophy as no more than "a purely technical discipline" is to view it only under the aspect of its *Schulbegriff*—to ignore its calling to address the intellectual needs of our time. Kant's distinction between the *Schulbegriff* and the *Weltbegriff* of philosophy closely parallels the distinction between argument and vision that Putnam adapts from Burnyeat:

I would agree with Myles Burnyeat who once said that philosophy needs vision *and* argument. Burnyeat's point was that there is something disappointing about a philosophical work that contains arguments, however good, which are not inspired by some genuine vision, and something disappointing about a philosophical work that contains a vision, however inspiring, which is unsupported by arguments . . .

Speculation about how things hang together requires . . . the ability to draw out conceptual distinctions and connections, and the ability to argue . . . But speculative views, however interesting or well supported by arguments or insightful, are not all we need. We also need what Burnyeat called 'vision':—and I take that to mean vision as to how to live our lives, and how to order our societies. Philosophers have a double task: to integrate our various views of our world and ourselves . . . and to help us find a meaningful orientation in life.<sup>42</sup>

This emphasis on the philosopher's obligation to formulate an overall guiding vision that emerges in Putnam's recent work is particularly striking when one bears in mind the degree to which this notion of a philosophical duty runs against the grain of the traditional ideology of analytic philosophy. Of course, Putnam's commitment to philosophy's *Weltbegriff* does not, in and of itself, constitute a distinctively Kantian moment. This is a feature his work shares, for example, with currents in both pragmatism and continental philosophy. (Indeed, the emergence of this commitment in Putnam's own writings is unquestionably connected to his increasing interest in, and sympathy with, philosophers such as James and Kierkegaard.)<sup>43</sup> The characteristically Kantian moment here lies in the complementarity of Putnam's philosophical commitments: in the extent to which his recent philosophical work engages the aspirations of both the *Weltbegriff* and the *Schulbegriff* of philosophy and attempts to think productively in the tension that is the inevitable result of bringing them into each other's proximity. What is distinctive about so many of these essays is the cheerful and optimistic tone in which they carry off their attempt to

of the aspirations of its *Schulbegriff*, it fails to live up to what Kant terms "the ideal of the philosopher." The philosophical inquirer who neglects (or repudiates) the aspirations of philosophy's *Weltbegriff*, in Kant's view, betrays (or abdicates) the central responsibility of the vocation of philosopher: the responsibility to address the universal intellectual needs of his fellow reflective beings. If the practice of philosophy is not only pursued exclusively by specialists but, in addition, addresses itself exclusively to the needs and interests of specialists, then it should not properly be called "philosophy": "There is also the *Weltbegriff* which has always formed the real foundation of that which has been given the title [of philosophy]."<sup>39</sup> Kant amplifies the point in the paragraph that follows: "The mathematician, the natural philosopher, and the logician, however successful the two former may have been in their advances in the field of rational knowledge, and the two latter more especially in philosophical knowledge, are yet only artificers in the field of reason. There is a teacher, [conceived] in the ideal, who sets them their tasks, and employs them as instruments, to further the essential ends of human reason. Him alone we must call philosopher."<sup>40</sup>

Kant's idea here that the ideal of the philosopher should correspond to a certain ideal of the *teacher*—one who seeks to further the essential ends of humanity—is one that we will encounter again in considering the relation between Putnam's recent work and that of Cavell. The related idea that there is such a thing as the *responsibility* of philosophy—and that it is abdicated by the confinement of the pursuit of philosophy to the interests of its professional practitioners—is one that finds increasing resonance in Putnam's recent writings, as in the following passage: "Metaphysical materialism has replaced positivism and pragmatism as the dominant contemporary form of scientism. Since scientism is, in my opinion, one of the most dangerous contemporary intellectual tendencies, a critique of its most influential contemporary form is a *duty* for a philosopher who views his enterprise as more than a purely technical discipline."<sup>41</sup> This notion of a philosophical duty—a duty that binds every philosopher "who views his enterprise as more than a purely technical discipline"—is woven into the fabric of the arguments threaded through the essays in the present volume, controlling the focus and direction of analysis throughout. It constitutes a reasonable neighborhood in which to look for an answer to the question raised earlier—namely, what new Kantian dimension can be found in these essays that cannot be dis-

sustain intellectual life in the atmosphere of that tension—a mood that differs significantly from the nihilistic tone that prevails in much contemporary philosophy on either side of the Atlantic.

The most characteristically Kantian aspect of *Realism with a Human Face* is, I am suggesting, its insistence on the *duality* of these two different concepts of philosophy—its insistence that the esoteric and exoteric aspects of contemporary philosophy constitute complementary moments in a single enterprise of reflection. Hence these pages are also pervaded by an insistence on the *unity* of philosophy: an opposition to any form of metaphysical dualism that takes philosophy's twin aspirations of rigor and human relevance as the hallmarks of two distinct and incommensurable kinds of philosophical activity. One could summarize the character of the dual nature envisioned here by performing the appropriate substitutions in Kant's famous aphorism concerning the relation between the concepts of the understanding and the intuitions of sensibility: the *Weltbegriff* of philosophy without the *Schulbegriff* is empty, and the *Schulbegriff* of philosophy without the *Weltbegriff* is blind.<sup>44</sup> These two alternatives—emptiness or blindness—represent the two forms of catastrophe that face the polar tasks of popularizing and institutionalizing the practice of philosophy. The former alternative awaits philosophy whenever—in its eagerness to achieve the sound of profundity and to assume the posture of the sage—it compromises its aspirations to perspicuity, clarity, systematicity, and rigor. (Hence all too often philosophers living in exile from the academy tend to be suspiciously eager to take reassurance from the fact that it has always been a mark of honor in philosophy to be opposed by those who claim to speak in the name of philosophy—to rescue the vocation of philosopher from its usurpers.) The latter alternative ensues whenever philosophy's practitioners, in their preoccupation with excavating some narrow slice of territory, lose sight of why it was that they had originally wanted to sink their spades into that particular plot of ground in the first place. (Thus philosophy in its professionalized form often purchases the security of a stable set of projects at the cost of severing contact with most people's original motivations to the subject.) Every attempt at philosophizing remains poised somewhere between these twin perils: the emptiness of pseudo-profundity and the barrenness of pedantry. The former danger has particularly haunted Continental philosophy in its least productive phases, whereas the latter has proved to be analytic philosophy's most characteristic form of infertility.

It is worth reflecting on the fact that Kant is the most recent common figure to whom these two traditions can trace themselves back. He represents the crossroads at which the history of Western philosophy branches. It is as if the task of inheriting his monumental legacy caused our philosophical culture to split into two unfriendly halves, so that the twin aspirations to philosophy that Kant had hoped, once and for all, to balance against each other entered instead into a state of continuous disequilibrium. The result is a philosophical cold war in which the *Weltbegriff* and the *Schulbegriff* each insists on its own respective sphere of influence, and each views the incursions of the other as acts of subversion. Indeed, each has its characteristic mode of intellectual terrorism. (Carnap accused Heidegger and his kin of uttering "pseudo-propositions" that were "devoid of cognitive content." Heidegger accused Carnap and his kin of dwelling in a state of "forgetfulness," oblivious to the "essential questions." Each represented the danger inherent in philosophy that the other most abhorred: charlatantry and philistinism. Each felt that his counterpart paid the price of the one danger because of his excessive fear of the other.) Hence it has become customary to speak of philosophy as having divided into two different "traditions." Kant might have been more inclined to think of this development as philosophy itself dividing into halves—as if each "tradition" had chosen to excel in expressing what the other repressed in the aspiration to philosophy.

In his recent writings, Putnam has been led to remark in a number of places on how the direction of his thought has impelled him "to think about questions which are thought to be more the province of 'Continental philosophy' than of 'analytical philosophy.'" <sup>45</sup> He has also become particularly fond of remarking on certain patterns of convergence that are beginning to emerge between these two cultures—sometimes favorably (for example, the affinities between Rawls's Kantian constructivism and the views of the Frankfurt School)<sup>46</sup> and sometimes unfavorably (for example, the parallel forms of pressure toward relativism in Rorty and Foucault;<sup>47</sup> or the parallels in Quine's and Derrida's theories of interpretation).<sup>48</sup> One of Putnam's motivations for returning to Kant, and for taking his philosophical bearings from Kant's formulations of the traditional problems, would appear to be to heal this rift: to find a piece of nonaligned ground, somewhere within earshot of both sides. Surely one precondition of clearing such a piece of ground is finding a way to bring Kant's two concepts of philosophy back into a stable equilibrium with each other. For the situation is still one in which each half of the contemporary

philosophical world conducts itself as if it had been granted only one half of the Kantian inheritance, guaranteeing that philosophy everywhere would remain deprived of some part of its birthright. Putnam's increasing interest in the later work of Wittgenstein can be attributed in part to a conviction that, of the alternatives that have emerged thus far in the twentieth century, it comes closest to exemplifying a mode of philosophy that holds forth some promise of healing the rift which currently separates the analytic and Continental traditions of philosophy and which has left philosophy in our century divided against itself. Indeed, there are good reasons why Putnam might find in Wittgenstein—an Austrian, first schooled in his native country in the writings of Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer, who then came to study and eventually to settle in the Cambridge of Russell and Moore—someone who was uniquely placed to soothe the quarrel between the Anglo-American and Continental European philosophical cultures concerning which of the two concepts of philosophy should be granted ascendancy over the other. Putnam sees in Wittgenstein someone who succeeds in reconstituting the scaffolding of the Kantian architectonic, rejuvenating Kant's legacy to philosophy by fashioning a stable equilibrium between his two concepts of philosophy.

### Putnam's Wittgensteinianism

A number of Putnam's earlier papers, including some of the most famous, have been devoted to attacking views such as the so-called criterial theory of meaning<sup>49</sup> and various conventionalist theories of mathematical truth<sup>50</sup>—views that both he and others have often dubbed “neo-Wittgensteinian.” Against this background it can come as a surprise to find Putnam increasingly disposed in recent years to indulge in remarks such as the following: “In my view, Wittgenstein was simply the *deepest* philosopher of the century.”<sup>51</sup> The apparent tension between Putnam's professed admiration for Wittgenstein in remarks such as this one and his recurring impatience with the forms of neo-Wittgensteinianism currently in vogue in philosophy of language and philosophy of mathematics can be perplexing. The appearance of a contradiction here, however, is eased somewhat by the discovery that Putnam also declares Wittgenstein to be “the most misunderstood” philosopher of the century.<sup>52</sup> This declaration issues not so much from a conviction that Wittgenstein's epigones have simply misrepresented his substantive philosophical views, as from a

sense that they have misrepresented Wittgenstein as a philosopher who held views. On a number of occasions in the present volume, Putnam argues that Wittgenstein was not a philosopher who wished to put forward anything that could properly be termed a “philosophical view” of his own. In fact, he occasionally suggests that Wittgenstein should not even be thought of as wishing to put forward “arguments” in any traditional philosophical sense.<sup>53</sup> This raises the question: if it is not his philosophical views or his arguments, what is it about Wittgenstein that Putnam professes to admire? The answer would appear to be the *manner* in which Wittgenstein philosophizes: his means of arriving at insight into what fuels and what relieves the tensions of philosophical controversy. Wittgenstein, on Putnam's reading of him—unlike the neo-Wittgensteinians mentioned above—is not concerned to arrive at anything a traditional philosopher would consider a “solution” to a philosophical problem. It does not follow from this that he wishes to debunk the philosopher's questions: “Wittgenstein is not a ‘debunker’; the philosophical *search* fascinates him; it is answers that he rejects.”<sup>54</sup>

It is at this point that we find perhaps the most striking mark of convergence between Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and the one that informs Putnam's recent work: namely, the idea that it is the philosophical search itself that is of most interest in philosophy—as the peculiar character of the questions that exercise philosophy—as opposed to any of the specific answers with which various thinkers have attempted to soothe the recurring insistence and mystery of the questions. Indeed, one aspect of the peculiarity of philosophy's questions lies in the very fact that they consistently tend to outlive the answers that are foisted upon them. Putnam begins Part Two of the title essay of this collection by invoking Wittgenstein in connection with the theme of “the death of metaphysics” and then goes on to issue the following summary statement of his own metaphysical credo:

I take it as a fact of life that there is a sense in which the task of philosophy is to overcome metaphysics and a sense in which its task is to continue metaphysical discussion. In every philosopher there is a part that cries: “This enterprise is vain, frivolous, crazy—we must say, ‘Stop!’” and a part that cries, “This enterprise is simply reflection at the most general and abstract level; to put a stop to it would be a crime against reason.” *Of course* philosophical problems are unsolvable; but as Stanley Cavell once remarked, “there are better and worse ways of thinking about them.”

To a reader primarily familiar with Putnam's early work, the most surprising words in this entire volume may consist of Putnam's remark here that "philosophical problems are unsolvable"—with the sole exception, that is, of the even more surprising words that immediately precede this remark, namely, "*Of course!*" Does Putnam wish us to take it as *obvious* that philosophical problems are unsolvable? Then why should we occupy ourselves with them? Putnam is here paraphrasing a passage in which Stanley Cavell says of the questions of philosophy that "while there may be no satisfying answers to such questions in *certain forms*, there are so to speak, directions to answers, *ways to think*, that are worth the time of your life to discover."<sup>55</sup> To say that there are no satisfying answers to such questions in *certain forms* is to say that part of how one makes progress with such questions is by transforming them, by shifting the terms in which they present themselves to us. The trickiness of this position lies in its combining two perceptions that have traditionally competed with each other: first, that philosophical problems do not admit of satisfying answers (at least in the forms in which they have usually been posed), and second, that there is such a thing as philosophical progress (and that something of human importance hinges on its achievement). Cavell, in the passage in question, is summarizing what he takes to be Wittgenstein's teaching concerning the character of the questions that preoccupy philosophy. He makes this explicit, for example, in the following remarks:

[Wittgenstein's] philosophizing is about philosophy as something that is always to be received. Philosophy in him is never over and done with. The questions on his mind are perennially, How do philosophical problems begin? and How are they momentarily brought peace? When Wittgenstein says that he comes to bring philosophy peace, it's always a possible answer to say, "Listen to this tortured man. How can what he does be seen as bringing philosophy peace? If that's what he wanted, he certainly failed." But that assumes that what he wanted to do was to bring philosophy peace once and for all, as though it was to rest in peace. And some people are perfectly ready to take him that way, as showing that philosophy came to an end at some point in cultural time. Even he flickeringly thought that might be the case. But what I take him constantly to mean is that just as you don't know a priori what will bring philosophy peace, so you never know at any crossroads what will cause another beginning. His work cannot be exempted from—and is not meant to be

exempt from—such a view of what philosophy is, a view in which philosophy always lies ahead of him.<sup>56</sup>

On this reading of Wittgenstein, philosophy stands both for those questions that, in the forms in which they impose themselves, do not admit of satisfying answers *and* for the activity of searching out directions to answers, ways to think, that relieve us of the perplexity with which such questions can torment us. Philosophy, so understood, is not an activity that comes to an end.<sup>57</sup>

We can now see that in the passage by Putnam quoted above, he is summarizing a formulation of Cavell's which, in turn, is intended in part as a way of summarizing certain formulations of Wittgenstein's concerning the nature of philosophy's questions. Part of what Putnam takes from Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein here is the idea that any attempt to offer a straightforward solution to a longstanding philosophical problem constitutes a form of philosophical *evasion* insofar as it does not seek to come to terms with why it is that the purported "solution" is so unsatisfying to most people who are gripped by the question for which it was proposed as an answer—insofar, that is, as it does not seek in any way to contribute to our understanding of how it is that such problems persist in exercising the kind of fascination that they clearly do and clearly have for so many people for so many centuries. Putnam remarks elsewhere: "If philosophical investigations (a phrase made famous by another philosopher who 'changed his mind')<sup>58</sup> contribute to the thousands-of-years-old dialogue which is philosophy, if they deepen our understanding of the riddles we refer to as 'philosophical problems,' then the philosopher who conducts those investigations is doing the job right."<sup>59</sup>

Putnam aligns himself with Wittgenstein here by describing the work in which he aspires to engage as consisting of "philosophical investigations." Such investigations, rather than proposing solutions, aim to "deepen our understanding of the riddles we refer to as 'philosophical problems.'" The comparison of a philosophical problem with a riddle is itself one that derives from Wittgenstein: "For in riddles one has no exact way of working out a solution. One can only say, 'I shall know a good solution if I see it.'"<sup>60</sup> According to Wittgenstein, both a riddle and a philosophical question consist of a form of words still in search of a sense. The sense of the question, he suggests, is a borrowed one that can only be fixed once we have an answer in hand.<sup>61</sup> The form of words constrains the range of possible

answers but does not, in itself, uniquely determine the sense of the question. In Wittgenstein's view, in order to answer straightforwardly a question posed by such a form of words we must first specify a language-game in which it has a home. Yet it is also internal to Wittgenstein's teaching that such an answer (which provides a comfortable home for the question) will generally not satisfy us, for the answer will seem to drain the question of its original appearance of profundity.<sup>62</sup> Philosophical problems, Wittgenstein writes: "have the character of *depth*. They are deep disquietudes . . . let us ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be *deep*. (And that is what the depth of philosophy is.)"<sup>63</sup>

In order to preserve its character of depth, the question must preserve its likeness not only to a riddle, but to a riddle that still awaits its solution. Each proposed answer that is imposed upon the question threatens to rob it of some of its characteristically philosophical peculiarity. Riddles, unlike philosophical questions, are posed by someone who has a specific, perfectly fitted answer already in view. A good riddle is carefully tailored to match its preexisting answer. Philosophical questions are more like riddles with no preexisting answer, riddles to which no answer quite fits—though various directions of answer suggest themselves. Hence Putnam writes: "Philosophy is not a subject that eventuates in final solutions, and the discovery that the latest view—no matter if one produced it oneself—*still* does not clear away the mystery is characteristic of the work, when the work is well done."<sup>64</sup> This will strike some readers as an astounding conclusion for a philosopher like Putnam to reach. Yet, in some ways, it is a not at all surprising development that the contemporary analytic philosopher most famous for both propounding and converting his colleagues to a wide range of different solutions to philosophical problems should now propound the conclusion that "philosophy is not a subject that eventuates in final solutions." In the past, frustrated critics of Putnam's work have sometimes dismissively labeled him a "moving target," referring to his infamous tendency to change his mind.<sup>65</sup> As John Passmore, a historian of twentieth-century Anglo-American philosophy, observes, Putnam can be considered the Bertrand Russell of contemporary philosophy in this respect.<sup>66</sup> Passmore not only remarks that "Putnam shares Russell's capacity for changing his mind as a result of learning from his contemporaries,"<sup>67</sup> but goes on to complain that trying to characterize "Putnam's philosophy [in particular, his swings between realism and anti-realism] is like trying

to capture the wind with a fishing net."<sup>68</sup> Indeed, this has often served as a rallying point for Putnam's critics, who have charged that his string of metamorphoses serves as evidence that in his philosophizing Putnam is unable to preserve a stable relation to his own convictions—as if a responsiveness to one's convictions could be measured by one's unwillingness to change. Nevertheless, some discussion of Putnam's work crops up in virtually every chapter of Passmore's latest book, entitled *Recent Philosophers*, as if it were undeniably the case that several of the most important recent philosophers all happened to be named "Hilary Putnam." Passmore himself remarks on the oddity of his procedure at one point: "Putnam's Russellian capacity for changing his mind makes him very useful for our purposes. He is the history of recent philosophy in outline."<sup>69</sup>

To many, however, this will still appear to be a dubious form of praise. For even if obstinacy is not an intellectual virtue, surely neither is fickleness—an inability to form genuine philosophical commitments. Is this Putnam's problem? Wolfgang Stegmüller, in a survey of contemporary philosophy not unlike Passmore's, puts a rather different face on this aspect of Putnam's work: "It is the coincidence of a variety of features, as fortunate as they are extraordinary, that have contributed to Putnam's occupying the central position that he does in intellectual discussion within the contemporary English-speaking world. Foremost among these is his infallible instinct for what, in the unsurveyable diversity of contemporary discussions, is genuinely *significant*, combined with his ability to arrange a confrontation with the issues in a fashion that consistently promises to advance our thinking in some new direction."<sup>70</sup> Stegmüller here portrays Putnam as someone who, far from blowing with the winds of current intellectual fashion, acts as the conscience of our philosophical culture, drawing attention to the strains in our commitments and driving wedges into the cracks in our contemporary dogmas—acting as a force that shapes, rather than merely conforms to, the prevailing intellectual agenda of the time. If there is anything to Stegmüller's assessment here, then a volume of Putnam's recent work should be of interest to anyone who seeks some glimpse not only of the direction in which philosophy "within the contemporary English-speaking world" is presently headed, but the direction which it might soon be about to take.

Putnam's remark that "philosophy is not a subject that eventuates in final solutions" would appear to suggest that his most recent

change is more than simply a change of mind. It does not simply mark a conversion to some new philosophical position, one that is now opposed to his previously held view, but rather a change of philosophical heart—a movement in an orthogonal direction: an aspiration to a broader perspective on his work as a whole. His search, it would appear, is no longer simply directed toward arriving at a new and more satisfying candidate for the next philosophical orthodoxy, but rather is directed toward a more inclusive and a more historical standpoint, one that allows him to survey and scrutinize the intellectual forces that have fueled the engine of his own philosophical development, provoking his series of conversions over the years—conversions that have in turn helped to usher in and usher out one form of professional orthodoxy after another. The fact that his work over the past few decades represents the history of recent analytic philosophy in outline has helped to make the topic of the fragile and ephemeral character of philosophical orthodoxy—as well as the cyclical alternation between reigning forms of orthodoxy and heterodoxy—itsself a philosophical topic of increasing urgency and centrality for him.

Kant's name for this alternating cycle of orthodoxy and heterodoxy is the dialectic between dogmatism and skepticism.<sup>71</sup> He argues that the dogmatist's and the skeptic's respective pictures—one of Reason's omnipotence and one of its impotence—are based on a common false step. Indeed, this is the point at which Putnam sees an anticipation of a Wittgensteinian theme in Kant's thought—as evidenced in the opening sentence of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as presented by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer."

For Kant, as we saw earlier, this propensity of the human mind to pose questions to itself that it is unable to answer is a natural and inevitable concomitant of its capacity to reason. Hence, human beings will always have a need for philosophy. A prevalent reading of Wittgenstein, recently popularized by Richard Rorty, attempts to distinguish him from Kant in this respect, viewing his work as undertaking to quench the human need for philosophy once and for all. On this reading, Wittgenstein is to be understood as teaching that all that there is left for (the good) philosophers to do is to clean up the metaphysical mistakes that other (bad) philosophers have committed. Putnam suggests at a number of points that such a reading of Wittgenstein depends upon a misunderstanding of the role of the meta-

physically inclined interlocutory voice that intervenes on almost every page of Wittgenstein's later writings. Rorty appears to follow the widespread tendency to interpret the presence of this interlocutory voice as a literary device for dramatizing the metaphysical temptations of some misguided other—someone not yet privy to Wittgenstein's vision of how matters stand—a voice that is ultimately to be brought to silence. It is to be sharply distinguished from Wittgenstein's own voice: the voice in his text that rounds on, corrects, and censures the interlocutory voice. Putnam appears to favor a reading in which the two voices that pervade Wittgenstein's later writing—Stanley Cavell calls them the voice of temptation and the voice of correctness<sup>72</sup>—are viewed as locked in an enactment of the Kantian dialectic of pure reason. On this reading, the insistence that drives each of these voices is understood as feeding on and sustaining the other. The antimetaphysical voice (which denies the theses that the metaphysician propounds) contents itself with propounding countertheses that only perpetuate, however unwittingly, the cycle of philosophical controversy. Putnam follows Cavell in holding that Wittgenstein's writing aspires to a further perspective—one that does not take sides in this dialectic of insistence and counterinsistence—one that seeks to bring the philosopher within himself a *moment* of peace. Yet it is important that this be consistent with Wittgenstein's holding that the voice of temptation is one that naturally and inevitably speaks up again—it can be brought to a moment of peace but never definitively silenced. On this reading, "the philosopher" whom Wittgenstein wishes to address is, *pace* Rorty, not primarily some subset of humanity that spends its working hours in university philosophy departments, but rather someone who might best be described as the philosopher in each and every one of us (including, preeminently, the philosopher in Wittgenstein himself).<sup>73</sup> In a famous section of his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes: "The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of breaking off [coming to a pause] in philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question."<sup>74</sup> The reference here to philosophy as an activity that the author wishes to be capable of breaking off implies that it is also one that will inevitably be resumed.

Wittgenstein's aim is thus to bring philosophy peace in each of its moments of torment, one by one, as they arise—not, however, to lay philosophy to rest once and for all, so that it may, in Cavell's words, "rest in peace" and never rise again. For Wittgenstein, as for Kant,

philosophy is, on the one hand, the name of that inevitable form of intellectual entanglement that is a natural symptom of the pressure of our taking thought, and, on the other hand, the name of our equally inborn desire for intellectual clarity that ministers to us in our recurring crises of confusion. To undertake to lay the impulse to philosophy within ourselves to rest once and for all would be tantamount to renouncing our capacity for thought. Hence, "as long as reflective people remain in the world," as Putnam puts it, "metaphysical discussion will not disappear." Not only, on this view, is the impulse to philosophy a constitutive feature of the human, but the impulse to repudiate the philosopher within oneself—the dream of bringing philosophy to an end, not simply for the time being, but for all time—is itself a moment within philosophy. The impulse to repudiate the philosopher within oneself is paradigmatically philosophical, above all, in its human desire to repudiate one's own humanity.<sup>75</sup> Throughout the present volume, the reader will find Putnam suggesting that our philosophical "craving" for an unattainably high pitch of certainty (and the ensuing forms of all-consuming doubt that it precipitates) is rooted deeper in the human animal than has been hitherto generally acknowledged by those who undertake to propose "solutions" to the problems that our craving for philosophy spins off. The suggestion throughout appears to be that it is part of what it is to be human that one be subject to philosophical cravings that lead one to renounce the conditions of one's humanity. An examination of the character and sources of such cravings should therefore reveal something about what it is to be a human being. It follows further that the tendency in philosophical realism to wipe the human face off our image of the world and ourselves in it is itself a deeply human tendency. This adds a further twist to the title of this volume, for it would seem that, in this sense, every form of what Putnam calls "Realism with a capital 'R'" can be said to bear a human face (but then, in this sense, so can every form of totalitarianism be said to bear a human face).

The following theme pervades each of the essays that follow: The answers that philosophers have canvassed, and continue to canvass, as solutions to philosophy's problems are unable to provide satisfaction to most people (including most other philosophers) who are gripped by the questions of philosophy. A number of essays engage this theme by taking up the claim, most vigorously advocated in recent years by Richard Rorty, that we stand on the verge of a "post-philosophical culture" in which, once it dawns, the problems of philosophy will

cease to exercise us any longer.<sup>76</sup> Part Two of the title essay of this volume primarily consists of an argument with Rorty over this issue. Its opening paragraph climaxes in Etienne Gilson's elegant aphorism: "Philosophy always buries its undertakers." Putnam is alluding here to Gilson's suggestion that a proclamation of the end of philosophy—something Rorty trumpets as the latest news—itself forms a constitutive and recurring moment *within* the history of philosophy—an integral phase of the dialectic which drives the subject onward—as if philosophy really would come to an end, that is, a standstill, if at every other juncture someone did not succeed in transforming and revitalizing the subject by calling, in the name of philosophy (that is, out of a faithfulness to philosophy's own aspirations), for the end of philosophy. Hence, having just completed an overview of the history of the subject from the medieval to the modern period, Gilson writes: "Now the most striking of the recurrences which we have been observing together is the revival of philosophical speculation by which every skeptical crisis was regularly attended. As it has an immediate bearing on the very existence of philosophy itself, such a fact is not only striking, it is for us the most fundamental fact of all. . . . The so-called death of philosophy being regularly attended by its revival, some new dogmatism should now be at hand. In short, the first law to be inferred from philosophical experience is: *Philosophy always buries its undertakers*" (his emphasis).<sup>77</sup>

Putnam concurs with Gilson here, summarizing his conclusion as follows: "A simple induction from the history of thought suggests that metaphysical discussion is not going to disappear as long as reflective people remain in the world." However, Putnam is not prepared to rest his case against Rorty on this simple induction from the history of thought. Writing half a century after Gilson, Putnam shares Rorty's sense that the traditional problems of philosophy have come to seem problematic to us in a way that no longer encourages the idea that some traditional form of philosophical speculation, as Gilson had hoped, will soothe our current skeptical crisis: "There is a sense in which the futility of something that was called epistemology is a sharper, more painful problem for *our* period—a period that hankers to be called 'Post-Modern' rather than modern" (Chapter 1, Part Two).

Nevertheless, Putnam is as wary of Rorty's scorn for traditional philosophical controversy as he is of Gilson's optimism that philosophy in its traditional form will continue to prosper. The second half



of the title essay of this volume is devoted primarily to specifying his differences with Rorty and “the French thinkers he admires.” In particular, Putnam focuses on “two broad attitudes” toward philosophical problems, both of which he claims are “gripping” for Rorty, and both of which he finds repugnant. He summarizes the first of these attitudes as follows:

The failure of our philosophical “foundations” is a failure of the whole culture, and accepting that we were wrong in wanting or thinking we could have a “foundation” requires us to be *philosophical revisionists*. By this I mean that, for Rorty or Foucault or Derrida, the failure of foundationalism makes a difference to how we are allowed to talk in ordinary life—a difference as to whether and when we are allowed to use words like “know,” “objective,” “fact,” and “reason.” The picture is that philosophy was not a reflection *on* the culture, a reflection some of whose ambitious projects failed, but a *basis*, a sort of pedestal, on which the culture rested, and which has been abruptly yanked out. Under the pretense that philosophy is no longer “serious” there lies hidden a gigantic seriousness.<sup>76</sup>

Putnam’s quarrel with philosophical revisionism is one of the motivating sources of his distinction between Realism with a capital “R” and realism with a small “r”: “If saying what we say and doing what we do is being a ‘realist,’ then we had better be realists—realists with a small ‘r.’ But metaphysical versions of ‘realism’ go beyond realism with a small ‘r’ into certain characteristic kinds of philosophical fantasy” (Chapter 1, Part Two). It will emerge that to call such views characteristic kinds of fantasy is a very particular form of criticism—one that suggests that what these views require is a treatment that will prove therapeutic—that is, that will restore their sense of reality. Putnam defines Realism with a capital “R” (which he also calls “scientific realism” or “objectivism”) as the set of views that depend upon the following two assumptions: “(1) the assumption that there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the properties things have ‘in themselves’ and the properties which are ‘projected by us,’ and (2) the assumption that the fundamental science—in the singular, since only physics has that status today—tells us what properties things have in themselves.”<sup>79</sup>

Such views end by concluding that our commonsense view of the world (along with the commonsense “objects” that it “postulates” such as tables and chairs) embodies a false picture of reality (and hence that tables and chairs, strictly speaking, do not *really* exist).

Such views often, therefore, also tend to conclude that propositions that we ordinarily take to be true are, strictly speaking, false. What Putnam calls “realism with a small ‘r’” opposes these conclusions and affirms our ordinary picture of the world and the everyday linguistic practices that it licenses. Putnam remarks in a number of places that what he thinks of as “realism with a small ‘r’” is meant to bring out an important point of convergence that he finds in strains of both analytic and Continental philosophy (in particular, in the phenomenological tradition, as represented preeminently by Husserl, and in ordinary language philosophy, as represented preeminently by the latter Wittgenstein): an unwillingness to hold our everyday intuitions about what is “reasonable” (or “true”) hostage to our philosophical theories: “The strength of the Objectivist tradition is so strong that some philosophers will abandon the deepest intuitions we have about ourselves-in-the-world, rather than ask (as Husserl and Wittgenstein did) whether the whole picture is not a mistake.”<sup>80</sup>

Putnam connects the label “realism with a small ‘r’” with Wittgenstein’s remark that in doing philosophy we tend to forget that trees and chairs—the “things and that we can point to”—are paradigms of what we call “real.”<sup>81</sup> Putnam credits Husserl with tracing the source of our philosophical dissatisfaction with our commonsense picture of the world to the rise of modern science:

Thus, it is clear that the name “Realism” can be claimed by or given to at least two very different philosophical attitudes . . . The philosopher who claims that only scientific objects “really exist” and that much, if not all, of the commonsense world is mere “projection” claims to be a “realist,” but so does the philosopher who insists that there *really are* chairs . . .

Husserl traces the first line of thought, the line that denies that there “really are” commonsense objects, back to Galileo, and with good reason. The present Western world-view depends, according to Husserl, on a new way of conceiving “external objects”—the way of mathematical physics . . . And this, he points out, is what above all came into Western thinking with the Galilean revolution: the idea of the “external world” as something whose true description, whose description “in itself,” consists of mathematical formulas.<sup>82</sup>

The Realist, on the assumption that the scientific picture of the world represents “the One True Image” (or, as Putnam also likes to call it, “the God’s-Eye View”), concludes that our commonsense image of the world is second-class. It begins to appear, indeed, to be in certain respects worse than second-class, if one endorses a further

assumption championed by some Realists: namely, that the scientific and the everyday vocabularies for describing and understanding the world embody *conflicting* “conceptual schemes.” An allegiance to the former vocabulary is then viewed as naturally entailing various forms of disillusionment with beliefs and practices that depend upon the latter. Putnam follows Wittgenstein in arguing that ordinary language in itself embodies neither a theory of the world (that could so much as conflict with scientific theory) nor an ontology (in the philosopher’s sense) which commits the speaker to “postulating” the existence of a set of fundamental objects. Putnam sees Scientific Realism’s fixation on the achievement of modern science as leading to philosophical confusion in a further way as well, namely, through its fascination with the *methods* of science—in particular, those of reduction (exhibiting higher-level entities to be constructions of lower-level entities) and formalization (revealing the hidden logical structure, or lack thereof, of ordinary beliefs by rendering them in a formal language). In Chapter 7 Putnam diagnoses the tendency in modern philosophy to extrapolate the application of these methods beyond their legitimate scope of application as a characteristic expression of the pressure of certain philosophical cravings:

I can sympathize with the urge to *know*, to *have* a totalistic explanation which includes the thinker in the act of discovering the totalistic explanation in the totality of what it explains. I am not saying that this urge is “optional” . . . But I am saying that the project of providing such an explanation has failed.

It has failed not because it was an illegitimate urge—what human pressure could be more worthy of respect than the pressure to *know*?—but because it goes beyond the bounds of any notion of explanation that we have.

The implication here is that “the pressure to know,” which leads us to legitimate forms of knowledge, is one that also leads us into metaphysical confusion. Since, even if it were possible, it would be self-defeating for us to seek immunity from this pressure, we have no choice but to try to be vigilant about when it pushes us beyond the bounds of sense, stretching our ordinary concepts out to a point where they cease any longer to have an application. Held up against such a stretched-out philosophical concept of knowledge, our ordinary practices and beliefs appear too particular, too subjective, too local, too perspectival. Putnam suggests that insofar as our analyses

of “Objective Knowledge,” “Truth,” and “Rationality” are tied to certain of these ideals—based usually on a metaphysical picture of what accounts for the success of science—the conclusion will inevitably be forthcoming that our ordinary claims to knowledge are not, strictly speaking, “true,” nor are our everyday practices, strictly speaking, “rational.” This forces a choice between our prephilosophical intuitions and the conclusions of our philosophical theories. If we opt for the latter, then it appears to follow that full philosophical honesty requires us to call for *revisions* in our ordinary practices. The first two steps, for Putnam, in countering this impetus to what he calls “philosophical revisionism” are to question the coherence of the ideals of objectivity and rationality that are being brought to bear on our ordinary practices, and to diagnose and do justice to the sources of their appeal. At many early junctures in the essays that follow, Putnam is often concerned at the outset merely to draw our attention to how deeply rooted in us “ideas of perfect knowledge” and “ideas of the falsity of everything short of perfect knowledge” are—how deeply such ideas “speak to us.”<sup>83</sup> As a given essay progresses, the project in each case takes on a specific focus: to trace some particular contemporary form of philosophical dissatisfaction with our ordinary practices to its source in a disappointment over how those practices are unable to live up to the standard of a philosophical ideal that is being brought to bear on them. When the philosophical ideal turns out on closer examination to be an unattainable one, Putnam tries to show that rather than retracing our steps, we tend to opt for a strategy of despair: we lose confidence in our practices along with the ideals we brought to them. In whatever way a philosophical project of providing a foundation that holds out the promise of satisfying our philosophical cravings falls through, the tendency is then to conclude that the entire superstructure of ordinary practices and beliefs that the foundation was to support is bankrupt as well—to conclude, as Putnam expresses it, that “philosophy was not a reflection *on* the culture, a reflection some of whose ambitious projects failed, but a *basis*, a sort of pedestal, on which the culture rested, and which has been abruptly yanked out.” The conclusion ensues that the genuine article (truth, objectivity, rationality) is unattainable. Putnam suggests, as a partial diagnosis, that what appeals to us about such philosophical views (that declare our ordinary practices to be merely second-class) is that they claim to demythologize our lives. Nothing satisfies us more, being the children of modernity that we are, than

the thought that we cannot be duped. Only a view that holds out the promise of having completed the modern project of disenchanting the world, so that a moment of further disillusionment is no longer possible for us, will cater to our image of ourselves as immune to the temptation of self-deception. As Putnam says in Chapter 9, we want to believe that we have *seen through* how things appear to how they really are:

Our modern revelation may be a depressing revelation, but at least it is a *demythologizing* revelation. If the world is terrible, at least we *know* that our fathers were fools to think otherwise, and that everything they believed and cherished was a lie, or at best superstition . . .

I think that this consolation to our vanity cannot be overestimated. Narcissism is often a more powerful force in human life than self-preservation or the desire for a productive, loving, fulfilling life. . . . We would welcome [a new view] . . . *provided* the new view gave us the same intellectual confidence, the same idea that we have a superior method, the same sense of being on top of the facts, that the scientific view gives us. If the new view were to threaten our intellectual pride . . . then, I suspect, many of us would reject it as “unscientific,” “vague,” lacking in “criteria for deciding,” and so on. In fact, I suspect many of us will stick with the scientific view even if it, at any rate, can be *shown* to be inconsistent or incoherent. In short, we shall prefer to go on being depressed to losing our status as sophisticated persons.

Giving up our “status as sophisticated persons” requires allowing ourselves to be vulnerable to disappointment; hence we are only satisfied with absolute knowledge or no knowledge at all. We prefer the alternative of complete skepticism to the possibility of genuine knowledge with all the risks of fallibility it entails. In Chapter 8, entitled “The Craving for Objectivity,” Putnam discusses the example of recent attempts in philosophy to reduce the highly informal everyday activity of interpretation to a set of formalizable rules and the ensuing wholesale skepticism about meaning and interpretation that has followed in the wake of the failure of such attempts. The essay concludes: “The contemporary tendency to regard interpretation as something second class reflects, I think, . . . a craving for absolutes—a craving for absolutes and a tendency which is inseparable from that craving, the tendency to think that if the absolute is unattainable, then ‘anything goes.’” The title of this essay is derived from a famous pas-

sage in which Wittgenstein discusses what he calls the philosopher’s “craving for generality.” Wittgenstein also diagnoses this craving as arising in part through the philosopher’s fixation on the methods of science: “Our craving for generality has another main source: our preoccupation with the method of science. I mean, the method of reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest number of primitive natural laws; and, in mathematics, of unifying the treatment of different topics by using a generalization. Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness.”<sup>84</sup>

Putnam’s charge against Rorty and “the French thinkers that he admires” is not that they share this widespread philosophical preoccupation with the method of science, but that they falsely imagine themselves to have transcended the confusions engendered by this preoccupation—in particular, they fail to appreciate how much the manner in which they reject philosophical projects guided by such a preoccupation is still conditioned by the same craving which gave rise to such projects in the first place. In Putnam’s view, the character of Rorty’s disappointment with certain features of our culture reflects the strength of the hold that the philosophical craving for absoluteness continues to exert on him. It is his equation of objectivity with a certain metaphysical picture of objectivity that drives him to the misguided conclusion that the demise of this picture carries in its train implications for the integrity and security of our ordinary claims to knowledge. Putnam is alarmed by the *ethical* implications of Rorty’s antimetaphysical stance, in particular, the moral it draws concerning how we should view our everyday lives—a moral that depends on a “misrepresentation” of “the lives we lead with our concepts.”<sup>85</sup> Putnam follows Wittgenstein in proposing that philosophical progress will come from a closer examination of our everyday practices of entering and adjudicating claims about what is true and what is reasonable:

Rather than looking with suspicion on the claim that some value judgments are reasonable and some are unreasonable, or some views are true and some false, or some words refer and some do not, I am concerned with bringing us back to precisely these claims, which we do, after all, constantly make in our daily lives. Accepting the “manifest image,” the *Lebenswelt*, the world as we actually experience it, demands of us who have (for better or for worse) been philosophi-

cally trained that we both regain our sense of mystery . . . and our sense of the common (for that some ideas are “unreasonable” is, after all, a *common* fact—it is only the weird notions of “objectivity” and “subjectivity” that we have acquired from Ontology and Epistemology that make us unfit to dwell in the common).<sup>86</sup>

In saying that philosophy makes us “unfit to dwell in the common,” Putnam follows Wittgenstein in viewing philosophy as an activity that places us not only at odds with what we ordinarily say and do, but also, what is more important, in a position from which we are unable to recover our sense of the ordinary. We become able to view the ordinary only through the lens of a philosophical theory: we lose our sense of the genuineness of our conviction in the reasonableness (or unreasonableness) or truth (or falsity) of certain actions or claims. Our former, prephilosophical conviction now appears to us to be only the consequence of our youthful, unreflective, metaphysical naiveté (and hence an effort at self-deception seems to be a necessary precondition of recovering such conviction). Thus the price of intellectual honesty appears to be the abandonment of many of our ordinary ways of talking and thinking. Putnam’s summary statement of his disagreement with Rorty over this issue (in Chapter 1, Part Two) encapsulates the philosophical attitude that informs especially the essays concerned with specifically ethical and political matters in this volume: “I hope that philosophical reflection may be of some real cultural value; but I do not think it has been the pedestal on which the culture rested, and I do not think our reaction to the failure of a philosophical project—even a project as central as ‘metaphysics’—should be to abandon ways of talking and thinking which have practical and spiritual weight.”

Putnam links the hastiness with which Rorty draws revisionist implications from the failure of traditional philosophical projects with a second moment of hastiness—one that issues from the other of Rorty’s “two broad attitudes”: namely, the contempt with which Rorty dismisses long-standing philosophical controversies. Putnam suggests that this particular failing is, to some extent, characteristic of analytic philosophers: “Rorty’s analytic past shows up in this: when he rejects a philosophical controversy, as, for example, he rejects the ‘realism/anti-realism’ controversy, or the ‘emotive/cognitive’ controversy, his rejection is expressed in a Carnapian tone of voice—he *scorns* the controversy” (Chapter 1, Part Two). Putnam’s

disagreement with Rorty here reflects a further difference in their respective interpretations of the teachings of the later Wittgenstein, as well as that of the major figures of the movement called Ordinary Language Philosophy (Austin, Bouwsma, Wisdom, and Ryle) whose philosophical methods most closely resembled Wittgenstein’s. Rorty takes it that the work of these figures, and especially that of Wittgenstein, shows us that what we should do is simply *dismiss* the problems that have most exercised philosophers over the past few centuries. The feature of Rorty’s attitude toward philosophical controversy that concerns Putnam here is evident in the following passages from Rorty’s review of *The Claim of Reason* by Stanley Cavell:

Austin, Bouwsma, Wittgenstein, Wisdom, and Ryle all suggested that we just shrug off the claims which Berkeley and Descartes and Moore made on us—that we teach epistemology as the history of some bad ideas. Now Cavell tells us that, unless we take these claims very seriously indeed, we shan’t get the full benefit of what Wittgenstein and Austin (in particular) can do for us. We mustn’t, he tells us, shrug off skepticism too easily, for then we may miss “the truth of skepticism” . . .

But if [Cavell] . . . is not concerned about being professional, why worry about “American philosophical life”? The latter phrase can only refer to current trends in fashionable philosophy departments. Among intellectuals generally, Wittgenstein is in fact being read and used more and more. It is only within certain philosophy departments that he, and “Oxford philosophy,” are *vieux jeu*. Such parochial matters should not concern Cavell . . . One would have expected him to conclude that Wittgenstein would be better served by *forgetting* “events within American philosophical life” than by recapturing them.<sup>87</sup>

This is the voice of a man who is angry about his education. He has come to the conclusion that the history of epistemology has been a “history of some bad ideas.” His overwhelming emotion, when faced with the traditional problems of philosophy, is one of impatience—a desire to get on to something more fruitful. Rorty’s interest in Wittgenstein therefore is an interest in someone who has managed to put this history behind himself—someone who will enable us to put this history behind ourselves, so that we may distance ourselves from the pain of its pointlessness. Thus he feels that there is an inconsistency in Cavell’s being interested in Wittgenstein’s work *and* in the problems that preoccupied the great historical figures and still preoc-